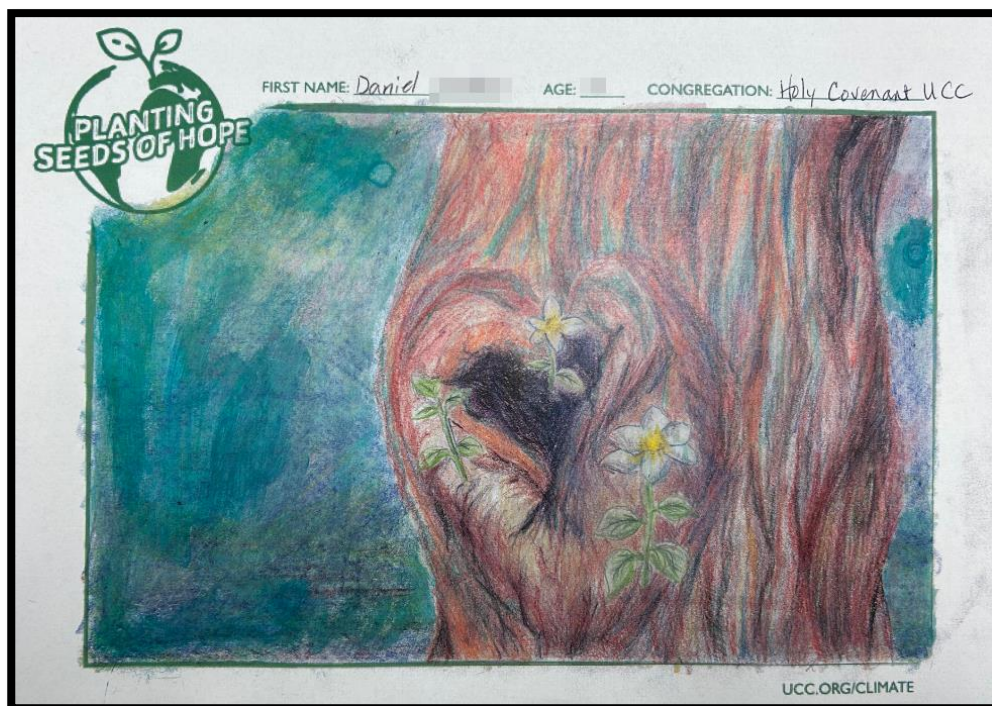




**Artwork by Daniel Sexton
Finalist in the United Church of Christ's
Planting Seeds of Hope Art Contest**

"Creation is not a backdrop for human activity—
it is a sacred community of which we are a part."
– Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley, Keetoowah Cherokee

"The environment and the economy are really two sides of the same coin.
If we cannot sustain the environment, we cannot sustain ourselves."
– Wangari Maathai, Kenyan Environmentalist

"We are not protecting nature.
We are nature protecting itself."
– Casey Camp-Horinek, Ponca Nation elder

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
EARTH SUNDAY ~ CREATION CARE SUNDAY

April 27, 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 "Terra Beata" arr. M. Hayes

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
One: May the peace of Christ be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

Land Acknowledgement Terrence Hayes

Acknowledgement of People and Land

We acknowledge that Holy Covenant is on colonized land traditionally belonging to the Catawba, Cheraw, Sugeree, Wateree, and Waxhaw Peoples, all of whom have stewarded this land throughout the generations. The city in which we are located, Charlotte, was established on the traditional crossroads of two Indigenous trading paths, the Occaneechi Path and the Lower Cherokee Traders' Path, routes that facilitated the extensive trade networks of many Indigenous peoples prior to colonization.

We would also like to recognize today the many enslaved and indentured peoples who were forced to dedicate their labor and bodies to the construction of what is now Mecklenburg County. To these peoples and their descendants, we acknowledge the grave injustices inflicted on them, and we recognize the indelible mark of their labor on the land on which we gather today.

In recognizing that we are on colonized Indigenous land that has also been crafted through forced labor, we take it as our collective responsibility to confront the histories and present-day patterns of oppression in this place while affirming and lifting up the many Indigenous forms of resurgence.

. . .

Today, the city of Charlotte has a Native community that includes members of all of North Carolina's eight state and federally recognized tribes. The Metrolina Native American Association exists to empower and advocate for the American Indian people residing in our region. The Catawba Nation continues to thrive as a federally recognized tribe located less than one hour to our south. They have established a cultural center and an online archive where they invite all to learn about their culture and history.

