



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



HCUCC Everywhere 2025 Annual Report

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Holy Covenant United Church of Christ

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Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2024

NOTE: Portions of the annual report were delivered during the worship service preceding the annual meeting. Reports from each of the ministry teams are in the 2024 Annual Report.

Service Began

Worship Team Report

Ed Vickery gave the Worship Team report.

Christian Education Team Report

Jo Ann Jellison gave the Christian Education Team report.

Racial Justice and Equity Team Report

Meg Houlihan gave the Racial Justice and Equity Team report.

Pastor's Report

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki gave the Pastor's report.

Missions and Justice Team Report

Suzanne Lamorey gave the Missions and Justice Team report.

Buildings and Grounds Team Report

Suzanne Lamorey gave the Buildings and Grounds Team report.

Service Ended

Annual Congregational Meeting

Opening

Jeff Edwards-Knight called the meeting to order and with the help of tabulators established that a quorum was present.

Approval of the 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes

Jeff Edwards-Knight called for a motion to approve the 2023 Annual Congregational Meeting Minutes. Dave Shimberg made the motion and a second was provided by Lloyd Spencer. There were none opposed, and the 2023 minutes were approved.

President's Report

Jeff Edwards-Knight provided the President's report. Jeff has served as Consistory President for the past two years and noted his special thanks to Consistory Vice-President Terry Raley-Dennis for her leadership during 2024.

Endowment Team Report

Cheri Lovell, attending online, provided the Endowment Team report. Several key items were presented:

- At the end of 3rd quarter 2024, the value of the endowment was \$1,765,800.
- The rate of return for 2024 was 24%.
- In Spring 2024, Consistory voted to allocate a portion of the fixed-income portfolio to a mortgage loan to Pastor Czarnecki and his family.

- The target investments for the endowment are 60% stocks and 40% fixed-income, and the fixed income portion includes investments with Fidelity and Pastor Czarnecki's mortgage.
- During the year, the Team provided grants totaling \$106,500.
- Five of these grants, for \$20,000 each, were provided to groups involved in Hurricane Helene relief efforts in western NC.

Consistory Class of 2027 Nominations

Jo Ann Jellison, reporting for the Nominating Committee, presented the nominees for the Consistory Class of 2027:

Tom Magraw - Elder
Dawn Robinson - Elder

Martha Bomely - Deacon
Tom Lannin - Deacon
Lee Parish – Deacon

Jeff Edwards-Knight then asked if there were additional nominations from the floor. Hearing none, Jeff called for a vote. The congregation unanimously approved the Consistory Class of 2027.

Nominations for the Endowment Team

Per the Endowment Policy, the Endowment Team needs at least 5 and no more than 7 members. Jo Ann Jellison reported that the Nominating Committee recommended that Gregg Walker and Mel Andersen be nominated to serve 3-year terms.

Jeff asked if there were any additional nominations from the floor. Hearing none, Jeff called for a vote, and the congregation unanimously approved Gregg and Mel for service on the Endowment Team.

Next the congregation was asked to vote on an extension for Cheri Lovell's tenure as Chair of the Endowment Team. Jo Ann read the following text from page 12 of the Annual Report.

"Cheri Lovell has served as the Chair for the Endowment Team for two consecutive 3-year terms and is due to roll off. Given that the Endowment Team has no incoming Chair to replace Cheri and is in the middle of a policy review being led by the active Chair, the nominating team is recommending to the congregation that Cheri Lovell be allowed to extend her term to serve as the active Chair through the completion of the policy review, not to exceed one-year."

Questions from the floor:

Will the Congregation vote on a new chair after the policy review is completed?

Cheri noted that the policy does not specify that the Congregation selects the new Chair. The Congregation would vote to approve the member selected to replace Cheri and the members of the Endowment Team would select the Chair from among the team members.

There were also requests/suggestions to modify the text that reads "to serve as the active Chair through the completion of the policy review, not to exceed one-year."

Based on the discussions, the amended text should read: that Cheri Lovell's tenure as Chair will end with the completion of the Endowment Policy review, but no later than Dec. 31, 2025.

There was no further discussion or questions from the congregation. Jeff called for the vote, and the extension, with modifications, was unanimously approved.

Budget and Finance Team Report

Jeff Hughes gave the Budget and Finance Team report. The following are some of the highlights of the proposed 2025 budget:

- *The outstanding mortgage on the church building is now less than \$100k and will be paid off in 2027.*
- *Extra HVAC expenses were offset by additional income from Crown Castle.*
- *Successful stewardship campaign despite losing some church members.*
- *The church's cash account balance is near \$150K.*
- *Projected income in 2025 is \$282K.*
- *Increases noted in electricity costs and staff salaries.*
- *A final balanced budget was presented to the congregation which included increases in staff salaries.*

Meg Houlihan thanked the Budget and Finance Team for their efforts in the important work of shepherding the financial well-being of Holy Covenant UCC.

Jeff Edwards-Knight then called for a vote on the budget. The budget was unanimously approved.

Acknowledgement of Ministry Teams

Terry Raley-Dennis, Consistory Vice-President, expressed her thanks to ministry teams and to everyone in the entire congregation for their contributions during this past year – noting that their work that is vital to the health and growth of HC-UCC.

Thanks and Benediction

Pastor Czarnecki extended special thanks to groups/individuals who worked on preparations for the congregational meeting:

*Everyone who helped with food and preparation for the luncheon
Consistory, Team Chairs, Team members and the larger congregation
Laura and Brian Hankins for work on slides and meeting logistics
Dawn Simmons for time and dedication in completing the 42-page annual report.*

Pastor Czarnecki then closed the meeting with a benediction.

Meeting Concluded

Respectfully submitted,
Mel Andersen, Consistory Secretary 2024

President's Report

To my Holy Covenant family,

2025 has been a busy year for both Holy Covenant church members and the Consistory.

In January at our consistory retreat, Pastor Chris presented us with a book that he wanted us to read and discuss over the next months when we had our meetings. The book was Piloting Church by Cameron Trimble. We read and discussed a chapter each month at the beginning of our meetings. This generated ideas for how we could help Holy Covenant evolve as our congregation continues to increase and more families with children and young people begin to regularly attend our services. Plans and ideas that will grow during the coming years have been generated with the goal of putting these practices into play to create a stronger, more stable church.

In May, we held a Congregational meeting to approve the updated policy for the Endowment team as well as adding two people to the team. The updated policy, as well as the addition of Gregg Walker and Mel Andersen to the team, were approved by the congregation. In the following month, Gregg Walker took over the Chair of the Endowment team and Mel Andersen serves as the liaison to consistory.

June was a very active time for the church. Our Racial Justice & Equity team hosted a very informative gathering that highlighted the Wilmington Massacre. They did this by involving the Charlotte community to also attend this film presentation and discussion. This allowed people from the Charlotte community to know who Holy Covenant is and what we stand for. The positive benefits from that presentation have attracted people to visit Holy Covenant to learn more about our campus and get to know Pastor Chris. We also celebrated 25 years being an O&A UCC Church. This affiliation has continued to attract new folks to Holy Covenant.

Because June was such an active month at Holy Covenant, Consistory didn't meet in person for June and July. July is the month we typically take a holiday from the monthly meeting. However, as items came up needing our attention, we were able to meet quorum via email and zoom meetings.

Several Consistory and church members attended an active shooter training course that was facilitated by our insurance company. The presentation was very informative and thought-provoking. We will have a video to share with anyone who would like to see it once the insurance company shares it with us. Our Safety team will find this information very useful.

Developing a clear, attainable long range strategic plan for Holy Covenant was on my radar when I stepped into the leadership team role. This past year Pastor Chris, Dawn Robinson and I have been trying to wrap our arms around how we can make this a reality. We have met with two different groups and have received proposals from them. However, this has become a project that is going to need lots of time, talent and money to pull it together correctly. I am passing my goal for this project on to next year's classes of Deacons and Elders to make this a reality.

As I exit Consistory next month, I want to thank the Deacons and Elders I've worked with over the course of my past three years. I am proud to be a member of your tribe here at Holy Covenant. To all the team leaders/chairs/facilitators I've had the opportunity to work with, your dedication and hard work here at Holy Covenant do not go unnoticed or unappreciated! I am so proud to be a part of your efforts to make Holy Covenant a safe, loving, welcoming place to be. To all our members new and old, I might have issues with remembering your name without a name tag ... and sometimes even with one, but I love the

fact that we are gathered together here in this beautiful space to worship in a way that I believe Jesus would be proud of.

Last, but not least, I want to say how proud I am to have had the chance to work with Dawn Simmons, Jon Weddell and most of all Pastor Chris. Pastor Chris, you liked to call me “boss” this past year, but I gratefully feel that you out rank the boss by being such a good shepherd to Holy Covenant.

