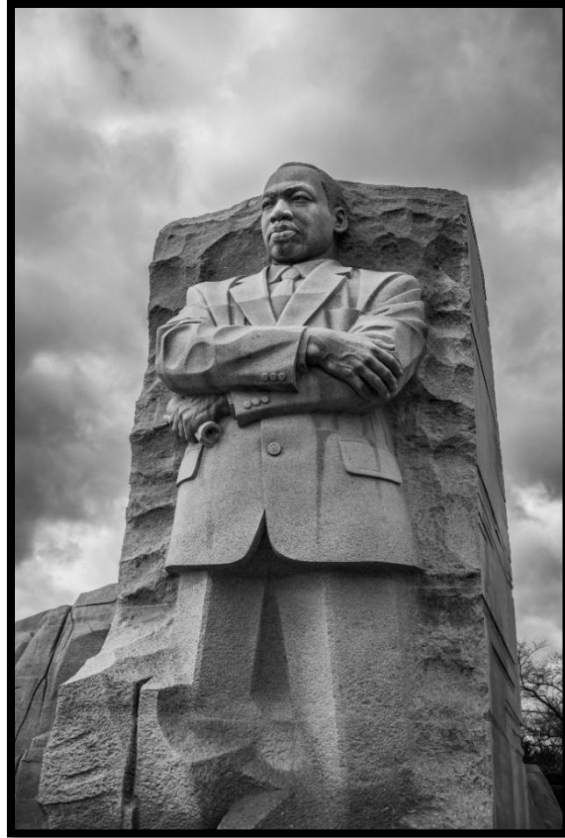




HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Tim Mossholder

“God does not call us because we are ready;
God calls us because love demands a response.”

- Megan Rohrer

“Justice is not the absence of pain but the refusal to let pain
have the final word. Faith means stepping forward
even when the destination is unclear.”

- Pauli Murray

“Justice grows when people trust that their contribution matters.”

- Ella Baker

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
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

January 18, 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 arr. R. W. Thygerson
"Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen"

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...
God of light and liberation, we come this morning from the noise and busyness of our lives, from the weight of all we carry, from the worries in our world that keep us up at night. In this sacred space, help us to quiet our anxious thoughts and open our hearts to the voice of Spirit. Center us in the truth that we are loved simply because we are yours. As we gather to worship, help us to hear your call afresh, to see your light breaking in, and to trust that you are forming us to be servants in the world. In the spirit of the prophets, in the love of Jesus, in the life of saints and martyrs, we come, we worship, we sing, we pray. 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

Alix Felsing

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

One: We gather as God's beloved community, called from the womb, named as beloved before we knew ourselves.

Many: **We gather as servants, ready to answer the call placed upon us.**

One: We come carrying our doubts and inadequacies, our questions and uncertainties.

Many: **We come trusting that God equips us for and through the work before us.**

One: We gather in a world crying out for justice, longing for liberation, yearning for light.

Many: **We gather to be that light; shining through our wounds, our witness, our willingness to say, "yes."**

One: In the spirit of the prophets, in the legacy of Dr. King, in the name of Jesus who calls us friends...

Many: **We gather to worship the God of resurrection, who creates life from death, who bends the arc of the universe toward justice. Let us now worship together!**

* Hymn

"Oh Freedom"

SPIRITUAL

Angela Allison, DL Evans, vocalists

Oh, freedom, Oh, freedom

Oh, freedom over me

Refrain: And before I'd be a slave,
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my Lord and be free.

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Alix Felsing

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

God of justice and mercy, we confess that we often feel too inadequate for the work you place before us. We look at the brokenness around us, the injustice, the suffering, the overwhelming need, and we convince ourselves that someone else should answer the call. We labor and grow weary, wondering if our efforts make any difference at all, tempted to believe our work is in vain. Forgive us, and transform our hearts from doubt to trust, from fear to faith, from reluctance to readiness. Amen.

Words of Grace

Alix Felsing

Friends, hear this good news...

God has never loved you because you are useful; you are useful because you are loved by God. Your worth is not measured by your accomplishments, but your worth was given you by God from the very beginning. You are being equipped for every call as you step forward in faith. The God who creates life from death, who gathers scattered exiles, who vindicates those who labor in faithfulness—that same God is with you, and is sending you forth as a light. In the name of Christ, know you are forgiven, you are loved, and you are called. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Pastoral Prayer

Special Music

“Roll Down, Justice”
Meg Houlihan, vocalist

M. Miller

Modern Lesson

Beth Christian Sharp

Our Modern Lesson for today comes from Fannie Lou Hamer who was a voting and women’s rights activist, and community organizer during the civil rights movement. She is remembered once having said...

