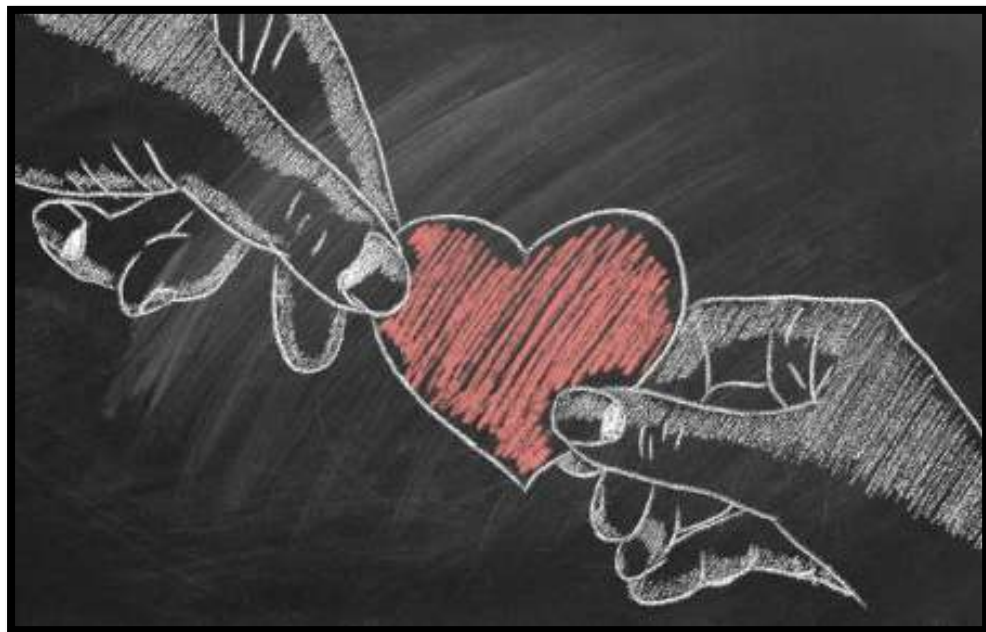




HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



“Compassion is not a relationship between the healer and the wounded. It’s a relationship between equals. Only when we know our own darkness well can we be present with the darkness of others.”

~Pema Chodron

“True compassion does not come from wanting to help out those less fortunate than ourselves but from realizing our kinship with all beings”

~Pema Chodron

“We can use everything we encounter in life—pleasant or painful-.
To awaken genuine uncontrived compassion”

~Pema Chodron

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
OPEN AND AFFIRMING SUNDAY - HAPPY 26TH ANNIVERSARY!

June 28, 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 "Morning Has Broken" arr. Trotter
Kristin Andes, harp, Patrick Washburn, piano

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

Chiming of the Hour

Centering Prayer Ed Vickery

Introit "Welcome to This House" D. Cowen
Welcome to this house, open and affirming,
In God's Son we are all one. Hand in hand we stand.
Welcome to this house, caring and accepting.
In God's Son we are all one.
Welcome to this house of God.

* Call to the Heart Sally Duffy
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your worshiping, reading, and singing...

One: From the places we call home and the journeys we have traveled, we gather together to experience the presence of God in this place.

Many: We gather as a beloved community, diverse in our beauty and united in spirit.

One: Our God is a God of deep compassion, binding up the brokenhearted and seeing the vulnerable.

Many: Called by that same compassion, we open our doors wide and affirm the sacred worth of every person.

One: Our God calls each of us children of belonging. We are seen for all of who we are and all that we will become.

All: Called by that same desire to welcome, we open our hearts, persist in faith, embrace hope and awaken compassion. Let us worship together with spirits alive and voices raised. Amen.

* Hymn

“Sing a New World into Being”

NETTLETON

Sing a new world into being. Sound a bold and hopeful theme.
Find a tune for silent yearnings. Lend your voice and dare to dream:
Dream a church where all who worship find their lives and loves belong.
Sing a new world into being: Sing as Christ inspires your song!

Sing a new world into being where each gender class and race
Brings its rainbow gifts and colors to God’s limitless embrace;
Where the lines that one divided form instead the ties that bind.
Sing a new world into being: risk transforming heart and mind!

