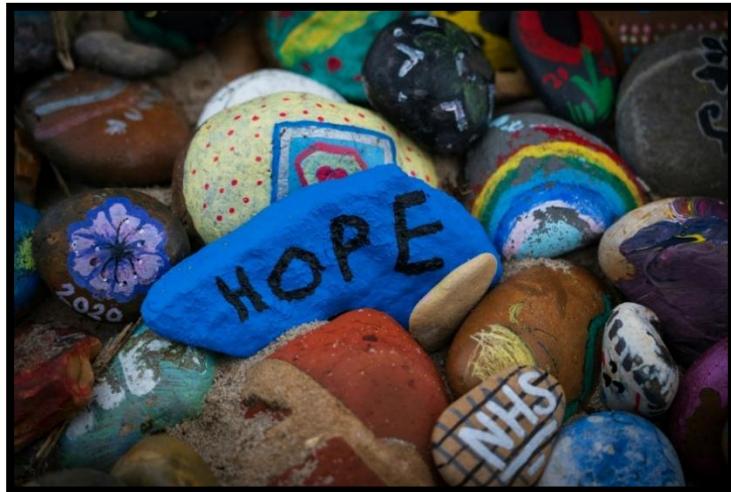




**HOLY COVENANT**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
*-be the Church, everywhere*



*Unsplash image by Nick Fewings*

“Hope is a gift, but you don’t receive that gift if you’re not creating resources for it...Reasons for hope don’t just drop from the sky. They come from below, from what people are doing.”

- Gustavo Gutiérrez

“My being is a declaration of hope. That visibility is not a compromise, but a step toward a more inclusive world.”

- Hope Giselle

“How can Christian theology truly speak of the hope of Jesus Christ, unless that hope begins and ends with the liberation of the poor in the social existence...there can be no talk about hope in the Christian sense unless it is talk about the freedom of black, red, and brown people.”

- James H. Cone

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

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT ~ HOPE

November 30, 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                    "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"                    arr. J. Carraway

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

**Many:** And also with you.

## Chiming of the Hour

Welcome to this house, open and affirming,  
In God's Son we are all one. Hand in hand we stand.  
Welcome to this house, caring and accepting.  
In God's Son we are all one.  
Welcome to this house of God.

Welcome to this house. Blessed by Word and Harmony.  
Child of God, born from above. Know that Christ is love.  
Welcome to this house. Filled with peace and charity.  
Child of God, born from above.  
Welcome to this house of God.

Hanging of the Greens Kristin Andes

One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the coming of the Bringer of Peace?

Many: With colors of blue and the beauty and truth of God's Word.

One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the coming of our Comforter?

**Many:** With garlands of pine and fir, with holly and ivy whose leaves are ever living, ever green.

One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the coming of the Light of the World?

**Many:** With trees of light, which shine in the darkness, calling us to hope.

One: How shall we prepare this house of worship for the Beloved of God?

Many: **With a wreath of green and candles of celebration, which lead us through this season of waiting.**

One: How shall we prepare our hearts for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Many: **By hearing the words of the prophets, by opening our spirits to the songs of the season, by receiving the Word of God in our lives.**

All: **Come, let us worship our God who is, who was, and who is to come.**

Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal Spirit rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all-sufficient merit raise us to thy glorious throne.

## 2025 Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy

By doing this we remember the ways God lives among us, bringing life and hope amid difficulty and hardship. Each candle and flame we light brings to our awareness the ways the Spirit of God is still present among us, unfolding something new within and around us.

This morning, we invite the Deck family, Kyle, Amanda, and Harper to come forward to light our first candle.

## Advent Candle 1: Hope

Kyle, Amanda & Harper Deck

Today we light the first candle, the candle of Hope. *[light the candle]*

We light this candle as a sign of hope. Hope does not deny the pain of the world but leans toward the promise of God's renewing love to heal it. Hope is the quiet conviction that even when things seem uncertain, God is still creating, still healing, still calling us toward new beginnings. In a time when despair is all around us, we choose to nurture hope as an act of faith. This hope is not passive, but the active trust that God's future is already taking shape among us. May this flame remind us that we are never alone, for God's hope is alive and growing in us and through us.

One: In a world longing for renewal...

Many: We light the candle of hope.

One: When fear and despair draw near...

Many: We light the candle of hope.

One: May this light guide our steps and our hearts...

Many: For God is birthing new life among us.

