



HOLY COVENANT
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Josue Escoto

“If there is to be reconciliation, first there must be truth.”
— Timothy B. Tyson

“The practice of peace and reconciliation is one of the
most vital and artistic of human actions.”
— Thich Nhat Hanh

“Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice. You have your
agency to choose contention or reconciliation.”
— Russell M. Nelson”

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
TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 16, 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 "Fountain Medley" arr. P. Rodriguez

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...
Holy and ever-present God, slow our wandering minds, help us breathe deeply, and to become aware of your presence that fills this place, moves through all creation, and dwells within each of us. Awaken us to the Christ within, that sacred spark of love, light, and goodness that longs to come alive through us. In this hour, may we listen more deeply to what our soul needs and remain open to whatever it is you might reveal. Ground us in our interconnection, that we are part of something larger than ourselves. And may this time together renew our spirits and send us back into the world more awake to the sacredness of every life and every moment. 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.

O, Alleluia, sing alleluia, we bless your holy name.
O Alleluia, sing alleluia, there's a spirit of love in this place.

* Call to the Heart

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

One: Come, you who are straight and you who are queer; you who are cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, and still discovering the beautiful person God created you to be.

Many: **Come, for the love of God draws us closer to one another.**

One: Come, you who have been welcomed and you who have been rejected; you who have found belonging and you who are still searching for a place to call home.

Many: **Come, for the love of God is stronger than that which divides us.**

One: Come, you who have been hurt by others and you who have caused hurt of your own; you who long for reconciliation and you who are still finding the courage to do so.

Many: **Come, for the love of God calls us toward wholeness.**

One: Come, people of every race and culture, every gender and sexuality, every ability and identity, every belief and doubt, for God turns away no one.

Many: **Come, for the love of God has us bound to one another.**

One: So come closer—to God, to one another, to this beloved community, and to the wider world we are all part of.

Many: **Let us now worship together, weaving our hearts as one in the boundless love of God.**

* Hymn

“God of Many Faces”

SLANE

God of many faces, we offer our praise,
Singing your glory through all of our days.
Hear ever growing voices, once fragile, now strong,
Carrying melodies in expansive new songs.

God of many genders, our world reflects you,
Sunrise and sunset uniting our hues,
Woven into a city with jewels of all shades,
Houses of ruby and walls rowed with jade.

God of many names, we invite you to show
Us the new names that reflect our true souls.
Breathe with your holy spirit to give us the Word
That will indwell dry bones, granting new life once heard.

God of many bodies, abide within ours,
Shifting more each day through time and through scars.
Come sanctify our bodies, all fashioned by you,
Holier every day still becoming more true.

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*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

God of Life, we confess that at times we hold onto grudges, hold onto our feelings of anger, and push away those who see the world differently than we do. Forgive us for the times we have chosen resentment over being in relationship or being right stead of making peace. Transform our hearts, O God, so that we might loosen our grip on old hurts and find the courage to draw closer to one another. Amen.

Words of Grace

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

Beloved of God, hear this good news...

Our sacred stories are filled with people who were hurt, betrayed, and disappointed. Yet these same people rarely let that hurt have the final say. You might remember that Jacob ended up embracing Esau after years of estrangement, David showed mercy to Saul after he tried to kill him, Paul and Barnabas found a way to work together after being in conflict, and Jesus reconciled people across social boundaries at tables where they shared meals together. May we know as our ancestors did that our hurts and wounds, whatever they may be, can still be transformed by God's love.

Stories for All People

Jean Raley-Dennis

Special Music

"How Beautiful"

arr. L. Larson

Sally McLester, Martha Battles, duet

Poem

"Waiting on God's Rainbow"

by Alydia Smith

A Prayer for Charlotte Pride

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

Pam Shimberg

Our modern lesson for today is from Desmond Tutu, who is an Anglican bishop, theologian and anti-apartheid and human rights activist. Among his work he says...

“Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.”