Thank you all for making my year as President of Consistory an experience I will remember and treasure.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Raley-Dennis, 2025 Consistory President



Clerk’s Report as of November 12, 2025

Members as of 2025:

195	Members of Record for 2024 as of November 15, 2024
+ 0	Confirmands
+ 17	New members
- 4	Deaths
- 1	Transfers
- 44	Removed from Rolls/ adjustment #
163*	

* November 12, 2025

Members of Record who have not had any contact with the church within the past six years have been removed from the rolls as of November 6, 2025. Contact indicators included no engagement through newsletters (unopened or unsubscribed), absence from in-person or virtual worship services, no monetary or financial contribution to the church, and no communication via social media or church during this six-year period. Membership totals are used to determine annual dues paid to the Southern Conference UCC.

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Simmons, EAA, Clerk of Records



Personnel Report

Team Members: Jeffery Edwards-Knight (Chair), Phyllis Johnson, Dawn Robinson, Ed Vickery, Jay Whitley, Pastor Christopher Czarnecki (ex-officio)

Purpose of the Team

The Personnel Team provides human resource management and support for all individuals employed by the congregation.

Membership Requirements

The Personnel Team shall consist of at least three members, with representation from individuals familiar with worship, the music program, and administration. The Pastor serves as an ex-officio member.

Key Highlights for the Year

1. Conducted reviews and updates of job descriptions for all congregational staff to ensure accuracy and relevance.
2. Developed and implemented performance evaluation processes for all employees, including the Pastor, Executive Administrative Assistant, and Minister of Music.
3. Submitted salary increase recommendations for the Pastor, Executive Administrative Assistant, and Minister of Music to the Budget Team.

Goals for the Coming Year

- Complete the annual performance reviews for the Pastor, Executive Administrative Assistant, and Minister of Music by the end of the year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jeffery Edwards-Knight, Chair

Pastor's Report

Holy Covenant,

As I reflect on this past year of ministry at Holy Covenant UCC, my heart is filled with deep gratitude for the ways God's Spirit continues to move among us. 2025 has been a year marked by growth, meaningful ministry, and what I see are unmistakable signs that new life is emerging within our church.

This year we said goodbye to several beloved members of our church family—Ed Sharp, Joann Felsing, and Isabelle Powell—each of whom was honored in a memorable Celebration of Life service. In March, I joined Rev. Lloyd Spencer in Lincolnton to preside over the interment of Rev. Linn Finger, where he received military honors for his service to our country. We also received word this Spring that Sharon Landis passed away, who was one of the charter members and a pillar of Pilgrim UCC. These sacred moments of remembrance reminded us of the holy privilege it is to have life and share it with others whom we love.

We also rejoiced in moments of joy, celebrating two weddings this year and welcoming 19 new people into our church community, 18 of whom became members of Holy Covenant. Each new face and story continues to remind us that the Spirit is indeed drawing new people into our midst who are seeking the kind of community we are striving to be: open, affirming, grounded in love, and justice seeking.

Our worship life has been rich and vibrant. From Ash Wednesday, when we offered non-toxic glitter ashes as a sign of our solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community, to Easter Sunday, where we celebrated the resurrection of Christ with more than a hundred in attendance, each service is thoughtfully planned to be meaningful and give people an experience of God that is loving, encouraging, and hopeful.

I think many would agree that one of the most moving Sundays this year was Palm Sunday, when six confirmands completed their Confirmation journey of faith formation and offered deeply meaningful reflections during our worship service. On that same day, we recognized Dawn Simmons for her 15 years of dedicated service as our Church Administrator. It was a moment of heartfelt gratitude for all she does.

Our worship life continues to grow in creativity and diversity, with offerings such as our recent Contemplative Service and Mix-It-Up Sundays, expanding how we experience the sacred presence of God in our midst. The vacant seats that are now being filled, the sounds of children crying and laughing, and the increasing number of people who are showing up for worship on Sunday all speak to the new life that is emerging among us.

I felt this last year that I wanted to try something new, so at the beginning of this year we introduced programming called "A Year of Wellness," and also partnered with the North Carolina Council of Churches' Partners in Health and Wholeness Program to enhance this programming. Over the course of the year, I think we discovered that we may not yet be functioning at a "program church" level, however this effort provided meaningful ways for people to explore spiritual and personal wellbeing, deepening their faith in some more practical, life-giving ways.



As we've grown, so has our ability to connect people together who have had or are sharing similar experiences. So, two new groups have been born. The first, *Healing Connections*, is for a group for women in our community seeking mutual support and healing, and the second, *Living Well Together*, is intended for those living with chronic illness. One has already met and started, and we are in the process now of trying to get the other together for its first meeting.

Our commitment to justice and public witness remained strong this year. We continued to partner with the North Carolina Poor People's Campaign, hosting a local viewing of the Interfaith Service and Moral Mass Meeting in January, participating in demonstrations for voting rights, and taking a trip as a group to Raleigh to protest legislation disguised as hurricane relief that would strip power from newly elected officials.

Our Racial Justice and Equity Team hosted a well-attended public screening of *PBS's American Coup: Wilmington 1898* in June, fostering powerful conversations about racial justice and history. That same spirit of inclusivity was visible in October when our Missions and Justice Team represented Holy Covenant at Union County Pride, as we've been focusing our presence this year on smaller, local Pride events where our impact and visibility could be even more personal and meaningful.

In late September, I met with Kevin McCoy of Church World Service (CWS) to explore potential partnerships, and we look forward to welcoming him sometime in the coming year to share more about their mission and opportunities for collaboration.

We also continued to strengthen our relationship with the wider church, attending the UCC's 35th General Synod in Kansas City, Catawba Clergy Days, the Western North Carolina Association Fall Meeting, and a meet-and-greet with UCC General Minister and President Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson. At the Association meeting, we were thrilled to learn that Holy Covenant was selected to receive a 2026 Growing the Church Grant in the amount of \$1,500 to support our upcoming strategic planning efforts.

At the start of this year, our Consistory began reading and discussing *Piloting the Church* by Cameron Trimble, engaging in thoughtful dialogue about priorities, leadership, and our shared vision for Holy Covenant's future. We've met with a local consultant and representatives from the UCC Church Building and Loan Fund to explore strategic planning options, and I look forward to sharing more with the congregation in the new year as this vision unfolds.

Personally, I began a Spiritual Direction Training Program for clergy this fall. This one-year formation journey is helping me deepen my capacity to listen, discern, and accompany others in their spiritual lives as they discern God's presence in their own lives. It is a weekly continuing education piece added to my already busy schedule, but a gift I hope will enhance the kind of pastoral care I provide, and something I look forward to bringing more fully into my shared ministry with you.

I've also found some new creative expression through my Substack blog, which has become a space for me to share liturgy, poetry, reflections, and spiritual insights with both our congregation and a wider community of readers who share our values, passions, and theology around faith and God.

Some of our most meaningful ministry moments this year have come from the simplest of gatherings, like our growing Community Thanksgiving Meal, which has become a cherished tradition for those who might otherwise spend the holiday alone. It's a reminder to me that Holy Covenant is, at its best, a family, rooted not just in shared beliefs, but in a sense of shared belonging. This annual meal reminds me I am part of a family, and you are an important part of it.

In one of our biggest celebration moments this year, we marked 25 years of being an Open and Affirming Church, unveiling a new website and logo that now welcomes all who pass by our front sign. Additionally, as a part of our ongoing commitment to accessibility, we also created a new Sensory Support Station in our narthex, offering fidget items, earplugs, and other aids for those with sensory needs.

As I look ahead, I continue to dream about transforming our Prayer Chapel into an Interfaith Prayer Room, a space that would be open to all people of faith for prayer, meditation, and reflection. Now that I've entered into my third year of ministry, I am feeling a call to create a space for folks to explore their own spirituality. This vision, like so much else in our church, will take energy, imagination, and collective effort.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to our dedicated staff: Dawn Simmons, whose organizational gifts and faithful presence week in and week out hold us together, and Jon Weddell, whose musical and theological partnership enriches our worship life. To our Consistory, Team Chairs, volunteers, and our clergy colleagues, thank you for your leadership, generosity, and devotion.

All signs point to growth at Holy Covenant. We are seeing more people in the pews, more families and children in our midst, more conversations about possibilities and hope, more giving and generosity, and even those small moments of tension that I have learned to affectionately call "growing pains." These are all good signs. They mean life is happening here and we are growing.

Through it all, I remain grateful. Grateful for each of you, for the ministry we share, and for the Spirit that continues to call us forward into God's unfolding future.

Peace and blessings,

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki
Holy Covenant UCC
Senior Pastor



Nominating Team Report

Committee members: Laura Hankins, JoAnn Jellison, Tommy Tomlinson, Ed Vickery, Jay Whitley, Rev. Christopher Czarnecki (ex officio).

We are grateful to those in our outgoing Class of 2025 for their dedicated support in ministry! Elders Jana Harrison and Lloyd Spencer, and Deacons Suzanne Lamorey, Eric Miner and Terry Raley-Dennis.

