

# **CLAVERING CHURCHES METHODIST COVENANT SERVICE 10<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021**

## **Welcome**

This covenant service that we are sharing in today has its origins in the earliest days of Methodism, when John Wesley invited his people to renew their covenant relationship with God each year.

Remembering God's commitment to us in covenant love, individually and in our communion with each other, we recommit ourselves to God.

The Covenant Service usually includes the sacrament of Holy Communion, but, as the Methodist Church has not authorised on-line communion services, our service this morning will not include Holy Communion.

We begin by praising God.

## **Praise**

Glory to the Father, the God of love, who created us; who continually preserves and sustains us; who has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **Blessed be God for ever.**

Glory to Jesus Christ our Saviour, who, though he was rich, yet for our sake became poor, and was tested in every way as we are, yet without sin; who proclaimed the good news of the kingdom, and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; who was raised from the dead and is alive for ever, and has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; who is seated at God's right hand in glory, and will come to be our judge.

### **Blessed be God for ever.**

Glory to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, by whom we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ; whose witness confirms us; whose wisdom teaches us; whose power enables us; who will do for us more than we can ask or think.

### **Blessed be God for ever.**

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever.

**Amen.**

## **Collect**

God of grace, through the mediation of your Son, you call us into a new covenant. Help us therefore to draw near with faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you. Through Jesus Christ our Lord **Amen**

## **Bible Reading:**

A reading from the Gospel according to John. Hear the Gospel of Christ.  
**Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

This is the Gospel of Christ.  
**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

## **Reflection**

### **The Covenant**

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law.

The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience.  
In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ.

For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God.  
We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

Let us then seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

Let us pray.

## **Confession of Sin**

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.

For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ, reluctant to follow him, and afraid to bear the cross: Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has caused the poverty of our worship, the formality and selfishness of our prayers, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, and our hesitating witness for Christ: Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has led us to misuse your gifts, evade our responsibilities, and fail to be good stewards of your creation: Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has made us unwilling to overcome evil with good, tolerant of injustice, quick to condemn, and selfish in sharing your love with others: Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

*Silence*

Let us join together and say:

**Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love; in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences. Wash away all my guilt, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Give me the joy of your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

## **Assurance of Pardon**

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore, to all who truly repent this is his gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn:** O thou who camest from above

1. O Thou who camest from above,  
the pure celestial fire to impart  
kindle a flame of sacred love  
upon the mean altar of my heart!
2. There let it for thy glory burn  
with inextinguishable blaze,  
and trembling to its source return,  
in humble prayer and fervent praise.
3. Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
to work and speak and think for thee;  
still let me guard the holy fire,  
and still stir up thy gift in me.
4. Ready for all thy perfect will,  
my acts of faith and love repeat,  
till death thy endless mercies seal,  
and make my sacrifice complete.

Charles Wesley

## **Covenant Continued:**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us again accept our place within this covenant which God has made with us and with all who are called to be Christ's disciples.

This means that, by the help of the Holy Spirit, we accept God's purpose for us, and the call to love and serve God in all our life and work.

Christ has many services to be done: some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others bring reproach; some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests, others are contrary to both; in some we may please Christ and please ourselves; in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own. Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ.

In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you. We are no longer our own but yours.

We say together

**I am no longer my own but yours.  
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,  
wherever you may place me,  
in all that I do and in all that I may endure;  
when there is work for me and when there is none;  
when I am troubled and when I am at peace.  
Your will be done  
when I am valued and when I am disregarded;  
when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;  
when I have all things, and when I have nothing.  
I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you,  
as and where you choose.  
Glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours.  
May it be so for ever.  
Let this covenant now made on earth  
be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:  
**make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world:

**establish justice and peace among all people.**

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble:

**deliver them from their distress.**

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:

**bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

Let us pray in silence for our own needs and for those of others...

*Silence*

Lord our God, you have helped us by your grace to make these prayers, and you have promised through Christ our Lord that when two or three agree in his name you will grant what they ask. Answer now your servants' prayers according to their needs; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**Our Father ...**

## **The Peace**

The Lord has made an everlasting covenant of peace with his people. The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

## **Hymn: Now thank we all our God**

1 Now thank we all our God,  
with hearts and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

2 O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;  
and keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.

3 All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven,  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore,  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

Martin Rinkart translated by Catherine Winkworth

### **Blessing and Dismissal:**

The blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon us  
and remain with us for ever.

**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**