

Unsplash Photo by Blake Sherman

**“This day will not come again.
Let it be your resurrection”
– Jan Richardson**

**“Resurrection begins in the absence,
in the ache, in the love that refuses to give up, even on death.”
– Rita Nakashima Brock**

**“New Life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a
baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark.”
– Barbara Brown Taylor**

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
EASTER SUNDAY

April 20, 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 "Amazing Grace" arr. L. Larson
Dawn Robinson, Jon Weddell, piano duet

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, Lord to Me" G. McSpadden & G. Nelson
Meg Houlihan, Ed Vickery, duet

**Jesus, Jesus, Lord to me. Loving Savior, Prince of Peace!
Ruler of my heart today, Jesus, Lord to me.**

* Call to the Heart Pam Shimberg
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping...

One: Early in the morning, while it was still dark, Mary came to the tomb expecting death.

Many: **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!**

One: She saw the stone rolled away, and the linen cloth lying there.

Many: **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!**

One: She ran to tell the others, bearing witness to what she had seen.

Many: **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!**

One: And now we come, in faith and in hope, to proclaim the good news.

Many: **Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!**

* Hymn 233

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"

EASTER HYMN

Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!
Mortal tongues and angels say: Alleluia!
Raise your joys and triumphs high, Alleluia!
Sing, glad heavens, and earth reply: Alleluia!

Let the Victor's people sing, Alleluia!
Where, O death, is now your sting? Alleluia!
Dying once, Christ lives to save, Alleluia!
Where your victory, O grave? Alleluia!

Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Christ rise, Alleluia!
God has opened paradise, Alleluia!

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!
Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!
Made like Christ, like Christ we rise, Alleluia!
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies, Alleluia!

Monthly Affirmation

Ourselves:As the Christ within me rises, I experience the hope of new life.

Neighbor:As the Christ within you rises, you experience the hope of new life.

World: As the Chris within us rises, we experience the hope of new life.

Prayer for Transformation (*unison*)

Pam Shimberg

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

God of new life, we confess that we do not always recognize resurrection when it arrives, in ourselves, in others, or in the world around us. We hold on to fear, cling to what is comfortable, and sometimes turn away from your transforming love. Forgive us, and call us again by name, that we may rise with Christ into hope. 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

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

*Gospel Lesson

John 20:1-18 (NRSV)

Jeff Edwards-Knight

Our Scripture for today comes from the Gospel of John 20:1-18, where Mary comes to the tomb on the third day after Jesus' crucifixion and finds it empty...

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus's head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed, for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples returned to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, and she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and she told them that he had said these things to her.

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.**

Easter Solo "Was It a Morning Like This?" J. Croegaert
Ed Vickery, vocals
The Good News "I Have Seen the Lord" Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Choir Anthem "Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness" arr. B. L. Bobb

Invitation to Generosity Jean Raley-Dennis
On this resurrection morning, we are invited to share not just our joy, but our resources, to help bring new life where it is needed most. Just as Mary ran to tell the good news, we respond with hearts open to give. Let us offer what we have, trusting that the power of love multiplies what we share.

Song during Offering "Lord, I Lift Your Name on High" R. Founds
Lord, I lift your name on high.
Lord, I love to sing your praises.
I'm so glad you're in my life;
I'm so glad you came to save us.

You came from heaven to earth to show the way.
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay.
From the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky;
Lord, I lift your name on high.

Prayer of Dedication Jean Raley-Dennis
Risen Christ, bless these gifts and all who give. May they be signs of hope, seeds of justice, and vessels of resurrected life in a world longing to be made new. Use them, and use us, for your love-filled work. Amen.

**THE COMMUNION FEAST
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE**

Song of Preparation "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" arr. M. & S. Eithun
Handbell Choir
Cheryl Sexton, Joy Decker, Dawn Robinson, Dawn Simmons

The Invitation
One: The Lord be with you.
Many: **And also with you.**
One: Life up your hearts.

Many: We lift them up to the Lord.
One: Let us give thanks to the Lord.
Many: It is good to give our thanks and praise.

