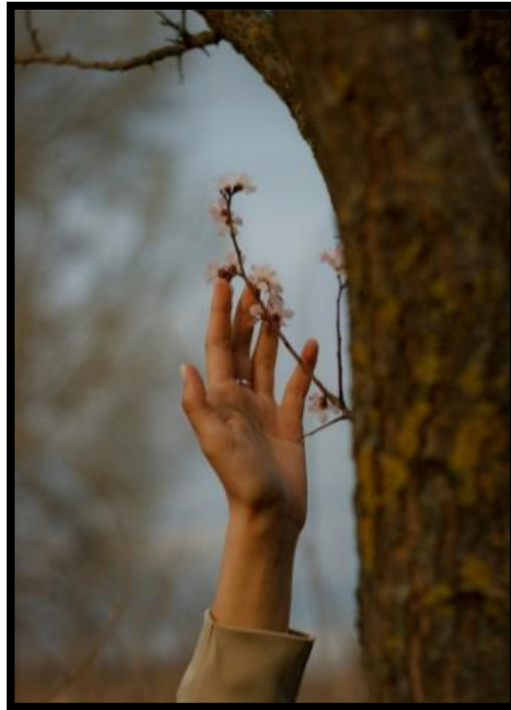




HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash photo by DNK.Photos

"The more you have, the more you are occupied.
The less you have, the more free you are."
– Mother Teresa

"Live simply so that others may simply live."
– Mahatma Gandhi

"If you scale back your possessions and commitments to just what you really need, you will have more time and energy for those things that truly bring you joy and enrich your life."
– Rachel Jonat

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
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 28, 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 Have Decided to Follow Jesus” arr. L. Larson

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 come this morning with arms full and hearts restless, reaching for more, yet longing for enough. In this space, quiet the noise of our striving, and remind us of the treasures that do not fade: the kindness freely given, the courage to do what is right, the love that grounds and sustains us. Here in this sacred space, may our hunger turn to gratitude, our striving for more to stillness, and our inner longing to outward joy. Teach us to take hold of what is good, so that we might be renewed in spirit and strengthened for the journey ahead. 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

Kristin Andes

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

One: Come, people of God, bringing your hopes, your struggles, and your questions.

Many: We come to take hold of what is truly life.

One: The world tells us to chase after more. Like more wealth, more status, more things.

Many: We come to take hold of what is truly life.

One: God invites us to discover contentment, to live with generosity, and to root ourselves in love.

Many: We come to take hold of what is truly life.

One: Christ shows us that joy is found not in the abundance of possessions but in the abundance of grace.

Many: We come to take hold of what is truly life.

One: The Spirit is moving among us now, calling us to live with curiosity, to walk in peace, to seek love and justice.

Many: We come to take hold of what is truly life. Let us not just take this life but embrace it. Amen.

* Hymn 3

“Wakantanka Taku Nitawa”

LACQUEPARLE

Translation: “Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works”

(Dakota Tribe)

Joseph R. Renville’s mother was Dakota and his father, French. An explorer, fur trader, and Congregational minister, Renville helped found the Lac qui Parle Mission in Minnesota in 1835. This song, which is also known as the “Dakota Hymn,” was sung by thirty-eight Dakota prisoners of war as they were led to execution at Mankato, Minnesota, on December 26, 1862. This song was first published in the Dakota Indian Hymnal (1916).

**Many and Great, O God, are your works, Maker of earth and sky;
Your hands have set the heavens with stars,
Your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
Lo, at your word the waters were formed;
Deep seas obey your voice.**

**Grant unto us communion with you, O star abiding One;
Come unto us and dwell with us:
With you are found the gifts of life.
Bless us with life that has no end, eternal life with you.**

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*)

Kristin Andes

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

Holy One, we confess that too often we chase after more. More possessions, more recognition, more distractions. We scroll endlessly, buy what we don't need, and compare ourselves to others in ways that leave us empty. We cling to things that do not give life, forgetting the ways you call us. Forgive us, O God, and turn our hearts again to what is true and lasting. Amen.

