



*Unsplash Photo by Colin Lloyd (formatted)*

“Justice is what love looks like in public.”  
-Cornel West

“Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, every minute a chance to change the world.”  
-Dolores Huerta

“You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.”  
-Grace Lee Boggs

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**  
**THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**

**January 26, 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 "Jesus Is Here Right Now" L. Roberts

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 Jim Dwiggins

*Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping...*

One: Come, beloved community, let us gather as one body, called to hear the words of life and liberation.

Many: **We come seeking the Spirit who moves among us, stirring our hearts and opening our minds.**

One: The One who proclaimed good news to the poor still speaks, inviting us into the work of peace and justice.

Many: **We come to embrace the mission of love: to set the oppressed free and welcome the excluded.**

One: Today, let the scriptures be fulfilled in our hearing.

Many: **Today, we rejoice in God's radical welcome, living into the promise of freedom, inclusion, and hope for all.**

\* Hymn 42

“O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing”

AZMON

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise,  
The glories ever echoing  
The triumphs of God’s grace!

My gracious Savior and my God,  
Assist me to proclaim,  
To spread through all the earth abroad  
The honors of your name.

Jesus! the name that calms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease  
Is music in the sinner’s ears,  
Is life, and health, and peace!

Glory to God, and love and praise  
Be ever, ever given  
By all the saints in every age,  
The church in earth and heaven.

Affirmation

Yourself: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for I have been sent to bring good news to the world.

Neighbor: The Spirit of the Lord is upon you,  
for you have been sent to bring good news to the world.

World: The Spirit of the Lord is upon us,  
for we have been sent to bring good news to the world.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

*Join me in prayer as we confess the ways we seek to be changed and transformed...*

Holy One, we confess that too often we are silent when we should speak and hesitate when we should act. You call us to proclaim good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed, yet sometimes we cling to comfort over courage. Forgive us for the ways we have resisted Spirit’s lead and for the ways we have failed to embody justice and love. Renew us, O God, so that we might be living vessels of your liberating truth. Amen.

Words of Grace

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Beloved, hear this good news: God's mercy is abundant, and God's love knows no limits. Even when we falter, God calls us back to the work of justice and the way of peace. In Christ, we are forgiven, freed, and empowered to live as bearers of good news. Thanks be to God, who makes all things new. Amen.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Responsive Prayer

One: Holy One, we bring before you the pain and challenges of our world. For those trapped in the cycle of poverty and homelessness, and for the countless lives impacted by systemic inequities, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to proclaim good news to the poor and to build a world where everyone has a home.**

One: For the ongoing presence of racism, xenophobia, and Christian nationalism that seeks to divide us, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to break down barriers of hate and to proclaim the dignity and worth of all people.**

One: For the destruction caused by global warming, natural disasters, and devastating weather events, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to care for creation and to seek justice for the earth and all living things.**

One: For those struggling under the weight of rising healthcare and prescription costs, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to work for systems of care that prioritize healing over profit.**

One: For the people of South Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza, and all places torn apart by war and violence, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to seek peace, reconciliation, and the flourishing of all nations.**

One: For national leaders who seem out of touch with the struggles of the middle class and the lowly, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to lift up the voices of the vulnerable and to demand equity and justice.**

One: For LGBTQIA+ individuals facing discrimination and for those whose mental health is suffering due to hatred, we pray:

**Many: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, to affirm the sacred worth of every person and to create communities of love and belonging.**

One: Holy One, empower us with your Spirit to be the hands and feet of Christ in this world. May we boldly proclaim your love, embody your justice, and live into your kin-dom.

**Many: Amen.**

Lord's Prayer (*in unison*)

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Modern Lesson

Mel Andersen

*Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Dr. Emilie N. Townes, who is a minister, womanist theologian, and professor at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. Among her writings she says...*

The gospel is not just a call to believe, it is a call to act. Jesus' ministry was about embodying God's love in real, tangible ways, especially for those who have been overlooked or cast aside. To follow Jesus means to disrupt the systems that cause harm and to proclaim a vision of community where every person is seen, valued, and loved. This is the heart of the good news: that God's justice and mercy are for all.

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

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

\* Gospel Lesson

Luke 4:16-30 (CEB)

Jim Dwiggins

*Our Scripture Lesson for today comes from the Gospel of Luke 4:16-30, where Jesus enters the synagogue and reads from the scroll of Isaiah, announcing good news to the poor...*

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because the Lord has anointed me.

He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,

to proclaim release to the prisoners

and recovery of sight to the blind,

to liberate the oppressed,

and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down.

Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Everyone was raving about Jesus, so impressed were they by the gracious words flowing from his lips. They said, “This is Joseph’s son, isn’t it?”

