



Photo by Pinterest

“Part of the problem is that we tend to think that equality is about treating everyone the same, when it’s not. It’s about fairness. It’s about equity of access.”

— Judith Heumann

“In the resurrected Christ, I recognized the foundation of a liberating hope: that our bodies participate in the imago Dei, not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them.”

— Nancy Eiesland

“Cure says: Let me fix you. Let me remove your difference. Let me erase your body or mind. But I don’t want to be fixed. I want to be heard, respected, and valued as I am.”

—Eli Clare

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.

HCUCC 25th Anniversary

On June 29th, Holy Covenant will celebrate the 25th anniversary of becoming Open and Affirming (ONA). As part of that celebration, we are asking members and friends of Holy Covenant to tell us what ONA has meant to them. We are seeking video clips between 30 seconds and 2 minutes in length. You can record yourself with your smartphone. If you are technologically challenged and do not have a child or grandchild with vast selfie/TikTok knowledge, please contact Jana Harrison at 704-577-5628 for assistance. You can email your video clip to janaharr@msn.com or upload it here: [HCUCC 25 Anniversary](#). Please send your video clip by June 13th.



We're on Instagram – and Something New Is Coming!

As a pre-cursor to the launch of our new website, HCUCC Everywhere, we're excited to invite you into a new way of connecting visually through Holy Covenant's life and ministry.

Follow us on Instagram: [@hcucc_everywhere](#)



Our Instagram feed will showcase images from every corner of our community – worship, justice, fellowship, nature, remembrance, and joy – pulled directly from the photo galleries on our new website. This new platform gives us the chance to share our story with one another and with the wider world – in pictures that speak to who we are and what we value.

As we get closer to launching the new website, we invite you to follow us now, engage with the stories being shared, and help us build momentum. Let's fill every corner of the internet with light, love, and Holy Covenant spirit.

Follow, like, and share: [@hcucc_everywhere](#)

Because Holy Covenant is happening – everywhere.

#HCUCCeverywhere #NewWebsiteComing #FaithInPictures

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 25, 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 "Meditation on Surrender" arr. B. Barrett

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 worshiping...

One: Come, beloved of God, into this space made for all bodies, all minds, all ways of being. Come, those with mobility aids and those who move freely. Come, those who live with chronic pain, fatigue, or illness. Come, neurodivergent ones, those with autism, ADHD, anxiety, or mental health conditions. Come, Deaf and hard of hearing, blind and low vision, and those who communicate in diverse ways.

Many: **We come as whole people, made in God's image, worthy of love, belonging, and respect. We come, not to be fixed, but to be welcomed. Not to be pitied, but to be empowered. Not to be included as an afterthought, but to be honored from the start.**

One: In this sacred time, we celebrate the wisdom and gifts of all people. We affirm that access is love, and accessibility is a sacred practice.

Many: **We worship a God who sees each of us as beloved, who knows our needs and names, and who invites us into a community of justice, care, and radical welcome. Let us worship with our full selves—body, mind, and spirit—trusting that here, all belong.**

* Hymn

“Once a Sheep Was in a Pasture”
Ludwig van Beethoven, adapt. Edward Hodges
Lyrics, Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

HYMN OF JOY

Once a sheep was in a pasture with the other ninety-nine.
Their good shepherd loved those hundred,
And he told them, “You are mine!”
As the hundred grazed together, for some reason yet untold,
One found she was separated from the shepherd, from the fold.

Shepherd, sometimes we face trouble, far from others, far from you.
There are different ways we struggle,
Different things that we can do.
There are times we’re prone to wander;
There are times we’re pushed away.

Shepherd, by your love you find us—then in joy you celebrate!
Like a shepherd, Lord, you know us and the songs our spirits sing.
You accept us and you love us - and you know the gifts we bring.
With our singing, with our voices, with our hearts, may we express:
Shepherd, by your love you find us— We are yours, and we are blessed!

Shepherd, by your love you find us, then you send us out in turn
To seek out all your beloved and to bring the wounded home.
As we lead and help each other, as we advocate and pray,
May we shepherd one another on your faithful, loving way.

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 for Transformation (*unison*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

God of love and liberation, we confess that we have not always seen your image in every body and mind. We have turned away from the needs of disabled siblings, built barriers instead of bridges, and forgotten that access is a holy calling. Forgive us, O God, and move us toward a community where all are honored, all are needed, and all are whole.

Words of Grace

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Hear this good news: God's love makes no exceptions and holds no conditions. In Christ, every body is blessed, every mind is beloved, and every spirit is embraced. We are not only forgiven, but we are also called into new ways of being community together. Thanks be to the God, who makes us whole. Amen.

Special Music

"If I Could Look through Your Eyes"

G. Ferguson

Meg Houlihan, soloist

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

Deborah Winston

Our modern lesson for today comes from the National Autism Association, a non-profit that provides help and resources to the autism community, so that all affected can reach their full potential. They have a quote on their website that says...