Words of Grace

Kristin Andes

Friends, hear this good news...

God does not love us for what we own or for what we lack. We don't need something that feels like it's missing to receive God's love. In Christ, we are already enough, we already have what we need, we are already held in God's mercy. When we let go of our need for more, we make room for God's grace. Friends, let us believe we are forgiven, so that we may take hold of this life we have been given. Amen.

Stewardship Moment

Alix Felsing and Tommy Tomlinson

Song

“Come Build a Church”

Ken Medema

Come build a church with soul and spirit,

Come build a church of flesh and bone.

We need no tower rising skyward; no house of wood or glass or stone.

Come build a church with human frailty,

Come build a church of flesh and blood.

Jesus shall be its sure foundation. It shall be built by the hand of God.

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 Tom Lannin
Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Sherri L. Mitchell, who is an author and activist of the Penobscot (pronounced Puh-NAHB-skut) Tribe, an Indigenous people from the Northeastern Woodlands region of America. Among her work she says...

"We are taught that land and spirit are not separate, that everything is alive, that every being—rock, tree, river—is part of the web of life. When we live in relationship with that understanding, we begin to see that the craving for more—more land, more resources, more control— distorts our connections. We lose sight of reciprocity. Our fulfillment becomes a hunger, not a gift. If we can learn to give back, to honor what sustains us, to limit what we take, we reclaim peace. That peace is not passive— full of action, guided by responsibility. Fulfillment is not in having more, but in being more deeply in harmony with all that is."

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

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

This Sunday, due to the length of the scripture reading, please remain seated.

Our Scripture reading for comes from 1 Timothy 6:6-19, where Paul reminds Timothy that true life is not found in wealth or possessions...

We will be sharing two translations- the first is from the First Nations Version in honor of Indigenous and Native Peoples of this country, which the UCC recognizes on this Sunday. Our second will come from the Common English Bible.

First Nations Version
An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament
Lee Parish

It is true that following the ways of the Great Spirit will lead to great possessions, but only when people are at peace with what they have. For we came into this world with nothing and can take nothing with us when we leave it. So, as long as we have food to eat and a roof over our heads, we should be at peace with what we have. Those who long for more and more possessions stumble into temptation and are trapped by many foolish desires that drag them down and take them to a bad end.

For the love of possessions is the root of many evil, thorny branches. Some, who have made possessions their aim in life, have walked away from the good road and have been pierced by thorns that bring them much pain and sorrow.

But you, O man who follows the Great Spirit, run away from these things and pursue doing what is right, living in a sacred way, trusting, loving, never giving up, and walking softly and in a humble manner. Fight for the good fight of trusting Creator. Get a firm hold on the life of the world to come that never fades away, full of beauty and harmony. The Great Spirit called you to this life when you said yes to him and made it known before many people that you had chosen to walk the good road with Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One.

As you stand before the Great Spirit who gives life to all things, and before the Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One, who told the truth in a good way when he stood before Spear of the Great Waters (Pilate), I call on you to follow through with this way of life to which he has called you. Keep walking a path that no one can find fault with until the day comes when our Honored Chief, Creator Sets Free (Jesus) the Chosen One, will appear. That day will be revealed when the time is right by the Blessed One who alone rules above all others, the Grand Chief Above All Chiefs. He is the only one over whom death have no power. His life shines so bright no one can even come near him, and no human eye has ever been able to fully see him. To him belongs all honor and power to the time beyond the end of all days. Aho! May it be so!

Instruct the ones who have many possessions in this present world not to see themselves as better than others. They must not put their hope in their many possessions, which cannot be depended on, but in the Great Spirit, who, from his great possessions, provides all we need to enjoy life. Instruct them to walk in a good way, to possess many good deeds, and to be willing and ready to share with those in need.

In this way, they will be storing up and preparing themselves for the life of the world to come, the true life of beauty and harmony that never grows old or fades away.

