



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Tomiwa Ogunmodede

“We can’t change people, but we can plant seeds
that may one day bloom in them.”

— Mary Davis

“All the flowers of all the tomorrows
are in the seeds of today.”

— Chinese Proverb

“If you take care of the sowing,
God will take care of the growing.”

— Anonymous

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
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 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

“Fairest Lord Jesus”
Mary Tarr, violin

arr. J. Evanovich

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...

Holy One, in this moment we come home to the holy ground of our own being. To still the noise within, and settle the restless soil of our own hearts, so that we might tend what is seeking to grow. Help us to give these spaces our honest and gentle attention. To root up what no longer serves us: lingering fears, hardened stubbornness, the tangled worries that choke out the good and crowd our soul. Clear the ground within here and now, so that something new might take root. Show us the seeds we wish to plant—growing love, flourishing compassion, and thriving hope. May we nourish these, and in this holy time, prepare us to cultivate fertile spaces within where the Spirit of Christ can grow. Amen.

Introit

“There’s a Spirit of Love in This Place”

M. A. Miller

There’s a spirit of love in this place. (2x)

You can’t see it, but it’s there, just as precious as the air.

There’s a spirit of love in this place.

There’s the presence of peace in this room. (2x)

In God’s tenderness is found peace that passes human bounds.

There’s the presence of peace in this room.

* Call to the Heart

Patrick Washburn

One: We come this morning as scatterers of seed, called by a God who calls us to sow everywhere.

Many: **May we plant seeds of love.**

One: Where the ground is hard and the path is worn, where love seems hard and unlikely to take root.

Many: **May we plant seeds of justice.**

One: Where the world says the soil is too poor, the harvest too unlikely, that the labor is not worth putting into.

Many: **May we plant seeds of hope.**

One: Where fear has built walls and strangers have been turned away, where hearts have become closed,

Many: **May we plant seeds of welcome and acceptance.**

One: So let us sow, both generously and faithfully, trusting in the One who gives life and growth to every seed sown.

Many: **For the harvest has always belonged to God. Let us now worship together as one.**

* Hymn 319

“Sing Them Over Again to Me”

WORDS OF LIFE

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life;
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life;
Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty.

Refrain: Beautiful words, wonderful words,
Wonderful words of life;
Beautiful words, wonderful words,
Wonderful words of life.

Christ, the blessed one, gives to all wonderful words of life;
Sinner, wake to the loving call, wonderful words of life;
All so freely given, our sure hope of heaven. (R)

Sweetly, echo the gospel call, wonderful words of life;
Offer pardon and peace to all, wonderful words of life;
Jesus, only Savior, keep me with you forever. (R)

Monthly Affirmation

- Ourselves:** The light of Christ dwells within me. May it grow, shine, and bless the world.
- Neighbor:** The light of Christ dwells within you. May it grow, shine, and bless the world.
- World:** The light of Christ dwells within us. May it grow, shine, and bless the world.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Patrick Washburn

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

Gracious God, we confess that we can grow despondent when the seeds we plant do not bloom, and disheartened when our labor seems not to bear fruit. We can become so attached to outcomes; we lose heart and wonder if our work, our efforts, or our voice even matters. Forgive us for abandoning the work when the harvest seems small, to loosen our grip on results we cannot control, and free us to sow once again. Amen.

Words of Grace

Patrick Washburn

Beloved of God, hear this good news...

The God who calls us to plant is the same God who causes the growth to occur. What we scatter in faith is never wasted, even when we cannot see where it lands or when it will rise. In God's own time and by God's tending, goodness sprouts up from the smallest and most unlikely seeds. And all so often the harvest, when it does come, is more than we ever dared to hope for or imagine. May we trust the process, hold to hope, and be at peace with the mystery through which God works. Amen.

Stories for All People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Special Music

"You Are Welcome Here"
Judah L. Jones, soloist

E. Bannan

Prayers of the People

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

*You are invited to raise your hand to share your prayers,
both joys and concerns, with the congregation.*

Lord's Prayer (*alternative version*)

Our Parent, who is among us, blessed be your Creation. May your reign be a reality here on earth. May we become more interested in building your kin-dom here and now than in waiting for it to come down from above. Let us share our bread with those who hunger. Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness. Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil. For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination (*sung*)

SANCTUARY

Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Modern Lesson

Sally McLester

Our modern lesson for today is from Cynthia Occelli, who is an author, teacher, and consultant on the spiritual and the sacred. In her book Resurrecting Venus (2012) she writes...

“For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. For someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction.”

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

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

* Gospel Lesson Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (CEB) Patrick Washburn
Please take a comfortable posture that supports your reading and worshipping...

Our Gospel lesson for today comes from Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, where Jesus tells the parable about a farmer who sows seed. You are invited to join in reading the parts in dark, bold print.

