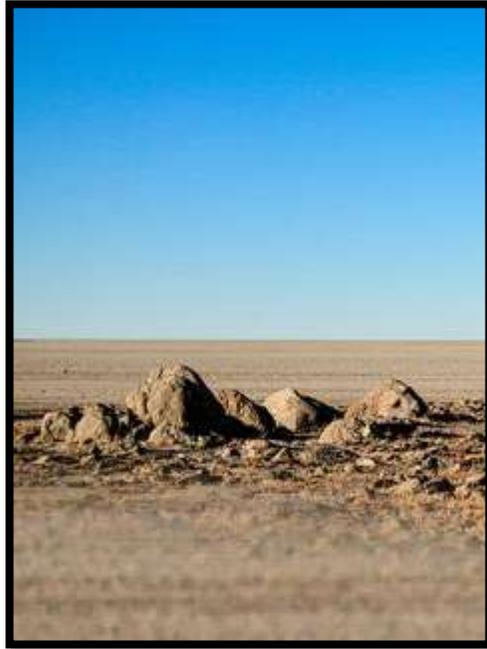




HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



“Bright Sadness is the true message and gift of Lent:
... the sadness of my exile, of the waste I have made
of my life; the brightness of God's presence and
forgiveness, the joy of the recovered desire for God,
the peace of the recovered home.”

~ Alexander Schmemmann

“What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible?
Maybe it is that power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of
love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control
people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.”

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

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

HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT ~ BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February 22, 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 "Lonesome Valley" arr. E. Butler

Welcome and Announcements Ed Vickery

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

Chiming of the Hour

Introit "Salaam" M. Samir (Egypt)

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God to every race.

Salaam, salaam, the peace of God in every place.

* Call to the Heart Pam Shimberg

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

One: We gather at the edge of promise, standing between what has been and what could be.

Many: **God brings us to this place of possibility and hope.**

One: Some of us see giants. Some see barriers. Some see obstacles.

Many: **Yet God calls us to see a future with trust and courage.**

One: Fear can distort our vision and delay our steps and actions.

Many: **But the Spirit of God uplifts our hearts and strengthens our faith.**

One: The Holy One goes with us into unknown and difficult places that lay ahead.

Many: **We will not turn back. We walk together in love. We will hold to the promise and move forward in faith.**

* Hymn 454 "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian" SPIRITUAL

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart;

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

In my heart, (*in my heart*), in my heart (*in my heart*).

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving...

Lord, I want to be more holy...

Lord, I want to be like Jesus...

Black Christian History Moment

Shanel Simmons

During each Sunday of Black History Month, we will recognize someone of African American descent who has contributed to the theology and breath of the Christian faith. Today we celebrate and recognize Dr. Katie Cannon.

Song

“I Love the Lord”

R. Smallwood

I love the Lord, who heard my cry and pitied every groan.
Long as I live and troubles rise, I'll hasten to God's throne.

I love the Lord, who heard my cry and chased my grief away.
O let my heart no more despair while I have breath to pray.

Stories for All People

Joy Decker

Song

“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

K. Medema

Lord, listen to your children praying.
Lord, send your Spirit in this place.
Lord, listen to your children praying.
Send us love, send us power, send us grace.

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Windy Allison

Anthem

“N'kosi Sikelel'i Afrika”
(Prayer for Africa/Pan-African National Anthem)
Sung in Zulu and Lesotho

arr. N. Page

English translation:

God bless Africa, let her glory be held up high.
Please listen to our prayers, God bless we, her children.
Holy Spirit, please come down, God bless we, her children.
God protect our nation. Please bring an end to wars and suffering.
Protect us, Protect our nation, Africa.

Scripture Lesson

Pam Shimberg, Deborah Winston

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

NUMBERS 13:27-33

Pam Shimberg

And they reported to him and said, “We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large, and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the land of the Negeb; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites live in the hill country, and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan. But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, ‘Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.’ Then the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we.’ So they brought to the Israelites an unfavorable report of the land that they had spied out, saying, ‘The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great size. There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim), and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.’

NUMBERS 14:6-10A

Deborah Winston

Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, “The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the Lord, and do not fear the people of the land, for they are no more than bread for us; their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” But the whole congregation threatened to stone them. Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites.

NUMBERS 14:40-45

Pam Shimberg

They rose early in the morning and went up to the heights of the hill country, saying, “Here we are. We will go up to the place that the Lord has promised, for we have sinned.” But Moses said, “Why do you continue to transgress the command of the Lord? That will not succeed. Do not go up, for the Lord is not with you; do not let yourselves be struck down before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites will confront you there, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned back from following the Lord, the Lord will not be with you.” But they resumed to go up to the heights of the hill country, even though the ark of the covenant of the Lord and Moses had not left the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them, pursuing them as far as Hormah.

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.**

Song

“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

Invitation to Generosity

Pam Shimberg

As we begin this Season of Lent, in a world that measures worth by wealth and success, Jesus invites us to see abundance differently. The kin-dom of God is breaking forth among us, not in power or privilege, but in generosity, justice, and love. When we give, we participate in that unfolding vision, ensuring that all are fed, cared for, and seen as beloved. Let us now share our gifts with open hands and open hearts.

