



Photo by Maximino Cerezo Barredo

**“The table is wide, the nets are cast,
justice multiplies when we dare to feed each other.”**

– Anonymous

**“The kingdom of God is not an idea—
it is the meal we dare to share today.**

– Gustavo Gutiérrez

**“Faith is not passive; it is a revolution of love
in a world that needs mending.”**

– Bell Hooks

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 OF EASTER

May 4, 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 “The God of Love My Shepherd Is” arr. J. Carraway

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 “Come and Find the Quiet Center” BEACH SPRING

**Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes that we can see
All the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.**

* Call to the Heart Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

One: You’d think, by now, we would be used to him showing up like this

Left Side: inviting us to cast our nets deeper and wider,

Right Side: showing us that abundance is found in opening new possibilities.

One: We are learning to open our hearts to these holy encounters

Left Side: nudging us to share what we have and trust it will be enough,

Right Side: showing us that flourishing happens together.

One: We are beginning to recognize the voice of love among us

Left Side: calling us to tend and nourish one another,

Right Side: showing us that new life grows through shared compassion.

One: You’d think, by now, we would be ready for Jesus in our midst

Left Side: welcoming us into worship that becomes love in action,

Right Side: showing us the way to transformation is mutual belovedness.

**All: Let us worship God, for we know deep in our bones,
everywhere we turn, it is the Lord!**

* Hymn

“God of Great and God of Small”

N. Sleeth

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)

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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 Christ within us rises, we experience the hope of new life.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Holy One, you ask us to feed your people, but we hoard what we have and call it wisdom. You call us to tend and nourish, but we measure and withhold, fearful there won't be enough. Forgive us when we ration love, when we hold back compassion, when we forget the feast you set before us. Amen.

Words of Grace

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Time and time again we see that even when we hold back, God continues to pour out. Even when we create borders and divisions, determinations of who's in or who's out, Christ makes a place for everyone. Be at peace, knowing you are forgiven, fed, and set free to be the Christ, to feed and love others. Amen.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song of Preparation “O Christ Surround Me”

GREEN TYLER

God, be the love to search and keep me;
God, be the prayer to move my voice;
God, be the strength to now uphold me:
O Christ, surround me. O Christ, surround me.

Christ in the eyes of all who see me,
Christ in the ears that hear my voice,
Christ in the hearts of all who know me:
O Christ, surround me. O Christ, surround me.

Mindfulness Moment

Meg Houlihan

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

THY WORD

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Modern Lesson

Laura Hankins

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Adrienne Maree Brown, who is queer writer and activist. In her book Emergent Strategy she says...

“Transformation doesn't happen in the grand moments, but in the daily choices to love, to stay connected, to act with intention. We shape the world through the ways we show up to each other's needs. Justice is a series of small solidarities. There is no later; there is only now. The future is already happening in our communities, in our relationships, in how bravely we imagine what could be.”

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

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

* Gospel Lesson

John 21:1-19 (CEB)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from the Gospel of John 21:1-19, where Jesus appears on the shore in the morning to the disciples and has breakfast with them...

Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how it happened: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were together. Simon Peter told them, "I'm going fishing."

They said, "We'll go with you." They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.

Jesus called to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

He said, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn't haul in the net. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren't far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you've just caught." Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn't torn, even with so many fish. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my lambs." Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Simon replied, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." He asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" He replied, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. I assure you that when you were younger you tied your own belt and walked around wherever you wanted. When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie your belt and lead you where you don't want to go." He said this to show the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus said to Peter, "Follow me."

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

“Do You Love Me?”

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Jesus calls us to share what we have, trusting that there is more than enough. When we give, we join in the work of love that feeds people and changes the world. Let us now bring our gifts with open hands and bold hearts to God.

* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise God, all creatures high and low. Alleluia, alleluia!

Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.

Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Take these gifts, O Christ, and multiply them beyond our imagination. Use them to be a far greater blessing than we can dream. Use our offerings to build a house of grace, to prepare a table of love, and to serve a feast of hope, where all God’s children are fed and welcome. Amen.

THE MYSTIC SUPPER
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE

Invitation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: Friends, the table is set, wide as God's mercy, deep as Christ's love. Will you come with open hearts?

Many: **We come, trusting that love makes a way.**

One: Will you come, bringing your hunger and hope?

