



# HOLY COVENANT

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



*Image by Valente, Liz. Baptism of Jesus, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.*

**“Love is the call on our lives. And it's a fierce call, a fierce love.”  
- Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis**

**“You are a blessing, not because of what you have done,  
but because of who you are.”  
- Jan Richardson**

**“Knowing we are beloved gives us the courage  
to live, to love, and to seek justice.”  
- bell hooks**

Founded in 1916, we are an Open & Affirming (LGBTQ+), anti-racist, and justice seeking church that is part of the greater United Church of Christ.

**HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**BAPTISM OF CHRIST**

**January 11, 2026 | 10:55 am**

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

Prelude "For the Beauty of the Earth" Conrad Kocher

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Chiming of the Hour

Centering Prayer Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

*Let us center ourselves in prayer as we gather for this time of worship...*

Loving God, we come into this space carrying the weight of the week behind us, the hopes we hold, and the questions of faith we wrestle with. Before we speak or sing or try to make sense of anything today, remind us that we are already known, already claimed, already loved by you. Settle our hearts into this moment. Let your Spirit move gently among us, opening us to a love that doesn't have to be earned or that asks us to be someone else. As we worship, help us remember we are your beloved. Here, now, always. Amen.

Introit "Holy Ground" Beatty/Davis

**This is holy ground. We're standing on holy ground.**

**For our God is present and where God is is holy. (2x)**

**We are standing on holy ground,**

**And I know that there are angels all around.**

**Let us praise Jesus now.**

**We are standing in God's presence on holy ground.**

\* Call to the Heart

Sally Duffy

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

One: Come, beloved community, to the welcoming waters of grace.

Many: **We gather, drawn by the voice that calls us precious and loved.**

One: Come, remembering the baptism of Jesus, where heaven declared,  
"You are my beloved."

Many: **We come to celebrate that this same love claims each of us, just as we are.**

One: Come, with all that you carry. Your joys, your struggles, your doubts, and your hopes.

Many: **We come, trusting in the God whose love and presence is always with us.**

One: Let us worship the One who calls us by name and sees us as beloved and whole.

Many: **We come to the waters of renewal, ready to receive the affirmation of God's love.**

\* Hymn 44

"Beautiful Jesus"

CRUSADER'S HYMN

Beautiful Jesus, Head of all creation,  
God and the blessed Mary's child: I want to love you,  
Praise and adore you, joy of my soul, so long desired.

Beautiful springtime, lovely, green and hopeful,  
All earth exhales its sweet perfume: Jesus is sweeter,  
Jesus is purer, sad hearts at this, rejoice and bloom.

Beautiful sunshine, clear, so lovely, moonlight  
Stars shine like angels, ranked through space: Jesus shines brighter,  
Jesus shines clearer, in perfect beauty, love, and grace.

All earthly beauty, all celestial radiance  
Fade when compared to Jesus' face. Let me not cherish  
Beauties that perish; let me this lovely good embrace.

Monthly Affirmation

**Ourselves:** I release the past, and step into the new beginning God is calling me to.

**Neighbor:** You release the past, and step into the new beginning God is calling you to.

**World:** We release the past, and step into the new beginning God is calling us to.

Modern Lesson

Alice Phelan-Young

*Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Rachel Held Evans who was influential writer known for her thought-provoking critiques of evangelical culture and her advocacy for a more inclusive, questioning, justice-oriented Christianity. In her book “Searching for Sunday” she says...*

Baptism reminds us that there's no ladder to holiness to climb, no self-improvement plan to follow. It's just death and resurrection, over and over again, day after day, as God reaches down into our deepest graves and with the same power that raised Jesus from the dead wrests us from our pride, our apathy, our fear, our prejudice, our anger, our hurt, and our despair. We all long for someone to tell us who we are. The great struggle of the Christian life is to take God's name for us, to believe we are beloved and to believe that is enough...Baptism declares that God is in the business of bringing dead things back to life, so if you want in on God's business, you better prepare to follow God to all the rock-bottom, scorched-earth, dead-on-arrival corners of this world—including those of your own heart—because that's where God works, [and] that's where God gardens.

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

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

\* Gospel Lesson

Matthew 3:13-17 (NRSV)

Sally Duffy

*Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshiping... Our Scripture reading for today comes from Mathew 3:13-17, where Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist...*

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

**One:** For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us. For the word of God within us.

**Many:** Thanks be to God.

The Good News

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“The World Is Waiting and the Waters Are Calling”

## Affirmation of Baptism

*Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Rev. Windy Allison, & Rev. Jay Whitley*

You are invited to come forward for an affirmation of baptism or a reminder of God's love. Whether or not you have been baptized, you are welcome to participate, because God's love for you exists before and beyond any ritual or sacrament. Three pastors will use water from the baptismal font to remind you that you are God's beloved child.

*Remember: "You are a beloved child of God."*

Music during Affirmation      "Wade in the Water"  
*Angela Allison, DL Evans, vocals*

SPIRITUAL

**Wade in the water; Wade in the water, children,  
Wade in the water; God's gonna trouble the water.**

## Invitation to Generosity

Sally Duffy

Jesus shows us that baptism is not the end, but the beginning of God's work in and through us. We are invited to wade into the messy and murky places of our world, standing in solidarity with those crying out for justice. Let us now offer our gifts, not as proof of our blessings, but as a response to the love that has claimed us from the very beginning. That these offerings are a way of participating in God's mission to love, peace, and justice as we seek to bring forth the kin-dom here on earth.

