



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Dawn McDonald

**“We were made for life together, for a communion that
heals the wounds of separation.”**

- Dr. Willie James Jennings

**“Love calls us into communities where we can be fully
known and still fully welcomed.”**

- Dr. Chanequa Walker-Barnes

**“Shalom is the community
where everyone has enough and everyone belongs.”**

- Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley

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
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 26, 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 "God's Eye Is on the Sparrow" arr. V. Labenske
Dawn Robinson, piano

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

Let us center ourselves in prayer as we gather for this time of worship...

Let us take a deep breath in and breathe out. Once more, breathe in and breathe out. Let us continue our breathing and with each exhale visualize ourselves releasing what is not ours to hold right now – a particular worry, some frustration, our unfinished business at home – and let us simply be, here, among these people, in the presence of God. This hour may we open ourselves to whatever we are most in need of, whether it's divine wisdom about a decision, clarity about our next steps, or to simply feel the renewed sense of our life's purpose. May this time of worship quiet our fears and stir the mighty powers of God dwelling within. We gather now for worship, to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray. To remember the Jesus way and to embrace Christ within. Amen.

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

Teresa Eller

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

One: For those who are hungry, those seeking community, those whose basic needs go unmet in a world of plenty...

Many: We gather to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray.

One: For those who are marginalized because of the color of their skin, their orientation, or their country of origin...

Many: We gather to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray.

One: For our migrant, queer, and disabled siblings who have been turned away from tables we all are supposed to belong to...

Many: We gather to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray.

One: For those living under the weight of poverty, or denied dignity by social structures built to exclude them...

Many: We gather to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray.

One: For all who have been told the circle of God's love does not include them...

Many: We gather to learn, to share, to break bread, and to pray and to keep making the circle wider, until all means all. Amen.

* Hymn 575

“O for a World”

AZMON

**O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,
Where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.**

**O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,
Where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.**

**We welcome one world family and struggle with each choice
That opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.**

**The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.**

**O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace,
Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.**

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Ourselves: The Christ within me rises to a new life and way in the world.

Neighbor: The Christ within you rises to a new life and way in the world.

World: The Christ within us rises to a new life and way in the world.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Teresa Eller

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

Gracious God, we confess that we do not always live up to Christ's vision. We gather to learn but can resist change. We speak of fellowship but can exclude. We break bread together, but do not always ask who is missing from the table. We pray but are not always moved to act on behalf of the suffering. Forgive us and call us back. Back to the people we have overlooked, and back to the vision of a community where all are seen and welcome. Amen.

Words of Grace

Teresa Eller

Friends, hear this good news...

Remember that the God who called together the first community of Jesus followers, as imperfect as they were, is the same God who calls us together today. Let us remember that the same risen Christ who breathed new life into this frightened and forgetful group of followers is same Christ still breathing new life into us, even when we don't get it right. May we remember that we are forgiven, we are loved, and the vision for kingdom here on earth is still alive in us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Stories for All People

Ed Vickery

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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

LEMME

**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.**

Modern Lesson

Terry Raley-Dennis

Our modern lesson is an adapted quote from Dr. Kwok Pui-lan, who is an Asian feminist theologian, author, and professor. In her work she says...

"The early Jesus-movement thrived because it embraced diversity and difference as gifts. People from various cultures and backgrounds found common purpose in shared meals and shared hope. We forget this when we cling to uniformity or fear the unfamiliar. Yet the ancient call to hospitality still echoes. When we open our doors and our hearts, we participate in the same cross-cultural community that shaped the earliest church."

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

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

Christian Scripture

Acts 2:42-47 (NRSV)

Teresa Eller

Our Scripture reading for today comes Acts 2:42-47, where we hear about the early church growing and the practices that shaped it...

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

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.**

Sermon

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“To All, As Any Have Need”

Invitation to Generosity

Teresa Eller

In the early church, there were no budgets or line items, it was simply about meeting the needs of those around them. They gave not out of obligation, but out of care and generosity. As we gather this morning's offering, we are invited to participate in this same ancient act. To give trusting that in God's economy, what is shared multiplies, and what is offered in love has the power to become life for someone else. Let us now share our gifts both generously and with open hearts.

* 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*) Teresa Eller
Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...
God of abundance, we offer these gifts as a sign of our commitment to the community you are calling us to become. Use what has been given to widen the circle. May these offerings help build your kingdom here on earth, not through perfection, but through the daily, faithful practice of sharing love and goodness with all who have need. May what has left our hands today become bread for someone else and hope for a world that is still learning what it means when all are truly loved and welcomed. Amen.

* Hymn 393 DENNIS
“Blessed Be the Tie That Binds”
Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The sharing of a common life is like to that above.

Before our God we come and pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

We share each other’s woes, each other’s burdens bear,
And often for each other flows a sympathizing tear.

When we are called to part it gives us inward pain,
But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.

* 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 arr. D. E. Wagner
“Simple Gifts”
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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: Laura Hankins, Jo Ann Jellison

Ushers: Dominic Ciciollo, Shakti Subramanian Greeters: Pam Shimberg

Refreshments: Kathy Gorman, Terry Raley-Dennis

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT

GET ALL THE DETAILS FOR NEWS AND EVENTS AT

<https://holycovenantucc.org/>

- **May 02 - Baseball Game for those who had signed up!**
- **May 4-6 - Retired Servants Spring Retreat**
- **May 06 - Daytimers Covenant Group Luncheon 12:00**
- **May 16 - Unity in Diversity Event**
- **May 20-25 - Church Office Closed**
- **May 23 - Project Linus drop-in event at HCUCC 10:00am-3:00pm**
- **May 24 - Sandwich Build following Worship**
- **May 25 - Memorial Day Observed**

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 in the church office.

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

STORIES FOR ALL PEOPLE, SUNDAYS | 11:00AM

Help Lead our Stories for All People! If you would like to deliver a short children's message to our youth during "Stories for All People" on a Sunday, or Sundays of your choosing, please consider the opened dates out ahead. 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 into 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, contact Dawn Robinson, or members of our Christian Education Ministry team.

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

UNITY IN DIVERSITY, SAT. MAY 16 | 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

HeartLight Spiritual Center, 7300 Mallard Creek Rd, Charlotte, NC 28262

"Unity in Diversity," a hosted in partnership with fellow faith leaders from New Thought Communities across Charlotte; a meaningful time of shared listening, connection, singing, prayer, fellowship, and social action in support of our neighbors experiencing hunger. Presenters from Holy Covenant United Church of Christ, Awaken Spiritual Community, Heart Light Spiritual Center, and Unity of Charlotte will each offer a reflection on "Unity in Diversity" from their unique faith perspectives. Our time together will include singing, meditation, and a community potluck to close the morning.

Bring a non-perishable food item or a love offering that will go directly to **Nourish Up**, one of Charlotte's largest food network providers. Please register for this event for an accurate head count and to know whether you plan to bring a dish to share at the potluck. More information, including a list of suggested donations and to register:

https://open.substack.com/pub/revchriscz/p/join-us-for-unity-in-diversity?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

**Please Remember in Prayer
Members**

Mel Andersen, Martha Bomely, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Lee Parrish, 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 Hulse (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

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