



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
-be the Church, everywhere



Image by Elena Mozhvilov

“The earth is what we all have in common,
and to care for it is to honor the One who made it.”
- Wendell Berry

“We are called to assist the earth to heal her wounds and in
the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole
creation in all its diversity, beauty, and wonder.”
- Wangari Maathai

“The Spirit of God moves through all creation,
calling us to nurture life, resist destruction, and honor
the earth as a living expression of divine love.”
- Dr. Karen Baker-Fletcher

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.

WAYS TO PROTECT OUR EARTH HOME

These earth care tips are provided by your
HCUC Creation Justice Team

1. Reuse, repurpose and repair items rather than putting them in the trash.
2. Find and use your nearest recycling center to dispose of recyclable items not collected curbside (e.g. cloth, Styrofoam, paint batteries and electronics).
3. Avoid purchasing single-use plastics when possible (bringing your own reusable bottles, grocery bags, etc.).
4. Save gas and avoid putting carbon monoxide into the environment by combining trips, carpooling, using public transportation, biking, or driving an electric vehicle.
5. Go for a walk in your neighborhood and bring along a bag to pick up litter you see along the way.
6. Plant native plants in your yard or flowerpots, especially those that attract pollinators.
7. Refrain from using gas powered lawn tools and equipment.
8. Eat more vegetables and less meat, throw away less food by buying less and composting.
9. Conserve electricity by turning off lights and electronics when not in use, using LED bulbs, turn down heat, air conditioning and water heater temperatures.
10. Educate yourself and others about climate change and environmental justice.



HOLY COVENANT UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CREATION JUSTICE ~ EARTH SUNDAY

April 19, 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" arr. J. Evanovich
Mary Tarr, violin

Welcome and Announcements Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

Many: And also with you.

Chiming of the Hour

Introit 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 Jim Dwiggins

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

One: The land holds us.

Many: Sky breathes in us.

One: Trees stand around us alike ancestors.

Many: Birds sing to us like friends.

One: Rivers flow with tears of joy.

Many: Living beings feed us and walk with us.

One: In the end the earth receives us.

Many: All Creation is God's love poured out; we receive it with joy, care for it with gratitude, and in unity with all Creation we worship God.
Alleluia!

* Hymn 21

“God Reigns o’er All the Earth”

TERRA BEATA

God reigns o’er all the earth! Green hills and valleys low,
The farms and towns in golds and browns
God’s grace and beauty show.
God reigns o’er all the earth! Stone banks and spreading plains,
In rainbow hues - reds, yellows, blues - of streams and country lanes.

God reigns o’er human life! Through youth and aging years,
In death, in birth, in grief, in mirth, in all our hopes and fears.
God reigns o’er human life! Our inspiration still.
Through all our schemes, in all our dreams,
We see God’s reigning will.

God reigns o’er time and space! In history’s by-gone days,
Christ’s faithful folk in reverence spoke to bring God earnest praise.
God reigns o’er time and space! O’er galaxy and sun,
Through timeless years the cosmos hears the heavenly music run.

Action & Advocacy

“Going Green in Lawn Care”

Tom Lannin

Hymn 569

“Touch the Earth Lightly”

TENDERNESS

Touch the earth lightly, use the earth gently,
Nourish the life of the world in our care:
Gift of great wonder, ours to surrender,
Trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

We who endanger, who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
We who would foster clouds of disaster—
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

Let there be greening, birth from the burning,
Water that blesses, and air that is sweet.
Health in God’s garden, hope in God’s children,
Regeneration that peace will complete.

God of all living, God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow, and the sun,
Teach us, deflect us, Christ reconnect us,
Using us gently, and making us one.

Many: Creation calls to us...

One: To open our eyes to the devastation we have and are causing our earthly home. The harm being done to trees, soils, oceans, air, and so much more.

Many: Creation reminds us...

One: To recognize our ones with all beings, human and non-human.

Many: Creation calls to us...

One: To value the community of creation above human greed.

Many: Creation is waiting for us...

One: To move from doing what is easy to doing what is necessary and right.

Many: Creation is waiting for us...

One: To prioritize the needs of community over the Convenience of self, for loving each other is a seed of hope.

Many: Creation hurts and aches, and is lashing out!

One: She asks that we stop polluting, and remove the pollution from our seas, land, air, bodies and hearts.

Many: Creation longs for us...

One: To lament over the devastation of war; the lives lost; Earth, the destruction of her land, and the assault on her climate. To be like the mustard tree seed that grows into a glorious tree in which a myriad of creations, including human beings, find shelter, food, and protection.

