

Photo by Substack Image Creator

“There is no liberation without truth-telling, and no healing without the courage to name what has wounded us.”

— Cole Arthur Riley

“To follow Jesus is to cross borders, disturb comfort, and cast out the powers that bind.”

— Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas

"We must tell the stories that have been buried, not only to remember but to resurrect hope."

— Kaitlin Curtice (Potawatomi Christian Author)

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
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 22, 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 "In Christ There Is No East or West" arr. M. Hassell

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*) Sally McLester
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping...

One: We come, not as people unscathed, but as those wounded by systems that divide and destroy...

Many: **We come seeking healing from the powers that possess us.**

One: From racism that privileges some while dehumanizing others, from prejudice that lingers in silence and denial...

Many: **Deliver us, O God, and draw us near.**

One: From greed that values profit over people, from nationalism that worships power instead of peace...

Many: **Deliver us, O Christ, and set us free.**

One: From fear that walls us off from our neighbors, from the lies we tell to preserve our comfort...

Many: **Deliver us, Holy Spirit, and make us whole.**

One: Come, let us worship the One who crosses boundaries, names what is hidden, and restores what has been broken...

Many: **We come to worship the Living Christ, who frees us to tell the truth and live in love.**

In Christ there is no East or West, in Christ no South or North;
But one community of love throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere their high communion find;
God's service is the golden cord close binding humankind.

In Christ now meet both East and West, in Christ meet South and North;
One joyous, true community throughout the whole wide earth.

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 (*unison*)

Sally McLester

Join me in prayer as we confess the ways in which we separate ourselves from God...

God of truth and transformation, we confess that we often turn away from what we don't want to see. We remain silent about the powers that divide and possess us, systems of control that dehumanize others and protect our own comfort. We prefer ease over honesty, avoidance over accountability. Forgive us, O God, and free us from the forces that bind us, so we may walk in ways of love and justice.

Words of Grace

Sally McLester

Friends in Christ, hear these words of grace...

In the scripture we will hear today, what we find is a Jesus who will meet us in the tombs of our fear and the truths we try to cast out and bury. He sees what grips and possesses us and still calls us worthy of restoration. In Christ, we are not condemned, we are called to be made whole. Know, whatever it is that has you in bondage, you are forgiven, now set free, and invited to live in the fullness of God's liberating and life-giving love.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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. 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

Terrance Hayes

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes, who is a clinical psychologist, author, and professor of practical theology and pastoral care at Columbia Theological Seminary. Among her work she says...

“Putting the burden of reconciliation solely on white people can unintentionally reinforce white supremacy. When we center the narratives of people of color, we understand that liberation requires work across all communities, each with its own path. True racial reconciliation is not a quaint gesture; it demands intentional, sustained, large-scale effort to correct and remake policies, practices, and cultural norms. It means saying that Black lives are not just visible, but valued, and that harms—historical and present—must be repaired.”

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

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

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping. Our Gospel Lesson for today comes from Luke 8:26-39 (NASB), where Jesus heals a man of his demon possession and is urged by the community to leave...

Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when he stepped out onto the land, a man from the city met him who was possessed with demons; and he had not put on clothing for a long time and was not living in a house, but among the tombs. And seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell down before Him, and said with a loud voice, "What business do you have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me!" For He *had already* commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and *yet* he would break the restraints and be driven by the demon into the desert. And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; because many demons had entered him. And they were begging him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

Now there was a herd of many pigs feeding there on the mountain; and *the demons* begged him to permit them to enter the pigs. And he gave them permission. And the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

Now when the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported *everything* in the city, and in the country. And *the people* came out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen *everything* reported to them how the man who had been demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the territory of the Gerasenes and the surrounding region asked him to leave them, because they were overwhelmed by great fear; and he got into a boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging him that he might accompany him; but *Jesus* sent him away, saying, "Return to your home and describe what great things God has done for you." So he went away, proclaiming throughout the city what great things Jesus had done for him.

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.

“What Possesses You?”

Invitation to Generosity

Sally McLester

The kin-dom of God we speak of on Sundays is not some far-off dream but a present and unfolding reality. One that’s built every time we choose love over fear, justice over silence, and inclusive community over comfort. Through our offerings, we become co-creators of this present-day kin-dom: nurturing healing, empowering truth-telling, and investing in a liberation that seeks to lift us all. Let us not share our gifts out of obligation, but out of hope for what can be.

