



Unsplash photo by Vitaly Gariev

"Come as you are, with your burdens and your beauty.
Love meets you here."
– Rev. angel Kyodo Williams

"When we deny our stories, they define us.
When we own our stories, we get to write the ending."
– Brené Brown

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in."
– Leonard Cohen"

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
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 7, 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 “Let Us Break Bread Together” arr. D. Wyrzten

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

Centering Prayer Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Let us center ourselves in prayer as we gather for this time of worship...

One: Holy One, we have come this morning from our houses and apartments, our condos and single bedroom dwellings. We bring with us task lists left unfinished, boxes still waiting to be unpacked, and paperwork stacked higher than we'd like to admit. We bring griefs that weigh heavy, pain that lingers in body or spirit, and worries that cling to our hearts. Here, in this sacred hour, let us set it all down. Let us allow things to be just as they are—in their rawness, their ache, their unfinishedness. Meet us in this place with your presence, with Christ's love, and with the Spirit's balm that heals as best as it can in this short and holy time. Renew us, restore us, and ready us to live encouraged as we go back into this world again. Amen.

Introit “In This Very Room” Carol & Ron Harris

In this very room, there's quite enough love for all of us;
And in this very room, there's quite enough joy for all of us.

And there's quite enough hope, and quite enough power,
To chase away any gloom
For Jesus, Lord Jesus is in this very room.

* Call to the Heart

Jim Dwiggins

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

One: Come, you who feel like clay: cracked, fragile, unfinished, falling to pieces.

Many: **We come, held in the hands of the One who will not let us go.**

One: Come with your heartbreaks, your fears, your losses, your laments.

Many: **We bring them to God, trusting that nothing in our lives is wasted.**

One: Come, you who are weary in world warped by division and injustice.

Many: **We come, longing for mercy, for justice, for peace to take shape among us.**

One: Come, you who have known failure and disappointment.

Many: **We come, believing God can reshape what's been broken.**

One: Come, you who hunger for love, welcome, inclusion, and belonging.

Many: **We come, open to the One who gathers all people into one family.**

One: Come, for the Potter is at work, shaping us into vessels of hope and new life.

Many: **We come to worship, ready to be molded by the love of God.**

* Hymn

“As a Fire Is Meant for Burning”

BEACH SPRING

As a fire is meant for burning with a bright and warming flame,
So the church is meant for mission, giving glory to God's name.
Not to preach our creeds or customs, but to build a bridge of care,
We join hands across the nations, finding neighbors everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers; we are pilgrims on the way.
We are seekers; we are givers; we are vessels made of clay.
By our gentle, loving actions, we would show that Christ is light.
In a humble, listening Spirit, we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime is the sign of life renewed,
So may we be signs of oneness 'mid earth's peoples, many hued.
As a rainbow lights the heavens when a storm is past and gone,
May our lives reflect the radiance of God's new and glorious dawn.

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Ourselves: “I am open to letting God shape my life, into some new expression of love.”

Neighbor: “You are open to letting God shape your life, into some new expression of love.”

World: “We are open to letting God shape our life, into some new expression of love.”

Prayer for Transformation (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

God, who is ever shaping and molding us, we confess that too often we resist your hands upon our lives. That we cling to what is broken, afraid to release it into your care. We hide our cracks and imperfections, fearing they make us unworthy of love. But help to know, you see us whole, invite us to be reshaped, and amid this transformation, still call us beloved. Amen.

Words of Grace

Jim Dwiggins

Friends, hear this good news...

God does not discard what is flawed or broken. In Christ, the one who showed us the depth of our own humanity, nothing is wasted—not our failures, not our losses, not even our regrets. The Spirit of God can take anything in our lives and reshapes it into possibility, beauty, and new life. So, receive and hold tightly to this grace: knowing you are forgiven, you are beloved, even now you are being made new.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Song

“I Love the Lord”

R. Smallwood

I love the Lord, who heard my cry and pitied every groan.
Long as I live and troubles rise, I'll hasten to God's throne.

I love the Lord, who heard my cry and chased my grief away.
O let my heart no more despair while I have breath to pray.

