



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Ingmar

**“My life is one long curve, full of turning points.”
— Piere Trudeau**

**“Every second is a chance to turn our life around.”
— Anonymous**

**“If you’re not aligned with God, it’s hard to recognize yourself as being of God. The way that you get aligned with God is by being like God, being like Source, being like energy. That means understanding how God works.”
— Wayne W. Dyer**

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
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST ~ HOLY COMMUNION

September 06, 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 "Meditation in Chereponi" arr. R. Blake

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 "Come Build a Church" Ken Medema

Come build a church with soul and spirit,

Come build a church of flesh and bone.

We need no tower rising skyward; no house of wood or glass or stone.

Come build a church with human frailty,

Come build a church of flesh and blood.

Jesus shall be its sure foundation. It shall be built by the hand of God.

* Call to the Heart Lloyd Spencer

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

One: We come carrying worries, distractions, and frustrations that have followed us into this place.

Many: **We turn our attention toward God and make room to be present.**

One: We come in from a world that keeps pulling us toward fear, anger, comparison, and division.

Many: **We turn toward the ways of love, compassion, peace, and justice.**

One: We come knowing how easily our hearts can be swayed by our own needs, forgetting the needs of our neighbors.

Many: **We turn toward one another and the sacred work of building kingdom.**

One: Again and again, God invites us to turn toward ways that bring more life and happiness.

Many: **So, let us now turn our hearts toward God and worship together.**

* Hymn “We Gather Here in Jesus’ Name” COME, SHARE THE LORD

We gather here in Jesus’ name;
Christ’s love is burning in our hearts like living flame;
For through Christ’s sacrifice, the whole wide world unites.
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

No one is a stranger here; everyone belongs.
Finding our forgiveness here, we in turn forgive all wrongs.

Christ joins us here; and breaks the bread;
Our God who pours the cup is risen from the dead;
The one we love the most is now our gracious host:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

We are now a family, of which our God is head.
Though unseen, Christ meets us here in the breaking of the bread.

We’ll gather soon in glory rise;
We’ll see the wonder of our God and of our Christ.
Now we anticipate the feast for which we wait:
Come, take the bread; come, drink the wine; come, share the Lord.

Stewardship Moment

Alix Felsing, the Hankins Family

Stories for All People

Laura Hankins

Pastoral Prayer

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

Prayer for Illumination (sung)

IN YOUR WORD

Order my steps in your word dear Lord
Lead me, guide me, everyday.
Send your anointing, God, I pray
Order my steps in your word.
Please, order my steps in your word.

Testimony to Jesus

Suzanne Lamorey

Jesus was Jewish, and yet we forget so often how his Jewish identity shaped his life and the way he lived. He would have been familiar with books like Genesis, aware of the stories and real-life struggles of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph. He knew Exodus, and I like to imagine he was something of a fanboy of Moses. As a devout Jew, he learned love of neighbor from Leviticus and love of God from Deuteronomy. He sang songs from the Psalms with his buddies and likely drew prophetic courage from Isaiah, Daniel, and Amos. Needless to say, for Jesus, faithfulness to God and living out God's ways was a top priority.

And yet I imagine that Jesus, being the human being he was, sometimes wanted to give in to his own desires and needs. There were probably times Jesus wanted to sock and bop one of his disciples, give Peter the silent treatment, or hide away in some corner instead of listening to all the doubts of Thomas. I bet there were moments when he would have rather thrown a cup of wine in some Pharisee's face than engage in verbal sparring, or trip one of those Roman soldiers through the unfortunate accident of a loose sandal. He saw hurting, hungry, and suffering people, and surely there were days when it would have been easier to go home, put his feet up, and read his *Roman Times* or *Hebrew Observer* subscription.

And I wonder, in all of that, how many times Jesus had to pause and remember, "What would God do?" How many times did Jesus have to remember that it wasn't only about him or his own needs and desires, but about something much larger, oh say the kin-dom of God? I would wager that Jesus regularly found himself stopping to pray and reflect on how he could turn his heart and eyes back toward God. To discern how he could align himself more closely with God's ways. To ask how he could bring more of God's love, justice, healing, and life into the world.

And what if we remembered that we are just as human as Jesus was, and that the holy things Jesus practiced are things we could practice too? What if we remembered we could turn our anger into compassion, or those feelings of resentment into mercy. What if we noticed something truly sacred about everyone who walks past us, and challenged what harms our neighbors. What if following Jesus isn't about being cast down in some hierarchy where we see ourselves as less than he was, but about doing the things Jesus did, and turning ourselves toward God again and again, until God's love becomes more and more of the way we live.