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

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

*Our Hebrew Lesson for today comes from Genesis 45:1-15, where Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, who have travel to Egypt seeking help. You are invited to join in reading the parts in **dark, bold print**.*

Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, “Send everyone away from me.” So no one stayed with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come closer to me.” And they came closer. He said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors.

So it was not you who sent me here but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me; do not delay. **You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have.** I will provide for you there, since there are five more years of famine to come, so that you and your household and all that you have will not come to poverty.’ And now your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that it is my own mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father how greatly I am honored in Egypt and all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here.” Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept, while Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

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.**

Invitation to Generosity

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

There is only so much one can do, but when we come together, our individual gifts can be combined to do far more. You can feed someone, but together, we can feed hungry people. You can pull up a chair, but together we can create places of belonging. You can stand up for someone but together we can advocate for entire groups pushed to the margins. Every gift can become a shared ministry of hope, healing, and love. Let us now share our offerings, trusting in what God can create through us when we bring our gifts together.

* 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*)

Jeffery Edwards-Knight

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

Abundant God, take these gifts we have gathered and weave them into your work of love in the world. May they become food at empty tables, welcome for those seeking belonging, courage for those resisting injustice, and pathways toward healing and reconciliation. May each of our gifts come together to help bring your beloved community here on earth a little closer to being realized among us. 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!

* 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

“Be Thou My Vision”

arr. J. Vogt

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The liturgy for today’s service was written by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki, Alydia Smith “Waiting for God’s Rainbow” United Church of Canada Pride Worship Resources.

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, Laurence Winston

Greeters:

Refreshments: Roxie McMillon, Rena Monk

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

- Aug. 16: Consistory
- Aug. 22: Project Linus blankie build drop-in 9am-4pm
- Aug. 30: Music Sunday; Sandwich Build following worship
- Sep. 06: IAF Church House Meeting following worship
- Sep. 13: Rally Day!
- Sep. 18 & 19: Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend
Please RSVP 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>

MAKE A WILL FOR FREE

August is nationally recognized as **Make-A-Will Month**, and we're excited to share that the UCC Pension Boards partners with FreeWill to offer members and friends of the United Church of Christ the opportunity to create or update a will at **no cost**. Creating a will is one of the most important gifts you can give your loved ones. It provides peace

of mind, ensures your wishes are clearly known, and helps protect those you care about by making difficult decisions a little easier during an already challenging time. Whether you're creating your first will or updating an existing one after a life change, now is a great time to take this important step. To create your free will sponsored by UCC Pension Boards through FreeWill, go to <https://tinyurl.com/2026Will>.

WHAT'S YOUR BATTERY LIFE? TIPS FOR ADAPTING IN A TRYING WORLD

The plumber worked all day, the refrigerator is leaking, and the cat's unhappy about the commotion. Then your crown comes off during a routine dental appointment. You have to laugh: You caught it, and they cemented it back on. Done! But be honest, how much battery life do you have left for your other commitments? Join Alix Felsing for an interactive discussion about resilience, and how you can adapt effectively to your version of *all the things.* We'll meet at 12:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 23, in the conference room. Register by Aug. 21, so we can provide enough chairs and handouts. <https://tinyurl.com/Register4Resilience>

Please Remember in Prayer Members

Von & Melissa McQueen-Simmons and family in the recent death of both Von's aunt and uncle within the past three weeks.

Mel Andersen, 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), Ivory Garvin and family (Von McQueen-Simmons), Charlie Holt (Autumn Holt), Judson Hulsey (Kristen Fuchs), Janet Kominski (Dawn Simmons), Renee Lewis (Martha Battles), Richard Lease (Barb Schneller), Matty McKinnon (Joy Decker), Geraldine Mobley (Jeffery Edwards-Knight), Brenchia Thomas, Steve Thomas (Jeffery Edwards-Knight) June Washburn (Patrick Washburn), Scott Whitley (Jay Whitley)

If you wish to add someone to the prayer list, please send a note to prayers@holycovenantucc.org.

OUR MINISTRY TEAM

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