



HOLY COVENANT

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

-be the Church, everywhere



Unsplash Photo by Breanna Louise

**“I believe that we are all one family in Christ despite our ethnicity,
but each of us as unique distinctions and gifts.**

**That’s how God desires us to live. To say we don’t see
color is to say we don’t see the beauty of that diverse kingdom.”**

— Lecrae Moore

**“There is comfort in being welcomed, but there is
dignity in knowing your arrival just shifted a
group toward deeper wholeness.”**

— Cole Arthur Riley

**“God is the newness of everything that is and is coming to be. God is
ever newness in love. Transcendence, therefore, is the future
beyond that draws us in the present
movement toward greater wholeness and unity.”**

— Ilia Delio

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
RALLY DAY ~ WELCOME BACK TO CHURCH

September 13, 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 “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” arr. L. Larson
Dawn Robinson, Patrick Washburn, piano duet

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

One: A new season in the church is unfolding among us. Children and youth are returning with their curious minds, great questions, and laughter.

Many: **We celebrate the wonder, wisdom, and joy they bring into our community.**

One: We gather again to learn and grow through Bible study, books, and conversations, bringing our questions and different perspectives.

Many: **We open our hearts and minds, trusting there is always more for us to discover.**

One: Our ministries of mission, racial justice, and creation justice continue forging pathways toward greater justice, hope, and love.

Many: We bring our gifts and passions together, knowing each of us has something meaningful to offer.

One: Around covenant groups and potlucks, we will deepen friendships, welcome new faces, share good food, and build community together.

Many: In all the ways we gather, may there always be room for one more.

One: World Communion, All Saints, Reign of Christ, Advent, and Christmas await us, sacred days in another season of faith together.

Many: So let us begin this new season with joy and worship the God who holds us all.

* Hymn

“Christ, You Teach Us of Your Kingdom”
lyrics by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY

**Christ, you teach us of your kingdom and the common life we share.
You remind us, “Be like children!” So we offer you our prayer:
Make us gentle, make us humble, may we cause no one to stumble,
Sheltered in your church’s care. (2x)**

**Shepherd, every lamb is cherished, even those who go astray.
You want none of us to perish nor to wander from your way.
When a sister or a brother sins against you or another,
Give us helpful words to say. (2x)**

**Let your love be our foundation when we need to challenge sin;
May our quiet conversations be the places we begin.
For our judging and complaining and our gossip and our blaming
Won’t bring sinners home again. (2x)**

**May we seek your will together, bound together by rebirth.
May we care for one another, knowing every sinner’s worth.
Two or three united, praying, two or three, your love obeying,
Are your voice and hands on earth. (2x)**

Stewardship Moment

Alix Felsing, Stewardship Chair
Kyle & Amanda Deck, Kristin Andes & Tom Magraw

Stories for All People

Jean Raley-Dennis

Gift in Music

“Goodness of God”
Ed Vickery, vocals

Jenn & Brian Johnson

Let us reflect on the life, teachings, and spirit of Jesus, and what it might have to say to us as we live and move through the world today...

We are regularly told that Jesus had twelve disciples. But I think we often forget that these dudes came from different backgrounds, had different occupations, and likely even had different social and political perspectives. As much as we like to imagine they skipped around holding hands and singing camp songs, they didn't always get along, nor were they some uniform group.

I imagine some complained that James and John smelled like fish. Matthew, the tax collector, was probably a little too supportive of the empire for some of them, while Simon the Zealot was strongly opposed to it. Judas, man that guy just couldn't stay out of trouble. And Bartholomew never seemed to speak up or say much of anything. They argued about which of them would be the greatest and even touted themselves as being special because they were part of Jesus' inner circle.

Tension among the twelve existed. They were jealous, competitive, impulsive, carried their own prejudices, and were sometimes outright petty. And I'm not just talking about jealousy over John's favoritism or irritation that Judas kept getting them in hot water. There were probably a couple disagreements that ended in spiked drinks, scorpions thrown into sleeping bags, and wishes that they were the eleven disciples instead of twelve.

Yet somewhere within the pages of this ancient story, within all those days spent living and ministering alongside Jesus, this very different group of people had to learn how to love one another. And they didn't learn it through some formal discipleship training course or eight-week online masterclass. They learned it by choosing to follow Jesus.

A Jesus who loved his enemies, welcomed outsiders, served the lowly, pushed back against injustice, and treated others as he would want to be treated. Some of the people Jesus encountered were nothing like him, but through his ministry of service and love, he demonstrated that our lives are connected to everyone and everything. We belong to God and are bound together by some cosmic force of impenetrable love, where beneath every disagreement and difference we might have, we still remain part of one whole.