Then Jesus said to them, “Undoubtedly, you will quote this saying to me: ‘Doctor, heal yourself. Do here in your hometown what we’ve heard you did in Capernaum.’” He said, “I assure you that no prophet is welcome in the prophet’s hometown. And I can assure you that there were many widows in Israel during Elijah’s time, when it didn’t rain for three and a half years and there was a great food shortage in the land. Yet Elijah was sent to none of them but only to a widow in the city of Zarephath in the region of Sidon. There were also many persons with skin diseases in Israel during the time of the prophet Elisha, but none of them were cleansed. Instead, Naaman the Syrian was cleansed.”

When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was filled with anger. They rose up and ran him out of town. They led him to the crest of the hill on which their town had been built so that they could throw him off the cliff. But he passed through the crowd and went on his way.

**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

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“A Gospel Without Boundaries, A Love Without Limits”

Invitation to Generosity

Jim Dwiggin

Friends, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us, calling us to bring good news to the poor and hope to the world. Through our gifts, we join in God’s work of liberation, healing, and justice. Each offering, no matter the size, is a step toward building a more inclusive and loving community. Let us give generously, trusting that we can make a difference.

\* 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*) Jim Dwiggins  
*Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...*  
Gracious God, we dedicate these gifts to the work of your love and justice. May they bring freedom to the oppressed, hope for those who are struggling, and peace to the world. Bless what we offer today and inspire us to give not just our resources but to offer our lives to your mission. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

\* Hymn “Live into Hope” TRURO

Live into hope of captives freed, of sight regained, the end of greed.  
The oppressed shall be the first to see the year of God's own jubilee!

Live into hope! The blind shall see with insight and with clarity,  
Removing shades of pride and fear, a vision of our God brought near.

Live into hope of liberty, the right to speak, the right to be,  
The right to have one's daily bread, to hear God's word and thus be fed.

Live into hope of captives freed from chains of fear or want or greed.  
God now proclaims our full release to faith and hope and joy and peace.

\* 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 “We've Come This Far by Faith” R. Smallwood

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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:

### 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/>

### ANNUAL GIVING STATEMENTS 2024

The Annual Giving Statements for 2024 have been distributed via email, in an effort of reducing paper and costs, and to distribute them to you expediently. If you have questions regarding your statement, please contact Dawn Simmons in the church office, [office@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:office@holycovenantucc.org), or Martha Bomely, Treasurer. Printed copies are available upon request.

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH DISPLAY

During the month of February, you are invited to bring in books, art work, pictures, and memorabilia from Black History and Culture that can be used for our 2nd Annual Black History Month Display. The items shared for the display will be for viewing purposes only and will be returned to the owner at the end of February. Last year the display was placed in the gathering room and was a huge hit not only within the congregation but the community who used the building that month. If you have questions sharing your items, please reach out to Pastor Chris or contact the church office.



## **RELATIONAL WELLNESS EVENTS**

Mark your calendars for Sunday, February 9th and February 23rd. On these two Sundays after worship we will be engaging in conversation and fun activities that engage the dimension of Relational Wellness, how we connect with others. The **hospitality team** will be hosting this event on both Sundays. We will meet in the Gathering Room after worship at 12:30pm and will last approximately 1 hour to 1.5 hours. Childcare and light food and beverages for all ages will be provided. To get a headcount of how many to plan for we ask that you please register using the link in the newsletter, or contact the church office.

## **SAVE THE DATE, FEBRUARY 1, 2025 CHURCH WORK DAY**

Information to come!

## **NEW MEMBERS CLASSES 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 or contact the church office.

## **DROP IN BLANKET PARTY, AT HCUCC, TUESDAY, FEB. 25**

Join the Project Linus Blanketeers in a drop-in day, Tuesday, February 25, from 9am-3pm at Holy Covenant UCC! All are welcome. Materials and tools provided. Let's make some blankets for children needing a little comfort by providing them with blankets made with love.

## **UCC Launches Climate Hope Art Contest**

Under the theme, "Planting Seeds of Hope," the United Church of Christ (UCC) is conducting a Climate Hope Art Contest. Children and youth from UCC churches across the nation are invited to draw, paint, or color works of art that illustrate the theme and bring it to life. Submissions will be accepted from February 2 to March 14. An online award ceremony for finalists from each of the different age groups will be held on Saturday, April 5, 2025. One overall winner will receive an all-expenses paid trip to visit Washington, D.C. with a parent or guardian. The winning artwork will serve as the logo for UCC Climate Hope advocacy work throughout 2025.

## **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER**

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

### **Members**

Beth Sharp and family in the recent death of her husband, Ed Sharp  
Alix Felsing & Tommy Tomlinson in the death of Alix's mother, Joann Felsing  
Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sharon Landis,  
Suzanne Lamorey, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, 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), Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon  
VanFleet (Diane Neese), 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 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**

**RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167**

**Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music**

**Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant**

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