Once elected, those nominated this year will fill out the Consistory as follows:

Class of 2026	Class of 2027	Class of 2028 (Nominated)
Joy Decker (elder)	Tom Magraw (elder)	Sally Duffy (elder)
Brian Hankins (elder)	Dawn Robinson (elder)	Diane Neese (elder)
Mel Andersen (deacon)	Martha Bomely (deacon)	Stephanie Herrin (deacon)
Cheryl Milam (deacon)	Tom Lannin (deacon)	Patrick Washburn (deacon)
Shakti Subramanian (deacon)	Lee Parrish (deacon)	Ed Vickery (deacon)

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Raley-Dennis

Racial Justice & Equity Team Report

The RJE team is guided by the statement Consistory passed in February 2019:

After prayer and conversation, Holy Covenant Consistory has discerned that God is calling us to set racial issues – racial equity, racial justice, racial diversity, and racial inclusion – as a high priority for our work as God’s church. Therefore Consistory, staff, and ministry teams will lead Holy Covenant UCC in a range of sustained activities to put action to word and thought as together we address these important issues.

The 2025 RJE team includes Melvin Andersen, Kristin Andes, Jean Berg, Pastor Chris Czarnecki, Elizabeth Colton, Teresa Eller, Alix Felsing, Anne Hayes, Ann Hooper, Meg Houlihan (Chair), Melissa McQueen-Simmons, Holly Middleton, Alice Phelan-Young and Deborah Winston.

RJE’s attention in 2025 was focused on five efforts: MLK Day and Black History Month events in January and February; a screening of the film “American Coup: Wilmington 1898” for the June “Year of Wellness” event; ongoing research into affordable housing; and a heritage trip to Greensboro’s International Civil Rights Center and Museum.

Martin Luther King Day/Black History Month.

This year, the MLK observance fell on January 20, the same day as the presidential inauguration. We offered the congregation two opportunities to meet with others in solidarity around this difficult conjunction. Two members met together to watch the inauguration in the afternoon, and 14 members and guests met at the church to watch a televised service of The King Center's Beloved Community Commemorative Service. In February, RJE reprised the helpful and appreciated Black history month display from 2024, and members contributed brief presentations about notable figures in Black history (such as Dr. Delores Williams and Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson) during worship.

Film Screening Event: "American Coup."

Much of spring was dedicated to planning the June 22 screening of "American Coup: Wilmington 1898" for RJE's June wellness event. The idea began with the NC Council of Churches encouraging churches to screen the film. Pastor Chris followed up and worked with a Filmworks liaison who provided HC with the promotional materials, schedule, registration, and feedback forms. RJE planning included discussion of how to connect this challenging film to wellness for an audience that may find it difficult to watch. We were guided by the belief that learning about the adversity such as that which the African American community and their allies faced can heal trauma and prevent it from repeating itself in future generations. Ultimately, the June event included light refreshments followed by a film screening and invited speakers Tom Hanchett, PhD, historian and former director of The Museum of the New South, and Justin Perry, LCSW, trauma therapist and community activist. Tom Hanchett presented on the political climate in the state at the time that made Wilmington's coup possible, and Justin Perry facilitated a discussion that encouraged us to consider what makes it difficult for us to see clearly the injustices in front of us. One hundred fifteen (115) people attended the event, and just over half of those were community members responding to RJE's publicity efforts. We could not have done this without the help of the Communications and Hospitality Teams and the talents of Brian Hankins on Tech.



Research on affordable housing

Spearheaded by Melvin Anderson and with participation from Pastor Chris, we have begun to think about how to address the critical need for affordable housing in our community, a need that is borne especially heavily by people of color. We are aware that other churches are engaged in this work and, while we know that our small size may make an independent project unfeasible, we do believe that there may be a role for us at some point. Throughout the year, Mel has reported on collaborative efforts in Charlotte, has made connections with other churches and has kept this issue on our radar.

Trip to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum.

On Oct. 4, the RJE Team sponsored a pilgrimage to Greensboro to learn more about the sit-in that desegregated the Woolworth lunch counter in 1960.

Nearly three dozen people made the Oct. 4 pilgrimage, most by bus, to the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, which is housed in the former Woolworth store and includes the original lunch counter.

The “Greensboro Four”—freshmen at what was then called the Agricultural & Technical College of North Carolina—staged a sit-in that led to desegregated restaurants in Greensboro. We learned that the women of nearby Bennett College did the planning, the sit-in lasted for months, the sit-in expanded as students took turns spelling each other amid the ugly backlash, and that high-school students stepped in to continue the sit-in during the summer when the college students went home.

After the museum, we visited the NC Agricultural & Technical State University campus to see the February One monument honoring Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil and David Richmond. We stopped at Bennett College to get a glimpse of where the sit-in plans were made. As we headed home, we drove past the Magnolia House, one of four remaining places that the Green Book listed as safe for Black travelers to stay in North Carolina.

We returned to Charlotte in awe of the planning, perseverance and bravery that went into Civil Rights actions that made our world more equitable amid horrific cruelty and violence.

We are grateful for the fellowship we experienced on this trip, and for learning together about our history. On Oct. 26 and Nov. 12, 2025 we convened two discussions for RJE members and bus participants to reflect together, and we plan to share our insights with the congregation as we discern how we might take action to address today’s concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Alix Felsing, Meg Houlihan and Holly Middleton for the Racial Justice and Equity Team



Mission & Justice Team Report

Team Members include Suzanne Lamorey, Kim Buch, Tina Dickens and Barb Schneller

The Missions and Justice projects at Holy Covenant during 2025 ranged from local to global. As in years past, we made contributions to international and national groups such as World Central Kitchen and the CROP Hunger Walk. We are participating in the United Church of Christ national Banned Books Service Project with our own Banned Book Library. We have made repeated contributions to regional groups attempting to address the devastation in Western North Carolina. Our social justice efforts mightily reflect our commitment to diverse local populations in our community such as asylum-seeking families, unhoused individuals, teachers and students in local schools, our LGBTQ+ neighbors, children experiencing trauma, as well as men and women who are incarcerated.

Because of the generosity of our faith family, we have been able to support these ministries:

1. In the international sphere we continue to contribute to World Central Kitchen, with this year's contribution of \$500 going towards their work in Myanmar following the earthquake there.
2. With news of the continued devastation of towns in Western North Carolina due to Hurricane Helene, we sent \$500 worth of propane to providers there as well as several boxes of winter clothing for children and adults. In addition, we sent several large "hot tents" to organizers in the region who serve families whose homes were still under repair.
3. We participated in the Charlotte AIDS Walk on Saturday May 31 thanks to our coordinator Jeff Edwards-Knight. Over \$965 was raised by Holy Covenant members for this effort.



4. We participated in the annual Charlotte CROP Hunger Walk in October, headed by Tina Dickens, who has led our church initiative since 2000! Well done, good and faithful servant! Over \$1335 was raised by Holy Covenant members for malnourished communities both domestically and abroad. Some of their projects include emergency food and nutrition packets, as well as ongoing support such as seeds, tools, chickens, and beehives for families to feed themselves in the future.

5. We are continuing to participate with and support Project Linus, which is a national group that creates quilts for children in need. We host the Charlotte chapter here at Holy Covenant for their workdays as well as donating fleece fabric and creating quilts to donate. During 2025, we made and donated 15 fleece blankets as well as 8 handmade baby and teen quilts. Holy Covenant serves as a drop-off site for other quilters in the community.



6. We continue to participate with the Cultural Compassion Closet. Church members donated clothing, toiletries, and household goods to asylum-seeking families here in Charlotte. On a monthly basis, we donate approximately 7 bags of clothing, 1 bag of toys, and 2 bags of household items. We also sort and deliver the clothing to families. In May, we helped to distribute over 1,000 pounds of clothing, shoes, linens, and toys to families at a city-wide giveaway. In November, we contributed 10 new car seats to migrant families with infants and toddlers.



7. We continue participating in the sandwich ministry by making over 300 sandwiches each month for the Roof Above which serves unhoused individuals. We have started having two sandwich-making sessions per month as we have over a dozen people join us on Monday mornings to make sandwiches as well as several church members who participate in the after-church sandwich-making opportunities.

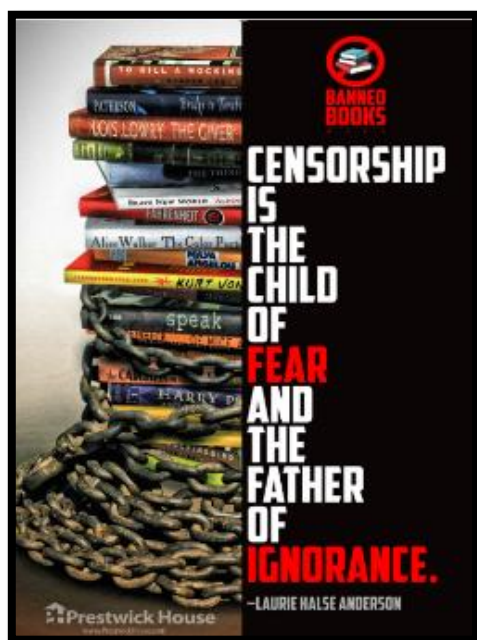
8. In support of students in our public schools, we continue to donate food to the Backpack Ministry as part of our effort to provide weekend meals for the students at David Cox Elementary School which is in our neighborhood. During the month of August, we collected a carload of back-to-school supplies for Classroom Central. In November, we learned about the need for funds to address overdue lunch debt of high school students in Charlotte Mecklenburg and contributed \$800 toward the abolishment of that debt with plans to contribute again in December.