That day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he climbed into a boat and sat down. The whole crowd was standing on the shore. He said many things to them in parables: “A farmer went out to scatter seed. As he was scattering seed, **some fell on the path, and birds came and ate it.** Other seed fell on rocky ground **where the soil was shallow.** They sprouted immediately because **the soil wasn’t deep.** But when the sun came up, **it scorched the plants, and they dried up because they had no roots.** Other seed fell among thorny plants. **The thorny plants grew and choked them.** Other seed fell on good soil and bore fruit, in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one. **Everyone who has ears should pay attention.”**

“Consider then the parable of the farmer. Whenever people hear the word about the kingdom and don’t understand it, the evil one comes and carries off what was planted in their hearts. This is the seed that was sown on the path. As for the seed that was spread on rocky ground, this refers to people who hear the word and immediately receive it joyfully. Because they have no roots, they last for only a little while. When they experience distress or abuse because of the word, they immediately fall away. As for the seed that was spread among thorny plants, this refers to those who hear the word, but the worries of this life and the false appeal of wealth choke the word, and it bears no fruit. **As for what was planted on good soil, this refers to those who hear and understand, and bear fruit and produce—in one case a yield of one hundred to one, in another case a yield of sixty to one, and in another case a yield of thirty to one.”**

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.

“Just Keep Sowing”

Invitation to Generosity

Patrick Washburn

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

We bring our gifts this morning like seeds. The seeds of time, talent, and treasure placed into the ground of this moment, trusting they will become part of something far larger than ourselves. We may never see the wholeness of what our giving makes possible, or the lives it touches, yet we are called to plant anyway. May we now do so, in faith and in hope, offering what we have to the God, whose love only grows. Let us now share our gifts with God.

* Doxology

OLD HUNDREDTH, words by M. Luti

Praise God whose mercies never cease;
Whose justice raises up the least;
And sits all creatures down to feast;
God's mercy is our hope and peace! Amen.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Patrick Washburn

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

Gracious God, we offer these gifts and give thanks for the harvest they will bring. With them may the hungry be fed, the stranger be welcomed, and the weary be loved. May they become the fruit of care and affirmation, so that all who receive know that someone stands in solidarity with them. Bless and multiply what we bring beyond our imagining, reaping the blessings of your kin-dom, taking root here on earth. Amen.

* Hymn 433

“In the Bulb There Is a Flower”

PROMISE

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn for every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

“Send Us Out”

J. M. Talbot

Send us out to proclaim the reign of your kin-dom,
Send us out to proclaim and to heal,
Send us out with your power and your authority
To overcome and to heal the world.

Postlude

“Wonderful Words of Life”

arr. D. Wyrzten

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*Today's liturgy is written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki,
Lord's Prayer by Rev. Manny Santiago*

*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: David Shimberg, Shakti Subramanian
Greeters: Roxie McMillon
Refreshments: Sojourners

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 TODAY
- Jul 19: Family Games after worship, Consistory 12:30pm
- Sept 18 & 19: Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend

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

For the next two Sundays, Barb Schneller will lead us in a Bible study of *The Letter of James*. 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

SANDWICH BUILD TODAY

After worship we will build 100 bagged lunches for the neighbors at Roof Above. Following the tragic loss of their Day Center in last weekend's storm, including their kitchen and serving areas, this is even more important! Join us in the conference room. No experience is needed!

FAMILY GAME DAY EVENT, JULY 19 12:30PM

We're trying something new!! In addition to our ever-popular Saturday Game Nights, we thought we'd try a **Sunday Funday Game Day** after worship on July 19. We'll provide a light lunch and beverages plus board games for all ages. We even found Chutes and Ladders as well as Go Fish for the younger gamers. We'll start at about 12:30 and game until 2-ish. Please join us! Any questions? Contact Kim Tyler or Suzanne Lamorey.

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.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFERINGS

The Giving Statements for the 1st half of 2026 (1H2026) have been sent out via email on July 8th. If you haven't received your statement and were expecting one, or have questions about what you received, please contact the church

office. Your thoughtful generosity supports our many ministries that reach out to so many in the Charlotte region and beyond. Thank you!

CONGREGATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING WEEKEND, SEPT. 18 & 19

We are asking the entire congregation to save the dates: Fri., Sept. 18 (5:30pm-9:00pm) & Sat., Sept. 19 (8:30am-3:00pm) for our Strategic Planning Weekend. Your participation, presence, and voice are vital to making this important work of envisioning our church's future a success! More details will be available as we approach this important time together, for now we just need you to mark your calendars, and plan to attend.

Please Remember in Prayer Members

Mel Andersen, Darline Batton, 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, Ashely Hedrick & Skip Yeager (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

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, MDiv, MBA, Senior Pastor

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Jon Weddell, MDiv, MSW, Minister of Music

Dawn Simmons, BSBF, Executive Assistant

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