



Unsplash Photo by: Annie Spratt

“When we choose joy, we affirm our faith in love, justice, and hope”
– Bell Hooks

“The moment we cease to hold each other, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out. Joy is found in holding on.” – James Baldwin

“Joy is the quiet acknowledgment that we belong to something beautiful.” – Cole Arthur Riley

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.



Join us this Advent

December 22

WORSHIP 10:55 am ~ LOVE ALWAYS

Music Sunday featuring the Chancel Choir

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December 24, CHRISTMAS EVE EVENTS

Chili & Soup Supper, 5:30-6:30 pm

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE at 7:00 pm

MORAVIAN LOVE FEAST

### CHILI SUPPER ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Join us at 5:30pm for a light meal before worship! (Choir rehearses at 6pm.) We'll offer several styles of chili, rice, rolls, and various fixin's. Even a soup, if chili's not your thang! Help us keep our community safe by listing ingredients, particularly items with gluten, peanuts and tree nuts. Vegan and Vegetarian options are welcomed!

Sign up in the gathering room, or on SignUpGenius:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-53825271-christmas>

### HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERING FOR OUR STAFF

During this joyful time of year, we ask you to consider contributing to a holiday love offering to be divided among our 4 dedicated staff members who work hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, & spiritual renewal. No gift is too small and all are appreciated. If you chose to give, electronic offerings can be made to Terry Raley-Dennis via Venmo: @Terry-Raley-Dennis or via Zelle: tldennis2@hotmail.com; or to Martha Bomely via PayPal: Martha.Bomely@gmail.com. Please contribute today, so our gifts can be shared with the 4 staff members next Sunday.

### OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor

RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167

Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

Mailing address: P.O. Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT ~ JOY**

**December 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 "Lo, How A Rose" arr. J. Purifoy

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Chiming of the Hour

Introit "While We Are Waiting, Come" WAITING

**While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.**

**Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.**

\* Call to the Heart Gregg Walker

One: Sing aloud, O people of God, and shout with joy!

Many: **God has taken away the judgments against us and turned away our shame.**

One: Rejoice and exult with all your heart! The Lord is in our midst, bringing restoration.

Many: **God delights in us with gladness and renews us with love.**

One: Let us rejoice together in the boundless joy of God's promises!

Many: **With open hearts, we welcome God's joy into our lives and into the world.**

\* Hymn 129

“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice”

In DULCI JUBILO

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now give heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;  
Ox and ass before him bow, asleep within the manger now.  
Christ is born today, Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now you know of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!  
God has opened heaven's door, and you are blessed forevermore.  
Christ was born for this, Christ was born for this!**

**Good, Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
Now you need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save, Christ was born to save!**

Third Sunday of Advent: Joy in Everything We Do

*Sara, Harper & Bishop Green, Lily & Justin Chaney*

We light the third candle, the candle of Joy, today as a reminder that joy is not merely a fleeting emotion but a deep, abiding experience that flows from the love of God. Joy is the fruit of justice and peace, the song that rises in our hearts when we see the goodness of God at work in the world. Joy is found not only in moments of celebration but in the daily acts of kindness, compassion, and justice that transform the world around us.

As we light this candle, we remember that we are invited to live with joy, no matter the circumstances, because joy is rooted in the love that God has for us all.

*(Light the third candle in your Advent wreath.)*

One: Let us rejoice, for God's joy is in us.

Many: **We will celebrate joy, in all things, at all times.**

Song of Response

“Love's Pure Light”

J. Raney

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and end this gloom of night.  
Bring hope to the world, bring peace to the earth,  
And fill us with love's pure light.**

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Pastoral Prayer

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

MARANTHA

**Maranatha! Maranatha! O come to us, Emmanuel!**

Modern Lesson

Cheryl Milam

*Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Adrienne Maree Brown, who is a writer, speaker, and organizer who explores healing ideas, practices, and stories for transformation. Among her work she says...*

Joy is a central feature of resilience, a life-sustaining, pleasure-filled commitment to being alive. It is not something that comes after justice is achieved but is essential to the process of getting there. Joy reminds us why we fight, who we are, and that we are already enough, already whole. In a world bent on despair and division, joy is a radical declaration of our humanity and interconnectedness. To feel joy, even in struggle, is to know the freedom that love makes possible.

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

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

Choir Anthem

“A Voice in the Desert”

R. A. Nelson

\* Hebrew Lesson

Zephaniah 3:14-20 (NRSV)

Gregg Walker

*Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from Zephaniah 3:14-20, where the prophet sings a song of joy for Jerusalem, that God is in their midst...*

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

“Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival.” I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord.

**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.

The Good News

“There Is Still Joy to Be Found”

*Rev. Christopher Czarnecki*

Invitation to Generosity

Gregg Walker

As we reflect on the joy of God’s presence among us, let us remember that our giving is an act of sharing that joy with others. Through our offerings, we partner in the work of justice, love, and renewal in our community and beyond. May our gifts today reflect the boundless joy we have received and our commitment to making that joy known to the world. Let us now give with grateful and joyful hearts.

\* Doxology

CAROL

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.**

**Praise God all creatures here below.**

**Praise God above, ye heavenly host.**

**Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.**

Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Gregg Walker

**Generous God, we dedicate these gifts to your work of joy in the world. May they bring hope to the weary, justice to the oppressed, and love to the forgotten. Bless what we offer today, that it may reflect your joy and transform lives. Amen.**

\* Hymn 125

“Angels We Have Heard on High”

GLORIA

Angels we have heard on high,  
Sweetly singing o’er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply,  
Echo back their joyous strains.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
Say what may the tidings be  
Which inspire your heavenly song.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
Come adore on bended knee,  
God our world now entering.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

See the babe in manger laid  
Whom the choirs of angels praise  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,  
While our hearts in love we raise.  
Gloria in excelsis Deo;  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

\* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

\* Benediction Response

ELATA

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray.  
Cast out our sin, and enter in; be born in us today.

Postlude

“Lo, How A Rose”

J. Carter

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*The liturgy for today’s service was written by 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.*

### 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/>

*Read about Project Linus, New Member Classes planned in 2025, and more!*

### WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins,  
Ushers: Shakti Subramanian; Greeters:     ; Refreshments:

### 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>.



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

### CHILDREN'S CHURCH JOINS THE WORSHIP SERVICE ON DEC. 15 AND 22, AS WELL AS CHRISTMAS EVE.

As was the plan last year, the Christian Education Committee will make available small coloring books, crayons, and markers available outside the sanctuary. There will be clipboards or large children's books to be used as a sturdy surface underneath the coloring books. Pencils and white paper will be provided for drawing and sketching. It is a part of their faith development for children to experience the atmosphere of the worship service with their church community. Especially at Christmas and Easter, the modern and traditional music are a part of our lives and our Christian experience. Preschoolers may play in the Gathering Room under the watchful eye of volunteers or may take a toy or two into the worship service with them.



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## **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

### **Members**

Jana Harrison & Jeff Hughes and family in the death of Jana's father, James Thomas Harrison

Friends and Family in the recent death of the Rev. H. Linn Finger

Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Alix Felsing & Joann Felsing, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Ed & Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Darline Warren

### **Friends & Family Members**

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Craig Chrismon (Melissa Noll), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Pam Culp (Melissa Noll), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charles Jernigan (Lee Parrish), Dave Johnson, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Earl & Susie Morgan (Ed Vickery), Joe Parks (Beth Sharp), Larry & Karen Roark (Ed Vickery), Michelle Sharp (Beth & Ed Sharp), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Brian Weddell (Jon Weddell), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to [prayers@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org).