[I am] not a label. Not a word. Not a derogatory term you heard. I'm a who. Same as you. Do you have a name? Me too. I'm a mind. A heart. A personality. I'm an equal part of the overall we. I'm a him or a her. A he or a she. [A they or a them.] Who am I? I'm simply me. A person. Not a disability.

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

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

*Gospel Lesson

John 5:1-9

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping... Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from John 5:1-9, where Jesus comes to the pool of Bethesda and finds a sick man who had been lying there for a long time waiting to be made well...

After this there was a Jewish festival, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethesda. It had five covered porches, and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there. A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I don't have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I'm trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me."

Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

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

"Do You Want to Be Made Whole?"

Invitation to Generosity

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

In today's Gospel, Jesus sees a man who had been overlooked for thirty-eight years. Where others passed by, Jesus stopped. Where systems failed, grace moved. This is the kind of healing love we are called to embody, one that lifts, includes, and restores. As we give today, may our offerings be acts of welcome. May they ripple outward, creating spaces where every person is seen, every body honored, and every barrier dismantled. Let us now share our gifts with generous hearts.

* 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 Jeffery Edwards-Knight
God of healing and wholeness, we bring these gifts to you. Not just as currency, but as commitments of building your beloved kin-dom. Bless what we offer so that your love may reach those still waiting by the water's edge, still longing to hear, "Do you want to be made well?" Use our lives and our resources to stir up the waters of justice and extend your compassion to all. Amen.

* Hymn 177 "God of Change and Glory" KATHERINE

*Solo: God of change and glory, God of time and space,
When we fear the future, give to us your grace.
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.*

*Refrain: Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.
In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise
One Giver, one Word, one Spirit, one God
Known in many ways, hallowing our days.
For the Giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!*

*God of many colors, God of many signs,
You have made us different, blessing many kinds.
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear. (R)*

* 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 "Materna" S.A. Ward

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Parts of the liturgy for today's service was adapted from the UCC Mental Health Network's Mental Health and Wellness Worship Resources for All.

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: Patti Unger

Refreshments: Bold and Beautiful Covenant Group

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/

CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES

Do you know someone who will be graduating soon? Please let us know so we can recognize their accomplishments out ahead! Send information (and we'd love a photo!) to office@holycovenantucc.org.

SANDWICH & BAG LUNCH BUILDS

We will pause today, resuming on June 15 after worship. No experience needed! We are making 100 bagged lunches for the Giles Center, including 200 sandwiches! Come! Help us feed our neighbors in need! Watch for our new mid-week sandwich builds coming soon.

THE MICHAEL G. BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP 2025-26, Applications Due June 15

The purpose of the Michael G. Brooks Scholarship Fund is to encourage youth in both their educational growth and their service to God. Scholarship funds up to approximately \$2,000 will be considered annually for all applicants. Contact the church office or JoAnn Jellison, joannjellison@yahoo.com for the Process and Procedures document for this scholarship and the application.

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. Pick up a list of High-Demand Books in the Gathering Room, near the collection shelf.

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 \$575, 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!

DAYTIMERS COVENANT GROUP LUNCHEON meets Thursday, June 5, noon. All are welcome.

SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 22, 1:00-3:00 PM, SCREENING AND DISCUSSION OF "AMERICAN COUP: WILMINGTON 1898"

In partnership with PBS North Carolina and Working Films, Holy Covenant will host a screening of "American Coup," a film that shares the little-known story of a deadly race massacre and insurrection in North Carolina's largest city in 1898. Self-described white supremacists used intimidation and violence to destroy Black political and economic power and overthrow Wilmington's democratically elected, multi-racial government. Refreshments will be served prior to the 1:00 screening and discussion will start at 2:00.

This community event is a Racial Justice and Equity contribution to the Year of Wellness. At a time when the truths of our history are being erased, RJE offers this event as a corrective. We will also have the opportunity to process it with two guest speakers: Tom Hanchett, a local historian, will guide us through the historical conditions that made the coup possible and Justin Perry, a trauma-informed therapist, will facilitate discussion of the viewing experience. For more information contact Holly Middleton at hsmiddleton@gmail.com.

MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR ISABELLE REEDY POWELL

It is with heavy hearts that we share of the death of our eldest member, and Deacon Emeritus, Isabelle Powell. There will be a Celebration of Life service today. Prelude of special music beginning at 1:40 PM. The service at 2 PM will be live-streamed, <https://holycovenantucc.org/virtual-hc/>

Please Remember in Prayer Members

Family and Friends of the late Dr. Isabelle Reedy Powell

Markus & Kristen Fuchs in the recent death of Markus' father.

Mel & Christine Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Tina Ettesen, Laura Hankins, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Lee Parrish, Sue & Bill Pascucci, 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, 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), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn), 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.**

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

**Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor
RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167**

Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

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