9. We participated in Union County Pride this fall. This was the 4th year that we have supported this effort. We had a booth at the festival in Crossing Paths Park and 7 church members showed up to welcome individuals and families at this event. This year, there were more vendors and visitors than there were protesters!

10. We have had a very positive response to our new ongoing ministry involving new and used donations of paperback books to the North Carolina Prison Book Collective. This group provides reading material to people who are incarcerated in NC. There is a collection bookshelf in the Gathering Room that also shows a list of acceptable book genres. We have sent four boxes full of highly requested books to this organization.



11. In August, during the United Church of Christ Banned Books month, we started an ongoing Banned Books library and awareness display in the Gathering Room (thanks to the efforts of



Kim and Bill Tyler). On the first Sunday that we introduced this, there was a very positive response as people checked out banned books, planned to donate more banned books, and in general to lament the fact that so many classics are now banned. During Native American Heritage month in November, we purchased several banned books written by Indigenous authors for this library. We currently have about 90 books available for check-out in our Banned Books Library as well as a binder full of material about the issues surrounding the banning of books. These books include selections for children, young adults, and adult readers.

12. Missions and Justice participated in the church's Year of Wellness project in September by organizing a special sandwich-making project after church. We paused our efforts to be making sandwiches for the community at large in order to sit across the table with members of our church family and make special sandwiches for each other.

13. In November, we will once again begin participating in Room In The Inn thanks to the efforts of Terry and Jean Raley-Dennis. We plan to host 6 unhoused individuals once a month for one evening during the months of December to March. Funds were made available to supply this ministry with bedding, hats, gloves, socks, and toiletries for the next five years.

Respectfully submitted,
Suzanne Lamorey, chair

Sunshine Fund

The Donna Collins Memorial Sunshine Fund at Holy Covenant is a non-budgeted fund that depends on donations from members and friends of the church to operate. It provides temporary financial assistance to members and occasionally non-members who are facing a financial crisis. Funds are not used until all community resources are exhausted. All requests for assistance are confidential.



This year the committee has been led by Caroline Utz, Tom Magraw, Faye Humphrey and Jackie Freeze. Requests for assistance may be made by contacting one of the team members or by contacting Rev. Czarnecki or the church office.

This year we had 3 individuals requesting funds.

Starting Balance as of 09/30/24	\$5,873.89
Donations	\$3,750.20
<u>Disbursements</u>	<u>\$3,107.28</u>
Ending Balance as of 09/30/25	\$6,516.81

Respectfully Submitted,
Caroline Utz, Sunshine Fund chair

Christian Education Team Report

Team Members: Chair, JoAnn Jellison, Kim Buch, Laura Hankins, Von McQueen-Simmons, Akeera Czarnecki, Pastor Chris Czarnecki (Ex Officio)

General

- The Michael G. Brooks Scholarship was awarded to Jean Raley-Dennis this summer for continuing Education in the amount of \$2,000.00, the annual award.
- Rally Day (the beginning of the Sunday School year) was on September 14.
- The Christian Education team participated in a Year of Wellness activity in August, demonstrating the materials available for use in teaching children, teens and adults.

Children

- The Christian Education Team adopted a curriculum from ProgressiveChristianity.org with a variety of activities and lessons, which will be supplemented with lessons for Black History Month and special events.

- Two people who have had background checks are with the children each Sunday. There is a lesson each week and time for arts and crafts.
- There's been an uptick in the number of children who are present in Children's Church in recent weeks.

Youth

- Confirmation classes were conducted by Pastor Chris and adult volunteers. Six of our youth were confirmed on Palm Sunday this year. The adult volunteers involved were Rev. Jonathan and Linda Heaslet, Kristin Andes, and Jo Ann Jellison. Parents provided lunch.
- Most of the Confirmands, plus one guest and JoAnn Jellison attended the MeckMin Youth Summit on August 8 and 9.
- The Teen Room was cleaned out and once again set up for our youth who will meet initially on the 2nd Sundays during worship. We are hopeful this will eventually expand to add meetings on the 4th Sunday. Discussions will be led by Shakti Subramanian and a female volunteer. Initial volunteers are Dawn Robinson, and Aline and Jason Sullivan.



Sojourners

- In February the Sojourners completed a Bible Study of the Gospel of Mark.
- They then began a book study of *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem* by Marcus Borg and John Crossan.
- Next, they began a book study of *Grace Will Lead Us Home* by Jennifer Hawes, the story of the massacre of Black members of Mother Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC.
- Following that the Sojourners read *The Widening of God's Mercy: Sexuality within the Biblical Story* by Christopher and Richard Hays.

They will close the year with a study of five of the minor prophets (Amos, Hosea, Micah, Joel, Jonah) led by Jay Whitley. In preparation for this study, class members read *From Judgment to Hope: A Study on the Prophets* by Walter Brueggemann.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Ann Jellison and Cheryl Milam

Worship & Music Team Report

Team Members: Martha Bomely, D. Evans, Laura Hankins, Stephanie Herrin, Terry Parrish, Ed Vickery and Patrick Washburn; Ex Officio: Reverend Christopher Czarnecki, Jon Weddell, and Dawn Simmons; Consistory Liaison: Lloyd Spencer

First let us begin our worship report with a Psalm of praise and worship, one I used last year but just could not find another passage more fitting. Psalm 95:1-6 “O come, let us sing to our God; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into Christ presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Christ with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods. In our Creator’s hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are theirs also. The sea is our Creator’s, for they made it, and the dry land, which their hands have formed. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before our God, our Maker!”



The Worship and Music Ministry continues to serve at the heart of Holy Covenant’s life together, curating sacred experiences that honor our diversity, deepen our faith, and invite all people to encounter the Holy. 2025 was a year marked by rest, renewal, and reconnection — in spirit with our congregational theme, “A Year of Wellness.” The purpose and goal of our theme was to encourage our congregation to see worship as both spiritual nourishment and communal care. The Worship and Music Team helped integrate monthly wellness themes into prayer, music, and preaching, bridging faith with holistic well-being.

Our worship reflected this rhythm of care and courage. Through thoughtful liturgy, intentional music, and participatory leadership, the team sought to embody the inclusive, justice-centered, and creative spirit of the United Church of Christ.

Worship Highlights

Throughout 2025, worship continued to be the central gathering point of our community, with Pastor Rev. Christopher Czarnecki's leadership offering sermons that wove together spiritual insight and social consciousness.

Advent & Christmas 2024

The 2024 Advent season ushered in the theme "From Darkness to Dawn," inviting our congregation to prepare hearts for the light of Christ breaking into the world. Each Sunday—Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love—offered creative expressions of anticipation through Scripture, poetry, and song.

The choir's Advent repertoire included "Candle in the Night" and "In the Bleak Midwinter," blending familiar carols with contemplative choral works that reflected both reverence and joy.

Christmas Eve worship gathered members, families, and guests in a sanctuary radiant with candlelight and music, reminding us that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

This season carried forward the spirit of wellness and renewal that would shape the entirety of 2025, preparing the congregation to enter Epiphany with hearts centered in gratitude and hope.



Epiphany & Lent 2025

The first months of 2025 offered worship rooted in illumination and reflection. Epiphany celebrated the presence of divine light in unexpected places, leading into a Lenten journey framed by the Year of Wellness theme—encouraging spiritual rest, prayer, and compassion for self and others.

Lenten worship incorporated meditative music, Taizé-style prayer, and the use of silence as a sacred discipline. The team prepared meaningful Holy Week observances, culminating in Maundy Thursday communion and a service of shadows that drew participants deeply into the story of Christ's passion.

Easter & Eastertide

Easter morning at Holy Covenant was a radiant celebration of resurrection hope. The sanctuary featured a cross filled with flowers, and the resounding voices of the choir, solos and the congregants singing “Christ the Lord Is Risen Today.”

Through the Easter season, worship emphasized renewal, joy, and new life in community—continuing into May with music from “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing” and “There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place.”

Pentecost & Summer 2025

Pentecost Sunday marked a vibrant celebration of the Spirit’s movement among us, with red paraments and moving hymns honoring the diversity of voices within our congregation. The summer season carried this Spirit forward with joyful and justice-centered worship.

Guest preachers during the year included Reverends Melissa McQueen-Simmons, Lee Parish, Glencie Rhedrick and Barbara Thomas each bringing prophetic energy, while worship continued to affirm Holy Covenant’s call as an Open and Affirming congregation.

The 25th Anniversary of Holy Covenant’s ONA Covenant (June 29) was a defining highlight of the year—a service of remembrance and recommitment that featured special music, historical reflection, and a reaffirmation of our promise to embody extravagant welcome for all.

The music ministry also introduced contemplative piano preludes and instrumental meditations by various congregants, offering moments of rest and spiritual reflection during worship.



