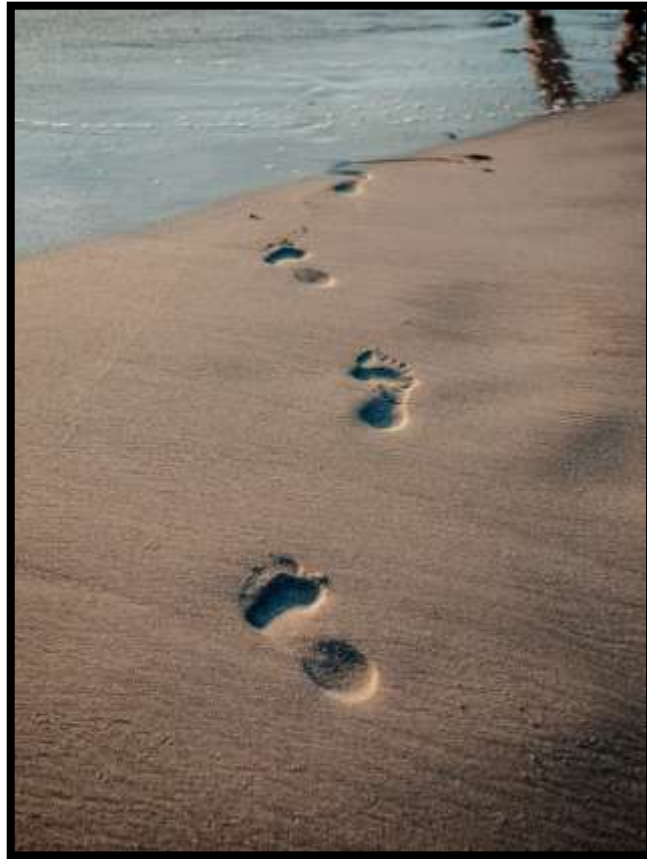




# HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*-be the Church, everywhere*



*Unsplash Photo by Ronan Furuta*

“Doubt isn't the opposite of faith;  
it is an element of faith.”

- Paul Tillich

“When you are in doubt, be still, and wait.”

– Chief White Eagle

“God is big enough to handle our questions.”

– Dr. Neichelle Guidry

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 OF EASTER ~ LAITY SUNDAY

April 12, 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 "The Power of the Cross" arr. J. Evanovich  
*Mary Tarr, violin*

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

Chiming of the Hour

Introit NCH 73 "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" ENTER, REJOICE  
Enter, rejoice, and come in. Enter, rejoice, and come in.  
Today will be a joyful day; enter, rejoice, and come in.

\* Call to the Heart Lloyd Spencer

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

One: We gather in this place, as those first disciples gathered following the resurrection of Jesus.

Many: **We come as we are, with all our questions, skepticisms, and uncertainty.**

One: We protect ourselves and guard our hearts, yet the Risen Christ speaks saying, "Peace be with you."

Many: **We open ourselves to that peace, the peace that finds us wherever we are.**

One: Like Thomas, we are not alone in our disbelief. Yet doubt is not the opposite of faith, it is part of the journey.

Many: **We bring our doubts to this sacred space, trusting they are welcome here.**

One: We gather once again, to touch, to know, to be called and commissioned to be the community of Jesus in the world.

Many: **We answer that call together. Come, let us now worship as one.**

\* Hymn

“Come, Christians, Join to Sing”

MADRID

**Come, Christians, join to sing: Alleluia! Amen!  
Loud praise to Christ we bring: Alleluia! Amen!  
Let all with heart and voice, before his throne rejoice;  
Praise we with grateful choice: Alleluia! Amen!**

**Come lift your hearts on high: Alleluia! Amen!  
Let praises fill the sky: Alleluia! Amen!  
Christ is our guide and friend on whom we can depend;  
His love shall never end: Alleluia! Amen!**

**Praise yet our Christ again: Alleluia! Amen!  
Life shall not end the strain: Alleluia! Amen!  
On heaven’s blissful shore Christ’s goodness we’ll adore,  
Singing, forevermore: Alleluia! Amen!**

Lesson & Witness

Psalm 16 (CEB)

Rena Monk

Protect me, God, because I take refuge in you. I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord. Apart from you, I have nothing good.” Now as for the “holy ones” in the land, the “magnificent ones” that I was so happy about; let their suffering increase because they hurried after a different god. I won’t participate in their blood offerings; I won’t let their names cross my lips. You, Lord, are my portion, my cup; you control my destiny. The property lines have fallen beautifully for me; yes, I have a lovely home. will bless the Lord who advises me; even at night I am instructed in the depths of my mind. I always put the Lord in front of me; I will not stumble because he is on my right side. That’s why my heart celebrates and my mood is joyous; yes, my whole body will rest in safety because you won’t abandon my life to the grave; you won’t let your faithful follower see the pit. You teach me the way of life. In your presence is total celebration. Beautiful things are always in your right hand.