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 Psalm 119:33-40 (NRSV), where the psalmist asks for understanding and to turn their heart and eyes back to God...

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,
and I will observe it to the end.
Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.
Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.
Turn my heart to your decrees
and not to selfish gain.
Turn my eyes from looking at vanities;
be gracious to me according to your word.
Confirm to your servant your promise,
which is for those who fear you.
Turn away the disgrace that I dread,
for your ordinances are good.
See, I have longed for your precepts;
in your righteousness be gracious to me.

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

“Letting God’s Ways Become Our Ways”

Invitation to Generosity

Lloyd Spencer

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

Generosity is one of the ways we practice the life we hope to create together. So much in our world teaches us to hold tightly to what we have, and to believe there is not enough. Generosity offers another way. Giving reminds us that in our sharing there is enough, and that our lives are so much richer when we live with open hearts and hands. Let us now share our gifts as a way of practicing the generosity we hope will shape our lives.

* Doxology

I HEAR ANGELS

“Holy, holy, God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”

All creation is bringing glory to the Lamb who sits upon the throne.

* Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Lloyd Spencer

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

God of every good gift, we give thanks for each person who has shared from what they have. May these gifts become conduits through which our ministries grow, our community of welcome is felt, and the hope of Christ finds a way to reach beyond these walls. Use what we have offered to help build a more just world, so that all may know greater peace and love. 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: Long ago Jesus gathered people around tables.

Many: **At those tables, strangers became neighbors and outcasts found a place.**

One: Jesus welcomed all people.

Many: **There was room for all bodies, stories, differences, and imperfections.**

One: Jesus showed us another way of being together, beyond our differences.

Many: **This meal is for all and is meant to feed everyone.**

One: And so, we come, ready to turn away from whatever keeps us from that life.

Many: **We turn again toward love and toward the ways of Christ.**

Jesus spent his life working to create a world that was much different than the world around him. So, he ate with those judged unworthy. He touched people others avoided. He welcomed hard questions, crossed boundaries, challenged unjust systems, and reminded people who had been pushed aside that they equally belonged within the embrace of God.

And perhaps that is the power of this meal. We live in a world that teaches us to separate ourselves from one another. To believe there isn't enough. To decide who is worthy of God's love and who is not. To protect what is ours, fear those who are different, and accept suffering as simply the way things are. Even we at times participate in such things.

But this table asks us to turn. To turn away from scarcity and toward abundance. To turn away from exclusion and toward belonging. To turn away from fear and towards love. To turn away from whatever diminishes life and toward what makes life more alive and whole.

And no one has to have it all right or figured out before coming here. This table is for us messy, odd, quirky-divinely touched people. There is enough bread and juicy wine for everyone. There are no better seats because of whom you love, what you believe, where you were born, or how your body moves in the world.

So come as you are. Come with whatever needs healing, whatever needs releasing, and whatever within you is ready to begin living life again. Come because there is a place for you here and there is enough for us all. Come because this meal offers us a glimpse of the world God is inviting us to create together.

Words of Institution

On the night before his death, Jesus gathered around a table with his friends. During the meal, he took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and shared it with them, saying: **“This is my body, given for you. Whenever you eat this bread, remember me.”**

[Let this be a sign that God will always love you.]

And after supper was finished, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks for it, poured it, and shared it with them, saying: **“This cup is the new covenant. Poured out for you. Whenever you drink from it, remember me.”**

[Let this be a sign that God will always be with you.]

Sharing of the Elements

Music during Communion **“God of the Movements and Martyrs”** D. LaMotte
https://youtu.be/FYaEl5ombvQ?is=18vaAeldG_A3rX1-

The Prayer of Jesus (*unison*)

Author Unknown

Loving God, in whom is heaven, may Your name be honored everywhere. May Your kin-dom come. May the desire of Your heart for the world be done, in us, by us and through us. Give us the bread we need for each day. Forgive us. Enable us to forgive others. Keep us from all anxiety and fear. For You reign in the power that comes from love which is Your glory forever and ever. Amen.

