



Keeping Christmas



**“God is the name of the blanket we throw over mystery
to give it shape.”**
~ Barry Taylor

The Work of Christmas:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

~ Howard Thurman

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

December 28, 2025 | 10:55 am

** Your whole self is welcome here. Please feel free to take care of your body during worship in ways that work for you.*

Welcome and Announcements Ed Vickery
One: May the peace of the New Born Christ be with you.
Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

* Call to the Heart Jackie Freeze

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

One: Praise the Holy One! Praise God from the sanctuary and across the screen. Praise God in the morning and the evening...in the afternoon and at night!

Many: Praise God all people, all nations, all generations! Praise the Holy One who forms and shapes us!

One: Let our adoration join with the angels! May our songs join with the saints!

Many: Let us worship the Holy One with gladness! Let us worship our God in truth!

One: Praise the Holy One for their abiding presence! Praise God for their wondrous works!

Many: Let the name of the Holy One be exalted forever and ever! Praise the Holy One!

* Hymn 132

“Joy to the World”

ANTIOCH

Joy to the world! The Lord is come: Let earth its praises bring;
Let every heart prepare Christ room, And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove
The glories of God’s righteousness and wonders of God’s love,
And wonders of God’s love and wonders, wonders of God’s love.

Stories for All People

D Evans, Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Gift in Song

“Ella’s Song”

Written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon (Sweet Honey in the Rock) to honor civil rights leader Ella Baker.

*D Evans, Angela Allison,
Von McQueen-Simmons, Melissa McQueen-Simmons, vocals*

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 63: 7-9

Laura Hankins

Our Scripture reading for today comes from Isaiah 63:7-9, where the prophet yearns for God to save and protect his people...

I will recount the gracious deeds of the Lord, the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, because of all that the Lord has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully,” and he became their savior in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

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

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

* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 2:13-23 (NRSV)

Jackie Freeze

Our Gospel reading for today comes from Matthew 2:13-23, where the holy family flees to Egypt to escape Herod's violence and protect the life of their son...

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the magi. Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

“A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

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 Sermon in Word and Song

“Keeping Christmas”

Rev. Judah L. Jones

“Christmas We Shall Not Be Moved”

Christmas peace we're bringing, We shall not be moved;
Love and joy we're singing, We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved.

Chorus:

We shall not be, we shall not be moved;
We shall not be, we shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved.

In this busy season, We shall not be moved;
Jesus is the reason, We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved. *Chorus*

Delighting in Gd's story, We shall not be moved;
Giving God the glory, We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved. *Chorus*

Noel Hallelujah, We shall not be moved;
Noel Hallelujah, We shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water,
We shall not be moved. *Chorus*

Invitation to Generosity

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.

Jackie Freeze

Generosity is a spiritual gift and a discipline. Let us cultivate our practice of trusting in God's provision, abundance, and love by giving generously to meet the needs of our community and beyond.

* 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*)

Jackie Freeze

Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...
Wise God, we present these offerings to you and dedicate our time, talents, and treasures for your kindom. May your will be done, our siblings needs be met, and your name be known through what we share in praise and thanksgiving for all you have given to us in time, talent, and treasure. Amen.

* Hymn 154

“Go Tell It On the Mountain”

SPIRITUAL

*Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hill and everywhere.
Go tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born!*

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. (R)

The shepherds feared and trembled when lo! above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. (R)

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. (R)

* Benediction

Rev. Judah L. Jones

Postlude

“Rain Down”

arr. J. Cortez

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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Parts of this service were adapted from In God's Love: Service Prayers for the First Sunday of Christmas Year A, written by the Rev. Dr. Cheryl A. Lindsay, Minister for Worship and Theology for the United Church of Christ.

Candid photographs and/or video recording share our work and witness and invite others into the fellowship of our congregation. Some pictures/video may be published in church print publications, on our website or on our official social media sites. If you do not wish to have your image published, please contact the church office by phone or email.

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

D Evans, Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian, Laurence Winston

Greeters:

Refreshments: Pam Shimberg, Barbara Schneller

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/>

WELCOME GUEST PREACHER THE REV. JUDAH L. JONES

The Reverend Judah L. Jones is an ordained minister in the Western NC Conference of the UMC who officially retired last year. She holds a Master of Divinity (MDiv) from Duke Divinity School. Despite being born blind, Judah has challenged limits and continues to accomplish vocational goals. In retirement, she serves in a variety of settings as preacher, music leader, singer/songwriter, actor, artist, and comedian. Former positions include Senior Pastor, Director of Pastoral Care, Substance Abuse Counselor, and Minister of Music. She served as Minister of Music at Holy Covenant UCC 2006-2014.

She is currently active with Carolina Voices, Carolina Carolers, Southern Songwriters Association, Forest Hills UMC - Worship at Gibson Village, Planet Improv, and Charlotte Murder Mystery Company. You can follow Judah on Facebook at Judah Blind Prophet.

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

12/31 4th Annual NYE Game Night at HCUCC | 6:30-8:30pm

01/11 Room In The Inn



Your generosity builds a more inclusive church!

Explore secure options available online

<https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/>

YEAR-END GIVING - THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Holy Covenant's fiscal year ends on Tuesday, December 31. Contributions for 2025, or prepayments for 2026, must be received at the church by noon on 12/31/2025, or postmarked on or before 12/31/2025 if being mailed. Please use the secure address of: **Holy Covenant UCC, PO Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269**. Questions about year-end contributions, stock gifts or electronic giving may be directed to Treasurer, Martha Bomely, 704-804-0640, or Dawn Simmons at office@holycovenantucc.org. Please let them know if you plan to make a stock gift so we can include the value of this gift on your year-end giving statement. We are blessed by your generous support of the ministries at Holy Covenant!

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.

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/>

Please Remember in Prayer

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

Members

Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Teresa Eller, Kathy Habel, Jon & Linda Heaslet, Eileen Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Linda Miller, Sue & Bill Pascucci, Benjamin Rudolph, Anita Taylor, Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

The Family of Zackary Cash (Jay & Cathy Whitley)

Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), 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), 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)



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.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Senior Pastor

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Jon Weddell, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

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