



Unsplash Photo by Ben Wilkins

“Not only do we know God through Jesus Christ,
we only know ourselves through Jesus Christ.”

– Blaise Pascal

“If you want to know what Jesus meant by what Jesus said,
pay attention to what Jesus did.”

– Andy Stanley

“Following Jesus is an ongoing transformational
process, and as believers, we’re invited to
be a bit more like Him every day.”

– Nish Weiseth

Founded in 1916, we are an Open & Affirming (LGBTQ+), anti-racist, and justice seeking church that is part of the greater United Church of Christ.



5-Step Prayer Process As described by the Unity Church

1. **Relax.** Breathe deeply and focus within. Become willing to know a truth that frees you from all concerns. *How to: Take deep, conscious breaths. As you relax your body and release busy thoughts, feel your heart opening up.*
2. **Concentrate.** Recognize the power of God as life, love, wisdom, and ever-present good. *How to: Center your thoughts on the ever-present energy of God in your life. You might want to inhale God is, exhale I AM.*
3. **Meditate.** In silent reflection, see that the power of God is the same power within you—your divine potential. *How to: In silence, experience the power of your own divinity, knowing you share all the attributes of God—love, strength, wisdom.*
4. **Realize.** Know that you have the power to be, to do, to have, and to allow the good you desire. *How to: Feel a click as everything falls into place and you know all is well, regardless of outer circumstances. It is done.*
5. **Appreciate.** Grateful for your growing spiritual awareness, you are empowered to live fully now and into a fulfilling future. *How to: Empower your life with every expression of gratitude.*

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
JUST PEACE SUNDAY**

September 15, 2024, 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcome here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Prelude "There Is a Balm in Gilead" arr. A. M. David

Chiming of the Hour

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Introit "We Are an Offering" D. Liles

We lift our voices; we lift our hands; we lift our lives up to you.

We are an offering.

God, use our voices; God, use our hands;

God, use our lives; they are yours. We are an offering.

All that we have, all that we are,

All that we hope to be we give to you, we give to you.

We lift our voices; we lift our hands; we lift our lives up to you.

We are an offering. We are an offering.

* Call to the Heart Carl Johnson

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worship and reading...

One: We come today seeking peace for our souls.

Many: From tension, stress, doubts, and worries.

One: We come today to nourish our spirits.

Many: So that we may be peace bearers and peacemakers.

One: We come today to find stillness and tranquility.

Many: Among the violence, war, and oppression we see.

One: We now worship in the hope of building peace in our world.

Many: A peace built on God's justice and love. A peace through Christ we will bring to the world.

* Hymn 606

“Nearer, My God, To You”

BETHANY

Nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

I'll bear the cross as Christ calls me to do and pray each day anew:

Refrain: Nearer my God, to you, nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

When I am wandering as Jacob did,
and in the deepest night the path is hid, my dreams will bring me, too, (R)

Let Jacob's ladder fill the sky above,
and angels carry down the faith and love to keep this goal in view: (R)

Then, waking from the night to morning air by Bethel's stone,
I'll know you heard my prayer, and how my yearning grew: (R)

Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Yourself: I am an extension of Christ's peace in the world.

Neighbor: You are an extension of Christ's peace in the world.

World: We are an extension of Christ's peace in the world.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life (*unison*)

Carl Johnson

On this Peace Sunday, we come before you, O God, to confess the ways we have not supported peace in our lives and the life of the world.

For the times we have tolerated, through our actions or inaction, abuse of human rights, war and military solutions to conflict, the growing gap between rich and poor, and homelessness.

For the times we have condoned, through our actions or inaction, personal violence and family violence.

For the times we have abused creation—the land, water, and air, the non-human life of this world, our global environment. For the times when we have accepted a theology that dominates or limits others.

We confess we can lose the vision of your peace, and that we fail to rely on your grace, which is active in our world.

Hear our call, O God, to be a people who keep your vision of peace present and active in this world. A people who celebrates your grace in our global community.

Hear our call to come home to you, O God.