* Hymn

“Turn, Turn, Turn”
*Brian Hankins, Laura Hankins,
Benjamin Rudolph, Dawn Simmons*

Pete Seeger

Refrain: To everything - turn, turn, turn
There is a season - turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under heaven

A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep (R)

A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones
A time to gather stones together (R)

A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace
A time to refrain from embracing (R)

A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew
A time for love, a time for hate
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late!

* Benediction

Rev. Christopher Czarnecki

* Benediction Response

“Song of Hope”

ARGENTINA

May the God of hope go with us every day,
Filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
Bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace; singing, share our joy with all;
Working for a world that's new, faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

“You Satisfy the Hungry Heart”

arr. A. M. David

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The liturgy for today's service was 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: Dave Shimberg, Shakti Subramanian, Laurence Winston

Greeters: Pam Shimberg

Refreshments: Joy Decker, Kim Tyler

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.

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>

UPCOMING DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sep. 07: Labor Day - office closed
- Sep. 13: Rally Day with All Church Potluck
- Sep. 18 & 19: Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend
Please RSVP and plan to attend!
- Sep. 26: RJ&E Civil Rights Trail Outing, Davidson College Sculpture & Museum.

- Sep. 27 Consistory
- Oct. 4 & 11: New Member/Inquire Classes
- Oct. 25: Welcome Sunday Installation of New Members

Let's mark the winding down of summer with Rally Day!

September 13, 2026

With the conclusion of summer vacations and the startup of the new school year, we also look forward to returning to the life of the church. We'll soon start a new liturgical season, and everyone is invited to prayerfully consider how you can be a part of this ministry at Holy Covenant UCC. Next Sunday, Sep. 13, after worship, we will join together for fun and fellowship with an all-church potluck! We invite you to bring your favorite dish to share. We're excited to see everyone at the Rally Day potluck following service!



Sign Up Genius <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C044CA4AE22A3F8C16-65240499-rally>

Congregational Strategic Planning Weekend

September 18-19, 2026

Where is God calling Holy Covenant as we look ahead? What kind of church do we want to become, and what ministries, priorities, and commitments will help us get there?



On Fri., Sep. 18 (5:30-9:00 PM) and Sat., Sep. 19 (8:30 AM-3:00 PM), our congregation will gather for a Strategic Planning weekend facilitated by a consultant from the national setting of the United Church of Christ. Strategic planning gives us an opportunity to listen to one another, celebrate who we are, consider the needs of our church and community, and discern where we are being led to focus our energy and resources in the years ahead. The conversations we have during this weekend will help shape the mission and vision and establish priorities to guide Holy Covenant for the next 3-5 years. For this process to truly reflect the desire of our congregation, we need your voice at the table. Whether you have been part of Holy Covenant for decades or only recently started attending, we want your ideas, hopes, and dreams for our church to be part of the conversation. To attend and help us imagine a future for Holy Covenant, please RSVP TODAY using the QR code or contact the church office, office@holycovenantucc.org.

RJE OFFERS DAVIDSON FIELD TRIP, SAT. SEP. 26, 2026

Come see the exquisite exhibit "With These Hands"; a memorial sculpture to the enslaved and exploited, and the Homeless Jesus Sculpture, Davidson College. Register at

<https://forms.gle/73ax9yFmiDF4HhXm7> or use the QR Code.

Questions? Contact us at 704-578-2677 or hooperclt@aol.com



September is Stewardship Month!

“Journeys: Rooted in Faith, Growing in Hope” is Holy Covenant’s theme for our annual Stewardship Campaign to raise money for next year’s budget. On each Sunday in September, speakers will talk about various aspects of life at Holy Covenant, from where we’ve been to current life and our hopes for the future. We will soon pay off the mortgage, and Holy Covenant leaders are discussing our next set of priorities - our commitments of the present, our needs in the short term and our goals in the long term. We appreciate your participation via time and talents, and this fall we ask you to prayerfully consider increasing your total financial contribution as we look to the future. Please make your pledge by Sept. 30 by scanning the QR code or going to <https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/> .



Please Remember in Prayer Members

Faye Humphrey and family in the recent death of her husband,
the Reverend James "Jim" Humphrey

Mel Andersen, Darline Batton, Kathy Habel, Lee Parrish, Jean Raley-Dennis, 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), Samuel Head (Benjamin Rudolph), 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), Marie Raley (Jean Raley-Dennis), 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)

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

Mailing address: P.O. Box 481285, Charlotte NC 28269

3501 West W.T. Harris Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28269-8510

www.holycovenantucc.org 704-599-9810