



Unsplash photo by Arquidis Molina

“In God’s love, we are not asked to change who we are, but to embrace who we were always meant to be.”

- Unknown

“You are the beloved. God’s love for you is not a matter of how you perform, but a matter of who you are.

You are God's beloved.”

- Henri Nouwen

“The only thing that separates us from the love of God is the lie that we are not worthy of it.”

- Rev. Jacqui Lewis

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
BAPTISM OF CHRIST

January 12, 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 "How Great Thou Art" arr. D. Musselman
Patrick Washburn

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 Ed Vickery
One: Come, beloved community, to the welcoming waters of grace.
Many: We gather, drawn by the voice that calls us precious and loved.
One: Come, remembering the baptism of Jesus, where heaven declared,
"You are my beloved."
Many: We come to celebrate that this same love claims each of us, just
as we are.
One: Come, with all that you carry. Your joys, your struggles, your
doubts, and your hopes.
Many: We come, trusting in the God whose love and presence is always
with us.
One: Let us worship the One who calls us by name and sees us as beloved
and whole.
Many: We come to the waters of renewal, ready to receive the
affirmation of God's love.

(W 1,3 & 5)

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as you are,
And make me love you as I ought to love.

Have you not bid us love you every way?
All, all your own: soul, heart, and strength, and mind;
I see your cross—there teach my heart to stay:
O let me seek you, and O let me find.

Teach me to love you as your angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heaven descended dove,
My heart an altar, and your love the flame.

Affirmation

Yourself: I am God’s beloved, created in love, and cherished just as I am.

Neighbor: You are God’s beloved, created in love, and cherished just as you are.

World: We are God’s beloved, created in love, and cherished just as we are.

Prayer of Transformation (*Unison*)

Ed Vickery

Loving God, we confess that we often forget the depth of your love for us. We listen to voices that tell us we are not enough, and we fail to see ourselves and others as precious in your sight. Forgive us for the ways we withhold love, turn from justice, and cling to fear instead of trust. Remind us of your grace and renew us to live as your beloved. Amen.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Jesus reminds us, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you*” (John 15:16). You are chosen, you are cherished, and you are loved beyond measure. Nothing you have done and nothing you could do will ever separate you from the love of God. May we trust in this truth, and let it wash over us and restore us so we might see others in the same light. Amen.

Stories for All People

Pastoral Prayer

Modern Lesson Reader

Tina Dickens

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Kelly Brown Douglas, who is a Womanist Theologian, Episcopal priest, and author. She says...

God's justice is not an abstract idea but an intimate reality that meets us in our lived experiences. It is the declaration that we belong, that we are loved, and that we are worthy, not because of what we achieve but because of who we are. This justice disrupts the false stories that deny our humanity and calls us to live into the truth of our sacred identity.

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

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

Hebrew Lesson

Isaiah 43:1-7 (CEB)

Ed Vickery

Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from the Book of Isaiah, where the prophet speaks of God's enduring and restorative love...

But now, says the Lord—the one who created you, Jacob, the one who formed you, Israel: Don't fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; when through the rivers, they won't sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you won't be scorched and flame won't burn you. I am the Lord your God, the holy one of Israel, your savior. I have given Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in your place. Because you are precious in my eyes, you are honored, and I love you. I give people in your place, and nations in exchange for your life. Don't fear, I am with you. From the east I'll bring your children; from the west I'll gather you. I'll say to the north, "Give them back!" and to the south, "Don't detain them." Bring my sons from far away, and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name and whom I created for my glory, whom I have formed and made.

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

"You Are Precious and Loved"

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

As we prepare our offering, we are reminded of the love God has for each of us. In response to this gift, we are invited to share from what we have, knowing that our offerings help to build a world rooted in justice, inclusion, and love. May our gifts today reflect our commitment to affirming the dignity of all people and working for the transformation of our community. Let us now share our gifts, knowing that in doing so, we honor the God who calls us beloved.

Offertory

“Jesus Loves Me”
Patrick Washburn

arr. J. Raney

* 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*)

Ed Vickery

Gracious God, we offer these gifts to you with hearts full of gratitude and hope. May they be used to bring justice, healing, and affirmation to those in need, reflecting the love you have shown us. Bless these offerings and the hands that give them, that they may help build a world where all are seen and valued. We dedicate them to you, trusting that you will guide us in our work of building your kin-dom of peace and justice. Amen.

* Poem

“The Eighth Elegy” (Adapted)
by Rainer Maria Rilke

* Hymn 292

“Breathe on Me, Breath of God”

TRENTHAM

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew;
That I may love the way you love and do what you would do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart is pure,
Until with you I will one will, to do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, stir in me one desire:
That every earthly part of me may glow with holy fire.

Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never die,
But live with you the perfect life of your eternity.

* 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

“Be Thou My Vision”
Patrick Washburn

arr. M. Wells

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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*The liturgy for today’s service was written or adapted by Rainer Maria Rilke
and Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.*

*Thank you, Patrick Washburn, for filling in for Jon Weddell during his vacation
time. We appreciate your sharing of your gifts with us!*

*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:

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/>

Jan. 18 Consistory Working Retreat

Jan. 19 Ordination and Installation of Elders and Deacons

FROM THE RJE TEAM: PLANNING FOR MLK HOLIDAY

Charlotte offers a variety of ways to celebrate next weekend's MLK Holiday, kicking off with the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Parade on Saturday, Jan. 18. View the calendar of events:

<https://www.charlotteonthecheap.com/mlk-day-charlotte/>

The RJE Team is planning an opportunity for the Holy Covenant family to view and discuss the Interfaith Service and Moral Mass Meeting organized by the Repairers of the Breach. The service will stream at 7 pm on Monday, Jan. 20. Stay tuned for more details on how we can observe MLK Day as a community.

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=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09>

Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

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. Return the completed blankets to the gathering room.

SAVE THE DATE, ALL CHURCH WORK DAY MOVED TO SATURDAY, FEB. 1

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; Her life will be celebrated at 11:00 AM on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, 3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269. Visitation will follow the service.

Jana Harrison & Jeff Hughes 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

Will Judd and family in the death of his father, Grady Judd

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

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor

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Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

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