



Unsplash Photo by Y-K

**“Courage doesn’t always roar.
Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day
that says I’ll try again tomorrow.”**

– Mary Anne Radmacher

**“We are not called to fit into systems of oppression, we are called to
dismantle them and build something better.**

– Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey

**“Jesus did not remain silent in the face of empire.
Neither should we.”**

– Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III

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 IN LENT

March 16, 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 "Lead Me to Calvary" arr. L. Shockley

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 "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" LONESOME VALLEY

Jesus walked this lonesome valley. He had to walk it by himself.

Oh, nobody else could walk it for him. He had to walk it by himself.

* Call to the Heart Lee Parrish

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

One: Come, people of God, called from many places but united in one Spirit.

Many: **We come with open hearts, ready to hear and respond to God's call.**

One: God calls us to stand on the side of justice, to proclaim truth even when it is risky.

Many: **We will not be silent in the face of oppression. We will rise for love and liberation.**

One: Christ leads us in the way of solidarity, calling us to embrace and affirm the full dignity of our trans and queer siblings.

Many: **We stand together, building a world where all are seen, cherished, and free.**

One: The Spirit moves among us, stirring holy resistance to the forces of white supremacy, bigotry, and violence.

Many: **With courage and conviction, we will speak, act, and love boldly.**

One: Come, let us worship the God of justice, the God of liberation, the God who is still speaking!

Many: **We come to worship, to be strengthened, and to go forth as co-creators of God's justice-filled world.**

Won’t you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey; we are travelers on the road;
We are here to help each other go the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shadow of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh, I’ll laugh with you.
I will share your joy and sorrow till we’ve seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven we shall find such harmony,
Born of all we’ve known together of Christ’s love and agony.

Won’t you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you?
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too.

Daily Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Ourselves: I release my fears and move forward with the courage of Christ.

Neighbor: You release your fears and move forward with the courage of Christ.

World: We release our fears and move forward with the courage of Christ.

Song of Preparation

“Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”

DETROIT

“Forgive our sins as we forgive,” you taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

Prayer for Transformation (*unison*)

Lee Parrish

Loving God, we confess that too often we let fear silence us when we should have spoken. We admit that at times we have turned away when we have witnessed racism in our workplaces, stayed quiet when trans and queer siblings were harmed, and chosen comfort over the hard work of justice. Forgive us for the times we have lacked the courage of Jesus, and strengthen us, O God, so that we might once again live boldly into your call. Amen.

Song of Transformation “God, Be Merciful to Me” REDHEAD 76
God be merciful to me; on your grace I rest my plea.
My transgressions I confess; grief and guilt my soul oppress.
Wash me, make me pure within; cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

Gracious God, my heart renew, make my spirit right and true.
Do not cast me from your sight nor remove your Spirit’s light.
Your salvation’s joy restore, make me steadfast evermore.

Words of Grace Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Just as Jesus met Peter with love after his denial, just as he welcomed Zacchaeus despite his past, Christ meets us with grace even when we have fallen short. When fear has kept us from speaking, when complacency has stilled our hands, God’s mercy remains steadfast. Know we are not defined by our failures but by God’s unrelenting love, calling us again and again to courage, to justice, to new life. In Christ, we are forgiven, and we are made new. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Song of Response “Return to God” M. Haugen
Return to God with all your heart, the source of grace and mercy.
Come seek the tender faithfulness of God.

Stories for All People Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song of Preparation “I Want Jesus to Walk with Me” SOJOURNER
I want Jesus to walk with me. (2x)
All along my pilgrim journey,
Oh I want Jesus to walk with me.

Pastor Prayer Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song of Prayer “God Weeps” DELGADO
Meg Houlihan, soloist

Lord’s Prayer (*unison*) Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your Kin-dom 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 Kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination “Take, O Take Me as I Am”

J. L. Bell

**Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;
Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.**

Modern Lesson

Suzanne Lamorey

Our modern lesson for today comes from Pauli Murray, who was a queer civil rights activist, Episcopalian Priest, and theologian. Among her writing she says...

True community is built not on the erasure of difference, but on the celebration of it. Justice is not given, it is demanded, insisted upon, fought for with every breath. When we refuse to be silent in the face of oppression, we become part of a long and holy lineage of prophets who dared to speak truth to power. We do not stand alone; we stand with those who have come before and those who will come after. Our faith, if it is to mean anything at all, must be lived boldly in the streets, in our workplaces, in our relationships. This is the work of love. This is the work of God.

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

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

*Gospel Lesson

Luke 13:31-35 (CEB)

Lee Parrish

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping. Our Scripture Lesson for today comes the Gospel of Luke 13:13-35, where Jesus is warned by the Pharisees that Herod wants to kill him...

At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said, “Go! Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.”

Jesus said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Look, I’m throwing out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. However, it’s necessary for me to travel today, tomorrow, and the next day because it’s impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn’t want that. Look, your house is abandoned. I tell you, you won’t see me until the time comes when you say, Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.”