Common English Bible
Kristin Andes

Actually, godliness is a great source of profit when it is combined with being happy with what you already have. We didn't bring anything into the world and so we can't take anything out of it: we'll be happy with food and clothing. But people who are trying to get rich fall into temptation. They are trapped by many stupid and harmful passions that plunge people into ruin and destruction. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.

But as for you, man of God, run away from all these things. Instead, pursue righteousness, holy living, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness. Compete in the good fight of faith. Grab hold of eternal life—you were called to it, and you made a good confession of it in the presence of many witnesses. I command you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and Christ Jesus, who made the good confession when testifying before Pontius Pilate. Obey this order without fault or failure until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The timing of this appearance is revealed by God alone, who is the blessed and only master, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He alone has immortality and lives in light that no one can come near. No human being has ever seen or is able to see him. Honor and eternal power belong to him. Amen.

Tell people who are rich at this time not to become egotistical and not to place their hope on their finances, which are uncertain. Instead, they need to hope in God, who richly provides everything for our enjoyment. Tell them to do good, to be rich in the good things they do, to be generous, and to share with others. When they do these things, they will save a treasure for themselves that is a good foundation for the future. That way they can take hold of what is truly 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.

Invitation to Generosity

Kristin Andes

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: Paul reminded Timothy and the early church that true life is not found in wealth or possessions, but in generosity, good works, and sharing with others. He urged them to “do good, be generous, and ready to share.” Today, we are given that same invitation. When we give, we loosen our grip on what distracts us, and we take hold of what brings us life: community, compassion, justice, and joy. Let us now bring our offerings to God, trusting that what we share will bless others and help build a more generous world...

* Doxology

THANK YOU LORD

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

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Kristin Andes

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

Generous God, we offer these gifts as a sign of our desire to take hold of what is truly life. Use them to build Your kin-dom in this world, a world where love is shared, justice is pursued, and no one is left in need. Bless these gifts and bless our lives, so that we too may be rich in good works, generous in spirit, and steadfast in our faith. Let it be so, Amen.

* Hymn 460

“Be Not Dismayed”

MARTIN

Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you;
Beneath God's wings of love abide, God will take care of you.

Refrain: God will take care of you, through every day, o'er all the way;
God will take care of you, God will take care of you.

Through days of toil when heart grows frail, God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you. (R)

All you may need God will provide, God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you. (R)

No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you.
Lean weary one, upon God's breast, God will take care of you. (R)

* 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

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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

Greeters: Jackie Freeze

Refreshments: Suzanne Lamorey

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 CLASS PART 2, TODAY | 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 today, 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.

NEW PHOTO DIRECTORY, OCT. 9-11

You are Invited! We are hosting a professional photography event, **Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 9-11** to include all of our faith family! This directory wouldn't be the same without you! We would love to have 100% participation. There is no obligation to make a purchase. A free 8 x 10 portrait and a complimentary printed photo directory for each sitting for each family unit. Not able to make these dates? Contact the church office. There may be 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 and more information in the newsletter.

CHARLOTTE C.R.O.P. HUNGER WALK, OCT. 19

Let's walk to feed the hungry, locally and globally! All are invited to join the Charlotte CROP Hunger Walk on October 19. 25% of all donations will stay in Mecklenburg County and be given to 3 agencies - Nourish UP, Crisis Assistance Ministry and Second Harvest Food Bank. Walkers are encouraged to ask for pledges and/or donations from friends and relatives. Contact Tina Dickens at taichitina@gmail.com or in person at church. Questions welcome!

STEWARDSHIP PLANNING FOR 2026

Thanks to your prompt response, our 2025 Stewardship Campaign is off to a great start. As of Friday, Sept. 26, pledges to the General Fund are at 46% of our \$140,000 goal. Pledges to the Building Fund are at 21% of our \$40,000 goal. We welcome your gifts of time, talent and treasure. To make a financial pledge, go to <https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/> or scan this QR code:



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

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