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**“We worship a God who didn’t just settle for the way things were,  
but imagined what could be.”**

**– Austin Hartke**

**“Change is the only constant. And within change, there is always a  
hidden grace waiting to be discovered.”**

**– John O’Donohue**

**“Faith isn’t about staying put; it’s about stepping out, trusting that  
the Spirit is always ahead of us, making a way.”**

**– 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**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT - MIX-IT UP SUNDAY**

**April 6, 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                      “When I Survey the Wonderous Cross”                      arr. J. Innes

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                      Diane Neese

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

One: As we enter into worship, we recognize the beauty of who we are and the ways we show up in this sacred space. As you hear a statement that speaks to you, I invite you to take a comfortable posture that supports your worship, whether that means standing up, raising a hand, or remaining seated. As we hear each statement let us witness the diversity among us:

- If you have shown kindness to someone this week, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you are carrying a burden today, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you have experienced joy this week, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you believe that all people belong to God, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you are holding onto hope, even in the midst of uncertainty, please rise or raise your hand.

- If you celebrate the beauty of color and diversity in all its forms, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you see the presence of Christ in the faces around you, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you are struggling but still showed up today, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you have spoken up for justice or long to do so, please rise or raise your hand.
- If you believe that love is our greatest calling, please rise or raise your hand.
- And finally, if you trust that God's love for you is unconditional, please rise or raise your hand.

One: Look around you. This is the body of Christ. We are not alone on this journey. We bring all of who we are into this space, and God meets us here. Thanks be to God!

Many: Amen.

\* Hymn 417

"This is a Day of New Beginnings"

BEGINNINGS

This is a day of new beginnings,  
Time to remember and move on,  
Time to believe what love is bringing  
Laying to rest the pain that's gone.

For by the life and death of Jesus,  
God's mighty Spirit, now as then,  
Can make for us a world of difference,  
As faith and hope are born again.

Then let us, with the Spirit's daring,  
Step from the past and leave behind  
Our disappointment, guilt, and grieving,  
Seeking new paths, and sure to find.

In faith we'll gather 'round the table  
To taste and share what love can do.  
This is a day of new beginnings—  
Our God is making all things new

Reading for Peace & Justice

Jason Sullivan

*On this holy and sacred day, we offer a reading for peace and justice in the world. These words come from Kaitlin Curtice who is an author, storyteller, and speaker of the Potawatomi nation. She says...*

“The Spirit is always breathing newness into the world. Can you feel it? It rises in the people who dare to dream of justice, in the prayers whispered for healing, in the land renewing itself despite all that we have done. The work of love is to make room for the newness God is already bringing forth.”

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.**

Prayer for Renewal & Grace (*responsive*)

Diane Neese

**One:** God of new beginnings, you are always doing a new thing, yet we confess that we do not always perceive it.

**Many:** We cling to the past, afraid to trust in what is yet to come.

**One:** You make a way in the wilderness, yet we hesitate to follow.

**Many:** We grow comfortable in what we know, resisting the transformation you bring.

**One:** You call us to be people of hope, but too often we are people of fear.

**Many:** We let despair settle in when the road is uncertain.

**One:** Forgive us, O God, and open our hearts to your Spirit’s movement.

**Many:** Let us see the new thing you are doing among us. Let us step forward in faith.

**One:** Hear this good news: God's love is steadfast, and God's mercy is unending. No matter where we have been or what we have done, grace meets us here.

**Many:** We are forgiven. We are beloved. We are made new. Thanks be to God!

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.**

## Prayers for the People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

### Praying with One Another

You are invited to turn to someone near you and ask, “How can I pray for you today?” Take a moment to listen, then offer a prayer for your neighbor. Afterwards, have them do the same in return. If you would like to receive a prayer but prefer not to share your concerns aloud, the person praying may use the written prayer below:

*Loving God, you know the prayers of (person’s name) heart, both spoken and unspoken. Hold them in your grace, strengthen them in love, and remind them that I they are never alone. Amen.*

(Allow time for personal prayers to be shared.)

### Pastoral Prayer

Holy One, you have heard the prayers whispered between friends, the burdens shared in trust, and the hopes lifted in love. Gather these prayers into your heart and let your grace move among us. For those who are weary, bring rest. For those in need of healing, bring comfort. For our world—torn by division, longing for justice—pour out your mercy and stir us to action. We trust that you are doing a new thing, even now, making a way where there seemed to be none. And so, with hearts open, we pray in the name and power of a God who loves us. 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.**

\*Hebrew Lesson

Isaiah 43:16-21 (NRSV)

Jason Sullivan

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

*Our Scripture Reading for today comes from the Book of Isaiah 43:16-21 (NRSV), where the prophet speaks about God doing a new thing...*

Thus says the Lord,  
    who makes a way in the sea,  
    a path in the mighty waters,  
who brings out chariot and horse,  
    army and warrior;  
they lie down; they cannot rise;  
    they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:  
Do not remember the former things  
    or consider the things of old.  
I am about to do a new thing;  
    now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
    and rivers in the desert.  
The wild animals will honor me,  
    the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
    rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.