Hymn 544 “If I Have Been the Source of Pain, O God”

CAMACUA

**If I have been the source of pain, O God;
If to the weak I have refused my strength;
If, in rebellion, I have strayed away; Forgive me, God.**

**If I’ve insisted on a peaceful life,
Far from the struggles that the gospel brings,
When you prefer to guide me to the strife, Forgive me, God.**

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

God hears our call. The call from our hearts for peace, compassion, and understanding. We gather today in this community to renew the vision and commitment for a world of just peace knowing that God’s love holds all, sees all, accepts all. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Response to God’s Grace “Know That God Is Good”

MUNGO NI MWEMA

Know that God is good. (3x) God is good; God is good.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song of Preparation “In an Age of Twisted Values”

CHURCH UNITED

**In an age of twisted values, we have lost the truth we need.
In sophisticated language we have justified our greed.
By our struggle for possessions, we have robbed the poor and weak.
Hear our cry and heal our nation; your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.**

**We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear.
Hatred swiftly turns to cruelty if we hold resentments dear.
For communities divided by the walls of class and race,
Hear our cry and heal our nation; show us, Lord, your love and grace.**

Silent Meditation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

On this Just Peace Sunday, you are invited into a time of silent meditation. For these few minutes, in the midst of all that is happening in our lives and world, you are encouraged to seek the still and quiet peace of God within, so that when you return from prayer you might be a peaceful presence to the world.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

OPEN OUR EYES

**Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch you and say that we love you.
Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.**

Modern Lesson

Tina Dickens

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Eugene Peterson, who was a Presbyterian minister, scholar, theologian, author, and poet. Among his work he says...

“One of the reasons that Christians read Scripture repeatedly and carefully is to find out just how God works in Jesus Christ, so that we can work in the name of Jesus Christ.”

One: May we hear what the Spirit is saying to the people.

Many: Open our ears, our hearts, our minds.

*Gospel Lesson

Mark 8:27-38 (CEB)

Carl Johnson

Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from Mark 8:27-38, where Jesus questions the disciples about who he is and speaks of the suffering he will endure...

Jesus and his disciples went into the villages near Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

They told him, “Some say John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others one of the prophets.”

He asked them, “And what about you? Who do you say that I am?”

Peter answered, “You are the Christ.” Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then Jesus began to teach his disciples: “The Human One must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and the legal experts, and be killed, and then, after three days, rise from the dead.” He said this plainly. But Peter took hold of Jesus and, scolding him, began to correct him. Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, then sternly corrected Peter: “Get behind me, Satan. You are not thinking God’s thoughts but human thoughts.”

After calling the crowd together with his disciples, Jesus said to them, “All who want to come after me must say no to themselves, take up their cross, and follow me. All who want to save their lives will lose them. But all who lose their lives because of me and because of the good news will save them. Why would people gain the whole world but lose their lives? What will people give in exchange for their lives? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this unfaithful and sinful generation, the Human One will be ashamed of that person when he comes in the Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

One: For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us. For the word of God within us.

Many: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

“Who Are You?”

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Gift in Song

“Roll Down, Justice!”
Meg Houlihan, vocals

M. A. Miller

*There's a voice strong and clear ringing out far and near
"Let justice roll down, let justice roll down!"
Like the rush of a stream, comes a powerful dream, let justice roll down.*

*Let the earth be restored, every soul be reformed;
Let the healing renew, creation reborn.
Here in this sacred space with the strength of God's grace, let justice roll down.*

*On this glorious day, give us courage, we pray,
That justice rolls down, let justice roll down!
Let the vision take flight and God will delight as waters flow down, justice
abounds!*

Refrain: Roll down, justice! Roll like an everflowing stream.

Invitation to Generosity

Carl Johnson

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

God's teaching surrounds us. If we wish to know love or to understand justice, we must pay attention. The good news of the gospel is always coming alive somewhere or through someone. For all the ways God takes on flesh and manifests within and around us, let us bring our offerings with a sense of gratitude. Let us show who Jesus is and who we are through the diverse gifts of our love, peace, and justice.

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Carl Johnson

Please join me in our unison prayer of dedication...

Good and giving God, we lift these gifts to you, as symbols of our commitment to peace and justice in the world. May these gifts work through our ministries to challenge systems of oppression, to nurture alternatives to hate, violence and abuse, and to create the beloved kin-dom here on earth where all are welcome just as they are. Amen.