* Doxology

THANK YOU, LORD

Thank you, Lord. (3x) I just want to thank you, Lord.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Pam Shimberg

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

God of abundance, bless these gifts we bring today, that they may be signs of your love and agents of your justice. May they nourish the hungry, shelter the unhoused, and empower the ministry work we do. Transform not only what we offer, but also our hearts, that we may live with generosity and trust in your ever-unfolding kin-dom here on earth. Amen.

* Hymn

“We’ve Come This Far by Faith”

arr. R. Smallwood

Refrain:

We’ve come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord,
Trusting in God’s holy Word—God’s never failed us yet.
Oh, can’t turn around, we’ve come this far by faith.

Don’t be discouraged with trouble in your life;

God will bear your burdens and remove all misery and strife. (R)

* Benediction

Rev. Windy Allison

* Benediction Response

SIZOHAMBA NAYE (Eswatini)

We will walk with God, my brothers; we will walk with God.

We will walk with God, my sisters; we will walk with God.

We will go rejoicing till the kingdom has come.

We will go rejoicing till the kingdom has come.

Postlude

“Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child”
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arr. J. Carter

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

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

WE PROVIDE OUR EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME WITH HELP FROM:

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

Ushers: Shakti Subramanian,

Greeters:

Refreshments: Mtn. Island Covenant Group

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/>

- Feb. 22 - Sandwich Build following worship; Mtn. Island Covenant Group gathering 12:30pm, Conference Room
- Feb. 28 - Rock Hill Civil Rights lunch and museum 2:30pm
- Mar. 01 - Ministry Team Fair following worship
- Mar. 04 - Daytimers Covenant Group, 12:00pm
- Mar. 08 - New Member / Inquirer Class, 12:30pm; RITI 3:30pm
- Mar. 14 - Project Linus Blanket Party 10am-4pm
- Mar. 28 - Game Night 6:30-8:30pm

WELCOME GUEST PREACHER REV. WINDY ALLISON

Please welcome today's guest preacher, Rev. Windy Allison who comes with a deep love for Scripture and a commitment to listening for where God is moving. Approaching preaching as an act of faithfulness rather than performance, Rev. Allison seeks to serve as a vessel through whom God's Word might challenge, comfort, stretch, and grow God's people. Most importantly, Rev. Allison believes that God's Word calls us into deeper commitment and service to one another—and thus, to God. Windy is currently an Education Specialist for Berewick Elementary School as a K-5 Teacher. We are grateful for her time with us!

RJE CIVIL RIGHTS TRAIL - Next Stop: *Kounter* (Rock Hill)

A Black History Month community learning experience

Saturday, February 28 | 2:30pm Today is the final day to sign up!

The Racial Justice & Equity Team invites you to join us at *Kounter* on Saturday, February 28. We'll gather around the table, share a meal, and explore the museum as we honor the Friendship Nine and the 1961 sit-ins that helped open the doors of public restaurants to all. Stop by the table after worship to RSVP and claim your seat. Event details will be emailed to all who register later this week. Come be part of the story we're still shaping—together.

MINISTRY TEAM FAIR, MARCH 1

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.

NEW MEMBER / INQUIRER CLASSES PLANNED IN 2026

If you are interested in becoming a member at Holy Covenant or would like to explore what becoming a member means, mark your calendar for some upcoming dates in 2026. We hold new member classes on March 8th and 22nd, with a new member installation on March 29th, which is Palm & Passion Sunday. If you are interested in becoming a new member or have questions, please reach out to **Pastor**

Chris, RevChris@holycovenantucc.org or contact the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org.

PROJECT LINUS BLANKET MAKING PARTY, MARCH 14

Join the Project Linus Blanketeers in a drop-in day, Saturday, March 14, from 10am-4pm at Holy Covenant UCC! All are welcome. Materials and tools provided. Let's make some blankets for children needing a little comfort by providing them with blankets made with love. No sewing skills needed!

EVERY VOICE MATTERS: NEW HEARING ASSISTANCE DEVICES AVAILABLE

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

Please Remember in Prayer

Members

Mel Andersen, Liz Colton, Kevin Decker, Kathy Habel, Laura Hankins, Eileen Howe, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Roxie McMillon, Linda Miller, Benjamin Rudolph, Kathleen Smith & Lisa Cloninger, Anita Taylor, Tommy Tomlinson, Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

Friends and Family in the recent death of Sally Greenside Jones. (Linda Burby)
Brent Taylor and family in the recent death of his son, Mason Taylor (Cindy Coble)
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), Ann Garret (Holly Middleton & Dawn Schmitz), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), Jack Hillard (Barbara Schneller), Jeanne Hord (Diane Neese), Cindy Hedrick (Barb Schneller), Henry Hildebrand (Bill & Connie Hildebrand), Charlie Holt (Autumn Holt), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Ed & Johnnie McLester (Diane Neese), Sakhi Naushad (Stephanie Herrin), Matt, Brianna and Rhiannon Pacewicz (Dom Ciciollo), Bill Pascucci, 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)

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

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

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