Sing a new world into being where the homeless find a home.
Where no children ever hunger but are filled with God’s shalom;
Where all people work for justice, where all hate and vengeance cease.
Sing a new world into being: raise the harmonies of peace.

Sing a new world into being. Join an ancient prophets’ cry
For a time of health and plenty when all tears have been wiped dry;
When compassion flows like waters, pouring balm for all who grieve.
Sing a new world into being: live the promise you believe!

Stories for All People

Joy Decker

Song of Preparation

“Rain Down”

by Jaime Cortez

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love on your people.

Rain down, rain down, rain down your love, God of life.

Community Prayer (*unison*)

Rev. Barbara L. Thomas

God, you are the creator of all—In your creation we see color and diversity and wonder and wildness. We thank you for the differences that make us unique and beautiful. We are grateful for your creative spirit within us. We pray that our hearts will be open to see that Your love and compassion is poured into all you have created. Inspire us to see each other and to see ourselves with love and compassion. Energize us when our hearts are tired. Embrace us when we lose hope. Walk with us to create the world of love, acceptance and joy that you have called us to. This is our prayer in gratitude for the grace and presence of your creative spirit. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

OPEN OUR EYES

Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus,
To reach out and touch you and say that we love you.
Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen.
Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.

Hebrew Scripture

Isaiah 42:1-7 (NIV)

Dorrie Hankins

Our scripture lesson for today comes from Isaiah 42:1-7.

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.” This is what God the Lord says— the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it: “I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

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.

Special Music

“As Colors in the Sky”
Dorrie Hankins, vocals

arr. D. Damon

New Testament Lesson Romans 12:1-2, 9-12 (The Message) Sally Duffy

The New Testament scripture is taken from Paul's letter to the Romans--encouraging and instructing them about living as a community of faith. This reading is from The Message translation which might allow us to hear the words a little differently.

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

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

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

The Good News “Compassion as Resistance” Rev. Barbara L. Thomas

Invitation to Generosity

Now is the time for our ministry of giving and sharing...

God is still creating and still providing. Let us honor the continued and new gifts of God's generosity by bringing forth a portion of what we receive so that all needs will be met. As we prepare our gifts, stir up within us the same energy of those who helped pave the way for our LGBTQIA+ siblings. With these gifts, may we never stop expanding the borders of love, and never cease in our affirmation of the beauty and holiness of queerness. Let us now share our gifts with God...

* Doxology 785

SCHUMANN

We give you but your own, whate'er the gift may be;

All that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*) Sally Duffy
Please join me in a prayer of dedication for the gifts we have received...
Weaver of Justice, may these gifts allow us to continue to be your hands and feet! May they encourage us to follow Spirit's lead and work for justice and equity for our LGBTQIA+ siblings. In prayer we say all are made in your image, and now with these gifts, commit us to helping the world see the reality of it. In your mercy, hear our heart, our prayer, and our love. Amen.

* Hymn 391 J. Rush
"In the Midst of New Dimensions"
(vv. 1-3)

In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,
Who will lead the pilgrim peoples, wandering in their separate ways?

Refrain: God of rainbow, fiery pillar
Leading where the eagles soar,
We your people, ours the journey
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Through the flood of starving people, warring factions and despair,
Who will lift the olive branches? Who will light the flame of care? (R)

As we stand a world divided by our own self-seeking schemes,
Grant that we, your global village might envision wider dreams. (R)

* Benediction Rev. Barbara L. Thomas

* Benediction Response NEW DIMENSIONS
God of rainbow, fiery pillar,
Leading where the eagle's soar,
We your people, ours the journey
Now and ever, now and ever, now and evermore.

Postlude arr. J. Vogt
"God of Queer, Transgressive Spaces"

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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*Parts of the liturgy were written by written by Rev. Barbara L. Thomas,
and Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, June, 2024.*

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
Ushers: Dave Shimberg, Shakti Subramanian
Greeters: Pam Shimberg
Refreshments: Southside Covenant Group

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT UCC



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.

