



Photo by Microsoft Image Creator

**“The Spirit isn’t confined to temples made by hands. She lives in breath, in bodies, in the mystery of becoming.”**

**– Cole Arthur Riley**

**“God's Spirit is uncontainable, undeniable,  
and radically inclusive.”**

**– Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis**

**“The Spirit shows up in strange places,  
at unexpected times, and uses unlikely people.”**

**– Bishop Yvette Flunder**

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**  
**PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**June 1, 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                      “Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”                      arr. J. Vogt

Welcome and Announcements                      Terry Raley-Dennis

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Chiming of the Hour

Introit 270                      “Like the Murmur of a Dove’s Song”                      BRIDEGROOM

**Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight,  
Like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

**To the members of Christ's body, to the branches of the Vine,  
To the church in faith assembled, to our midst as gift and sign:  
Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

\* Call to the Heart                      Lloyd Spencer

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

One: Come, Holy Spirit like a rushing wind that sweeps away fear, like a holy fire that burns with justice and joy.

Many: **We gather from many places, speaking different languages of life and love yet drawn together by the breath of God.**

One: God’s Spirit is poured out on all people, young and old, dreamers and prophets, no one left out, no voice silenced.

Many: **In this sacred space, all genders, all bodies, all abilities, all identities are welcome and called.**

One: The Spirit moves among us ending divides, igniting hope, birthing new visions.

Many: **Let us worship with wonder, with courage, with hearts open to the Spirit’s movement.**

One: Come, let us worship the Living God, whose love knows no boundaries, whose Spirit speaks through each of us.

Many: **We are ready. Move Spirit move, among us!**

# W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY

God is calling through the whisper of the Spirit's deepest sighs,  
Through the thrill of sudden beauties that can catch us by surprise.  
Flash of lightning, crash of thunder; hush of stillness, rush of wonder:  
God is calling - can you hear? God is calling - can you hear?

**God is calling through the voices of our neighbors' urgent prayers,  
Through their longing for redemption and for rescue from despair.  
Place of hurt or face of needing; strident cry or silent pleading:  
God is calling - can you hear? God is calling - can you hear?**

God is calling through the music of sublime and human arts,  
Through the hymns of earth and angels, and the carols of our hearts.  
Lift of joy and gift of singing; days and nights our praises bringing:  
God is calling - and we hear! God is calling - and we hear!

Rev. Melissa McQueen Simmons

**Ourselves: “God accepts me exactly as I am, in all my beauty, pride, and love.”**

**Neighbor: “God accepts you exactly as you are, in all your beauty, pride, and love.”**

**World:** “God accepts us exactly as we are, in all our beauty, pride, and love.”

Lloyd Spencer

**Spirit of Truth, we confess that we often resist your movement, clinging to what is familiar instead of embracing your wild and liberating ways. That we can silence voices that speak uncomfortable truths and ignore visions that stretch beyond our comfort. Forgive us, O God, and set us free to be daring, to listen deeply, and to live with hearts on fire for love and justice. Amen.**

Lloyd Spencer

Friends, hear this good news: The Spirit that swept through Pentecost long ago still breathes in us today—offering renewal, not shame; freedom, not fear; something fresh and new, not the same old thing. Feel the Spirit still breathing among and within you, aware once again that you are beloved, forgiven, and called to share in this abundant life with others in God. Amen.

Stories for All People

“Websites Matter”

Jean Stewart Berg

Song of Preparation 508

“Prayer Is the Soul’s Sincere Desire”

ST. AGNES

**Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed;  
The motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast.**

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Prayer for Illumination 292 (*sung*)

TRENTHAM

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life a-new;  
That I may love the way you love and do what you would do.**

**Breathe on me, Breath of God, stir in me one desire:  
That every earthly part of me may glow with holy fire.**

Modern Lesson

Kevin Decker

*Our modern lesson for today comes from Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney, who is Womanist Hebrew Bible scholar and Episcopal priest. Among her writings she says...*

“Pentecost is the story of a God who speaks in every language—who refuses to be confined to one culture, one people, one way of speaking or being. The Spirit of God does not wait for translation; She speaks directly into the heart language of each person present. This is not a story of sameness, but of holy difference. It is a call to listen for the voice of God in unfamiliar accents and in unexpected bodies. The Spirit doesn’t erase our uniqueness but celebrates it, speaks through it, dances within it. Pentecost is not the reversal of Babel; it is its redemption. We are not called to be alike—we are called to be alive in the Spirit, together.”

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

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

\* Christian Lesson                      Acts 2:1-18 (The Inclusive Bible)                      Lloyd Spencer  
*Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping.  
Our Christian Lesson for today comes from Acts 2:1-18, where Holy Spirit is sent  
in a remarkable way as the followers of Jesus are praying together...*

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they all met in one room. Suddenly they heard what sounded like a violent, rushing wind from heaven; the noise filled the entire house in which they were sitting. Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in other languages as she enabled them.

Now there were devout people living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled. But they were bewildered to hear their native languages being spoken. They were amazed and astonished: "Surely all of these people speaking are Galileans! How does it happen that each of us hears these words in our native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya around Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome - all Jews, or converts to Judaism - Cretans and Arabs, too; we hear them preaching, each in our own language, about the marvels of God!"

All were amazed and disturbed. They asked each other, "What does this mean?" But others said mockingly, "They've drunk too much new wine."