Words of Institution

Hymn "We Gather Here in Jesus' Name" COME, SHARE THE LORD

**We gather here in Jesus' name;
Christ's love is burning in our hearts like living flame;
For through Christ's sacrifice, the whole wide world unites.
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.**

**No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs.
Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs.**

**Christ joins us here; and breaks the bread;
Our God who pours the cup is risen from the dead;
The one we love the most is now our gracious host:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.**

**We are now a family, of which our God is head.
Though unseen, Christ meets us here in the breaking of the bread.**

**We'll gather soon in glory rise;
We'll see the wonder of our God and of our Christ.
Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Risen Christ, just as you called Mary by name, call to us now in the breaking of bread and the sharing of cup. Let these simple gifts nourish us with your boundless grace and renew us with resurrection hope. By your Spirit, may we become your body, alive with love, for a world in need of rising. And now, we join together praying:

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 your is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

* Hymn "Praise God's Holy Name" K. Hampton
Sing till the power of the Lord come down.
Shout hallelujah! Praise God's holy name! (2x)

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Postlude "Praise God! Praise God!" arr. M. Hayes
*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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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, Laurence Winston, Kevin Edwards-Knight
Greeters: Diane Unger

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/

EGG HUNT TODAY!

After the service, please stick around for our all-ages Easter Egg Hunt! Yes, everyone is welcome to join the fun, but we kindly ask our enthusiastic adults and egg-hunting teens (especially those who take this very seriously) to give our littlest ones a head start. Let's make sure everyone gets a chance to fill their baskets with joy.

TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME! Last call for tickets today!

Charlotte Knights vs. Gwinnett game on Saturday, July 19, 6pm. Tickets \$20-27 each. Order by April 20. Payment info will be sent in an email then. Questions? Contact Martha Bomely, martha.bomely@gmail.com.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-48668551-charlotte>

APRIL 27, WE CELEBRATE EARTH SUNDAY

BAGGED LUNCH BUILD, APRIL 27

No experience needed! We are making 100 bagged lunches for the Giles Center on April 27.

YOU'RE INVITED TO BE A PART OF OUR CHURCH PICTORIAL DIRECTORY!

MAY 1-4

We are excited to partner with Heritage Church Directories to create a pictorial directory of our congregation. This full color directory will include all our congregations' photos as well as our rich history and current ministries. This will be a beautiful heirloom and a functional book for getting into deeper relationship with our congregation. We ask for your participation to love our neighbor and get to know each other. You will receive a free directory as part of our thank you gift for participating.

REGISTER NOW!



To make this a success, we invite all our congregants to participate. Heritage Church Directories will offer professionally produced prints of the portraits, candid, and church promotional shots captured during this event. You may bring family or any other extra outfits for additional photos, you can even bring pets! Heritage is here to make this event special and would love to photograph what is most important to you. Everyone will have the opportunity to purchase packages and pictures a la carte at the time of the event. You are under no obligation to purchase anything. The Heritage Directory will be made available to all our faith family who are photographed. Schedule your appointment by the above QR code, or this link: <https://www.picktime.com/52a9cdf2-9678-4d2b-8ae5-0b49dc094729>

Thursday, May 1, 2pm-8pm Friday, May 2, 3pm-8pm

Saturday, May 3, 10am-1pm, 2pm-7pm Sunday, May 4, 1pm-5pm

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

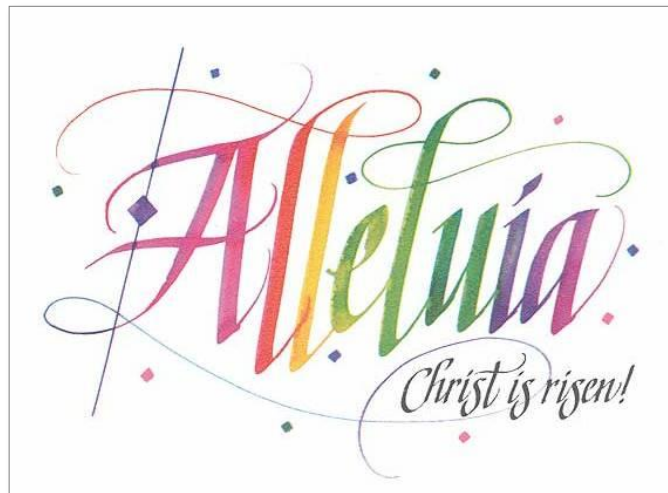
If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

Members

Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Tina Ettesen, Laura Hankins, Jana Harrison, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sharon Landis, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Isabelle Reedy Powell, Beth Sharp, Anita Taylor, Darline Warren, Sally Young & Alice Phelan

Friends & Family Members

Sandra (Carl & Phyllis Johnson), Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Gary Bomely (Martha Bomely), Melissa Brown, Jeff Calder (Martha Bomely), Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon VanFleet (Diane Neese), Kent Hansen (Kristen Fuchs), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Pam McGill & 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), Larry & Karen Roark (Ed Vickery), Michelle Sharp (Beth Sharp), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Brian Weddell (Jon Weddell), Kim Wiggs-Gamblin, Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)



OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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