Our acknowledgement today repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and reminds us that we affirm God's creation. All people bear God's image and likeness. And God desires all people be treated with dignity and respect. Racial justice means celebrating humanity's rich cultures and diverse ethnic backgrounds, traditions, and expressions of faith. Racial justice invites Christians to actively, boldly, and without reservation commit to dismantling racism, which harms and oppresses people of color, limits equal access, and denies God's human family their civil and human rights.

Introit 21

"God Reigns o'er All the Earth"

TERRA BEATA

**God reigns o'er all the earth!
Green hills and valleys low,
The farms and towns in golds and browns
God's grace and beauty show.
God reigns o'er all the earth!
Stone banks and spreading plains,
In rainbow hues - reds, yellows, blues -
Of streams and country lanes.**

**God reigns o'er human life!
Through youth and aging years,
In death, in birth, in grief, in mirth,
In all our hopes and fears.
God reigns o'er human life!
Our inspiration still.
Through all our schemes, in all our dreams,
We see God's reigning will.**

* Call to Worship

Ed Vickery

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

One: Come, people of God to honor the sacred ground beneath our feet, to hear the cries of creation, to remember we are made of earth and stardust.

Many: **We come to rejoice in the beauty of this world in oceans and forests, in wind and soil, in the life that pulses through every creature.**

One: We come, too, with heavy hearts aware of the wounds we've inflicted on this planet, and the ways our systems have harmed both Earth and neighbor.

Many: **Yet still, we gather in hope, believing that healing is possible, that we can be co-creators of justice and renewal.**

One: So let us worship the God of all life the One who calls forth green shoots from scorched earth, who breathes new life into dry bones, and who dares to imagine a world made whole again.

Many: **We worship with open hands, open hearts, and a longing to live in deeper harmony with all of creation. Amen.**

* Hymn 32

"God of the Sparrow, God of the Whale"

ROEDER

God of the sparrow God of the whale God of the swirling stars

How does the creature say Awe

How does the creature say Praise

God of the earthquake God of the storm God of the trumpet blast

How does the creature cry Woe

How does the creature cry Save

God of the rainbow God of the cross God of the empty grave

How does the creature say Grace

How does the creature say Thanks

God of the hungry God of the sick God of the prodigal

How does the creature say Care

How does the creature say Life

God of the neighbor God of the foe God of the pruning hook

How does the creature say Love

How does the creature say Peace

God of the ages God near at hand God of the loving heart

How do your children say Joy

How do your children say Home

Invocation

Deborah Winston

Join me in our responsive invocation this morning, which is an adaptation of a blessing by the East African Medical Missionary Sisters...

One: Spirit of God in the clear running water, blowing to greatness the trees on the hill, Spirit of God in the finger of morning, fill the earth, bring it to birth and blow where You will.

Many: Blow, blow, blow till I be but breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

One: Down in the meadows the willows are moaning, sheep in the pastureland cannot lie still. Spirit of God, creation is groaning, fill the earth, bring it to birth and blow where You will.

Many: Blow, blow, blow till I be but breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

One: Spirit of God, every human heart is lonely, watching and waiting and hungry until, Spirit of God, humanity longs that you only fulfill the earth, bring it to birth and blow where You will.

Many: Blow, blow, blow till I be but breath of the Spirit blowing in me.

Hymn 569

“Touch the Earth Lightly”

TENDERNESS

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,
Nourish the life of the world in our care:
Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,
Trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
We who would foster clouds of disaster—
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,
Water that blesses, and air that is sweet.
Health in God’s garden, hope in God’s children,
Regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,
Teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,
Using us gently, and making us one.

Stories for All People

Lee Parrish

Special Music

“Circle of Life”
Stephen Tarr, Ed Vickery, vocals

M. Haugen

Refrain: **One great circle of life, living circle of love,
Plants and trees, seas and rivers and the blessed sky above.
Creatures great, creatures small,
One the web that weaves us all in the circle of life.**

Earth Meditation

by Thích Nhất Hạnh
10/11/1926 - 1/22/2022

Aline Sullivan

Hear these words from Thich Nhat Hahn on praise for the beauty of the earth as a meditation...

Waking up this morning, I see the blue sky. I join my hands in thanks for the many wonders of life; for having twenty-four brand new hours. The sun is rising on the forest and so is my awareness.

I walk across the field of sunflowers. Tens of thousands of flowers waving at me; my awareness is like the sunflower; my hands are sowing seeds for the next harvest. My ear is hearing the sound of the rising tide on the magnificent sky.