We all want and need to experience the presence of God. But Jesus reminds us that we also need to recognize that sacred presence in one another. Because

perhaps one of the ways we come closest to God is by learning how to draw closer to our neighbors, especially the ones who are nothing like us.

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

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

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.

Christian Lesson

Romans 14:1-13 (CEB)

Meg Houlihan

Our Christian Scripture for today comes from Romans 14:1-13, where Paul writes to an early Jesus community in Rome that was judging each other and struggling to welcome each other in Christ...

Welcome the person who is weak in faith—but not in order to argue about differences of opinion. One person believes in eating everything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Those who eat must not look down on the ones who don't, and the ones who don't eat must not judge the ones who do, because God has accepted them. Who are you to judge someone else's servants? They stand or fall before their own Lord (and they will stand, because the Lord has the power to make them stand). One person considers some days to be more sacred than others, while another person considers all days to be the same. Each person must have their own convictions. Someone who thinks that a day is sacred, thinks that way for the Lord. Those who eat, eat for the Lord, because they thank God. And those who don't eat, don't eat for the Lord, and they thank the Lord too. We don't live for ourselves and we don't die for ourselves. If we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to God. This is why Christ died and lived: so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But why do you judge [each other]? Or why do you look down on [each other]? We all will stand in front of the judgment seat of God. Because it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. So stop judging each other. Instead, this is what you should decide: never put a stumbling block or obstacle in the way of [each other].

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

“We Belong to One Another”

Hymn

“God, You Made Your Good Creation”

BEACH SPRING

lyrics by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

God, you made your good creation and you hold it in your care—
From each starry constellation to each forest underlayer.
Tiny creatures, mountain splendor; rivers, lakes and ocean floors—
You are loving, kind and tender in your care for what is yours.

Yet, O God, the earth is crying, times are changing, storms are strong.
Now the coral reefs are dying, floods are raging, droughts are long.
Though the circumstances differ, when the earth is in distress.
See! The poor are first to suffer from our greed and selfishness.

God, you love this world we live in, so you sent your only Son.
“Here on earth as in your heaven,” God we pray, “Your will be done.”
By your Spirit, may we listen to the earth and to the poor;
May we care for all you’ve given till creation is restored.

Invitation to Generosity

Meg Houlihan

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

* 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*)

Meg Houlihan

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

Loving God, receive these gifts as signs of our commitment to your work
in the world. May they nurture new faith, strengthen community, care for
our neighbors, and help create pathways toward greater peace and justice.
Bless what we share today and use it to help all people know they are
welcomed, valued, and loved by God. Amen. Amen.

**You are the salt for the earth, O people: salt for the reign of God!
Share the flavor of life, O people: life in the City of God!**

***Refrain:* Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace;
Bring forth the reign of justice, bring forth the City of God!**

**You are a light on the hill, O people: light for the City of God!
Shine so holy and bright, O people: shine for the City of God! (R)**

**You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring forth the reign of God!
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the City of God! (R)**

**We are a blessed and a pilgrim people: bound for the reign of God!
Love our journey and love our homeland: love is the City of God! (R)**

* 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

“Hold to God’s Unchanging Hand”

arr. S. Key

*Songs in this service are used by permission.
CCLI License #11439355; CSPL164710*

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: Roxie McMillon, Deborah Winston

Potluck today! All are welcome!

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. 13: Rally Day with All Church Potluck TODAY!
- 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

CONGREGATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING WEEKEND IS NEAR!

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.

SEPTEMBER IS STEWARDSHIP MONTH

What inspires you to support Holy Covenant financially? Each Sunday in September, members of the congregation will share a Stewardship Moment that reflects on their experiences at Holy Covenant and their hopes for our future. "Journeys: Rooted in Faith, Growing in Hope," is our theme for this year's Stewardship Campaign. This is the season in which Holy Covenant leaders discuss 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 time and talents, and we ask you to prayerfully consider increasing your total financial contribution as we look to a mortgage-free future. We'll accept pledges and gifts any time, of course, and you can adjust them if your circumstances change. **Making your pledge by Sept. 30 helps us know what's possible as we shape the 2027 budget during October.** To donate, scan this QR code or go to <https://holycovenantucc.org/giving/> .

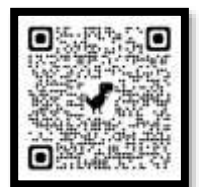


RJE OFFERS DAVIDSON FIELD TRIP, SAT. SEP. 26, 2026

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



SOJOURNERS CLASS - ADULT EDUCATION, SUNDAYS | 9:45 AM

Everyone is welcome to join us for stimulating discussion and no preparation is required. Everyone is welcome and no preparation is required. Join us at 9:45am in the Conference Room or via Zoom.

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