



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Tim Mossholder

“We need each other
because the soul finds its deepest meaning in shared struggle.”
— W.E.B. Du Bois

“When people cease to care,
they break the chain that binds humanity together.”
— Florence Scovel Shinn

“I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge
of developing confidence in one another.”
— Mary McLeod Bethune

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
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 05, 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

"No, Not One"
Patrick Washburn, piano

arr. Faye López

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

"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

Terry Raley-Dennis

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

One: People of God, we gather today carrying many burdens: the weight of injustice, the ache of indifference, the exhaustion of caring when it feels like no one else cares.

Many: **We come as we are, weary yet willing, longing for a world where all are seen and can thrive.**

One: We gather during a time when our nation is celebrating its founding, yet we grieve the harms still unhealed: the ongoing inequities, the threats to the vulnerable, the refusal to see hurt and harm.

Many: **We come to tell the truth in love, trusting that the kin-dom of God here on earth is still being built.**

One: Jesus knew this weariness. He knew what it was like to speak truth and be dismissed, to see what needed healing and be ignored, to labor for justice while others just wanted to get back to life as it was.

Many: We come to follow him still: to love, to seek justice, to offer compassion, kindness, and hope.

One: Christ calls to us still. So, "Come to me, all you that are weary...for this work is not yours to do alone."

Many: In this hour and beyond, let us be yoked as one: in community, in our ministry, and in building God's kin-dom one act of love at a time.

* Hymn

GOD OF GREAT AND GOD OF SMALL

God of great and God of small, God of one and God of all,
God of weak and God of strong, God to whom all things belong,

Refrain: Alleluia, Alleluia, praise be to your name.

God of land and sky and sea, God of life and destiny,
God of never-ending power, yet beside me every hour, (R)

God of silence, God of sound, God by whom the lost are found,
God of day and darkest night, God whose love turns wrong to right, (R)

God of heaven and God of earth, God of death and God of birth,
God of now and days before, God who reigns forevermore, (R)

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

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

Holy One, we confess the ways we are quick to lift up our nation more readily than we are the people Jesus calls us to love. The ways we are quick to celebrate the ideals of freedom while ignoring the burdens the marginalized or the chains that leave those oppressed. We confess the ways we still harbor injustice in the land of the free. Transform our hearts, O God, so that our love for country may never eclipse our call to follow Christ. Amen.

Words of Grace

Terry Raley-Dennis

Beloved of God, hear this good news...

Repeatedly we see that Jesus met people who had gone astray or lost their way. The grace he offered them was never about shaming but getting them to gently turn back toward the ways of God and the people we are asked not to forget. On this day may the grace we are offered free us from the chains of indifference and invite us into the vision of deeper, truer freedom for all. In Christ, we are forgiven for our missteps, renewed in spirit, and empowered by God to follow his ways with courage. Amen.

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.

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Today's prayer was written by Kat Armas, who is a Cuban American author, speaker, and theologian. His prayer, "A Prayer of Confession and Release, Release, Release" was published in the June 2026 edition of Sojourner's Magazine under the column "Prayers for Strangers in this Strange Land."

God of the cosmos, in this moment of remembering, we refuse easy triumph and come instead with truth on our lips. We confess how deeply we have been formed by empire, how its logic has shaped our desires, our silences, and our sense of what is normal.

There are times we have sought comfort at the expense of others' dignity and chosen safety over solidarity. Still, you call us back. So, we lay down the ways we have mirrored what harms this world and release our grip on control, on fear, and on scarcity.

Ground us in your mystery, a presence not contained by nation or border but alive in what the world calls weak. Remind us that we belong to you, to the land, and to one another.

Hold us in your mercy, both those who have upheld injustice and those crushed by it. Give us clarity and humble courage. Teach us to walk in wholeness and liberation, to choose love that frees, justice that restores, and a peace rooted in truth, so that we *[too]* might honor your image in this fragile, beloved world. Amen.

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.

Our modern lesson for today is from Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, who was Yankton Dakota writer, musician, educator, and political activist. In her book American Indian Stories (1919) she says...

“I was not made to think that the world was a cold place where people did not care for one another. Yet I saw how quickly the hearts of some grew hard when their comfort was threatened. It seemed to me that when people cease to care, they forget the very things that make them human. The strength of a people lies not in their weapons or their wealth, but in their willingness to stand together. We need each other, for no one can face the storms of life alone. A nation that forgets this will surely lose its way.”

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

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

* Gospel Lesson Matthew 11:1-6, 16-19, 25-30 (NRSV) Terry Raley-Dennis
Our Gospel lesson for today comes from Matthew 11:1-6, 16-19, 25-30, where Jesus goes to preach and teach in Galilee, and is approached by disciples of the imprisoned John the Baptist, who want to know who Jesus really is. You are invited to join in reading the dark, bold print.

Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities. When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, **“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”** Jesus answered them, **“Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”**

“But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.’ “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”

At that time Jesus said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been

handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. **“Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”**

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

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

“When Nobody Seems to Care”

Invitation to Generosity

Terry Raley-Dennis

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

Beloved ones, in a world of diversity God has woven us into a community where every person and every gift is part of God’s healing work in the world. When we give, so too are these gifts woven into the ministries that feed, shelter, welcome, and love. Let us now share what we have with gratitude and generosity, trusting that God uses every gift for good. With open hands and open hearts, let us now bring our gifts to God.

