



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



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**“We are born and reborn again and again.
We are changing with the waves of time.”**

- Debasish Mridha

**“To live fully is to let go and die with each passing moment,
and to be reborn in each new one.”**

- Jack Kornfield

**“I am my own sanctuary, and I can be reborn
as many times as I choose throughout my life.”**

- Lady Gaga

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 IN LENT

March 1, 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 “Lead Me to Calvary” arr. L. Shackley

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...

Gracious and loving God, we pause in this moment to simply be with you. Quiet the noise within us—the worries, the distractions, the endless lists of things we think we should be doing. Help us breathe deeply and know that you are here, closer than our own breath. Open us, God. Open our hearts to the people sitting beside us, strangers and friends alike, knowing each person carries your image. Open our minds to new ideas and perspectives we’ve never considered. Open our spirits to the possibility that you are so much bigger, so much more mysterious, so much more loving than we’ve ever dared to imagine. Help us to be aware of your Spirit in us now, receptive to being reborn, as we open ourselves to you. Amen.

Introit “Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley” LONESOME VALLEY

Jesus walked this lonesome valley. He had to walk it by himself.

Oh, nobody else could walk it for him. He had to walk it by himself.

* Call to the Heart Ed Vickery

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

One: When we face loss and grief, when our hearts are broken open by hurt and pain,

Many: **We are being born anew.**

One: When we ask hard questions, when we deconstruct old beliefs and seek deeper truths,

Many: **We are being born anew.**

One: When we fall in love, become parents, care for aging loved ones, and learn what sacrifice means,

Many: We are being born anew.

One: When we see injustice, when our eyes are opened to the suffering of others and their suffering becomes ours,

Many: We are being born anew.

One: When we step into the unknown, leave what's familiar and trust the Spirit to guide us forward,

Many: We are being born anew.

One: We are always being made new. Let us now worship and listen to the whispers of the Still Small Voice for the ways we are being reborn.

Many: Thanks be to God! Amen.

* Hymn

“Gather Us In”

M. Haugen

**Here in this place, the new light is streaming,
Shadows of doubt are vanished away:
See in this space our fears and our dreamings
Brought here to you in the light of this day.**

**Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
Gather us in, our spirits inflame.
Call to us now and we shall awaken;
We shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**We are the young - our lives are a mystery,
We are the old who yearn for your face.
We have been sung throughout all of history,
Called to be light to the whole human-race.**

**Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;
Gather us in, the proud and the strong:
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly;
Give us the courage to enter the song.**

**Not just in buildings, small and confining,
Not in some heaven light-years away,
Here in this place the new light is shining,
Now is God present, and now is the day.**

**Gather us in and hold us forever;
Gather us in and make us your own,
Gather us in, all peoples together -
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

Monthly Affirmation

Ourselves: I open my heart to a new path, trusting the light of God to guide my way.

Neighbor: You open your heart to a new path, trusting the light of God to guide your way.

World: We open our heart to a new path, trusting the light of God to guide our way.

Song of Preparation “Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive”

DETROIT

“Forgive our sins as we forgive,” you taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Ed Vickery

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

Loving God, we confess that we can resist the very transformation we need. We can cling to certainties that no longer serve us or hide behind old beliefs that keep us comfortable. We can fear what we might have to leave behind, or how others might see us differently. Forgive us for our fears and the ways we might avoid change. And instead, open us to your patient persistent work of making us anew. Amen.

Song of Transformation “God, Be Merciful to Me”

REDHEAD 76

God be merciful to me; on your grace I rest my plea.
My transgressions I confess; grief and guilt my soul oppress.
Wash me, make me pure within; cleanse, O cleanse me from my sin.

Gracious God, my heart renew, make my spirit right and true.
Do not cast me from your sight nor remove your Spirit’s light.
Your salvation’s joy restore, make me steadfast evermore.

Words of Grace

Ed Vickery

Friends, hear this good news...

God does not force transformation upon us but gently invites us to it. Throughout our lives the Spirit works slowly, meeting us where we are. God doesn’t ask us to change overnight, to have all the answers, or to become someone new by tomorrow. A loving God would not ask that of us. A loving God gives us grace to grow gradually, to ask questions along the way, to be reborn one day, one moment, and one experience at a time. A loving God allows for your becoming. Let us trust the presence of God who is always and forever guiding. Amen.

* Gospel Lesson

John 3:1-8 (CEB)

Ed Vickery

Our Gospel reading for today comes John, where Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, comes to Jesus in the night to ask questions about all he is saying and doing...

