



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Jason Pofahl

“Our job is to ready the sails and gather the embers, to discuss and debate, and like the biblical character Jacob, to wrestle with the mystery until God gives us a blessing.”

— Rachel Held Evans

“Often when you think you’re at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else.”

— Fred Rogers

“May we find our foundation in the work of Love; demanding, tiring, true and human and holy.”

— Pádraig Ó Tuama

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
TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 02, 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 “Sweet Hour of Prayer Medley” arr. L. Bergquist

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 Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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

Loving God, who is ever so close, we gather in this sacred space, present to this moment. Help us to calm our worries, soften our fears, and to be reminded that even if we can't we are welcome as we are. Meet us this hour in whatever we are carrying, in our joy and our grief, our gratitude and our questions. Help us to trust your presence is beside us, inviting us to hold on to hope. As worship together, may we discover once again that we do not wrestle or struggle through this life alone. You are here, even now. So open our hearts to your Spirit, strengthen us with your love, and remind us that whatever the future holds, you will not let us go. 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

Pam Shimberg

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

One: We come to this sacred space carrying many different stories. Some of us arrive with grateful hearts, others come burdened by grief, uncertainty, or questions we are carrying.

Many: **We come just as we are, trusting that God welcomes us with love and compassion.**

One: Here, we need not pretend to have all the answers or hide the struggles that weigh upon our hearts. We are free to bring our whole selves before that which we call Holy.

Many: **God meets us in our joy and in our sorrow, in our confidence and in our doubt.**

One: Even when life leaves us wrestling with loss, change, injustice, or fear we are never alone. God's presence remains steadfast, inviting us to hold on to hope.

Many: **We trust in the One who walks beside us through every season of life.**

One: Come, let us gather as one community. A people seeking grace, neighborly ways, and opening our hearts to Spirit's transforming presence.

Many: **Let us worship the God who never let's go of us, and who calls us toward love, justice, and hope. Amen.**

* Hymn

"A Place at the Table"

FOR EVERYONE BORN

(The first verse will be introduced by Dorrie Hankins)

For everyone born, a place at the table,
For everyone born, clean water and bread,
A shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead. (R)

Refrain: **And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy,
Compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice,
Justice and joy!**

For woman and man, a place at the table,
And all those between, beyond, and besides;
Expanding our world, dismantling power,
Each valued for what their voice can provide. (R)

For gay, bi, and straight, a place at the table,
Invited to wed, to baptize and preach,
A rainbow of race and gender and color
For queer, trans, and ace, God's justice in reach. (R)

Monthly Affirmation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Ourselves: I am part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

Neighbor: You are part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

World: We are part of the body of Christ, and therefore part of all that is good, holy, and true.

Prayer of Transformation (*unison*)

Pam Shimberg

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

Loving God, too often we become consumed by the things we wrestle with. We lose sight of the blessings already present among us, forget those in solidarity with us, and convince ourselves that hope is far away. Open our hearts once again to your presence right beside and within us, reminding us that even in our hardest moments, love is still at work, and new life is still possible. Amen.

Words of Grace

Pam Shimberg

Beloved of God, hear this good news...

Friends, every moment offers us another chance to notice the blessings that surrounds us. It may be found in the crisp taste of a cold soda, the brilliant blooms of the crape myrtles lining our grounds, the embrace of a friend in the gathering room, or the quiet assurance that in this church we are loved, affirmed, and surrounded by people who believe the Spirit of God dwells within us all. These, and so many more, are the blessings that remind us we are never alone. Thanks be to God.

Stories for All People

Dawn Robinson

Reflective Meditation

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

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.

*Our Hebrew Lesson for today comes from Genesis 32:22-31 (NRSV), where Jacob wrestles with God. You are invited to join in reading along with the parts highlighted in **dark, bold print**.*

The same night [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of the Jabbok [River]. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone, and a man **wrestled with him until daybreak**. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "**I will not let you go, unless you bless me.**" So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, **for you have striven with God and with humans and have prevailed.**" Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "**For I have seen God face to face, yet my life is preserved.**" The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

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

"Wrestling with God for a Blessing"

Invitation to Generosity

Pam Shimberg

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

The blessings we receive in life are rarely meant to stop with us. They become most meaningful when they are shared. We see this through acts of compassion, the way hospitality is extended, or the ways that justice is sought. As we offer our gifts today, may we do so trusting that even the smallest act of generosity or whatever gift we have to share can become a blessing to someone else.

* 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*)

Pam Shimberg

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

Holy One, receive these gifts and the generous hearts from which they are given. May they become food for the hungry, safe spaces for those seeking community, justice for those oppressed, and reminders that your love is made visible through ordinary people doing extraordinary things together. May they all become gifts to the world. 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, Rev. Gregg Walker

One: This is Christ's table, where love is freely given and all are welcomed.

Many: We come with open hearts and empty hands.

One: Here there is bread for the hungry, hope for the weary, and enough grace for everyone.