Many: Creation is waiting for us but will not wait forever...

One: In all these things and more, creation waits for us to remember our connection to it, before technology and self-sufficiency distanced us, before our creaturely instincts became dull behind concrete walls.

Many: Oh God we ask for radical courage...

One: To remember that we are creation within creation, for truly nature sustains us. Moreover, nature is God's face too - mottled with chlorophyll, adorned in foliage, dusted with feathers, and dewy in morning light.

Many: May we be moved...

One: To assume our roles as creation's servants and protect it. To know that we are a human and nonhuman family, inhabiting the same home.

Many: Amen, Amen.

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

LEMMELE

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.

Poem

“Providence”

Author, Jay Whitley

In the Creator’s universe,
there gently moves a little ball;
Suspended in infinity,
apparently waiting for a call.

To become a serious player,
in God’s great scheme of things,
Just anxiously awaiting,
for what that call will bring.

‘Cause on this ball is given,
all that life would ever need;
Food for growth, water for life,
and air for all to breathe.

Deserts, plains, and lowlands,
Hills and Mountains, rivers and seas;
Every animal that one can imagine,
and things that fly like birds and bees.

Now if this sounds like something,
a part of which you would like to be;
Then just thank the great Provider,
She made the earth for you and me.

Special Music

“Circle of Life”

M. Haugen

Stephen Tarr, Ed Vickery, vocals

Refrain:

One great circle of life, living circle of love,
Plants and trees, seas and rivers and the blessed sky above.
Creatures great, creatures small,
One the web that weaves us all in the circle of life.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Jim Dwiggins

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

Creator of all, we bring these gifts with thankful hearts, grateful for the beauty of the earth and the life it sustains. Bless what we offer today -our resources, our time, our energy - that they may nurture the soil, protect the waters, and bring renewal to places in need. May our giving be a sign of our love for You and all You have made. Amen.

A Liturgy of Farewell and Blessing for Beth Christian Sharp

Words of Love & Appreciation for Beth Sharp

by Suzanne Lamorey & Kristin Andes

Liturgy of Release

Pastor: Beth Sharp, do you leave this place knowing that you are loved – not because of what you have done, but because of who you are?

Beth: I leave knowing that I am loved.

Pastor: Do you leave with our blessing, our prayers, and our hopes for you?

Beth: I leave with your blessing, your prayers, and your hopes for me.

Pastor: Do you trust that the God who has been faithful to you here will be faithful to you in this new place?

Beth: I trust that God is faithful, wherever I am led.

Pastor: Congregation, do you release Beth with open hands and open hearts, sending your love with her?

Congregation: We release her in love and send our love with her.

Pastor: And do you affirm that Beth will be in her right and perfect place. That God goes with her, and she will find and build new community and friendships.

Congregation: We do. For it is God who goes with her.

Laying on of Hands

Words of Sending

Pastor: Beth, go knowing that this place will not forget you. That your name is written in this congregation's story. Holy Covenant is a people. And you, Beth Christian-Sharp, will always be part of this people. So, till we meet again, may Holy Covenant and all we have shared together remain forever a part of who you are.

Congregation: Amen.

* Song "Friends" M. W. Smith

Refrain:

And friends are friends forever if the Lord's the Lord of them.
And a friend will not say "never" 'cause the welcome will not end.
Though it's hard to let you go, In the Maker's hands we know
That a lifetime's not too long to live as friends.

* Benediction Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* 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 "Terra Beata" arr. H. Hayes

Songs in this service are used by permission.

CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710

Parts of the liturgy were written by Steve Garnaas-Holmes' Unfolding Light, The Canopy of Creation: Trees, Faith, and the Work of Justice a Resource from Creation Justice Ministries and the United Church of Christ, 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: Laura Hankins

Ushers: Laurence Winston, Dave Shimberg Greeters: Pam Shimberg

Refreshments: Akeera Czarnecki, Vondalyn & Melissa McQueen Simmons

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.

MICHAEL G. BROOKS SCHOLARSHIP Now through May 15, 2026

Calling all students preparing for post-secondary education! Holy Covenant awards annually a modest scholarship. Preference is given to high school students planning to go to college. The application is available from Dawn Simmons in the church office. Contact the church office for the application.

LET'S CELEBRATE OUR 2026 GRADUATES

We would love to celebrate the accomplishments of those who are graduating in 2026! Please send a photo along with their name, (and their relationship to you), and a brief description of their alma mater and what future pursuits they might have!

Office@holycovenantucc.org

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 Hulseley (Kristen Fuchs), Renee Lewis (Martha Battles), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty McKinnon (Joy Decker), 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. 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

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