There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a Jewish leader. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could do these miraculous signs that you do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered, “I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it’s not possible to see God’s kingdom.” Nicodemus asked, “How is it possible for an adult to be born? It’s impossible to enter the mother’s womb for a second time and be born, isn’t it?” Jesus answered, “I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it’s not possible to enter God’s kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t be surprised that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It’s the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

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

“Born Anew”

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Invitation to Generosity

Ed Vickery

One: As we prepare our gifts we remember the night Nicodemus came to Jesus. Instead of turning him away, Jesus offered his time, his wisdom, and his patience. Without demanding anything in return from Nicodemus, he offered his presence to one who had questions. We too are invited to give in the same way, knowing that our offerings create space for others to encounter the Spirit, to ask their questions, and to be born anew. Let us now give as we have received...

* 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*)

Ed Vickery

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

Gracious God, we dedicate these gifts to the ongoing work of building your kin-dom in this place and out in the world around us. May these offerings support ministries of love that embrace, ministries of justice that work, and ministries of welcome that say to all who come, “There is room here for you to grow and to be reborn.” Use these gifts and use us, that through the Christ within, we might continue breathing new life into our community and our world. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION
THE MYSTIC SUPPER

The Invitation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: The Lord be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

One: Lift up your hearts.

Many: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Many: **It is good to give our thanks and praise.**

Pastor: This sacred meal is not for the saved or a chosen few, but it is for all God’s people. Across time and generations and cultures and traditions, each has viewed this meal in new and different ways. But if there’s one truth that has stood the test of time, it is that this meal was meant to be shared.

Stephanie Herrin: I can’t tell you how many times over the course of my life I’ve eaten this bread and drank from this cup. Far too many to count. Yet each time, I am taken back by the beauty and wonder that the life of Christ lives not just in me, but in you and in everyone. And to this day, in a life where I’ve seen so much, I continue to stand in awe.

Jeff Edwards-Knight: People often separate and divide themselves over the most trivial things—race, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, and political parties to name a few. Yet, through this meal we remember no matter who we are, where we come from, or who we love, we are all a part of the body of Christ. Me just as much as you.

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

God of all things new, through this meal may we be reborn anew. Confident that the power of Christ that dwelled in Jesus is the same power that resides in us. Move us in new ways: new ways of loving, new ways of caring, new ways of just being present to the stranger, to our neighbors, to this incredibly wide world that just needs more goodness and compassion in it. We give thanks for this sacred meal, for it is sustenance through which we go forth to feed and love others. Amen.

* Hymn

“Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days”

ST. FLAVIAN

Lord Jesus, who through forty days for us did fast and pray,
Teach us with you to mourn our sins, and close by you to stay.

As you with evil did contend, and did the victory win,
O give us strength to persevere, in you the victory win.

And through these days of penitence, and through this Passiontide,
Yes, evermore, in life and death, O Christ, with us abide.

Abide with us, till when this life of suffering shall past,
An Easter of unending joy we may attain at last.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

WORLD PEACE PRAYER

Lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace;
Let peace fill our hearts, let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe.

Postlude

“Finest Wheat”

arr. A. M. David

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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

Children's Church: Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Dominic Ciciollo, Shakti Subramanian Greeters: Anne Hayes

Refreshments: Amanda Deck

**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING:
OUR LOVE OFFERING TO THE WORLD**

We will be receiving this special offering through March/Lent.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

GET ALL THE DETAILS FOR NEWS AND EVENTS AT

<https://holycovenantucc.org/>

- Mar. 01 - Ministry Team Fair - Today following worship
- Mar. 04 - Daytimers Covenant Group - 12:00pm
- Mar. 08 - New Member / Inquirer Class I - 12:30pm; RITI 3:30pm
- Mar. 14 - Project Linus Blanketeers 10:00am- 4:00pm
- Mar. 15 - Consistory - 12:30pm
- Mar. 18 - Children & Youth Programming Meeting - 7:00pm Zoom
- Mar. 22 - New Member Class II; Sandwich Build 12:30pm
- Mar. 22 - New Member / Inquirer Class II - 12:30pm
- Mar. 28 - Game Night - 6:30-8:30pm
- Mar. 29 - Welcome Sunday for New Members; Palm/Passion Sunday

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.

CHARLOTTE KNIGHTS VS. GWINNETT STRIPERS, SIGN UP LAST CALL TODAY

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-48668551-charlotte>

NEW MEMBER / INQUIRER CLASSES

If you are interested in becoming a member at Holy Covenant or would like to explore what becoming a member means, please reach out to Pastor Chris, or contact the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org.

Please Remember in Prayer

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

Members

Mel Andersen, Martha Bomely, 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), 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)

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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