Stories for All People

JoAnn Jellison

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Melissa McQueen-Simmons

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*) “Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus”

LEMUEL

**Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in God’s wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of God’s glory and grace.**

Lesson & Witness

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NRSV)

Beth Christian-Sharp

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Modern Lesson

Caroline Utz

*Our modern lesson for today is from Brian McLaren's book "Faith after Doubt: Why Your Beliefs Stopped Working and What to Do About It". In his book he says...*

Finally, I offer this simple benediction, modeled on the beatitudes, to remind you that your honest doubts are not a curse but, rather, a blessing indeed: Blessed are the curious, for their curiosity honors reality. Blessed are the uncertain and those with second thoughts, for their minds are still open. Blessed are the wonderers, for they shall find what is wonderful. Blessed are those who question their answers, for their horizons will expand forever. Blessed are those who often feel foolish, for they are wiser than those who always think themselves wise. Blessed are those who are scolded, suspected, and labeled as heretics by the gatekeepers, for the prophets and mystics were treated in the same way by the gatekeepers of their day. Blessed are those who know their unknowing, for they shall have the last laugh. Blessed are the perplexed, for they have reached the frontiers of contemplation. Blessed are they who become cynical about their cynicism and suspicious of their suspicion, for they will enter the second innocence.—Blessed are the doubters, for they shall see through false gods. Blessed are the lovers, for they shall see God everywhere.

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

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

Song

"Take O Take Me as I Am"

J. L. Bell

**Take, O take me as I am; summon out what I shall be;  
Set your seal upon my heart and live in me.**

\*Gospel Lesson & Witness      John 20:19-31 (CEB)      Patrick Washburn  
*Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping...*

*Our Gospel lesson for today comes from John 20:19-31, where Jesus appears to the disciples following the resurrection...*

It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven."

Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe."

After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!"

Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus replied, "Do you believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

**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.

Invitation to Generosity

Lloyd Spencer

Never should we give out of obligation, but from a place of gratitude. Gratitude for a God who meets us in our questions and holds us in our doubts. Our offerings are an act of trust, an expression that we believe in this community and the loving work we are doing together. In sharing our gifts, we proclaim that we are part of something much larger than ourselves, and that what we have is meant to be shared with others. Let us now give generously and joyfully.

\* Doxology

LASST UNS ERFREUEN

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise God, all creatures high and low. Alleluia, alleluia!  
Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit one.  
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

\* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Lloyd Spencer

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

God of all that good, we offer these gifts to you, trusting that every offering, rightly placed, can do more than we can imagine. May that's been shared extend welcome, create healing, and build the kind of kin-dom where all God's people are seen and valued. Use what we have given, and use who we are, in the service of your love in the world. Amen.

\* Hymn 256

“We Live by Faith and Not by Sight”

DUNLAP'S CREEK

We live by faith and not by sight;  
No gracious words we hear,  
From Christ who spoke as none e'er spoke,  
Who still we know is near.

We may not touch Christ's hand and side,  
Nor follow where Christ trod;  
But in confessing we rejoice:  
Our Savior and our God!

Help then, O Christ, our unbelief:  
And may our faith a bound  
To call on you when you are near  
And seek where you are found:

That, when our life of faith is done,  
In realms of clearer light  
We may behold you as you are,  
With full and endless sight.

\* Benediction

Rev. Jay Whitley

\* Benediction Response 581

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

“Come, Christians, Join to Sing”

arr. M. Hayes

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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: JoAnn Jellison      Youth Group:

Ushers: Dominic Ciciollo, Dave Shimberg      Greeters:

Refreshments: Bold & Beautiful Covenant Group,

Melissa & Von McQueen-Simmons

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

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

- Apr. 12 - Laity Sunday; Sandwich Build
- Apr. 18 - All Church Workday, 9am-1pm
- Apr. 19 - Earth Sunday; Consistory

*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.*

### **ALL CHURCH WORKDAY, SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 9AM-1PM**

Many hands make for light work! Come help us with #CleaningGodsHouse. Can't make this event? See the task board outside of the office. *Sign up* for something or *sign off* that you've completed a task. Both inside and outside chores are available. Most tools and supplies are already on hand. We are grateful for all your helping hands!

### **HELP LEAD OUR STORIES FOR ALL PEOPLE!**

Please consider presenting a short message to our children and youth during "Stories for All People" on a Sunday of your choosing. You will receive an email the during the week before your chosen Sunday that will include the scripture reading for that week so that you can link your message to the message congregants will receive while the children are in children's church. Please sign up for no more than 3 dates. For more information, you can contact Dawn Robinson, or members of our Christian Education Ministry team.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0C44ACAD23A2FE3-63107138-stories>

## **Please Remember in Prayer**

### **Members**

Mel Andersen, Martha Bomely, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Anita Taylor, Alice & Sally Phelan-Young

### **Friends & Family Members**

Amanda (Linda Burby), Laura Allison, Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Erica Echiverri, Gloria Echiverri (Melissa Noll), Cherice Fequiere (Deborah Winston), Jason Field (Benjamin Rudolph), Mario Gaetani and family (Kristen Fuchs), 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), Judson Hulsey (Kristen Fuchs), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Sakhi Naushad (Stephanie Herrin), Michael Reed (Dawn Simmons), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Tiffany Turner (Terry Raley-Dennis), Dave & Jennifer Ward (Jay & Cathy Whitley), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

If you wish to add someone to the list, please send a note to [prayers@holycovenantucc.org](mailto:prayers@holycovenantucc.org). We periodically adjust our prayer list. If you would like to have someone added back, please contact the office.

### **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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