## Song of Response

## “Light the Candle”

C. Schalk

**Light the candle of HOPE today, the Giver of hope will come!**

**Welcome the hope we long and wait for, but only Christ can give.**

**Flicker and flame and glow with hope, light up the world around you.**

**Flicker and flame and glow with hope, light up the world around you.**

## Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

## Recognition of World AIDS Day

Today in our service we want to take time to recognize World AIDS Day, which is observed on Dec. 1st. As a community committed to love and justice, we stand with all who have been affected by HIV and AIDS—those who have died, those who live with the virus today, and communities that have long advocated for those living with HIV and AIDS with both deep grief and extraordinary courage. We remember the ways stigma around AIDS has harmed people, and recommit ourselves to being a church of compassion, love, and advocacy. In that spirit, we offer this special music.

## Special Music

## “Patchwork Quilt”

W. Haynes

*D Evans, vocalist*

## Pastoral Prayer

Lee Parrish

Advent Inspired Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

Our Creator, who is ever-present, holy is Your name. In this season of waiting, let Your kin-dom draw near, and let Your will be done in our hearts, as it is in Your heavenly realm. Give us today the bread of hope, to sustain our faith as we journey toward the manger. Forgive us for the times we rush past Your presence and help us forgive those who have wounded us. Lead us away from the distractions that dim Your light and deliver us from the shadows of fear and doubt. For Yours is the kin-dom of promise, and the power of love, now and forever. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

M. Card

Jesus, let us come to know you.  
Let us see you face to face.  
Touch us, hold us, use us, mold us,  
Only let us live in you.

Modern Lesson

Pam Shimberg

*Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Rev. Amara Reyes, a queer Latina pastor and progressive Christian theologian, who writes...*

“Hope is not the soft thing we’ve mistaken it for; it is the steady decision to rise again when the world has given us every reason to fold. It is the quiet voice inside that whispers, ‘There is another way,’ even when we cannot yet see it. Hope teaches us to trust that God is already moving, already stirring, already healing things we do not have the strength to name. It refuses to let cynicism have the last word. And when we practice hope together, we become a community that lifts one another into possibility. Hope, in the end, is the courage to believe that God’s future is still worth walking toward.”

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

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

Anthem

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

arr. P. Liebergen

Hebrew Lesson

Isaiah 2:1-5 (CEB)

Kristin Andes

*Our Scripture reading for today comes from Isaiah 2:1-5, where the prophet shares his vision for a new world. A world of peace and where people walk in God's ways and on God's paths...*

This is what Isaiah, Amoz's son, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. In the days to come the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of the mountains. It will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go and say, "Come, let's go up to the Lord's mountain, to the house of Jacob's God so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths." Instruction will come from Zion; the Lord's word from Jerusalem. God will judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations. Then they will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war. Come, house of Jacob, let's walk by the Lord's light.

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

"Hope That Moves Us On"

Special Music

"Advent Hymn"

C. Nockels

*Eric Miner, Ed Vickery, vocalists*

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.*

In this season and time when need is great and our troubles are many, we dare to believe in God and the kin-dom that is to be. Our giving becomes an act of resistance, a way of saying, "This story isn't finished, and there's still yet more to be written." As we offer our gifts, we participate in Story as God of turns swords into plowshares, fear into love, and worry into hope. Let us now share, trusting that God uses even the smallest of gifts to do great things.

\* Doxology

W Żłobie Leży

Glory be to the Creator, Glory be to the Christ,  
Glory be to the Spirit, our praise to you arise.  
Here we offer to you gladly all the gifts that you impart,  
As we glory in your presence, giving from a grateful heart.

\* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Kristin Andes

*Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...*  
Gracious God, receive these gifts and transform them into signs of hope for our community and beyond. Where discouragement lingers, plant seeds of possibility; where weariness weighs heavily, let generosity bring life. Renew our minds and hearts, so that we might see the world through your hope and be the presence of Christ. Bless all that was given and who we are becoming, as we share your gifts with the world. Amen.

\* Hymn 117

“Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates”

TRURO

Lift up your heads, O mighty gates; behold the glorious Ruler waits!  
The Sovereign One is drawing near; the Savior of the world is here.

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart  
From earthly use for heaven's employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come! I open wide my heart to you; here, Christ, abide!  
Let me your inner presence feel; Your grace and love in me reveal.

So come, my Sovereign; enter in! Let new and nobler life begin;  
Your Holy Spirit guide us on, until the glorious crown be won.

\* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

\* Benediction Response

WAITING

While we are waiting, come; while we are waiting, come.  
Jesus, our Lord, Emmanuel, while we are waiting, come.

Postlude

“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

arr. J. Purifoy

*Songs in this service are used by permission.  
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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, Eric Miner

Greeters: Eric Miner, Pam Shimberg

Refreshments: Bold & Beautiful Covenant Group

Deacon of the Month: Martha Bomely (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/>*

**CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR AT <https://holycovenantucc.org/events/>**

**12/07 Second Sunday in Advent, Room In The Inn begins**

**12/14 Third Sunday in Advent,**

**Cookie Exchange following worship**

**12/21 Fourth Sunday in Advent (Music Sunday)**

**12/24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

**(Chili Supper 5:30pm / Service 7:00pm)**



## **WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

Greeters and ushers are needed starting at 10:30am every Sunday. Liturgists and readers roles are also available.

## **SOJOURNERS CLASS, SUNDAYS at 9:45AM**

Rev. Jay Whitley will lead us in a study of five of the minor prophets. Connect with him for materials for this study.

## HOSPITALITY - WITH YOU IN MIND

The Hospitality team is looking into practical ways they can support those with food allergies during our shared meals. They would like input from members who have experience navigating these difficulties. If you have suggestions on how best to set up shared meals and potlucks, please contact Holly Middleton at [hsmiddleton@gmail.com](mailto:hsmiddleton@gmail.com).

## HOLIDAY LOVE OFFERING FOR OUR STAFF

During this joyful time of year, we ask you to consider contributing to a holiday love offering to be divided among our dedicated staff members who work hard to make Holy Covenant a place of welcome, warmth, & spiritual renewal. *No gift is too small and all are appreciated.* If you choose to give, offerings can be made via any of these methods: Venmo: @mbbomely; PayPal: Martha.Bomely@gmail.com; Zelle: 7048040640 Check: Payable to *Martha Bomely*. *The last day for staff gifts is Monday, December 15.*

## FREEDOM TO READ: EXPLORE OUR NEW BANNED BOOK LIBRARY PAGE

Our newly expanded Freedom to Read: Banned Book Library web page is now live. Designed to celebrate curiosity, dignity, and diverse voices, this new page invites you to discover books that have shaped lives, sparked conversations, and endured attempts to silence them. <https://holycovenantucc.org/news-listings/freedom-to-read-page-launch/>

## THIRD ANNUAL COOKIE EXCHANGE, DECEMBER 14

Attention All Bakers! Dust off and select your favorite cookie recipes and join us for the third annual cookie exchange after worship on Sunday, Dec. 14. Share your favorite cookie and get to bring home some new ones! We will make accommodations for the choir members needing to get to rehearsal. Please join us! Look to reply with the SignUpGenius.



- Bring a minimum of 2 dozen cookies - homemade or store bought are welcome. 2 dozen will go to the cookie swap. The extras will go to the neighbors joining us in January for Room In The Inn.
- If you bring homemade cookies, please bring a copy of your recipe. We will take a picture of it and email all the recipes to the participants.
- There will be boxes to take your goodies home.

## CHRISTMAS EVE CHILI (& SOUP) SUPPER & CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Supper 5:30 PM | Service 7:00 PM

Join us on **Christmas Eve** for one of Holy Covenant's most beloved holiday traditions — an evening filled with warmth, laughter, and light. We'll begin with a **Chili (& Soup) Supper** at **5:30 PM** in the Gathering Room, followed by the **Candlelight Worship Service** at **7:00 PM** in the Sanctuary.



<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-53825271-christmas#/>

### Please Remember in Prayer

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to  
[prayers@holycovenantucc.org.](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org)

### Members

Mel & Christine Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Teresa Eller, Kathy Habel, Eileen Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Linda Miller, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Benjamin Rudolph, Anita Taylor

### Friends & Family Members

Felix Batton (Darline Warren-Batton), Beth, Michael & Julian Bliss (Robert Shepherd), Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Linda Burby, Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Gayle Clay (Jay Whitley), Erica Echeverri, Gloria Echeverri (Melissa Noll), Jason Field (Benjamin Rudolph), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), Jack Hillard (Barbara Schneller), 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), Frank Roach (Kristen Fuchs), 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

**Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Senior Pastor**

**RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167**

**Jon Weddell, Minister of Music**

**Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant**

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