Ordinary Time & Autumn 2025

The latter half of the year deepened our Year of Wellness journey through worship themes of rest, gratitude, and sabbath renewal. September and October featured services such as Accessibility and Disabilities Awareness Sunday, World Communion Sunday, and a deeply moving Contemplative Worship Experience that invited the congregation into stillness, journaling, and visio divina.

Throughout the fall, Pastor Rev. Christopher Czarnecki’s sermons invited the community to explore humility, mercy, and the inner life of faith. The Stewardship season concluded with Stewardship and Seminary Sunday (October 26), celebrating abundance, gratitude, and the shared work of building the kin-dom of God. Then on November 2, we were privileged and honored to welcome guest preacher Rev. Belinda Sledge to our pulpit. She came on behalf of the Southern Conference’s “Call to Care Tour”, an initiative to reach out to local UCC churches.

Advent & Preparing for Christmas 2025

As the calendar year draws to an end, preparations have begun for the Advent 2025 choral program, and the decorating of the sanctuary for the season of light. The Worship and Music Team is coordinating with volunteers for the hanging of the greens and Advent Wreath candlelighters, weaving service and song into a seamless act of worship.

Through these final weeks, the community is reminded once again that every act of love—every note sung, candle lit, and prayer spoken—is a reflection of the Holy presence moving among us.

Music Ministry

Under the direction of Jon Weddell, the music ministry continued to nurture both excellence and accessibility, blending traditional, global, and contemporary expressions of sacred music.



Highlights included:

- The return of expanded choral and bell choirs participation with people of all ages and abilities, symbolizing the ministry's "open choir" model.
- A growing repertoire of justice-themed music, including "Come Build a Church," "Praise God's Holy Name," and "Draw the Circle Wide."
- Regular instrumental offerings by our congregants, whose musical gifts enriched our worship life.
- Special music collaborations during Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and the ONA 25th Anniversary Service that embodied the message "Be the Church, Everywhere."
- The ministry's ongoing invitation to "make a joyful noise" — encouraging new singers and musicians to join in rehearsal and worship, emphasizing participation over perfection.

Creative Liturgy and Leadership

One of Holy Covenant's defining strengths continues to be its liturgical creativity. Each Sunday offered new opportunities for prayer, poetry, and theological reflection through original liturgies written by Rev. Czarnecki, adaptations from UCC Worship Ways, and expanded with contemporary sources from theologians, poets, and justice writers.

Members of the Worship and Music Team and lay leaders regularly participated in worship as:

- Liturgists and readers
- Call-to-the-Heart leaders
- Stories for All People
- Musicians and vocalists
- Ushers and greeters

These acts of shared leadership reflected the UCC principle of “the priesthood of all believers.”

Behind the Scenes

Worship preparation remained a collaborative effort across multiple teams and volunteers. The ministry coordinated closely with:

- The Digital Ministry Team, ensuring livestream and online worship accessibility.
- The Communications Team, enhancing bulletin design and website resources.

The Gathering Room and Sanctuary spaces were continually refreshed for the liturgical seasons, reflecting both beauty and sacred hospitality.

Looking Ahead

As we prepare for 2026, the Worship and Music Ministry will continue to cultivate worship that is:

- Spiritually nourishing – deepening faith through prayer, silence, and song.
- Theologically rich – grounded in UCC values of justice, inclusion, and grace.
- Artistically alive – engaging the full spectrum of creative expression.
- Community-building – empowering every member to find a voice in worship.

The year ahead promises continued growth in participation, collaboration with emerging leaders, and the introduction of new musical and liturgical expressions that reflect our congregation’s ever-expanding vision of “Be the Church, Everywhere.”

Gratitude

I must acknowledge my heartfelt thanks to the following:

- Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, for pastoral leadership and liturgical imagination.
- Jon Weddell, for his compassionate musical direction and theological artistry.
- The Worship & Music Ministry Team, for the gift of their time, talents, dedication, creativity, and behind-the-scenes care in order to develop meaningful and God honoring worship experiences.
- Brian Hankins for keeping us plugged in, online and many other things he does which aid us in our worship experience.
- Dawn Simmons, who develops and creates our weekly service bulletins, and does about anything someone else hasn’t been appointed to do.



- Our childcare workers and Sunday School teachers, who provide lessons, guidance and activities for our children and youth.
- All musicians, readers, ushers, greeters, elders, deacons, and volunteers who make our worship vibrant each week.
- And our Refreshment Angels who provide the physical food after the spiritual food.

Together, we give thanks for a year filled with “wellness”, scripture, discernment, music, meaning, and the unmistakable presence of the Spirit among us.

Thank you, Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, for this opportunity and joy to serve our church family and community!

Love & Peace,
Ed Vickery, Chair 2025

PS. You only thought I was finished! Once again, I want to look to the scriptures and close with another Psalm. Psalm 46:10 says, *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”*



Creation Justice Team Report

Team members: Tom Lannin, chair, Kim Buch, Sally Duffy, Jo Ann Jellison, Barbara Schneller, Benjamin Rudolph, Darline Warren-Batton, Cathy Whitley, Jay Whitley, ex officio Dawn Simmons

In April 2025, our Creation Team agreed to become more involved in the transformation of this church by focusing on five (5) things people can do to change their behaviors and become better stewards of the planet.

1. Cut out fast fashion, which exploits laborers globally and contributes to water and air pollution in many developing countries because of all the fabrics containing microplastics.
2. Avoid using single-use plastic bottles to reduce the microplastics problem
3. Eat less meat, especially commercially produced pork (eastern NC hog farms are a major source of water and air pollution and continue to threaten local inhabitants).
4. Compost food scraps. Simple and easy.
5. Do not hire landscape maintenance crews that use gas-powered blowers or replace old lawnmowers and leaf blowers with battery-powered equivalents (will save money as well). Fact: a G-P leaf blower produces as much pollution in one hour as a new Ford F150 driving 1800 miles.

We also agreed to follow the process of becoming a UCC Creation Justice Church and held a Zoom call with Rev. Brooks Berndt, the head of UCC's Creation Justice Ministry. He explained the four dimensions we need to follow to become a Creation Justice Church, and examples of praxis are below:

1. Theology and Worship

Using Earth Week as an example, we asked our congregation to reflect upon God in relation to caring for our planet and develop a theological understanding of creation care and justice into our services.

2. Institutional Life & Practice

An example of life and practice is that in April 2025, with assistance from Building and Grounds Team, we compiled data for an Energy Efficiency Assessment and sent the data to Interfaith Power & Light for an energy audit. They evaluated the following:

- Floor plan and room sizes
- Lighting inventory
- Water and sewer usage
- Electricity use

Building and Grounds has implemented some of the recommended changes and is evaluating others based on cost and resource ability to make changes "in-house" such as: change eternal flame to LED fixture; change metal halide lamp to LED at office entrance; continue to update fluorescent fixtures converting to LED as able; replacing the 19-year-old HVACs which are approaching end of life within the next 2 years +-; irrigation was run less with constant monitoring of rainfall and will be updated in the spring; stormwater credit for dry ponds to

continue as is; recommendation of using storm water for irrigation is not an option as recommended.

3. Awareness & Advocacy

Regarding this third dimension, we invited a certified Horticultural Therapist and Master Gardener to give us examples of the benefits to our congregation and our local community. The more we work with the earth as gardeners or stewards, the more we feel connected to it emotionally and spiritually. These are the benefits:

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Emotional Well Being
- Social Interaction
- Sensory Stimulation
- Sense of Accomplishment

Other advocacy examples:

- Year of Wellness: we engaged in monthly activities with church ministry teams.
- The CJ Team shared recommendations to the congregation, including Climate Change Films for Education and Discussion

4. Connect to Broader Movement

We will explore this dimension more in 2026

Respectfully Submitted,
Tom Lannin, chair



Building & Grounds Team Report

The Building and Grounds Team (Dave Shimberg, Dawn Simmons, Tom Magraw, Mel Andersen, Suzanne Lamorey, Jim Dwiggin, and Stephanie Herrin) successfully completed many projects during the past 12 months. The committee's activities focus on identifying and correcting problems that would likely become major expenses and performing activities that save money in lieu of paying external professionals.

Completed activities included:

- Instituting a "Maintenance Log" book to easily identify maintenance issues that need attention and when issues are resolved/completed
- Conducting an energy audit through Interfaith Power and Light, identifying potential energy savings (our church is already doing most of the suggested items)
- Replacing ceiling fluorescent light bulbs with LED bulbs (ongoing) to reduce energy costs
- Replacing high wattage halogen floodlights on shed with low wattage LED flood lights
- Leading church workdays (January and October) completing a variety of maintenance activities (carpet/rug cleaning, vacuuming all sanctuary pews and air vents, removing cobwebs from inside and outside all windows, cleaning behind all doors, pulling weeds from playground and swing areas, spraying herbicide in parking lots and HVAC areas)
- Treating fire ant mounds
- Adjusting restroom flush valves/systems and replacing old toilet seats
- Evaluating the need to schedule jetting of lift station sewer lines
- Arranging for the installation of two additional security cameras in the Sanctuary to protect instruments and sound system assets
- Monitoring and clearing walking trails
- Maintaining Memorial Gardens (weed pulling, clearing areas and walkways, and benches, insect fogging, including preparation for a member's wedding on July 5, 2025)
- Coordinating trimming of crepe myrtle and shrubs
- Replacing coach lights at building entrances

Although the total Building and Grounds budget is nearly \$46,500, much of that is utilities and fixed costs. We have made every effort and have successfully worked within or below that portion of the budget that is within our control. We are continuing to evaluate lighting and other expenses that might have lower costs with alternative options.