O Savior, let me walk with you in the early paths of service true;
Tell me your secret, help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear winning word of love.
Teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me your patience; let me be in closer, dearer company,
In work that keeps faith sweet and strong, in trust that triumphs over wrong.

In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future’s broadening way,
In peace that only you can give, with you, O Savior, let me live.

Poem “The Wrong Rain” Patrick Washburn
by Jennifer Vishagan

Video “Peace Train” featuring Yusuf/Cat Stevens
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QpjR6-Uuks>

<https://playingforchange.com>

Playing For Change (PFC) is a Certified B Corp (Social Purpose Organization) created to inspire and connect the world through music, born from the shared belief that music has the power to break down boundaries and overcome distances between people.

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response “Song of Hope” ARGENTINA

May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
Working for a world that’s new, faithful when we hear Christ’s call.

Postlude “Be Thou My Vision” arr. J. Vogt

*The liturgy for today's service was written or adapted by
United for Peace Worship Resources, Jennifer Watts, Unity's 5-Step Prayer
Process, Rev. Christopher Czarnecki*

*Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness
and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video
may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our
official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published,
please contact the church office by phone or email.*

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian, Greeters:

Refreshments: Bold & Beautiful Covenant Group

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

Stay connected! There are many new events in our future! Check out all the current happenings in the weekly newsletter via Constant Contact. *Not seeing it in your inbox? Sign-up here:*
<https://holycovenantucc.org/newsletters/>

Due to COVID cases within our congregation and community, those attending worship are welcomed to wear a mask should you feel more comfortable while worshipping with us.

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR AT <https://holycovenantucc.org/events/>

9/15 Choir Rehearsals resume after worship

9/15 Consistory meets

9/18 Project Harmony begins at HCUCC, Mondays and Wednesdays

9/22 Communications Team, all are welcome 9:30am

9/22 Rally Day, bring a dessert to share!

9/22 Confirmation Class begins, 12:30-2pm

9/29 Covenant Group Fair

C.R.O.P. HUNGER WALK, OCTOBER 6

We have 6 walkers so far - Linda Carver, Tina Dickens, Tom Magraw, Melissa Noll, Darline Warren, Deborah Winston. It's not too late to join us on October 6. If you can't do the walk with us on church property, please support a walker with either cash or a check made payable to CROP.

If you prefer to give online, please use this link:

[HCUCC CROP team page](#)

SOJOURNERS CLASS

We gather Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room, or via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09>

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Greeters and ushers are needed starting at 10:30am every Sunday. Liturgists and readers roles are also available. **Please sign up in the Gathering Room or at**

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-ushers>.



YOUR OFFERING, YOUR WAY

Various methods are available for your convenience! Schedule offerings, one time or recurring, through your bank's online payment system. Many financial institutions offer free services to its customers. Mailing a check, from home or a financial institution? Please use this secure address:



Holy Covenant UCC, PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

Donate online at HolyCovenantUCC.org/give-2/ via PayPal or Subsplash Wallet. Look for the *Give Today* button. Questions can be directed to the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org or 704-599-9810.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Members

Family & Friends in the recent death of Reverend Jerry Rhyne

Christopher & Akeera Czarnecki and family in the recent death of Chris' grandmother, Domenica Haegele

Kathy Habel and family in the recent death of her husband, Tom Habel

Lee Brigman, Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Linn Finger, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Kat Kerce, Sharon Landis, Melissa & Von McQueen-Simmons, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Alice Phelan & Sally Young, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Ed & Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Ed Vickery & Eric Miner, Cathy & Jay Whitley

Friends & Family Members

Melinda Tabb & Amanda Fern in the recent death of their mother, Joyce Ward (Ed Vickery)

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Debbie Coble (Cindy Coble), Pam Culp & Pam McGill (Melissa Noll), George Miner (Eric Miner), Francesca Czarnecki (Christopher Czarnecki), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charles Jernigan (Lee Brigman), Dave Johnson, Judah L. Jones & Bill Englebreth, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Joe Parks (Beth Sharp), Mike Santino (Melissa Noll), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Eulene Shepherd (Robert Shepherd), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to
prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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