* 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 (*unison*)

Sally McLester

Gracious God, take these gifts we offer—our money, our time, our faith—and use them to mend what is broken and nourish what is growing. May the gifts we’ve shared be the seeds of your kin-dom, where every person is valued, and no one is forgotten. Bless these offerings, and us all, that we might become the generous, justice-seeking people you have called us to be. Amen.

* Hymn 502

“Dear God, Embracing Humankind”

REST

Dear God, embracing humankind, forgive our foolish ways,
Reclothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives your service find, in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard, beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of your word,
Let us, like them, by spirit stirred, rise up and followers be.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee! O calm of hills above!
There Jesus met you prayerfully:
The silence of eternity, interpreted by love.

Drop your still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess the beauty of your peace.

Breathe through the pulses of desire your coolness and your balm;
Let sense be numb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire, O still small voice of calm.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* 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

“Softly and Tenderly”

arr. D. Wood

*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*

*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: Debbie Winston, Anne Hayes
Refreshments: Racial Justice and Equity Team

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/>

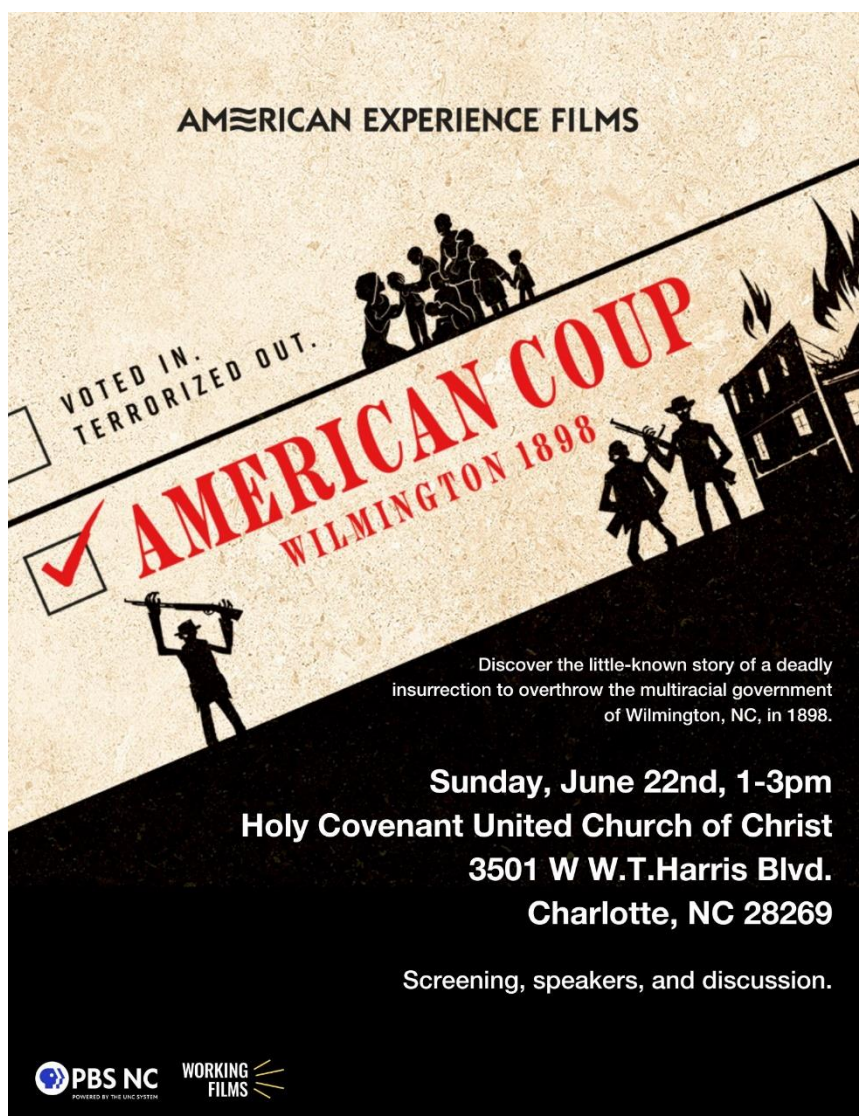
CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR AT holycovenantucc.org/events/

HCUCC 25TH ANNIVERSARY

On June 29th, Holy Covenant will celebrate the 25th anniversary of becoming Open and Affirming (ONA)! Come celebrate our inclusive church! Come early for special music! Stay later for a lovely reception and fellowship with friends! Surprises are in store!

"AMERICAN COUP: WILMINGTON 1898" Today, 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. Please plan to stay for this important and timely lesson in our local and national history.



**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

Sheri Clark and family in the recent death of her husband, Jim Clark (Jo Ann Jellison); 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

**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**