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed the crowd: "Women and men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem! Listen to what I have to say! These people are not drunk as you think - it's only nine o'clock in the morning! No, it's what Joel the prophet spoke of:

In the days to come it is Our God who speaks - I will pour out my Spirit on all humankind. Your daughters and sons will prophesy, your young people will see visions, and your elders will dream dreams. Even on the most insignificant of my people, both women and men, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

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.

Invitation to Generosity

Lloyd Spencer

On that first Pentecost, the Spirit moved among the people, filling them with courage, connecting them with one another, and creating a vision for a new kind of community. That same Spirit moves among us today, inviting us to share what we have so that love, justice, and belonging might take root and flourish. Let us now share with open hands and generous hearts, trusting that our gifts can transform this small space of the world we've been entrusted with into the kingdom of God.

\* Doxology 785

SCHUMANN

**We give you but your own, whate'er the gift may be;  
All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

\* Prayer of Dedication

Lloyd Spencer

**Holy Spirit, bless these gifts we bring that they may fan the flames of justice, nurture communities of belonging, and carry your love to places yearning for hope. Use us, and what we offer, to breathe new life into the world. Amen.**

*As you do your own wondering, hear the words of this poem titled “When We Breathe Together: A Blessing for Pentecost Day” by Jan Richardson...*

*This is the blessing  
we cannot speak  
by ourselves.*

*This is the blessing  
we cannot summon  
by our own devices,  
cannot shape  
to our purpose,  
cannot bend  
to our will.*

*This is the blessing  
that comes  
when we leave behind  
our aloneness  
when we gather  
together  
when we turn  
toward one another.*

*This is the blessing  
that blazes among us  
when we speak  
the words  
strange to our ears*

*when we finally listen  
into the chaos*

*when we breathe together  
at last.*

\* Hymn

“Though I May Speak”

GIFT OF LOVE

Though I may speak with bravest fire  
And have the gift to all inspire  
And have not love, my words are vain,  
As sounding brass and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess  
And striving so my love profess,  
But not be given by love within,  
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control;  
Our spirits long to be made whole.  
Let inward love guide every deed;  
By this we worship and are freed.

\* Benediction

Rev. Melissa McQueen Simmons

\* Benediction Response 391

NEW DIMENSIONS

God of rainbow, fiery pillar  
Leading where the eagles soar,  
We your people, ours the journey  
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude

“Breathe on Me, Breath of God”

arr. J. Innes

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

*Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written by  
Rev. Christopher Czarnecki and included selected writings from  
Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney and Jan Richardson.*

*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: Patti Unger,

Refreshments: Akeera Czarnecki,

**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 WELCOME GUEST PREACHER REV. MELISSA MCQUEEN-SIMMONS**

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and a first-generation college graduate. She is a mother to a fun and creative child, Camdyn, and the spouse to the beautiful and graceful Vondalyn McQueen Simmons. She is a creative, an empath, an author, mystic, and Iraqi-Veteran. Melissa was born into Generation X, the demographic cohort between Baby Boomers and Millennials. She earned her Master of Divinity (M.Div.) with an emphasis in Pastoral Care at Howard University School of Divinity.

Melissa is the Spiritual Director/virtual pastor for Wholy Ground Spiritual center. Melissa is ordained in the United Church of Christ and is currently pulpit supply for the Southern Conference, and a member for the Racial Justice and Equity team, she is a member of the Committee on Ministry team for the Southern Conference. She is also a facilitator for Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education that fosters informed, responsible, and values-based decisions about sexual health and behavior. She is intentional about healthy relationships with self, others, and the Divine of our understanding. She is committed to relationship-building within the community.

**SANDWICH & BAGGED LUNCH BUILDS!**

"We're putting *the social* in Social Justice!" -Suzanne Lamorey.

Join us for a Monday morning social activity. Let's make 200 sandwiches on **June 9th at 10:00 AM**. We will also make bagged lunches on **Sunday, June 15 after worship**. No experience needed. Help us feed our neighbors in need!

## **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](mailto:joannjellison@yahoo.com) for the Process and Procedures document for this scholarship and the application.

## **ALL CHURCH WORKDAY, JUNE 21, 9:00 AM-12:00 Noon**

It's time for #CleaningGodsHouse! (Well, tidying up the church yard is more on this list.) Let's get things all spiffy before big church events! Outdoor items are our focus; clipping, snipping, pruning, etc. Pull weeds from between the bricks in the Memorial Garden and the like. Check out the bulletin board outside of the office for additional tasks. Can't make that date? Drop-ins at your convenience are also welcomed. Check in at the church office. Supplies and tools are on hand!

## **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](mailto:hsmiddleton@gmail.com).

## **HCUCC 25TH ANNIVERSARY, JUNE 29, 2025**

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](mailto:janaharr@msn.com) or upload it here: <https://tinyurl.com/33dcdm97>. Send your video clip by June 13<sup>th</sup>!

**Please Remember in Prayer  
Members**

Mel & Christine Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Jim Dwiggin, Tina Ettesen, Kathy Habel, Laura Hankins, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Lee Parrish, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Beth Sharp, Pam Shimberg, Anita Taylor, Darline Warren, Sally Young & Alice Phelan

**Friends & Family Members**

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Melissa Brown, Linda Burby, Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon VanFleet (Diane Neese), Gloria Echeverri (Melissa Noll), Kent Hansen (Kristen Fuchs), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Dave Johnson, Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Tracy Reed (Dawn Simmons), Stephanie Sells (Jean Raley-Dennis), 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](mailto: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**

*Mailing address: P.O. Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269*

**3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510**

**www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810**