The team continues working on identifying and performing maintenance activities, but as with most church committees, needs increased participation from church members and friends willing and able to lend their hands and skills with maintaining God's House. We welcome everyone to join our team and make a difference in how we spend church funds. Help with tasks, both small and large, are greatly appreciated.

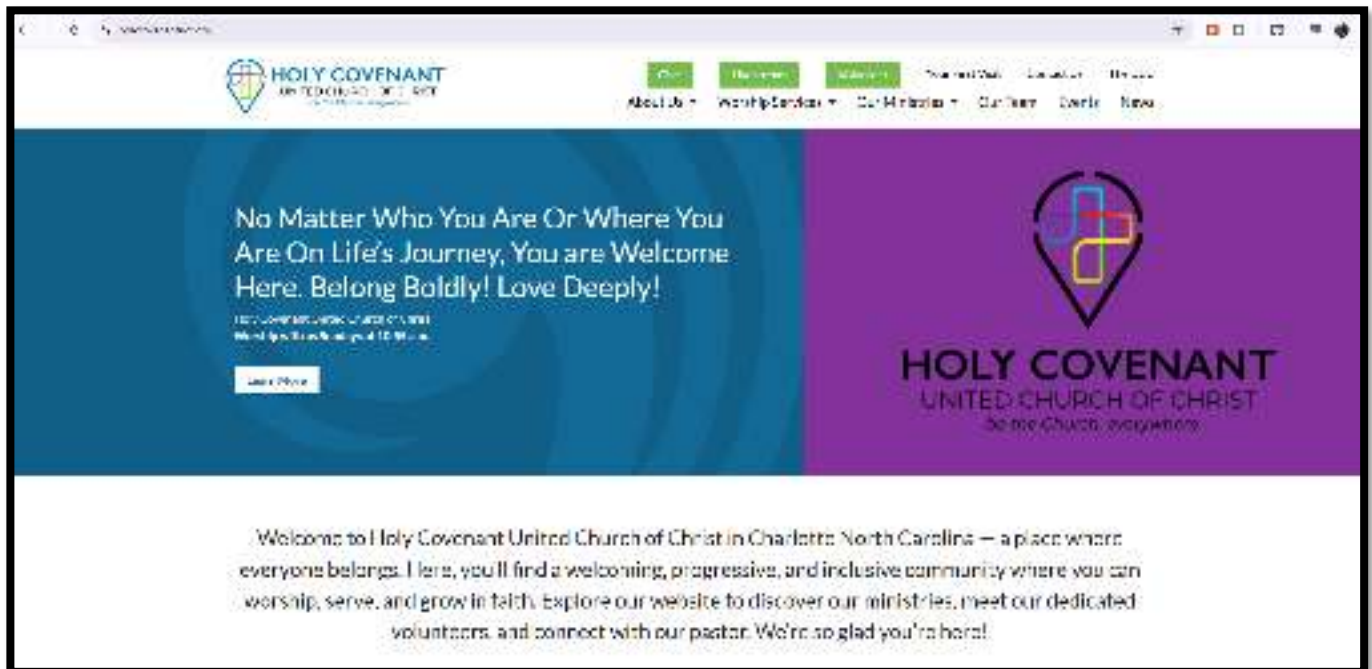
Respectfully submitted,
David Shimberg

Communications Team Report

Team Members: Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins, Dominic Ciciollo, Eric Miner, Dawn Simmons and Joy Decker, chair.

Your Communication Team has a wide area of responsibilities, including Information Technology (IT), social media and the church website, as well as print materials such as fliers and posters. There are several people hard at work behind the scenes, working to provide fresh and appealing communications within our congregation and to increase our outreach to the wider community. Additionally, we work in partnership with all the other church ministry teams to advertise their events and gatherings throughout the year.

Our main focus this year had been on redesigning the Church Website - starting in January, we poured our efforts into a redesign project, ably led by Eric Miner, which resulted in a much-needed update to our website, www.holyconvenantucc.org. **We launched the new website on June 29!**



The new website, HCUCC Everywhere, has the following benefits:

- Built on a UCC-specific hosting platform
- Modern look and feel
- Easier to get to most-used features: Livestream, Giving, Volunteer
- New "Your First Visit" page for newcomers
- Updated photos
- Mobile-friendly



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

AND, we launched a new email newsletter, *The Loop*, at the same time, which has organized content sections and allows us to easily link back to the website for more information.



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Eric Miner and Laura Hankins have been especially active in keeping up with our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram. Eric plans a themed social media calendar every month and faithfully follows up daily. Let us know if you have a topic of interest or a contribution!

We have been discussing since last year the need for a consolidated church Software Program - the idea was to look at the software packages and services that we pay for separately now and consider a church software program that could fulfill some / all of these functions so that we could streamline everything / most everything into one package that is user friendly and offers opportunities for the church community to engage with. The Communication Team utilizes many software programs and online apps such as Flickr, Zoom, Subsplash, UCCEverywhere and WordPress, Constant Contact and Signup Genius, Vimeo, Google Workspace and Google Analytics. Because these many platforms touches all ministry teams, Consistory has decided to form an ad-hoc team specifically to do this evaluation of church software next year (2026) and make recommendations.

Our thanks to Brian and Laura Hankins for putting in hours every week pulling together the slide deck, running our audio / video livestream and recording, maintaining the website and generally being our go-to IT expert! In addition, we have some new backup volunteers, Sally McLester and Dave Shimberg, which give the Hankins' a breather occasionally.

Thanks to Dominic Ciciollo for his technical expertise and concern for others, always ready to help when the office software/hardware acts up or the newsletter needs editing.

Our thanks to Dawn Simmons for keeping everything running out of the office in addition to upgrading platforms which always has its pain points. Thanks for being an encouragement as we modernize and also being the voice of experience.

Respectfully submitted,
Joy Decker, Communications Team



Endowment Team Report

Every year, the Endowment Team explores opportunities to support ministry in its myriad forms, in our community and beyond. In 2025, we continued providing grants to support Hurricane Helene recovery as well as the work of local ministries making a critical difference in Charlotte.

GRANTS

Each year, Consistory has the option to draw down up to 10% of the year's expected distribution for unique needs and opportunities. This year's grant recipients include:

- **Land of the Sky UCC: \$25,000**

A 2024 grant recipient from the Endowment, this additional grant is for our sister church to add showers so that the church can support work groups doing Hurricane Helene recovery work in their community;

- **Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church: \$25,000**

A 2024 grant recipient from the Endowment, this additional grant is for our sister church to continue their work in Hurricane Helene recovery in their community;

- **Bright Stars: \$5,000**

A year-round program hosted at Greater Bethel AME Church, Bright Stars offers at-risk students a place to have fun, develop character and leadership, and engage in activities that support academic and STEAM growth. HCUCC's grant helped to fund summer camp scholarships — but Bright Stars also offers after-school and holiday programming.

- **Lansing's Bridge to Recovery: \$10,000**

Brought to us by our own Holly Middleton, this is for a bridge project spearheaded by a UNC Charlotte professor who is using student labor to rebuild small bridges that Hurricane Helene washed away, thus restoring community members to necessities and to their neighbors.

- **Davidson Clergy Program for Pastor Chris: \$4,000**

Per the Endowment Policy, Consistory requested these funds. This funding enabled Pastor Chris to participate in this professional development and renewal program for clergy, supporting his continued growth as pastor of Holy Covenant.

- **ourBRIDGE: \$5,000**

A past grant recipient, ourBRIDGE offers culturally responsive, trauma-informed services to refugee and immigrant children and their families, all with the goal of helping them adjust and thrive.

- **Nourish Up: \$10,000**

In response to a plea from the interfaith community in Mecklenburg County regarding the great uncertainty and food insecurity caused by the suspension of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Endowment Team made a \$10,000 grant to Nourish Up, Mecklenburg County's largest food assistance program.

ENDOWMENT TEAM & POLICY UPDATE

On May 4, Holy Covenant held a Called Congregational meeting to approve the updated Endowment Policy, to elect Tom Lannin to the Endowment Team, and to announce Gregg Walker as the incoming chair. Given the lengthy process of updating the policy, followed by several opportunities for input from Consistory and congregation members, the vote passed quickly with no discussion. The Gift Acceptance Policy was also updated by the Endowment Team to align with the new Endowment policy.