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

SANCTUARY

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Modern Lesson

Suzanne Lamorey

Our modern lesson for today comes from Kai Cheng Thom, who is a trans poet, artist, youth counselor, and mental health worker. Among their writing they say...

“To gather in community is to say: I will not leave you alone with your pain. It is to say: even when I do not understand, even when I cannot fix it, I will stand beside you and witness the truth of your life. There is medicine in being seen like this, even if it does not cure everything. There is a balm in knowing that our griefs and fears are not too much to carry together. Healing is not the erasure of wounds, but the weaving of care around them. When we do this, we make a world that whispers back to us: you are not alone, you are not forgotten, you are still loved.”

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

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

Hebrew Lesson

Jeremiah 18:1-11 (CEB)

Jim Dwiggins

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping... Our scripture lesson today comes from Jeremiah 18:1-11, where Jeremiah tells the Israelite people God is like a potter. A potter who will not discard them, but reshape them...

Jeremiah received the Lord's word: Go down to the potter's house, and I'll give you instructions about what to do there. So I went down to the potter's house; he was working on the potter's wheel. But the piece he was making was flawed while still in his hands, so the potter started on another, as seemed best to him. Then the Lord's word came to me: House of Israel, can't I deal with you like this potter, declares the Lord? Like clay in the potter's hand, so are you in mine, house of Israel! At any time I may announce that I will dig up, pull down, and destroy a nation or kingdom; but if that nation I warned turns from its evil, then I'll relent and not carry out the harm I intended for it. At the same time, I may announce that I will build and plant a nation or kingdom; but if that nation displeases and disobeys me, then I'll relent and not carry out the good I intended for it. Now say to the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem: This is what the Lord says: I am a potter preparing a disaster for you; I'm working out a plan against you. So each one of you, turn from your evil ways; reform your ways and your actions.

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

“In the Potter’s Hands Nothing is Wasted”

Song

“Change My Heart, O God”

E. Espinosa

Terry Raley-Dennis, vocals

Invitation to Generosity

Jim Dwiggins

We embrace the many ways people share their gifts with Holy Covenant. Whether you support us through a planned stewardship pledge or giving in your own way, you can now scan the QR code provided on the back of your bulletin to access our secure online giving options. We thank you for supporting Holy Covenant’s ministries of love, welcome, and justice we share together.

One: Just as clay is shaped by the potter’s hands, our lives are shaped by what we give ourselves and our gifts too. When we share our resources, our time, and our love, we join God’s work of shaping a more just, inclusive, and compassionate world. Let us share our gifts—not as something perfect, but as something from the heart—trusting that God can use even this to create beauty and new life.

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...

Creator God, take these gifts and take our lives, in all their imperfection, and shape them into vessels of your justice, compassion, and peace. Use what we offer this day to mend what is broken, to lift up the oppressed, and to proclaim a love that is not without justice. With grateful hearts, we dedicate all we are and all we have to your transforming work. Amen.

THE MYSTIC SUPPER
ALL ARE WELCOME AT CHRIST'S TABLE

Song of Preparation

"A Place at the Table"
Steve Tarr, vocals

FOR EVERYONE BORN

*For everyone born, a place at the table,
For everyone born, clean water and bread,
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
For everyone born, a star overhead,*

**Refrain: And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy,
Compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice,
Justice and joy!**

*For everyone born, a place at the table,
To live without fear, and simply to be,
To work, to speak out, to witness and worship,
For everyone born, the right to be free. (R)*

Invitation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: The Holy One be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Open your hearts wide.

Many: We open them to the Spirit who makes us whole.

One: Let us give thanks to the One who gives us life.

Many: It is right to offer our thanks and praise.