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- Jun 28: Open and Affirming Sunday, Consistory 12:30pm
- Jul 03: Office Closed in Observance of Independence Day
- Jul 12: Sandwich Build after worship
- Jul 19: Family Games after worship

PLEASE WELCOME GUEST PREACHER REV. BARBARA L. THOMAS

Barbara is a trainer and director of the training and collaboration center: The Forum at Hope Haven whose mission is to equip, train and support the front line workers who are serving the most marginalized in our community. She also is the owner and Director of ASPIRECCC a counseling, coaching and consulting service. Previously she served as Director of the Dove's Nest Program for the Charlotte Rescue Mission, and as Director of Services at Urban Ministry Center (now Roof Above) providing care to over 400 people a day. Barbara is passionate about serving those who are underserved and about developing and equipping other professionals. She has great energy for providing workshops and trainings about issues that support personal and professional confidence, including Trauma Informed Care, Mindfulness, Communication and Appreciative Inquiry. She provides consultation to non-

profits, churches and organizations in Mecklenburg County that are strength based and trauma informed.

Community involvement is also important to Barbara. She currently serves on the Board of the Twelfth Step Service Club, is a former Board member of Mecklenburg County Women's Advisory Board, and Crop Hunger Walk team. Barbara's 97 year old mom lives with her and her dog Hope.

Her education includes a Masters of Divinity from Duke University, Masters of Organization Development from Queens University and certificates in Trauma Informed Care, Motivational Interviewing and is Certified in the Inner Counselor process. Barbara is a certified coach and a NC Certified Pastoral Counselor. She has lived in Charlotte for 19 years.

A SIMPLER WAY TO SERVE!

Starting June 12, all Sunday worship volunteer roles — refreshments, usher/greeter, reader, and more — are now in one convenient sign-up. No more hunting through separate lists! To sign up, visit our website www.holycovenantucc.org and click **Volunteer | SignUpGenius**

Already signed up? You're all set — your existing commitments have been transferred automatically. We welcome everyone to share their gifts and serve alongside us! **Join our Ministry.** **Ushers and Greeters** are among the first people newcomers and members meet when attending Services. We provide the first impression and welcome that, hopefully, make everyone feel welcome and special here at Holy Covenant. Of course, we also help with offerings and the flow of Communion. Select one or two Sundays each month, or every other month to help welcome people and make them feel at home. <https://tinyurl.com/HCUCCSundays>

SOJOURNERS CLASS - ENGAGING ADULT EDUCATION

All are welcome and no preparation is required.

June 28 Discussion of justice and religion begins led by Anne Hayes

Join us Sunday mornings in the Conference Room or online via Zoom, 9:45am Meeting ID: 895 6175 8099 Passcode: 986788

CHARLOTTE PRIDE INTERFAITH CELEBRATION, Aug. 9 | 4:00pm

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 1900 The Plaza, Charlotte, NC

This service brings together the LGBTQIA+ community and different faith groups to reflect, celebrate, and build relations. Additionally, this celebration initiates Pride Week in Charlotte, culminating in the festival and parade the following weekend. There will be an after-service social and refreshments. See the Loop newsletter for more details.

HCUCC BANNED BOOK LIBRARY

This month, the HCUCC Banned Book Library has celebrated Pride Month by focusing on books centered on LGBTQ+ stories and authors. Stop by the library table to see the books in our collection by and about the LGBTQ+ community. If there is a specific book you think should be added to the library, please let Kim Tyler know. Check out our regular news article updates in the Loop; this week, you'll find a book review by Suzanne Lamorey for "Gender Queer: A Memoir" by Maia Kobabe.

Please Remember in Prayer Members

Mel Andersen, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Diane Neese, Melissa Noll, Lee Parrish, Shakti Subramanian, Anita Taylor, Laurence Winston, Alice & Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

Amanda (Linda Burby), Laura Allison, Farug Brown Bey (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Annette Borrelli, Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Linda Burby, Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Cecelia Ciciollo (Dom Ciciollo), April Dawson, 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), Renee Lewis (Martha Battles), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty McKinnon (Joy Decker), Geraldine Mobley (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Tom, Beth and Ariel Rudolph (Benjamin Rudolph), Brenchia Thomas, Steve Thomas (Jeffery Edwards-Knight) Dave & Jennifer Ward (Jay & Cathy Whitley), June Washburn (Patrick Washburn), 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, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor
RevChris@holycovenantucc.org

Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

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