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“The Word became flesh to remind us that love is not distant or abstract but present, embodied, and alive in the world.”

- Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

“God’s new beginnings are born in unexpected places, inviting us to create a world of justice, healing, and love.”

- Rev. Dr. William Barber II

“In Christ, we find the courage to leave behind what no longer serves us and step boldly into a future filled with hope.”

- Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams

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.

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS ~ EPIPHANY

January 5, 2025, 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 "Go Tell It on the Mountain" arr. J. Carter

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 "Holy Ground" Beatty/Davis

**This is holy ground. We're standing on holy ground.
For our God is present and where God is is holy. (2x)**

**We are standing on holy ground,
And I know that there are angels all around.
Let us praise Jesus now.
We are standing in God's presence on holy ground.**

* Call to the Heart Mel Andersen

One: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very first breath, God was creating: new starts, fresh beginnings, the possibility of transformation.

Many: **We gather today, open to new life, open to God's presence, to welcome the light that shines in the darkness. We celebrate the promise of a new year, of fresh starts, and new beginnings in Christ.**

One: In the Word made flesh, we find grace and truth: not bound by time, but transcending it, drawing us into love, justice, and peace.

Many: **We are here, seeking the light, seeking the Word that becomes flesh in us, seeking the courage to begin again. Let us worship God together in hope and love. Amen.**

* Hymn 164

“Arise, Your Light Is Come”

FESTAL SONG

**Arise, your light is come! The Spirit’s call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today!**

**Arise, your light is come! Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive’s liberty, good tidings to the poor.**

**Arise, your light is come! All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the broken-hearted ones and comfort those who mourn.**

**Arise, your light is come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing; God’s power will make us strong.**

Affirmation

Yourself: **I am** open to the new thing God is doing in **me** and **through me**.

Neighbor: **You are** open to the new thing God is doing in **you** and **through you**.

World: **We are** open to the new thing God is doing in **us** and **through us**.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Gracious God, we come before you with open hearts, acknowledging the ways we have fallen short of your call to love and justice. We confess the times we have failed to care for ourselves, each other, and your creation. Forgive us and renew us with the grace that brings new beginnings. Empower us to live as your beloved community, ready to build a world of love and inclusivity. Amen.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Friends of God, the good news is we are forgiven. We are made new. God’s grace invites us into a fresh start, to live fully as the beloved creations we are. In the birth of Christ, we are free to begin again, empowered to share love and justice in the world. Know that even when we fall short, we are loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Stories for All People

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Modern Lesson Reader

Christine Andersen

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Rev. Dr. Christina Beardsley, who is a speaker, author, long-time advocate for trans inclusion in the Church, and honorary assistant priest at St John's Church, in Fulham, London. Among her work she says...

The story of God becoming flesh is the story of newness, of life starting over again and again, of hope being born in unexpected places. In the face of oppression, division, and despair, we find that Christ is always at work in us, offering us new beginnings and a future grounded in love, justice, and healing.

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

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

* Gospel Lesson

John 1:1-14 (CEB)

Mel Andersen

Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from the Gospel of John 1:1-14, where we hear the mystery of how the word was made flesh...

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light. A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light. The true light that shines on all people was coming into the world. The light was in the world, and the world came into being through the light, but the world didn't recognize the light. The light came to his own people, and his own people didn't welcome him. But those who did welcome him, those who believed in his name, he authorized to become God's children, born not from blood nor from human desire or passion, but born from God. The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

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

"The Word that Will Be made Flesh"

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

White Stone Ceremony

Use this time to reflect on the word that will guide your intentions, your heart, and your actions in the year ahead. Once Spirit has spoken this word to you write it on your stone. When you return home put this stone in a place where it will be visible to you each day, to remind you of the word of God that is seeking to be made flesh through you.

Invitation to Generosity

Mel Andersen

As we step into this New Year, we are reminded that every offering is an invitation for new beginnings. We give not out of obligation, but out of love. Love for God, for each other, and for the work of justice and transformation in the world. In this moment, let us now offer our gifts as a sign of our commitment to building a community where all are welcomed, where God's love is made flesh in our actions, and where new life is possible for all.

* 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.**

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Mel Andersen

Gracious God, we dedicate these gifts to you, trusting that they will be multiplied for the work of justice, peace, and love in the world. May our offerings be a sign of our commitment to new beginnings, to a future where all are seen, cared for, and valued. Use these gifts to strengthen our community, to support those in need, and to further our work. We offer them with grateful hearts, knowing that in our giving, we are made more like you. Amen.