One: Holy One, in every age you have sought us out: when we were lost, you called us home; when we were broken, you held us close; when we felt beyond repair, you shaped us again with tenderness and grace. In Jesus, you showed us the depth of your love—welcoming outcasts, healing the wounded, lifting the weary, and gathering all people at tables of mercy. Even when the world fractured, injustice running rampant and people in despair, even Jesus's own life was taken, his body broken and his blood split, your love did not end. From death you raised him and told us life can begin again. Even though at times it's hard to believe and we don't always see it, even in the midst of tragedy, you are shaping life into something new. And so, we join our voices with all who hunger for wholeness, all who long for healing, singing a song of hope that has been sung in every age:

[Sanctus] *Holy, holy, holy One, God of mercy and love,
Heaven and earth are filled with your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God.
Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest.*

LAND OF REST

Words of Institution

One: On the night before he was betrayed, Jesus gathered with his closest friends around a table. He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, saying: "This is my body, broken for you. Take this and eat it in remembrance of me." Let this be a sign that God will always love you. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup and said: "This is the cup of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many, offering new life. Take this and drink from it in remembrance of me." Let this be a sign that God will always be with you. Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember and proclaim one of the great mysteries of our faith

Many: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ lives within us, and therefore the world, again.

Sharing of the Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Loving God, we thank you for welcoming us at this table of mercy and acceptance. You have met us in our own brokenness and filled us with your healing grace. You have reminded us that nothing can separate us from your love. Send us out as vessels of love and compassion, so that we may carry your wholeness into what can be a fractured and hurting world. Amen.

* Hymn "Have Thine Own Way, Lord"

ADELAIDE

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after thy will,
While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Search me and try me, Savior today.
Wash me just now, Lord, wash me just now,
As in thy presence, humbly I bow.

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Wounded and weary, help me, I pray.
Power, all power, surely is thine,
Touch me and heal me, Savior divine!

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!
Hold o'er my being absolute sway.
Fill with thy Spirit till all shall see
Christ only, always, living in me.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

"Song of Hope"

ARGENTINA

May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

"We Come to the Hungry Feast"

arr. M. Sedio

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Parts of the liturgy 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, Dave Shimberg

Greeters: Pam Shimberg

Refreshments: Missions and Justice Team

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

GET ALL THE DETAILS FOR NEWS AND EVENTS AT
<https://holycovenantucc.org/>



*Your generosity builds a more inclusive church!
Explore secure options available online
<https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/>*

NEW MEMBER - INQUIRER CLASSES SEPT. 7 & 28 | 12:30PM

If you are interested in becoming a member at Holy Covenant or would like to explore what becoming a member means, today is the first of two classes with the second on Sept. 28th, with a new member installation on October 5, which is World Communion Sunday. If you are interested or have questions, please reach out to Pastor Chris or contact the church office.

NEXT SUNDAY RALLY DAY AND POTLUCK!

Rally 'round y'all! Let's kick off the new season and celebration with a potluck afterward. Bring your favorite dish - we LOVE the varieties! Sign up in the Gathering Room or find a link within the newsletter.

High school and middle school youth and parents - please meet in new Teen Room (near the kitchen) after worship on Rally Day, Sept. 14. Parents will talk with Jo Ann Jellison about the schedule.

LIVING WELL TOGETHER:

A NEW GROUP FOR THOSE LIVING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

At Holy Covenant UCC, we believe that God's love surrounds us in every part of our journey—including times when our health brings challenges. Many in our community live with chronic illnesses or conditions, and we want to create a safe and supportive space for sharing, encouragement, and connection. We're inviting those who are interested to join us for an initial weekday luncheon gathering at the church. This will be a time to meet one another, share our stories, and talk about what kind of support or resources might be most meaningful. If you are interested see the newsletter for the signup link, or contact Pastor Chris or the church office.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

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

Members

Mel & Christine Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Tina Ettesen, Kathy Habel, Eileen Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Benjamin Rudolph, Pam Shimberg, Anita Taylor

Friends & Family Members

Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Linda Burby, Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Reva Dixon, Kim Dixon Van Fleet (Diane Neese), Erica Echeverri, Gloria Echeverri (Melissa Noll), Jason Field (Benjamin Rudolph), Kent Hansen (Kristen Fuchs), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), Doug Howe (Eileen Howe), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matt, Brianna and Rhiannon Pacewicz (Dom Ciciollo), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Michelle Sharp (Beth Sharp), Ed Stack (Martha Bomely), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

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