



Unsplash photo by Elio Santos

**“The greatest gift we can give the world
is the love we show to others.”**

– Desmond Tutu

**“Caring for others is an act of resistance,
a revolutionary act in a world that often tells us not to care.”**

– bell hooks

**“In mothering, we find the essence of the divine:
the power to heal, to see, and to love.”**

– Anonymous

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
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 11, 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 "Fountain Medley" arr. P. Rodriguez

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 Terry Raley-Dennis
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping...
One: Come, beloved of God—come just as you are, and bring all that you are.
Many: **We come, seeking connection, courage, and a deeper faith.**
One: Come with your questions, your doubts, your hopes, and your convictions.
Many: **We come, trusting that God meets us in every honest step we take.**
One: In this sacred space, all are welcome. The weary and the strong, the joyful and the grieving, the certain and the curious.
Many: **We gather as one body, seeking to embody Christ's love in all we do.**
One: Let us worship the One who calls us beloved, empowers us to seek justice, and invites us to be transformed.
Many: **Let us worship with full hearts, open minds, and willing spirits. Amen.**

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain;
Wheat that in dark earth for many days has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again like wheat that rises green.

In the grave they laid their Love whom hate had slain,
Thinking that their Love would never wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again like wheat that rises green.

Christ came forth at Easter, like the risen grain,
Jesus, who for three days in the grave had lain,
Quick from the dead the risen One is seen:
Love is come again like wheat that rises green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
Christ’s warm touch can call us back to life again,
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again like wheat that rises green.

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*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

Loving God, in a world still marred by discrimination, war, genocide, violence, transphobia, and poverty, we confess the ways we have been complicit: by our silence, our inaction, or our comfort. Forgive us, and transform our hearts to beat with your justice, our hands to serve with your compassion, and our lives to reflect your liberating love. Renew us, that we may rise each day more faithful to your call. Amen.

Words of Grace

Terry Raley-Dennis

Because Christ is risen, new life is always possible. And the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave is still at work in the world today, breathing hope into what feels defeated, calling forth restoration from what seemed lost. Nothing is ever beyond redemption, and by God’s grace, may we learn to rise again, renewed, revitalized, and empowered to live in Christ’s love. Amen.

Special Music

"There Is a Savior"
Ed Vickery, vocals

G. Nelson

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

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.

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

THY WORD

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

Modern Lesson

Pam Shimberg

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Terry Tempest Williams, who is a speaker and author on environmental and ecological justice. Among her work she says...

"Mothering is not just an act of the body, but an act of the soul. It calls us to listen to the earth, to the people around us, to the suffering and the joy. We mother the world by nurturing, by tending to the wounded, by loving without limits. It is a gift that is not confined to one gender but extends to all who are willing to engage in the deep, life-giving work of care."

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

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

*Christian Lesson

Acts 9:36-43 (CEB)

Terry Raley-Dennis

*Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping...
Our Christian Lesson for today comes from the Book of Acts 9:36-43 (CEB), where a beloved disciple of the community named Tabitha has died and is raised back to life by Peter...*

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas). Her life overflowed with good works and compassionate acts on behalf of those in need. About that time, though, she became so ill that she died. After they washed her body, they laid her in an upstairs room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two people to Peter. They urged, “Please come right away!” Peter went with them. Upon his arrival, he was taken to the upstairs room. All the widows stood beside him, crying as they showed the tunics and other clothing Dorcas made when she was alive.

Peter sent everyone out of the room, then knelt and prayed. He turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then he called God’s holy people, including the widows, and presented her alive to them. The news spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in the Lord. Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon.

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 “The Ministry of Mothering” Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity Terry Raley-Dennis
Scripture tells us of Tabitha, a disciple who “abounded in good works and acts of charity.” She was known by the love she gave: the garments she stitched, the dignity she restored, the care she offered freely. In her spirit, we are invited to give not out of obligation, but out of a desire to be part of God’s life-giving, justice-seeking, and hope-bearing love. Let us now bring our gifts—of time, talent, and treasure—to the work of Christ in our world.

* 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*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

Holy One, we dedicate these gifts to you. Not only what we’ve shared, but the love behind it, the justice we long for, and the hope we carry into this world. May our offerings, like Tabitha’s hands, stitch warmth into cold places, restore dignity where it’s been stripped away, and bear witness to your love

made real through us. Bless and multiply them, we pray, for the healing of your people and the presence of your kin-dom in this world. Amen.

* Hymn "Mothering God" MARYTON

Mothering God, you gave me birth in the bright morning of this world.
Creator, Source of every breath, you are my rain, my wind, my sun.

Mothering Christ, you took my form, offering me your food of light,
Grain of life, and grape of love, your very body for my peace.

Mothering Spirit, nurturing One, in arms of patience hold me close,
So that in faith I root and grow until I flower, until I know.

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response 181 BRING FORTH

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

Postlude "God, We Thank You" arr. A. K. Organ

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710*

*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, Joy Decker
Greeters: Deborah Winston
Refreshments: Akeera Czarnecki, Andes Magraw family

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/

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 DROP IN EVENT! TUESDAY, MAY 13, 10am-3pm

Join the Project Linus Blanketeers in a drop-in day at Holy Covenant UCC! All are welcome. Materials and tools provided. Let's make some blankets for children needing a little comfort by providing them with blankets made with love. Stop by! It's a fun time for everyone.

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!

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 donate 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!

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 shelf. *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.*

Please Remember in Prayer Members

Mel & Christine 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

Family and Friends in the death of Carol Stewart, Darline Warren's sister-in-law; 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), Janet Wakefield (Linda Burby), Brian Weddell (Jon Weddell), Kim Wiggs-Gamblin, Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

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