## Offertory

"On Eagle's Wings"

Michael Joncas

## \* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below,  
Praise God above all heavenly hosts,  
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

## \* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Sally Duffy

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

**God of the muddy Jordan, you have named us beloved from the beginning, and you commissioned us to stand where you stand. Bless these gifts so they may wade into the places where your people are hurting, hungry, and crying out for change. May these offerings be the beginning of healing, the start of justice, and a sign that your kin-dom is being built through the power of solidarity and love. Amen.**

## INSTALLATION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

**Elders:** Joy Decker, Brian Hankins, Tom Magraw, Sally Duffy, Diane Neese; **Deacons:** Cheryl Milam, Shakti Subramanian, Tom Lannin, Lee Parrish, Stephanie Herrin, Patrick Washburn; **Officers:** Dawn Robinson (E), President; Ed Vickery (D), Vice President; Mel Andersen (D), Secretary; Martha Bomely (D), Treasurer  
**Outgoing Class:** Jana Harrison (E), Lloyd Spencer (E), Suzanne Lamorey (D), Eric Miner (D), Terry Raley-Dennis (D)

Recognition of service to Consistory Class of 2025

*Members of the Consistory Class of 2028 and Officers come forward.*

**Pastor:** These people have been called by God, in accordance with the faith and order of the church, to serve among us as leaders of the church. They have accepted their call, and we are here to witness their willingness to serve.

**President:** Siblings in Christ, it is an honor and privilege to be entrusted with the responsibility to serve in leadership at Holy Covenant United Church of Christ. Having prayerfully considered the duties and responsibilities of your ministry, are you prepared to serve with the help of God, in Christ's name, for the building up of the church and the good of the world?

**Members:** I am, with the grace of God.

**President:** Do you promise to exercise your ministry to the church in faith and diligence, demonstrating the wisdom and love of Christ?

**Members:** I do, with the grace of God.

**Pastor:** Are each of you who have committed to serve as officers of the congregation willing to accept the office to which you have been called and are you prepared to serve with the help of God, in Christ's name, for the flourishing of this congregation and the healing of the world?

**Officers:** I am, with the grace of God.

**Pastor:** Members of Holy Covenant, you have heard our siblings in Christ who have answered God's call to this service. Let us affirm our intention to live in covenant with them.

**People:** We gather in celebration of the joy that is ours to be partners with you in the service of Jesus Christ. We promise to love you, honor your leadership, and assist you, that together we may be a faithful church of Jesus Christ as we seek to follow his ways together.

*(The outgoing class of 2025 and current Elders and Deacons and  
are invited forward for the laying on of hands.)*

### Laying on of Hands

**Pastor:** The Laying on of Hands is a symbolic act by which the church, in every age, recognizes God's call already at work in the lives of faithful people. In this act, we give thanks for the gifts they carry and pray for wisdom, courage, and trust as those gifts are named, strengthened, and shaped for the ministry that lies before them. We lay hands upon you, Stephanie Herrin, Ed Vickery, and Patrick Washburn, as Deacons and Sally Duffy and Diane Neese, as Elders. Let us offer our prayers and blessings as a congregation:

**People:** **Eternal and faithful God, you have already been present in the lives of these people, calling them, shaping them, and gifting them for service in this church and the world. As we lay hands upon them, help us to recognize and affirm the gifts they bring, and to support their growth as new responsibilities and opportunities arise. Grant them wisdom in discernment, courage in leadership, humility in service, and joy in their shared ministry. May they serve among us with integrity and faithfulness, and may our life together reflect the love and grace of Christ as we seek to be a faithful community for this time and place in our world. Amen.**

**President:** In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the people of Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, we rejoice to announce that you are each installed as members of the Consistory. May your service and ministry be a blessing and cause you to grow in the wisdom, faith, and grace of Christ. Amen.

\* Hymn 290

“Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart”  
vv. 1, 4, 5

MORECAMBE

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;  
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as you are,  
And make me love you as I ought to love.

Teach me to feel that you are always nigh;  
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,  
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;  
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love you as your angels love,  
One holy passion filling all my frame;  
The baptism of the heaven descended dove,  
My heart an altar, and your love the flame.

\* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

\* Benediction Response

NEW DIMENSIONS

God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles soar,  
We your people, ours the journey now and ever,  
Now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude

“Amazing Grace”

Arr. Victor Labenske

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

*Parts of the liturgy were written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.*

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

**Many thanks to Dawn Robinson for being our accompanist today, allowing  
Jon Weddell to take some well-deserved time off.**

**WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:**

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

Ushers: Dave Shimberg, Eric Miner, Laurence Winston, Shakti Subramanian

Greeters: Roxie McMillon, Deborah Winston

Refreshments: Kristen Fuchs, Kathy Gorman, Pam Shimberg, Aline Sullivan



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

GET ALL THE DETAILS FOR NEWS AND EVENTS AT  
<https://holycovenantucc.org/>

*Your generosity builds a more inclusive church!  
Explore secure options available online  
<https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/>*



*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 to access our secure online giving options. Thank you for sustaining the ministries of love, welcome, and justice we are creating together.*

CHECK OUT OUR ONLINE CALENDAR AT <https://holycovenantucc.org/events/>  
01/11 Room In The Inn

### **WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

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

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

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

### **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](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org).

### **Members**

William Pascucci, family and friends in the recent death of Susan Passcucci  
Jon Wallace and family in the recent death of his father, Pete Wallace  
Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Kathy Habel, Jon & Linda Heaslet, Eileen  
Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Linda Miller, Bill Pascucci, Benjamin Rudolph,  
Barbara Schneller, 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 Rhannon Pacewicz (Dom Ciciollo),  
Frank Roach (Kristen Fuchs), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph),  
Michelle Sharp (Beth Sharp), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn), Scott Whitley  
(Jay Whitley)

### **OUR MINISTRY TEAM**

**Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Senior Pastor**

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

**Jon Weddell, Minister of Music**

**Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant**

*Mailing address: P.O. Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269*

**3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510**

**www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810**