



Unsplash Photo by Alex Shute

**“The Holy Spirit’s job is not to solve our problems
but to remind us that God is already here.”**

– Barbara Brown Taylor

**““The Spirit shows up in unexpected ways, nudging us toward justice,
toward community, and toward our truest selves.”**

– Shannon Kearns

**“God’s Spirit does not control us; she invites us into deeper
relationship, reminding us who we are and who we are becoming.”**

– Carter Heyward

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
TRINITY SUNDAY

June 15, 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 "Holy, Holy, Holy" 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

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 (*responsive*) Akeera Czarnecki

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

One: Come, beloved people of God's kin-dom, let us gather in this sacred place.

Many: **We come seeking comfort, guidance, and truth.**

One: The Spirit of Truth is still speaking, still moving, still breathing in us today.

Many: **When the world feels uncertain, the Spirit is our steady presence.**

One: The Holy Spirit does not replace Christ but continues Christ's way.

Many: **Teaching us, helping us, advocating for justice and compassion.**

One: In moments of confusion or grief, the Spirit whispers: "I am in your midst."

Many: **And even that is holy because God is with us.**

One: So let us open our hearts to the sacred movement within and among us.

Many: **Let us worship the One who has not left us but empowers us still.**

* Hymn NCH 277

“Holy, Holy, Holy”

NICAEA

Holy, holy, holy, God the Almighty!
Early in the morning we praise your majesty.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! Saints adore you truly,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
Cherubim and seraphim bow before you only,
From the beginning, God eternally.

Holy, holy, holy! Though we know but dimly,
Though the eyes of humankind your glory may not see,
You alone are holy, you alone are worthy,
Perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, God the Almighty!
All your works shall praise your name in earth and sky and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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.”

Prayer for Transformation (*responsive*)

Akeera Czarnecki

Join me in a responsive reading as we confess the ways in which we separate ourselves from God...

One: Spirit of Truth, we confess that we do not always listen to your voice.
You advocate for the vulnerable,

Many: **but we remain silent when migrants are threatened, and communities are displaced.**

One: You stir our hearts toward justice,

Many: **but we resist when it challenges our comfort or hardened beliefs.**

One: You speak through the voices of LGBTQ+ siblings longing to be seen and affirmed,

Many: **but too often we offer half-hearted welcome or no welcome at all.**

One: You grieve with the suffering of people under occupation, at war, or fleeing danger,

Many: **but we turn away, overwhelmed or indifferent.**

One: Forgive us, Holy Spirit, for the ways we muffle your call. Open us, our ears, our hearts, our hands...

Many: **to embody your liberating, healing love in this world. Amen.**

Words of Grace (*unison*)

Akeera Czarnecki

Join me in a unison prayer of thanksgiving for God's renewing and life-giving grace...

Holy Spirit, you meet us with mercy when we lose our way. You whisper truth when we are ready to listen and offer us a grace that somehow returns us to love. In your presence, as we seek to be transformed, help us to remember we are made new. We are forgiven, strengthened, and called to begin again. Amen.

Special Music

"Love Will Be Our Home"
Ed Vickery, soloist

S. C. Chapman

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer for Illumination 292 (*sung*)

TRENTHAM

Breathe on me, Breath of God, fill me with life anew;
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

Suzanne Lamorey

Our modern lesson for today comes from Traci C. West, who is Womanist ethicist and professor of African American Studies for Drew University Theological School. Among her work she says...

“The Holy Spirit disrupts comfort that is built on domination. She breathes life into those who have been silenced, and gives fire to voices that challenge systems of racial, gendered, and sexual violence. To be led by the Spirit is to be led beyond fear—into the work of healing and dismantling. The church cannot claim to follow the Spirit while ignoring those on the margins. The Spirit is with the poor, the trans child, the migrant mother, the protester crying out for freedom. And so the Spirit calls us—if we dare to listen—into risk, into truth, and into love made public. That is holy ground.”

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

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

*Gospel Lesson

John 16:12-15 (NRSV)

Cheryl Milam

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping. Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from John 16:12-15, where Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will come and shares what the Holy Spirit will do...