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.

Invitation to Generosity

Lee Parrish

God calls us to be co-creators of justice, love, and liberation in this world. Through our gifts, we stand in solidarity with the marginalized, strengthen the work of the Church, and embody the courage Christ calls us to. Let us give with boldness and generosity, trusting that God will use our offerings to bring about healing and hope.

* Doxology

GIVE THANKS

**Give thanks with a grateful heart; give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because God’s given Jesus Christ, God’s Son. (2x)**

And now let the weak say, “I am strong,”

Let the poor say, “I am rich

Because of what the Lord has done for us.” (2x) Give thanks.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Lee Parrish

Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...

God of mercy, we offer these gifts as a sign of our commitment to your vision of the beloved kin-dom that is here and now. May they be used to lift the oppressed, shelter the vulnerable, and proclaim your truth in a world that too often silences it. Bless our giving and our living, that both may reflect the fearless compassion of Christ. Amen.

* Hymn 181

“You Are Salt for the Earth, O People”

BRING FORTH

You are the salt for the earth, O people: salt for the reign of God!

Share the flavor of life, O people: life in the City of God!

***Refrain:* Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace;
Bring forth the reign of justice, bring forth the City of God!**

You are a light on the hill, O people: light for the City of God!

Shine so holy and bright, O people: shine for the City of God! (R)

You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring forth the reign of God!

Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the City of God! (R)

We are a blessed and a pilgrim people: bound for the reign of God!

Love our journey and love our homeland: love is the City of God! (R)

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response 581

WORLD PEACE PRAYER

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe.

Postlude

“Be Still, My Soul”

arr. P. Rodriguez

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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.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

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

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian Greeters:

Refreshments:

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

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

Members

Mel & Christine Andersen, Linda Carver, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Laura Hankins, Jana Harrison, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Darline Warren

Friends & Family Members

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon VanFleet (Diane Neese), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Pam McGill & Pam Culp (Melissa Noll), Deby Gumpfer (Dawn Simmons), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charles Jernigan (Lee Parrish), Dave Johnson, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Earl & Susie Morgan (Ed Vickery), 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)

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/>

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR AT holycovenantucc.org/events/

SEE THE E-NEWSLETTER FOR ABUNDANT LIFE WEBINAR SERIES BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE NORTH CAROLINA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

SOJOURNERS CLASS

Join us for a book study of *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem* by Marcus Borg and John Crossan. Amazon has only an "acceptable" paperback plus hardback copy. Another good source is [thriftbooks.com](https://www.thriftbooks.com) where you will find "good" and "very good" paperback copies as well as less expensive hardback copies. In person or via Zoom—no preparation necessary.

SING FOR THE CURE CONCERT, MARCH 29, 7:30PM, CPCC

This will be a very special, life affirming concert, on March 29, 7:30 at CPCC Halton Theater. Several choruses and choirs will be part of the large 90-member chorus, including 3 HCUCC choir members. See the newsletter for live links and discount code. Proceeds of this concert will benefit local organizations that provide critical financial assistance to individuals and families who are battling breast cancer. Thanks, *Tina Dickens, Meg Houlihan and D Evans, HCUCC members / Women's Chorus of Charlotte*

BAGGED LUNCH BUILD, MARCH 30

No experience needed! We are making 100 bagged lunches for the Giles Center on March 30, and again on April 27. This center is affiliated with A Roof Above and provides overnight shelter (and bags lunches) for homeless men. Stay after the worship service and join us!

CARES TEAM BRAINSTORMING SESSION, MARCH 30

On March 30th, following our worship service at 12:30pm in the conference room we will have a brainstorming session around the idea of forming a Cares Team Ministry at the church. This idea rose out of the proposed Year of Wellness Plan for 2025. The idea of the "Cares Team" was a ministry that would initially work to gather information about the needs and gifts within the congregation and find ways to coordinate and sustainably match those needs and resources. This is an idea in development. If you have a passion for wanting to be part of this ministry please join us. All are welcome!

Season of Lent: March 5 through April 17

Lenten Devotionals

“YOUNG VOICES: STEPPING OUT OF THE WILDERNESS”

This 47-day devotion walks you through Lent and concludes with the good news of Easter Sunday. All entries were written by UCC youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 35.

See these daily devotions on our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/HCUCC.Church>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/61370940062>

We will have a limited number of printed copies available.

Sojourners Class

Book study of The Last Week:

What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem
by Marcus Borg and John Crossan.

We gather In-person or via Zoom:

Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

April 6

On the 5th Sunday in Lent, join us for “Mix-it-up” Sunday,
with a Spring Brunch Potluck following worship.

Pastries, Muffins, Casseroles and Salads

April 13

Palm & Passion Sunday:

Let’s celebrate our Confirmands together!

April 20

Easter Worship 10:55am

Bring fresh flowers for the cross

April 27

Celebrate Earth Sunday with the Creation Justice Team

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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