



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash photo by Rapha Wilde

"There is no final place of arrival. We are always becoming,
always returning, always being found again."

– Joy Harjo

"We do not find God; God finds us, especially in the very places we
thought were too lost, too broken, or too far gone."

– Richard Rohr

"God's kin-dom is born when the lost are embraced, when the
wandering are welcomed, when every life is seen as treasure."

– Ada María Isasi-Díaz

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
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 14, 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 "I Love to Tell the Story" arr. M. Sedio

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: Ever present God, who is always with us and among us, we gather in this place from many different roads. Some of those roads well-traveled, some winding, some that left us feeling a little lost along the way. This day we bring with us questions that linger, doubts we don't yet know how to name, and longings we can at times barely speak aloud. Here, in this sacred hour, may we remember that to be lost is not to be forgotten, and to wander is not to be unloved. Here in our seeking, may we find love. A love that never lets us go and always brings us home. 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

Ed Vickery

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

One: Today we come—friends returning, new and familiar faces, stories waiting to be told.

Many: **We are glad to be back together!**

One: The gathering room echoes again with voices and the laughter of little children.

Many: **Our community is alive with joy!**

One: Each of us brings something new and unique from the journey we've taken.

Many: **And together, we weave those gifts into the life we share.**

One: Here there is space for every story, every heart, every single person.

Many: **Here we are welcomed, valued, and loved as we are.**

One: Let us celebrate this Rally Day with gratitude and joy!

Many: **With full hearts, we now worship the God who gathers us in!**

* Hymn 252

“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”

BRADBURY

Savior, like a shepherd lead us, much we need your tender care;
In your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use your folds prepare.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us, yours we are;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us, yours we are.

We are yours, in love befriend us, be the guardian of our way;
Keep your flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear your children when we pray;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear your children when we pray.

Let us always seek your favor; let us always do your will;
Jesus Christ our only Savior, with your love our spirits fill.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still;
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.

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.”

Stewardship Moment

Alix Felsing

Prayer for Transformation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

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

Loving God, we admit that sometimes we wander, losing ourselves in busyness, fear, or distraction. Forgetting that Your love can reach even in lost places. Forgive us for the times when pride has kept us from asking for help or when shame has convinced us we are not worthy. Gather us in again, reminding us of Your grace, and that there is in fact a path ahead. Amen.

Words of Grace

Ed Vickery

Friends, hear this good news...

There is no place, nor are we so lost, that God cannot find us. Wherever we might wander and no matter how far off we might be from the beaten path, the love of God will always welcome us home. God is continually seeking us out with tenderness, treasures us deeply, and delights in our return. In Christ, we are found and forgiven, so in this moment let us be made new. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Song

“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”
Sally McLester, Diane Neese, Joy Decker, Mary Tarr

arr. L. Larson

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.

A Lament for These Times

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

Beth Sharp

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Laurel C. Schneider, who is a professor at Chicago Theological Seminary on queer, feminist, and postcolonial liberation theologies. Among her work she says...

“In a world that insists on binaries—this or that, us or them—a ‘logic of multiplicity’ invites us to dwell in the porous spaces in between. We see that our identities, our faith, our very way of being with one another are shaped by fluid, relational truths, not either/or dichotomies. To live into this theology is to recognize that being lost can open us to what is more expansive, more alive. God’s search for us may emerge most powerfully in those liminal spaces where we have dared to wander beyond fixed boundaries.”

* Gospel Lesson

Luke 15:1-10 (CEB)

Ed Vickery

Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping... Our Gospel lesson today comes from Luke 15:1-10, where Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin...

All the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus to listen to him. The Pharisees and legal experts were grumbling, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose someone among you had one hundred sheep and lost one of them. Wouldn’t he leave the other ninety-nine in the pasture and search for the lost one until he finds it? And when he finds it, he is thrilled and places it on his shoulders. When he arrives home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost sheep.’ In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes both heart and life than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to change their hearts and lives.

“Or what woman, if she owns ten silver coins and loses one of them, won’t light a lamp and sweep the house, searching her home carefully until she finds it? When she finds it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Celebrate with me because I’ve found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, joy breaks out in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who changes both heart and life.”

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

“Sometimes We Need to Get Lost”

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

At Holy Covenant, we celebrate the many ways you share your gifts: through pledged support, spontaneous generosity, and acts of love in our shared life. If you'd like to give today, you can scan the QR code on the back of your bulletin to access our secure online giving options. Thank you for sustaining the ministries of love, welcome, and justice we are creating together.

One: Today we heard Jesus tell the story of a shepherd who searches until a lost sheep is found and of a woman who sweeps her house until that one treasured coin is in her hand again. A story that tells us God's love is just as tireless in seeking us and just as joyful in welcoming us. Let our giving this morning be a response to that relentless grace. A way of saying, as we share our gifts today, that we are part of God's story of finding and loving people.

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

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

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

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

God of love, bless these gifts, that they may serve Your kin-dom of justice, peace, and compassion. Use what we bring to help gather the lost, to welcome the wandering, and to celebrate the beauty of every person. Transform our offerings into acts of love that draw Your kin-dom nearer on earth. In Christ's name, we dedicate both ourselves and these gifts to You. Amen.

* Hymn 207

"Just as I Am"

WOODWORTH

**Just as I am, without one plea, but that your love has welcomed me,
And that you called inviting me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

**Just as I am, though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears with in, without, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

**Just as I am, you will receive, will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because your promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

**Just as I am, your love unknown has broken every barrier down;
Now to be yours, and yours alone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!**

* 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

“A Place at the Table”

arr. B. Mann

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

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, Dom Ciciollo, Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Joy Decker, Shakti Subramanian, Laurence Winston

Greeters: Deborah Winston

Refreshments: Rally Day All Church Potluck

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/>

RALLY DAY AND POTLUCK

Plan to stay after worship as we kick off the new season and celebrate with a potluck! **High school and middle school youth and parents** - please meet in new Teen Room (near the kitchen) after worship. Parents will talk with Jo Ann Jellison about the schedule.

NEW MEMBER - INQUIRER CLASS PART 2, SEPT.28 | 12:30PM

If you are interested in becoming a member at Holy Covenant or would like to explore what becoming a member means, the second class will be held 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.

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.

SOJOURNERS CLASS, SUNDAYS | 9:45 AM

The Sojourners invite you to join us Sundays for an engaging and grace-filled discussions. All are welcome and no preparation is necessary. We meet in person or via zoom.

SAVE THE DATES - NEW PHOTO DIRECTORY COMING SOON! OCT. 9-11

You are Invited! We are hosting a professional photography event, **Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 9-11** for all of our faith family! This directory wouldn't be the same with out you! We would love to have 100% participation. There is no obligation to purchase. A free 8 x 10 portrait and complimentary printed photo directory for each sitting for each family unit. Not able to make these dates? Contact the church office. You may be able to find another photo op near you. Universal Church Directories has a reputable history with churches in North Carolina. Look for the sign up sheet in the Gathering Room.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER

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

Members

Roxie McMillon and family in the recent death of her sister, Beauta Brown
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), Joyce Tyler (Bill Tyler), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn),
Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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

Jon Weddell, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, 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