**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  
“You Ain’t Seen Nothing Yet”

Instrumental Response

“God Will Make a Way”

D. Moen

## Invitation to Generosity

Diane Neese

Church, look around you. This is a community where love takes root, where justice takes shape, where hope takes action. Every prayer spoken, every song sung, every act extended in kindness is part of the offering we bring to God. And now, we give in another way. Not because we must, but because we can. Because generosity transforms. Because when we pool our resources, our treasure, our time, our gifts, we become part of something larger than ourselves. Some give by offering something in the plate, some give online, some give through the work of their hands and hearts. However you give, know this: it matters. It fuels our ministries, it supports justice, it extends welcome, and it embodies love. Let us give, not out of obligation, but with joy and expectation, because God is doing something new among us.

### \* 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 (*responsive*)

Diane Neese

**One:** God of abundance, we offer these gifts, our money, our time, our love, not as a transaction, but as an act of trust. May these resources be used to build a world where all are fed, where peace is planted, where justice rolls down like waters. Bless what we bring, bless what we hold back, and bless the stirrings in us to give in ways yet unimagined.

**Many:** In the name of the One who gave everything for love, we pray.  
**Amen.**

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

Song of Preparation

"Given for You"

J. M Martin

*Stephen Tarr, Ed Vickery, vocalists*

## The Invitation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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.**

One: Friends, this is a table of grace. A table where the familiar meets the unexpected, where tradition and joy intermingle, where the love of Christ welcomes each of us, just as we are. Here, we break the bread as Christ did, remembering the body laid down in the name of justice. We share the cup, recalling the promise poured out in love. And today, we honor the Spirit of God who delights in our gathering, who meets us in both the sacred and the playful, the simple and the extraordinary. Whether you come with deep hunger or quiet curiosity, whether you come full of faith or full of questions, there is a place for you here. This table is open to all. Come, taste and see.

## Blessing Over the Elements

Holy and Living God, you have always been a God of abundance. In the wilderness, you provided manna. At the wedding, you turned water into wine. On the hillside, you multiplied loaves and fish. And on the night of betrayal, Jesus took what was before him, the common bread and cup, and made them holy.

So, we ask now: bless these gifts of bread and grape, simple and surprising alike. Bless the goldfish crackers that call us to childlike joy and bless the sparkling grape juice, a reminder that your Spirit bubbles up in new and unexpected ways. As we share this feast, nourish us in body and spirit, so that we may go into the world with courage, love, and justice. Amen.

## Words of Institution

### Sharing of the Elements

Come forward as you are ready. At the center, receive the bread, the traditional, familiar, and playful. At the side stations, partake in the cup—the grape or the sparkling juice, knowing that God's grace meets us in every form.



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 Dedication (*unison*)

God of abundance, we give you thanks for this feast of wonder. For the ways you nourish us in the breaking of bread and in the laughter of unexpected joy. For the gift of community, where all are welcome, and for the reminder that your table is bigger than we ever imagined. Having been fed, may we now go and feed others. Having been welcomed, may we now welcome all. Having tasted grace, may we now become grace in the world. In the name of the One who invites us again and again, Amen.

## MORE LOVE TO YOU

**More love to you, O Christ, more love to you!  
Hear now the prayer I make faith to renew.**

**Refrain:** In all I say and do, more love, O Christ to you,  
More love to you, more love to you!

Once earthly joy I craved, sought peace and rest;  
Now you alone I seek, give what is best: (R)

Then shall my latest breath whisper your praise;  
This be the parting cry my heart shall raise: (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

## “You Satisfy the Hungry Heart”

arr. A.M. David

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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,

Greeters: Mel Andersen, Christine Andersen

**Join us following worship for a Brunch style Potluck!**

## 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/](https://holycovenantucc.org/events/)**

### 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

Mel & Christine 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

Family and friends in the recent death of Carl Farrow (Jeff Edwards-Knight) Sandra (Carl & Phyllis Johnson), Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Gary Bomely (Martha Bomely), Melissa Brown, Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon VanFleet (Diane Neese), Kent Hansen (Kristen Fuchs), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Pam McGill & Pam Culp (Melissa Noll), Deby Gumpner (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)

### OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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## **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 devotionals 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

Join us following worship for “Mix-it-up” Sunday,  
with a Spring Brunch Potluck.

Pastries, Muffins, Breakfast Casseroles and Salads

April 13

Palm & Passion Sunday:

Let's celebrate our Confirmands together!

April 17

Maundy Thursday Dinner & Tenebrae Service, 6pm

April 20

Easter Worship 10:55am

Bring fresh flowers for the cross

April 27

Celebrate Earth Sunday with the Creation Justice Team