I am sick and tired of being sick and tired. But being tired does not mean we stop. It means we remember why we began. Nobody’s free until everybody’s free. The work is heavy, but the vision is holy. We keep going because our lives, and the lives of those who come after us, depend on it. Faith means believing that change is possible even when the evidence says otherwise.

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

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

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 49:1-7 (NRSV)

Alix Felsing

Our Scripture reading for today comes from Isaiah 49:1-7, where a Servant is called upon to deliver the Israelites. A Servant who feels their work is futile and far bigger than they imagined...

Listen to me, O coastlands; pay attention, you peoples from far away! The Lord called me before I was born; while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow; in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord and my reward with my God." And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

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

"Called to Be Light"

Invitation to Generosity

Alix Felsing

One: Dr. King reminded us that "life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" Today we have the opportunity to answer that question through our generosity, investing in the work of justice, mercy, love, and compassion. Through our gifts, we become partners in building God's kin-dom here on earth, a beloved community where all are welcomed, all are valued, and all can flourish. Let us give as ones who have been called to be light in the world.

* 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*)

Alix Felsing

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

God of abundance, we offer these gifts, trusting that you will use them to bring your kin-dom to life in the world. Bless these offerings and bless the hands and hearts that give them, that they may shine as light in the shadows, bring hope where there is despair, and work for justice where there is oppression. May our generosity be a reflection of your love and a response to the call you have placed upon us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Poem

“Let America Be America Again”
Read by Jeff Edwards-Knight

by Langston Hughes

<https://allpoetry.com/Let-America-Be-America-Again>

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* Hymn

WE SHALL OVERCOME

We shall overcome; (2x) we shall overcome some day.

Refrain: O, deep in my heart I do believe we shall overcome someday!

We'll walk hand in hand; (2x) we'll walk hand in hand someday. (R)

We shall live in peace; (2x) we shall live in peace someday. (R)

We are not afraid; we are not afraid; we are not afraid today. (R)

God will see us through; (2x) God will see us through today. (R)

* 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

“Deep River”

arr. T. Osman

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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Parts of the liturgy were written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki.

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

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

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

Ushers:

Greeters: Roxie McMillon

Refreshments: Diane Neese, Sally McLester

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/>

- Jan. 12 - Worship Team Meeting 5:30pm
- Jan. 13 - Creation Justice Team Meeting 7:00pm
- Jan. 14 - Communications Team Meeting 7:00pm
- Jan. 14 - Racial Justice & Equity Team Meeting 7:30pm
- Jan. 18 - Consistory 12:30pm
- Jan. 19 - Office closed in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Dr. Day
- Feb. 01 - Christian Ed Planning Meeting 12:30pm
- Feb. 04 - Daytimers Covenant Group Luncheon 12:00pm

Anyone wishing to be a part of the HCUCC Ministry Teams is invited to contact the church office for an introduction to the team. A Ministry Team Fair is in the planning stages for the first Sunday in March.

EVERY VOICE MATTERS: NEW HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES AVAILABLE

See the ushers for a wireless transmitter and your personal ear buds.

A CONVERSATION ABOUT OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH, FEB. 1

To offer meaningful, engaging, and faith-based education for our children and youth, we are inviting parents and volunteers to join us for an important meeting. On Sunday, February 1, at 12:30 pm, we will gather in the Children's Classroom for a conversation about our children's and youth programming; what is working well, what support is needed, and how we can best provide a faith-based experience of our youngest members. This will be a time to talk through upcoming plans, identify areas where help is needed, and explore ways parents and volunteers can sign up and participate to offer both Christian education and spiritual formation during worship. Parents and volunteers are encouraged to attend, and you do not need to currently have a child or youth involved to participate. If you have a heart for supporting our children, families, and the future of our church, your presence and ideas are welcome. We look forward to dreaming, planning, and sharing this responsibility together, so that our children and youth continue to experience church as a place of care, belonging, and growth. For questions, please reach out to Jo Ann Jellison or Dawn Robinson.

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.

Members

Wm. Pascucci, family and friends in the recent death of Susan Passcucci
Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Kathy Habel, Eileen Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Linda Miller, Bill Pascucci, Benjamin Rudolph, Barbara Schneller, Anita Taylor, Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

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), Sakhi Naushad (Stephanie Herrin), Matt, Brianna and Rhiannon Pacewicz (Dom Ciciollo), Frank Roach (Kristen Fuchs), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Michelle Sharp (Beth Sharp), Tiffany Turner (Terry Raley-Dennis), Dave & Jennifer Ward (Jay & Cathy Whitley), Tara Washburn (Patrick Washburn), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Senior Pastor
RevChris@holycovenantucc.org, 314-402-8167

Jon Weddell, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, Executive Assistant

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