**THE MYSTIC SUPPER
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE**

Invitation to the Table

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: The Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Many: It is good to give our thanks and praise. God of new beginnings, we thank you for the Word that became flesh, for the birth of Jesus who came to dwell among us. In Him, we see your boundless love and justice, made real in a world that so desperately needs it. Through Jesus, we are invited into new life, a life where love reigns, where justice is a reality, and where all are welcomed and valued.

One: As we gather at this table, we remember that the Word became flesh, taking on human form. In the mystery of the incarnation, God's presence is made tangible, in the baby born in Bethlehem, in the bread broken, in the cup poured out. It is through this Word, this love made flesh, that we are made new, called to reflect that love in the world.

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Elements

Music during Communion

TABLE OF GRACE

Come to the table of grace. Come to the table of grace.

This is God's table; it's not yours or mine.

Come to the table of grace ...hope...peace... joy...love.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

God of renewal, we thank you for the gift of this meal, for the Word made flesh, born among us, and now present in our hearts. As we have shared in this holy feast, empower us to share that love and grace with the world. May the new beginnings we find here guide us in our work of justice, compassion, and peace, that all may know the joy of your love embodied. Amen.

* Hymn 159 "As with Gladness Those of Old"

DIX

As with gladness those of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, true Morning Star, may see
Evermore your splendor see.

As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger bed,
There to bend the knee before
One whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek your mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
At that manger plain and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring
Christ to you from whom they spring.

Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when mortal things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds your glory hide.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response 391

NEW DIMENSIONS

God of rainbow, fiery pillar
Leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude

"The First Noel"

arr. A. K. Organ

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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/>

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

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

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian

Greeters:

Refreshments:

WITH A NEW YEAR, COMES NEW LISTS!

Ushers & Greeters, Worship Leaders, and Fellowship Hour Hosts

Please consider these invaluable ministries, which play a big part in our extravagant welcome to newcomers, as well as a meaningful part of our congregational family! Sign up in the Gathering Room, or on SignUpGenius.

We welcome all in our congregation to participate in worship leadership. Download the app to make signing up even easier!

<https://www.signupgenius.com/mobileapp>

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

SOJOURNERS CLASS

The Sojourners meet Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom. Everyone is welcome and no preparation is necessary.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjIiNkF5QT09>

Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

DAYTIMER'S COVENANT GROUP LUNCHEON, JAN. 8

Covenant Groups are a great way to get to know each other and spend a little time in like-minded community. The Daytimers CG will gather for a potluck luncheon at the church on Wednesday, Jan. 8 at noon, then out ahead, on the first Wednesdays of the month. All are welcomed, and there's no requirement to bring food. Our cooks regularly make an abundance!

RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY TEAM, JAN. 8

HCUCC's Racial Justice and Equity Team will meet from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month in 2024 via Zoom. We will welcome new members, discuss prior events and how to build on that for next events, discuss projects, books, speakers, practices, education and relationships, etc. as well as continued discussions from our Confronting Whiteness cohorts. Please contact the church office if you wish to participate in this ministry, office@holycovenantucc.org.

9 COATS FOR KIDS DRIVE SUCCESS

Holy Covenant came through once again! A total of 4 car loads of coats were donated to the (Channel) "9 Coats for Kids" drive! Many thanks to all who contributed!

PROJECT LINUS

Our church is proud to sponsor **Project Linus**, which provides handmade blankets to children 0-18 who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need. Due to the tremendous need for comfort and warmth as it gets cold several blankets are being made for those affected by Hurricane Helene. Supplies and instructions are available for anyone wishing to help. Please return the completed blankets to the gathering room, so we can get the blankets to the children.

SAVE THE DATE, JAN. 25, 2025, ALL CHURCH WORK DAY

We might start at 10am, and wrap up by 1pm. Join us for some fun and fellowship while we're #CleaningGodsHouse!

NEW MEMBERS CLASSES PLANNED IN 2025

If you are interested in becoming a member at Holy Covenant or would like to explore what becoming a member means, mark your calendar for some upcoming dates in 2025. We hold new member classes on February 2nd and 16th, with a new member installation on March 2nd, which is Transfiguration Sunday. If you are interested in becoming a new member or have questions, please reach out to **Pastor Chris**, RevChris@holycovenantucc.org or contact the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

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

Members

Alix Felsing & Tommy Tomlinson in the death of Alix's mother, Joann Felsing
Jana Harrison & Jeff Hughes and family in the death of Jana's father, James Thomas Harrison
Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Suzanne Lamorey, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Ed & Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Darline Warren

Friends & Family Members

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Jeffrey Calder (Martha Bomely), 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), Kim Wiggs-Gamblin, Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley), John Zastrow (Barb Schneller)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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