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

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

Invitation to Generosity

Cheryl Milam

As we prepare to share our gifts, we lift-up today's special collection: the *Strengthen the Church Offering*, one of the five annual special offerings of the United Church of Christ. This special offering supports the expansion of ministry and the growth of UCC congregations by investing in new church starts, encouraging innovative ideas in existing churches, and cultivating the spiritual lives of youth and young adults. Your generosity, no matter the amount, helps us live into being recognized as a “5 for 5” church, committed to the collective missions of our wider church. As we remember the Spirit who stirs among us and calls forth new life, let us give in the hope of what God is still creating and doing.

* 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

Cheryl Milam

Gracious Spirit, you breathe possibility into our giving and awaken hope through our sharing. Bless these gifts, both those we can count and those we cannot measure. Use them to strengthen the church, to nurture bold visions of God's beloved kin-dom, and to build a world where all are seen, valued, and free. In the mystery of your holy movement we pray, Amen.

* Hymn 275

"Come Now Almighty God"

ITALIAN HYMN

Come now Almighty God,
Help us your name to laud;
Our songs we raise:
Ruler all glorious, o'er all victorious
Come and reign over us, Ancient of Days!

Come now, Incarnate Word,
By heaven and earth adored;
Our prayer attend:
Come, and your people bless, and give your world success;
Grant us your holiness, Savior and Friend!

Come, Holy Comforter,
Your sacred witness bear
In this glad hour.
Your grace to us impart, now rule in every heart,
Never from us depart, Spirit of Power!

To you, great One in Three,
Eternal praises be
For evermore,
Your sovereign majesty may we in glory see,
And to eternity love and adore.

Poem

*“Juneteenth: Freedom’s Journey (1619-2123)”
by Retired Army Col. Dwayne Wagner*

Fred Robinson, Deborah Winston, Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Fred Robinson

Juneteenth celebrates June 19, 1865, when 250,000 enslaved people of African descent in Galveston, Texas learned of their freedom following the end of the Civil War, two years after President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. This historic day was designated as a federal holiday in 2021. In honor and recognition of this holiday next week we end our worship service with a recently written poem by retired Army Col. Dwayne Wagner, titled, “Juneteenth: Freedom’s Journey (1619-2123)”.

August 20 1619

A transatlantic feat,
Slave ships filled keel to deck,
Enslaved hearts beat and beat,
Their voices sing to Gods unknown:
“When will I be free?”

April 19 1775

Colonists challenged the King,
Men and women, white and black,
And every shade between,
Their voices sang to a God well-known:
“We will fight to be free!”

October 14 1781

A battle, often ignored,
Enslaved Africans, muskets, and grit,
Dislodge the Redcoats once more.
Battle of Yorktown and Redoubt 9,
The enslaved men ask their Gods:
“Does victory make freedom mine?”

April 12 1861

A nation, torn apart,
Brother and cousins, swords drawn,
Pointed at our nation’s heart,
Soldiers cried to their Christian God:
“Will my death set others free?”

January 1 1863

A proclamation decree,
Unshackled chains, the Black Enslaved,
An attempt to make all free.
Texas slaves cried to their Gods:
“Why not us ... and ... why not me?”

April 9 1865

End of the bloody war.
Over six hundred thousand dead,
Grant meets with Lee once more.
Blue and Gray mothers wailed to their God:
“Can our sons now be freed?”

1863 to '65

Freedom took two years.
Texas ignored Emancipation.
More pain, more blood, more tears.
Field-slave Wagoner said to his God:
“What now will you have us fear?”

June 19 1865

A glorious day indeed.
Arrival of troops in federal blue,
Texas Enslaved are freed.
A coal-skinned mother in Galveston shouts:
“We be free! We are free!”

1865 to '77

Forty acres and a mule.
Reconstruction failed to hold,
Rich power brokers ruled.
Poor voices agonize to God:
“Will freedom find us soon?”

. . .

1865 to 2021

Juneteenth is freedom's grace.
Celebrated Texas-wide,
Now ready for America's embrace.
Deacon Wagner looked to the heavens:
"Is Juneteenth freedom's taste?"

June 18 2021

This holiday, "they" celebrate,
Exactly what does it mean?
Am I allowed to participate,
To celebrate the free?
I asked my God for guidance:
"Join hands in liberty."