Many: We come trusting there is a place for us.

One: Come, for this meal has been prepared with love, and Christ's invitation is for all people.

Many: We come with gratitude and hope, we now ready ourselves to gather around this sacred table.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus gathered people around tables. He welcomed tax collectors and fishermen, women and children, zealots and Pharisees, rich and poor, saints and sinners. Every meal became an act of resistance against an empire that divided people by wealth, status, and power. Around Christ's table, everyone was reminded that their worth was not determined by the labels the world placed upon them, but by the love of the One who created them.

Those meals became places where blessings appeared in unexpected ways. Some of those blessings we know because the Gospel writers recorded them: the hungry were fed, the lonely found friendship, forgiveness was offered, hope was restored, and lives were forever changed. But surely countless other blessings never found their way onto the pages of Scripture. The work of Jesus made people laugh again, tears that finally found a safe place to fall, strangers became lifelong friends, and there were people who realized for the first time that they truly mattered.

And today that story continues here with you.

This is not our table. It is Christ's table. Here there is room for every race and ethnicity, every gender identity and sexual orientation, every ability and every age. There is room for those carrying deep faith and those carrying deep questions, for those who have known the welcome of a church and those who have only known its rejection. There is room for immigrants and refugees, for those living with mental illness or disabilities, for those rebuilding their lives after loss, for those who feel unseen, and for those who have been told there simply wasn't a place for them.

If you have ever been told you were too much or not enough...too liberal or too conservative...too broken, too different, too doubtful, or too late in showing up for the party that is life...hear this good news: there is a seat right here at this table waiting for you. Here we will love you, we will shelter you, and we will feed you as Jesus would, because the Spirit of God dwells within each of us, and Christ's table has always been big enough for everyone, including you.

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

FOR EVERYONE BORN

For young and for old, a place at the table,
A voice to be heard, a part in the song,
The hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,
For bodies diverse, a church re-designed. (R)

Refrain: And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy,
Compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice,
Justice and joy!

For bodies diverse, a place at the table,
All manner of speech and movement and minds;
Enabled to lead and teach us new language,
For young and for old, the right to belong. (R)

For just and unjust, a place at the table,
A chance to repent, reform and rebuild,
Protecting the wronged, without shame or pressure,
For just and unjust, God's vision fulfilled. (R)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (*unison*)

Loving God, we thank you for this meal that reminds us we are never alone.
May this bread and cup that have nourished us, send us into the world to
become a blessing for others: welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry,
comforting the hurting, and working for the justice and compassion your kin-
dom proclaims. One where all are loved, and all belong. Amen.

Source: <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/02/11/lent-1-beloved-is-where-we-begin/>

If you would enter
into the wilderness,
do not begin
without a blessing.

Do not leave
without hearing
who you are:
Beloved,
named by the One
who has traveled this path
before you.

Do not go
without letting it echo
in your ears,
and if you find
it is hard
to let it into your heart,
do not despair.
That is what
this journey is for.

I cannot promise
this blessing will free you
from danger,
from fear,
from hunger
or thirst,

from the scorching
of sun
or the fall
of the night.

But I can tell you
that on this path
there will be help.

I can tell you
that on this way
there will be rest.

I can tell you
that you will know
the strange graces
that come to our aid
only on a road
such as this,
that fly to meet us
bearing comfort
and strength,
that come alongside us
for no other cause
than to lean themselves
toward our ear
and with their
curious insistence
whisper our name:

Beloved.
Beloved.
Beloved.
[Blessed.]

* Hymn	“A Place at the Table”	FOR EVERYONE BORN
For everyone born, a place at the table, To live without fear, and simply to be, To work, to speak out, to witness and worship, For everyone born, the right to be free. (R)		

**Refrain: And God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy,
Compassion and peace:
Yes, God will delight when we are creators of justice,
Justice and joy!**

* 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 “All Creatures of Our God and King” arr. J. Young

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
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Parts of the liturgy were written by 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
Ushers: Dominic Ciciollo, Dave Shimberg, Shakti Subramanian
Greeters: Yvette Wynn, Terry Raley Dennis
Refreshments: Deborah Winston

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT HOLY COVENANT



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

- TODAY, Aug.2 Event planning debrief in the Conference Room
 - Aug. 9 & 30: Sandwich Build following worship
 - Aug. 16: Consistory
 - Sept 18 & 19: Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend
- Please mark your calendars and plan to attend!

A SIMPLER WAY TO SERVE!

All Sunday worship volunteer roles — refreshments, usher/greeter, reader, and more — are now in one convenient sign-up. No more hunting through separate lists! 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

**Please Remember in Prayer
Members**

Terrence & Anne Hayes in the recent death of Anne's mother, Claire Hurst.
Mel Andersen, Darline Batton, Kathy Habel, Jim & Faye Humphrey, 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), Randy & Tina Buie (Diane Neese), 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), 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.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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