I see clouds approaching with joy from many directions. I can see the fragrant lotus ponds of my homeland; I can see coconut trees along the rivers; I can see rice fields stretch their shoulders, laughing at the sun and the rain.

Mother Earth gives me coriander, basil, and celery. Tomorrow, the hills and mountains of the country will be green again. Tomorrow, the buds of life will grow quickly; the folk poetry will be as sweet as the songs of the children. The whole family of humans will sing together with me in my work.

Prayer for Illumination 433

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower”

Hymn of Promise

**In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.**

*Gospel Lesson

Mark 5:21-34 (NRSV)

Ed Vickery

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping. Our Scripture for today comes from the Gospel of Mark 5:21-34 (NRSV), where Jesus is asked to restore life to a little girl and heals a woman...

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him, and he was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.” So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had, and she was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, “If I but touch his cloak, I will be made well.” Immediately her flow of blood stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my cloak?” And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’ ” He looked all around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

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

“The Earth is Bleeding: Will We Offer Our Healing?”

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

As we prepare our offering on this Creation Justice Sunday, hear the words of Julian of Norwich who said...

Be a gardener. Dig a ditch, toil and sweat, and turn the earth upside down and seek the deepness and water the plants in time. Continue this labor and make sweet floods to run, and noble and abundant fruits to spring. Take this food and drink and carry it to God as your true worship.

Let us now share our gifts with God...

Song during Offering

GOD OF GREAT AND GOD OF SMALL

God of great and God of small, God of one and God of all,
God of weak and God of strong, God to whom all things belong,

Refrain: Alleluia, Alleluia, praise be to your name.

God of land and sky and sea, God of life and destiny,
God of never-ending power, yet beside me every hour, (R)

God of silence, God of sound, God by whom the lost are found,
God of day and darkest night, God whose love turns wrong to right, (R)

God of heaven and God of earth, God of death and God of birth,
God of now and days before, God who reigns forevermore, (R)

* Prayer of Dedication

Ed Vickery

Let us join our voices in reciting a Hawaiian prayer for the blessings and gifts we have received...

May the earth continue to live. May the heavens above continue to live. May the rains continue to dampen the land. May the wet forests continue to grow. Then the flowers shall bloom. And we people shall live again. Amen.

* Hymn 28

“For the Beauty of the Earth”

DIX

For the beauty of the earth,
For the splendor of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
God of all, to you we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the wonder of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon, and stars of light,
God of all, to you we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child,
Friends on earth, and friends above,

For all gentle thoughts and mild,
God of all, to you we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

For the good that love inspires,
For a world where none exclude,
For a faith that never tires,
And for every heart renewed,
God of all, to you we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

* Benediction “Earth Teach Me” Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Hear these words of prayer by the Ute people, an Indigenous American people primarily located in present-day Utah, western Colorado, and northern New Mexico. Historically, their territory extended into parts of Wyoming, eastern Nevada, and Arizona.

Earth teach me quiet
as the grasses are stilled with light.
Earth teach me suffering
as old stones suffer with memory.
Earth teach me humility
as blossoms are humble with beginning.
Earth teach me caring
as the mother who secures her young.
Earth teach me courage
as the tree which stands all alone.
Earth teach me limitation
as the ant which crawls on the ground.
Earth teach me freedom
as the eagle which soars in the sky.
Earth teach me acceptance
as the leaves that die each fall.
Earth teach me renewal
as the seed that rises in the spring.
Earth teach me to forget myself
as melted snow forgets its life.
Earth teach me to remember kindness
as dry fields weep with rain.
[Earth teach me, so I learn your lessons,
And how to care for all of creation.]

* Benediction Response

THE TREES OF THE FIELD

You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace;
The mountains and the hills will break forth before you;
There'll be shouts of joy, and all the trees of the field
Will clap, will clap their hands.

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands; (clap, clap)
The trees of the field will clap their hands; (clap 2x)
The trees of the field will clap their hands (clap 2x)
While you go out with joy.

Postlude

“Terra Beata”

arr. J. Vogt

*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, Mel Andersen
Greeters: Diane Unger, Kathy Habel
Refreshments:

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/

BAGGED LUNCH BUILD, TODAY AFTER WORSHIP

No experience needed! We are making 100 bagged lunches for the Giles Center. Join us!

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.

REGISTER NOW!



You will receive a free directory as part of our thank you gift for participating. To make this a success, we invite all our congregants to participate. Heritage Church Directories will offer professionally produced prints of the portraits, candids, 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

Family and Friends in the recent death of Sharon Landis

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

Friends & Family Members

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), 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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