Many: **We come, ready to be fed and to feed others.**

One: At this table, Jesus meets us. Not with perfection, but with possibility. He shows up just as he always has: casting the nets wider, feeding the hungry, lifting the lowly, calling us to tend the hurting places of the world with fierce love. This is the table where peace outshouts the drums of war. Where every child of God: LGBTQ+ and straight, housed and unhoused, neurodiverse and neurotypical, those with access needs and diverse abilities, every race and everybody—is seen, known, and cherished. This is the table where justice is not a dream but a demand: for affordable housing, for full access, for mental health care, for dismantling racism, for liberation in all its forms. Here, Jesus reminds us that love is not safe or small. It is risky. It multiplies. It insists that no one is forgotten. Here, Christ invites us to believe in new solidarities, new life, new hope. So come, you who are weary and you who are ready to rise, you who have doubts and you who have faith stitched together with questions. Come and eat. Come and remember. Come and be made new.

Many: **We come—bold, wounded, and blessed—trusting that your table will transform us: opening us for love, filling us with grace, and sending us to cast wide the nets of justice, until all your people are fed, free, and home. Amen.**

Words of Institution

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Generous Christ, at this table you have opened us to the hope of your bold and beautiful kin-dom. One already stirring among us, calling us to act. We give thanks for the taste of belonging, justice, and fierce hope you have offered here. Strengthen us to live as your presence in the world, until your love is known in every home, every street, and every heart. 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

Special Called Congregational Meeting following Worship, May 4

Members, please plan to stay following worship for a brief meeting regarding the Endowment, and an update to our Constitution and By-Laws. After a brief comfort break, please return to the Sanctuary by 12:30 PM so we can begin. Members are needed for a quorum.

* Benediction Response 181

BRING FORTH

**Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace;
Bring forth the reign of justice, bring for the city of God!**

Postlude

“Shepherd Medley”

arr. P. Rodriguez

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Parts of the liturgy for today's service was adapted by UCC Worship Ways and 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, David Shimberg

Greeters: Pam Shimberg, Jackie Freeze

Refreshments: Jana Harrison

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/

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY PHOTO SESSIONS CANCELLED, MAY 1-4

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the photo shoot WILL NOT be taking place at the scheduled times in early May. We are so sorry for this and will advise you at a later date when we can reschedule.

SOJOURNERS CLASS

The Sojourners meet Sundays at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom. Everyone is welcome and no preparation is necessary.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89561758099?pwd=d1gvUmh3K2hCNmdidm1QdjllNkF5QT09>

PROJECT LINUS, MAY 13, 10am-3pm

Our church is proud to sponsor Project Linus, which provides handmade blankets to children 0-18 who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need. Due to the tremendous need for comfort and warmth as it gets cold several blankets are being made for those affected by Hurricane Helene. Supplies and instructions are available for anyone wishing to help. Please return the completed blankets to the gathering room, so we can get the blankets to the children.

COMPASSION CLOSET

Compassion Closet is a non-profit organization that collects and distributes clothing and linens to asylum-seeking migrant families here in Charlotte. Please donate new or gently used (& laundered) men's, women's and children's shoes and clothing, as well as towels and sheets. You'll find the collection box in the gathering room. Thank you!

MISSIONS & JUSTICE TEAM ANNOUNCES A PARTERSHIP WITH THE PRISON BOOKS COLLECTIVE

Imprisoned people are underserved in every way imaginable. The Prison Books Collective in NC is one way of counteracting the injustices of the incarceration system. The goal is to provide resources that help people during their imprisonment and as they prepare to transition back to society. Each year the Collective sends over a thousand books and resources free of charge to people in prison who otherwise couldn't afford them. These

materials provide education and life skills as well as joy, relief, and a sense of connection to the world. See their website at <https://prisonbooks.info/>.

Or pick up a list of High-Demand Books in the Gathering Room, near the collection box.

*Note: They can only accept **paperback books**, as required by prisons, and cannot accept books with markings or highlighting, images of nudity, or gang-related content.*

CHARLOTTE AIDS WALK, MAY 31

Join us for the Charlotte AIDS Walk on Saturday, May 31st, from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM at Truist Field. This annual walk is an opportunity to show support, raise awareness, and help make a difference in the lives of those affected by HIV/AIDS in our community. So far, we've raised \$340, but we're not yet close to our goal. Thank you for supporting us!

You can walk with our team, sponsor a participant, or make a donation by visiting: <https://p2p.onecause.com/aidswalkclt/team/holy-covenant-ucc-5>

Let's come together in love and solidarity, hope to see you there!

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

Family and friends in the recent death of Sharon Landis

<https://www.roseborosmortuary.com/obituary/Sharon-Landis>

Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Tina Ettesen, Laura Hankins, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Lee Parrish, 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, Linda Burby, Jeff Calder (Martha Bomely), Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon VanFleet (Diane Neese), Kent Hansen (Kristen Fuchs), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Dave Johnson, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Michelle Sharp (Beth Sharp), Carol Stewart (Darline Warren), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Brian Weddell (Jon Weddell), Kim Wiggs-Gamblin, Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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