ENDOWMENT INVESTMENT

as of September 30, 2025

- HC's overall portfolio stands at a value of approximately **\$1,780,000**, including a privately held mortgage that is part of the church's fixed-income portfolio.
- Endowment held funds at Fidelity Investments stood at **\$1,479,007** —
 - **Congregational Endowment** **\$ 178,556**
 - Fidelity Balanced Fund (FBALX)
 - **Pilgrim Legacy Fund** **\$ 1,300,341**
 - Equities Fidelity Contrafund (FCNTX) \$801,781 61.7%
 - Fixed-Income Fidelity Total Bond Fund (FTBFX) \$476,726 36.7%
 - Operating Fidelity Government Money Market (SPAXX) \$21,942 1.6%

The Endowment Team reviews the portfolio at least semi-annually, transferring funds (including cash from monthly mortgage payments) as needed to maintain an overall ratio of approximately 60/40 (±5).

ENDOWMENT SPENDING

To ensure HC's ability to maintain a robust grant-making program, the endowment policy bases annual distributions on total return on a *rolling average balance over the past 12 quarters (three years)*, which accounts for fund balance fluctuations over time. Total return includes both the reinvestment of dividends and income along with the change in the value of underlying investments. From the three-year rolling average balance, we calculate a draw of 3% to 7% of the portfolio value to use for grant funding each year, generally seeking to remain in the 4% to 6% range.

With a three-year rolling average balance of **\$1,440,807** as of September 30, a 4-6% distribution rate provides approximately **\$57,000-\$86,000 for distribution in 2026**. For perspective: distributions up to 7% are within the “reasonable” range (\$102,906 for 2025 grants); private and higher education foundations are generally required by law to distribute 5% of their value annually.

As we note each year, the HC endowment is invested “in perpetuity.” Unlike someone planning for retirement, the church doesn’t have an “end time” when funds must be available. HC therefore maintains a policy of long-term investment that *holds* an appropriate portfolio through market fluctuations and makes distributions based on total return.

Report offered by the Holy Covenant UCC Endowment Team:

Gregg Walker, Chair

Alix Felsing, Tom Lannin, Mel Anderson, Cheri Lovell

Martha Bomely (ex officio), Rev. Christopher Czarnecki (ex officio)



Capital Fund Team Report

Capital Fund Team Report Committee Members: Martha Bomely, Treasurer, Diane Neese

The HCUCC Building (Capital) Fund serves to finance permanent structures and improvements for our church's property, the latest being the addition completed in 2009. Plans for the addition began in 2006, followed by the Building for Ministry Capital Campaign in 2007 with construction of the new wing being completed in 2009. Not in the original plans was the driveway paving work which was also completed in early 2009 with funds pledged/paid outside of the Capital Campaign.

Beginning in January 2013, we began making the loan payments entirely from Building Fund Campaign contributions rather than 50/50 from operating and capital as was done previously. This means that the entire loan payment (\$46,728/year total) is now paid from pledges specifically to the Building Fund as the operating fund no longer provides 50% of the payment. **To that end, we are very pleased to report that to date, we have received pledges of \$46,260.00 from 47 pledgers for 2026.**

A recurring theme of past Capital Fund reports has been our ability to continue to improve upon our loan terms as rates have declined, and in 2016 we were able to refinance to a lower loan rate. For background, our mortgage on the addition closed in 2009 for \$825,000 which included indebtedness of \$168,000 remaining from the acquisition of the land and construction loan for the main church building years ago. Our mortgage rate was 6 7/8% on a 30-year amortization which equated to a loan payment of \$5,167/month. The loan had a 5-year balloon maturing on June 1, 2014. In August 2011, we were able to take advantage of then historically low mortgage rates, and lock in a longer term while retaining the flexibility to make additional principal paydowns, via a \$650,000 loan with BB&T, our local bank which manages our church checking and savings accounts. This loan refinanced all of our existing debt at a fixed rate of 5.75% for a 10-year term on a 20-year amortization, equating to payments of \$4,563.54/month.

In December 2012, as rates continued to trend downward, we were able to lock in an even lower rate of 4.75% and a monthly payment of \$3,920.10, while the maturity date remained unchanged at September 10, 2021. The charge for this rate change was only \$3,500, which was able to be recouped in lower interest costs in less than a year. The loan had a moderate prepayment penalty until August 2016, but once this was no longer applicable, we again took the opportunity to review the loan terms. Given that rates were still near historical lows, but seemingly beginning to trend upward the past few years, starting in late 2016, we explored the possibility of establishing new loan terms with the desire to obtain a fully amortizing loan if possible (meaning that when the loan matures, it would be paid in full rather than having a "balloon" payment due).

We were able to successfully obtain a \$376,504.14, 10 year, fully amortizing loan at a rate of 4.39% that matures on May 25, 2027 (current balance is **\$98,376.57**). As a result of the lower rate, even though the loan will be paid off sooner than the prior loan, our monthly payment actually went down slightly to \$3,894.00. In April of 2020, we were able to negotiate a loan modification at the nominal cost of \$208 to lower our rate to 3.89 % on our existing loan due to be paid off on May 25, 2027. We are applying our savings of \$144.75 each month towards our principle amount due.

God has truly blessed our church with many generous members and friends. Thanks to all who can continue to contribute to our Building Fund to help our church pay down this debt which was incurred when we expanded our building facilities. Each pledge made to the Capital Fund allows our church to

move closer to becoming debt free, which will free up almost \$47,000/year in required debt repayment. Just think of all the ways these funds will lovingly be put to use to further our church's mission, ministry and outreach programs!

Respectfully submitted,
Martha Bomely, Treasurer



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.

Stewardship Report

The Stewardship Team is grateful for the generosity of our Holy Covenant community in pledging financial support for 2026. We are also grateful for those who consistently give without pledging, and for those who give freely of their time and talents.

This year's Stewardship Campaign ran from Sept. 21 through Oct. 19. As of Stewardship Sunday, Oct. 26, pledges totaled 96% of our General Fund goal of \$140,000, and 108% of our Building Fund goal of \$40,000. As of Nov. 11, we have reached 112% of our General Fund Goal and 116% of our Building Fund Goal. In addition, we have received a special gift intended to provide financial resilience as we finish paying off our mortgage in the next few years.

During worship on each of the six Sundays of the campaign, members of the congregation provided a Stewardship Moment that described how they found Holy Covenant, what this community means to them, and why they pledge. Thank you to those whose heartfelt stories let us get to know them a little better: Anne and Terrence Hayes; Tommy Tomlinson; Melissa, Vondalyn and Camdyn McQueen-Simmons; Patrick Washburn; Jean Raley-Dennis; and Kyle and Amanda Deck.

Holy Covenant's refreshed branding and website with a new giving page makes it easy to make pledges and offers several ways to give. Thank you to Eric Miner and Dom Ciciollo for fast work in setting up the giving page.

The Stewardship Chair mailed personalized thank-you notes to everyone who pledged, gave consistently in 2025, or provided a Stewardship Moment.

In gratitude,

Alix Felsing, Stewardship Chair on behalf of the Stewardship Team:

Martha Bomely, Treasurer (ex-officio)

Dawn Simmons, Executive Administrative Assistant (ex-officio)



Budget & Finance Report

Pledge Recap 2016 through 2026

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST as of 11/11/2025 for 2026 PLEDGE RECAP--2016 THRU 2026								
General Fund Pledges					Building Fund Pledges			
	Total Amount	# of pledges	Avg.		Total Amount	# of pledges	Avg.	
2026	\$ 156,785.00	62	\$ 2,529		\$ 46,260	55	\$ 841	
2025	\$ 135,714	54	\$ 2,513		\$ 40,300	38	\$ 1,061	
2024	\$ 140,378	58	\$ 2,420		\$ 36,826	33	\$ 1,116	
2023	\$ 141,306	50	\$ 2,898		\$ 33,945	28	\$ 1,212	
2022	\$ 146,924	53	\$ 2,772		\$ 39,610	35	\$ 1,132	
2021	\$ 148,682	56	\$ 2,655		\$ 39,270	29	\$ 1,354	
2020	\$ 157,039	58	\$ 2,708		\$ 45,172	34	\$ 1,329	
2019	\$ 188,960	67	\$ 2,820		\$ 50,050	30	\$ 1,668	
2018	\$ 195,180	71	\$ 2,749		\$ 55,070	39	\$ 1,412	
2017	\$ 190,280	67	\$ 2,840		\$ 49,350	30	\$ 1,645	
2016	\$ 179,250	65	\$ 2,758		\$ 54,554	33	\$ 1,653	
* Original Cornerstone Loan was approximately \$730,000 financed in Spring 2008 at 6.75% five year balloon. \$5,100 monthly payment								