Offertory

“Give Thanks”

arr. Bill Svarda

* 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*)

Terry Raley-Dennis

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

Gracious God, bless these gifts and bless the hearts that offer them. Use what has been brought forth to nourish hope, to strengthen compassion, and to build your beloved community here on earth. May our giving reflect your love at work within us and around us, binding us together as one. In gratitude, we dedicate these offerings to your will and your way. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION THE MYSTIC SUPPER

At Holy Covenant UCC, all are welcome to Christ's Table. Elements are grape juice and bread, wafers, or gluten free options. As we prepare for Communion, those of you online are welcome to have some bread and juice and join us in Communion.

Invitation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

One: There is a table being set, not for the deserving, but for the hungry.

Many: **And we are hungry.**

One: There is room being made, not for the perfect, but for everyone.

Many: **We come; each has a place.**

One: A holy feast is being prepared, not for the few, but for all.

Many: **It looks so good, and together we come.**

Holy God, in Jesus Christ, you showed us the depth of your love and the breadth of your welcome. Jesus gathered at tables where others would not, breaking bread with sinners and saints, tax collectors and zealots. He ate with the poor, the outcast, and the forgotten. He shared meals with those the world deemed unworthy: women who had courage, men who carried doubt, children with sticky hands and lots of questions. He lifted-up the brokenhearted, healed those cast aside, and welcomed the stranger as family.

And it is today, as it was long ago. This table is his table. Here at this table, there is room for those who have been told they are too much or not enough, for those of every race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and age. There is room for immigrants and refugees, for those living in poverty, for those with disabilities or mental health challenges, for those scarred by trauma, for those filled with faith and for those still searching for what they would call God.

Whoever you are, there is room for you here. Because at this table, God's love is poured out without limit, and Christ's invitation is for all. I invite you to join me in saying our Lord's Prayer as we have printed in the bulletin.

Lord's Prayer (*unison*)

Loving Creator, who dwells within and beyond, Holy is your name. May your dream of justice and peace come alive in us. May your will be done, not in some distant heaven, but here and now, in this very world. Give us today what we need to thrive, bread for the body, hope for the heart, and the courage to share freely with others. Forgive us when we fail to love, and teach us to forgive with open hearts, letting go of fear, resentment, and harm. Lead us away from the temptations of power and apathy. Deliver us from all that destroys, hatred, greed, and indifference, so that we may walk in your way of grace. For your Kin-dom is not far off but among us, within us, here and now, a reign of love, justice, and belonging, now and always. Amen.

Words of Institution

On the night he was betrayed, Jesus gathered for a last meal among friends. And at that table, as they ate, he took bread, gave thanks for it, blessed it and broke it, and said: *"This is my body, given for you. Whenever you eat it, remember me."*

[Let this broken bread remind you that even what is broken can feed the world.]

In the same way, after supper, Jesus took the cup. And after giving thanks, he blessed it, poured it, and gave it to his disciples and said: *"This cup is the new covenant, poured out in love for all people. Whenever you drink it, remember me."*

[Let this overflowing cup remind you that love always finds a way.]

Sharing of the Elements

Music during Communion

"He Leadeth Me"

Arr. Matt Shinske

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Loving God, we give thanks for this sacred meal. May it nourish us with your grace, strengthen us for the ministry of service, and remind us that we belong to you and one another. Send us from this table to be your hands and heart in the world, building a kin-dom where all are fed, loved, and free. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Special Music (Video)

Rev. Windy Allison, Digital Creator

“America When Will You Hear from Me”

This video is offered as an act of truth-telling, reminding us that the story of this country's founding includes deep suffering that continues to shape many lives today. Some images may evoke strong emotions as they portray slavery, exploited labor, the displacement of Indigenous peoples, and the denial of dignity to migrants. We offer this introduction so that you can prepare your heart and mind for reflection.

Following the video, you are invited to leave the sanctuary and join us in the gathering room for fellowship.

Postlude

*“How Great Thou Art”
Patrick Washburn, piano*

arr. D. Musselman

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*The liturgy for this worship service was written by
Rev. Christopher Czarnecki and
the pastoral prayer read today was written by Kat Armas.*

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:

Refreshments: Worship Team

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

- Jul 12: Sandwich Build after worship
- Jul 19: Family Games after worship

A SIMPLER WAY TO SERVE!

To sign up, visit our website www.holycovenantucc.org and click

Volunteer | SignUpGenius

Join our Ministries! <https://tinyurl.com/HCUCCSundays>

SOJOURNERS CLASS - ENGAGING ADULT EDUCATION

All are welcome and no preparation is required.

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.

**Please Remember in Prayer
Members**

Mel Andersen, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, Melissa Noll, Lee Parrish, Anita Taylor, Alice & Sally Phelan-Young

Friends & Family Members

Farug Brown Bey (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Joan Bowling (Kristen Fuchs), Lester Brigman (Lee Parrish), Kim Chamberlain (Kevin Decker), Cecelia Ciciollo (Dom Ciciollo), April Dawson, 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), Janet & Lon Kominski (Dawn Simmons), 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

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