June 19 2021

Juneteenth, Juneteenth
Let's celebrate.
America righted a wrong.
Juneteenth, Juneteenth
Let's elevate:
"With love, praise, and song."

June 19 2023

Juneteenth seeks to unite.
Indigenous, immigrant, enslaved or not,
America has earned this right.
Citizens quietly self-reflect:
"Juneteenth brings freedom's might."

2024 and beyond.

The next 100 years.
Juneteenth represents our quest.
Make freedom the last frontier.
Our grandchildren silently smile,
As June 19th now endears.
New Years, Easter, Memorial Day,

We lovingly recognize.
July the 4th and Labor Day,

Are gleefully embraced with pride.
Juneteenth, our newest holiday,
Can help unite our tribes.
My father's story of olden times,
Included Juneteenth lore.
The slaughtered hog, the greens, the yams,
The songs, the dance, and more.
While Grandma sang a country tune:
"Knockin' on Heaven's Door"
If I am not free; You are not free.
If you are not free; I am not free.
America, our land of liberty.
We ask and pray:
"For equality."
Juneteenth is for you,
Juneteenth is for me,
Our histories not aligned.
Regardless of each journey,
Our futures are intertwined.
I hear ancestral voices ask:
"America, will thine be mine?"

For more information on this poem visit: Col. Dwayne Wagner on his Juneteenth Poem.

<https://www.courierpress.com/story/news/local/2024/06/18/col-dwayne-wagner-on-his-juneteenth-poem/73956307007/>

* 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

“I Know Whom I Have Believed”

arr. L. Larson

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Parts of the liturgy for today's service were written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki and included selected writings from Traci C. West.

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/

THE MICHAEL G. BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP 2025-26, Applications Due Today!

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.

SANDWICH & BAGGED LUNCH BUILD TODAY AFTER WORSHIP

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

Join us after worship to make bagged lunches for the Giles Center. No experience needed. Help us feed our neighbors in need! Then plan to join us for a Monday morning social activity. We'll make 200 sandwiches on **July 14th at 10:00 AM.**

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

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!

HAVE YOU RSVP'D FOR "AMERICAN COUP: WILMINGTON 1898"?

This is the last Sunday to sign up for our upcoming community event you don't want to miss! **On Sunday, June 22 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**, Holy Covenant will host a special screening and discussion of *American Coup: Wilmington 1898*, in partnership with PBS North Carolina and Working Films. This powerful documentary tells the often-overlooked story of a violent race massacre and coup in Wilmington, NC, and invites us to reflect on its legacy today. Refreshments will be available starting at 12:30, and the film will begin promptly at 1:00, followed by a meaningful conversation at 2:00 led by local historian Tom Hanchett and trauma-informed therapist Justin Perry. This is part of our Racial Justice and Equity Team's contribution to the Year of Wellness, offering a chance to engage deeply with our history and one another. We've had strong interest from the wider community, but we'd love to see more of our church family join us. Please RSVP today, which will help us prepare food and seating. For more information contact Holly Middleton at hsmiddleton@gmail.com.

EASY AND FUN SERVING HELP NEEDED FOR "AMERICAN COUP" SCREENING

The Racial Justice and Equity Team is asking for 8 volunteers to assist with the June 22 event, "American Coup: Wilmington 1898." We could use folks to help put food out and pick up empty trays between 11:45 - 12:45 and to help clean up and put

tables away after the event at 3:00 pm. You can sign up to volunteer by signing up in the gathering room or emailing Holly Middleton at hsmiddleton@gmail.com.

HCUCC 25TH ANNIVERSARY - LAST CALL! WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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: <https://tinyurl.com/33dcdm97>. Send your video clip by Monday, June 16th!



FREEDOM DAY JUNETEENTH JUNE 19

Your guide to Juneteenth events in Charlotte

Upcoming events include day parties; history walks and more. This is a growing list!

<https://qcitymetro.com/2025/06/09/charlotte-events-juneteenth/>

- *Gospel Fest, Durag Festival*
- *Youth talent show, cookout, tournament, live music*
- *Family-friendly activities and cultural performances*
- *Art Fest, Poetry with Passion, spoken word, music and more!*

Please Remember in Prayer

Members

Mel & Christine Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, 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.**

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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