2026 Proposed Budget Summary

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET		
	2025 PROPOSED BUDGET	2026 PROPOSED BUDGET
GENERAL/OPERATING FUND:		
INCOME:		
1 Identified Giving	175,700	221,185
2 Loose Cash	3,000	3,200
3 Total General Fund Giving	178,700	224,385
4 Tower Income	67,100	63,400
5 Rental Income	1,500	1,500
6 Tax Rebate Income	2,500	2,500
7 General Fund Reserve Income	17,500	-
8 Accessibility & Safety Income	-	-
9 General Fund Carryover from 2024	5,000	-
10 Total Undesignated GF Income	93,600	67,400
11 Designated Funds Received:		
12 Michael Brooks Scholarship	2,000	2,000
13 Sandwich Ministry	500	0
14 Mission and Justice	3,000	0
15 Special Offerings - Direct to General Fund	6,000	6,000
16 Total Designated Funds Received	11,500	8,000
17 TOTAL GEN/OPERATING INCOME	283,800	299,785
18 EXPENSE:		
19 Worship	26,850	27,564
20 Communications	2,000	2,000
21 Christian Ed & Development	4,000	4,270
22 Inclusion and Outreach	1,800	1,100
23 Mission and Justice	14,350	14,750
24 Buildings and Grounds	54,500	61,226
25 Administration	180,300	188,875
26 TOTAL GEN/OPERATING EXPENSE	283,800	299,785
27 NET GAIN(LOSS) TOTAL GEN/OP FD	0	0

2026 Proposed Budget Detail, p. 1 of 3

Holy Covenant UCC
2026 Proposed Spending Plan

Operating Account		Approved Total	Proposed Total	2026 Proposed Budget Detail
		2025 Plan	2026 Plan	Notes
1	H104100 - Operating Income-General Fund			
2	Identified Giving - Pledges	135700	151185	Based on current giving as of 11/8. +20% vs. 2025
3	Identified Giving - Unpledged	40000	40000	
4	H104101 - Subtotal Identified Giving	175700	221185	
5	H104102 - Loose Offering	3000	3200	
6	H104104 - Tower Income	57100	53400	Lost a cell tower carrier.
7	H104106 - Pastoral Settlement Grant Revenue	0	0	
8	H104110 - Rental Income	1500	1500	
9	H104115 - Tax Rebate Income	2000	2000	
10	H104124 - Assessability & Safety Income	0	0	
11	H104123 - Maintenance Reserve Income	0	0	
12	H104125 - Discretionary Reserve Income	0	0	
13	General Fund Carryover	5000	0	No carryover
15	H105011 - 2020 General Fund Reserves	17500	0	Fund depleted
16	Total H104100 - Operating Income-General Fund	272200	291785	(18,485)
17	H104800 - Special Funds Income			
18	H104520 - Special Funds Direct to General	8000	8000	
19	H104540 - Michael G. Brooks Scholarship	2000	2000	
20	H104599 - Designated			
21	H105075 - Missions & Justice Income	3000	0	
22	H105079 - Racial Justice & Equity Revenue	0	0	
23	H105107 - Sandwich Ministry Income	500	0	
24	H105108 - LGBTQ Ministries	0	0	
25	Total H104599 - Designated	3500	0	
26	Total H104800 - Special Funds Income	11500	8000	
27	H104800 - Interest Income	0	0	
28	Total Income	283700	299785	(15,905)
29				
30	A210000 - Worship			
31	H208100 - Special Worship Events	0	0	
32	H208500 - Music Program	1400	1400	
33	H208600 - Worship Supply/Aesthetics	900	900	
35	H208205 - Accompanist (Sub)	750	750	
37	H208240 - Director of Music - Salary	23800	24514	3% Increase
38	Total A210001 - Worship	26850	27564	(714)
40	Communications			
41	H408010 - Audio/Video/Media	1000	1000	
42	H408503 - Advertising and Marketing	500	500	
43	H808503 - Social Media	500	500	
44	Total A250000 - Communications	2000	2000	0

2026 Proposed Budget Detail, p. 2 of 3

	Operating Account	Approved Total	Proposed Total	2026 Proposed Budget Detail
		2025 Plan	2026 Plan	Notes
45	A300000 - Christian Education & Dev			
46	H306100 - Youth Events	100	100	
47	H306150 - Youth Church Camp Scholar Exp	0	0	
48	H306175 - Michael G. Brooks Schol Expense	2000	2000	
49	H306300 - Christian Ed Programming	300	525	materials, treats, water egg hunt
50	H308000 - Child Care Payroll	1500	1545	3% as shown, 5% increase (1,575)
51	H308001 - Child Care Supplies	100	100	
52	Total A300000 - Christian Education & Dev	4000	4270	(270)
53	A400000 - Inclusion and Outreach			
54	H401000 - Member Development	600	600	
55	H401010 - Church Retreat	0	0	
56	H406100 - Inreach Outreach-Hospitality	600	600	
57	H408101 - Sandwich Ministry HCUCC	700	0	Will be self funded in '26
58	Total A400000 - Inclusion and Outreach	1900	1100	700
59	A500000 - Mission and Justice			
60	H501010 - OCWM	6000	6000	
61	H501020 - Other Contributions (NIN,OGHS,)	6000	6000	
62	H501040 - Community Outreach	400	400	
63	H501041 - LGBTQ Ministries	0	0	
65	H501079 - Racial Justice & Equity Exp	1500	1500	
66	H501080 - Mocklenburg Ministries	0	400	Covered with designated pledge in 2025
67	H501090 - RIT1	0	0	
68	H501095 - Western NC Association	400	400	
69	Total A500000 - Mission and Justice	14300	14700	(400)
70	A600000 - Buildings and Grounds			
71	H609100 - Utilities and recurring			
72	H609101 - Electricity	15300	15300	
73	H609102 - Telephone and Internet	2900	2900	
74	H609103 - Security	1200	1200	
75	H609104 - Water	3200	4210	At \$908 through Sep.
76	H609200 - Janitorial	6000	6000	
77	H609301 - Ins Exp-Liability & Structure	10700	10700	
78	Total H609100 - Utilities and recurring	30000	40010	
79	H609250 - Maintenance			
80	H609002 - Paper Supplies	800	800	
81	H609273 - Lawn Mowing	3000	3000	
82	H609300 - Dry Pond Maintenance	3300	3300	
83	H609251 - Building Maintenance	1500	1500	
84	H609252 - Grounds Maintenance	800	800	
85	H609253 - Sewer Maint & Repair	1000	1000	
86	H609254 - HVAC Maint & Repair	1400	1400	
87	H609257 - Waste Management	1700	1700	
88	H609270 - Pest Control	1100	1100	
89	H609275 - Unplanned Maintenance	0	0	
90	Total H609250 - Maintenance	14600	14900	
91	Total A600000 - Buildings and Grounds	64500	65910	(1,010)

2026 Proposed Budget Detail, p. 3 of 3

	Operating Account	Approved Total	Proposed Total	2026 Proposed Budget Detail
		2025 Plan	2026 Plan	Notes
93	H000050 - Maintenance Reserve	0	5716	Add back into 2026 budget
94	H000450 - Accessibility & Safety	0	0	
95	A000010 - Administration - Pastor			
96	H007000 - Pulpit Supply and Honorarium	1200	1200	
97	H008006 - Settled Pastor Grant Expense	0	0	
98	H008000 - Pastoral Reimbursement	2300	2300	
99	Sabbatical Accrual for Church and Pastor	0	0	
100	Total A000010 - Administration - Pastor	3500	3500	0
101	H005000 - Admin Payroll Expenses			
102	H005001 - Payroll Processing	200	720	150 per quarter + 120 Quickbooks
103	H005110 - Healthcare Insurance Expense	30700	32112	Slight premium increase
104	H005112 - Minister Life & Disability Ins	1000	1000	
105	H005113 - Minister Dental & Eye Insurance	1000	1000	Slight premium increase
106	H005114 - Minister Pension	9400	9848	14% of salary + housing
107	H005221 - Minister Salary	38100	39243	3% Increase
108	H005222 - Minister Housing	28800	29904	3% Increase
109	H00523 - Minister Pension Pre-tax Contribution	0	0	
110	H00524 - Minister SS&Medicare Offset	5100	5253	3% Increase
111	H005226 - Exec Assistant Payroll	45700	47071	3% Increase
112	H005227 - Exec Asst Insurance Stipend	3000	3000	
113	H005228 - Exec Asst Overtime	500	2000	At 937 through Sep. Adjusted per BAF
114	H005300 - Employer's FICA	5400	5602	3% Increase
115	H005350 - Ins Exp-Workers Comp	1200	1400	At 1421 through Sep. (Rate increase)
116	Total H005000 - Admin Payroll Expenses	170000	178177	(7,577)
117	H006000 - Admin Supplies & Operations			
118	H007000 - Bank Service Charges	000	1100	At 1055 through Sep.
119	H008051 - Copier Supplies	800	1000	At 1000 through Sep. Copier has never been invoiced
120	H008080 - Postage	400	400	
121	H008081 - Church & Office Supply	1000	1240	At 1442 through Sep. + Stewardship (240), 25th ONA Anniversary
122	H008161 - Copier Lease Expense	1800	1800	
123	H008300 - Other Travel/Mileage Reimbursement	100	100	
124	H008301 - Continuing Ed-Staff	0	240	
125	H008450 - Conference Expense	1100	600	One-off exp. in '25. Synod airfare, housing and WNCA annual meeting
126	H008502 - Computer Expense-software	100	815	Software subscriptions (ServantKeeper, LastPass)
127	Total H006000 - Admin Supplies & Operations	6200	7108	
128	Total A000001 - Administration	180500	188875	(8,575)
131	Total Expense	283800	298785	(15,985)
132	Net Income	0	0	