



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

Covenant Service

Call to Worship

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:33-34



*Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.*

*Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to
dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.*

*Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.*

*Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life, till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride;
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.*

Robert Walmsley (1831-1905) CCL 25980

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
on this day, I and many others seek to renew our covenant with You. Your love is strong and faithful. You never stop loving us. Our love for You is weak and fickle and we often fall short of what we have committed ourselves to be and do. Forgive us for our reluctance to follow Christ, our half-hearted worship, our failures in caring, service and witness, and our unwillingness to challenge injustice. Have mercy on us, O God, and renew in us both the desire and the ability to be people of love.

Thank you for your gracious words: 'Your sins are forgiven'. Amen.



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021



*Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.*

*Take your truth, plant it deep in us ;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.*

*Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us
all your purposes, for your glory.*

*Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.*

*Cause our faith to rise,
cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail ;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.*

*Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds ;
help us grasp the heights of your
plans for us.*

*Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk
as you walk with us.*

*Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.*

*Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b.
1963) CCL 25980*

John 15.1-9

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 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.

Reflection

The Covenant Service is one of the great gifts to the church. It is a service full of bold and profound statements about God and our relationship with God. It contains the famous prayer, 'I am no longer my own but yours ...', sometimes referred to as 'The Scary Prayer'. In this service we come to understand again the awe, sovereignty and majesty of God and our total commitment and dedication to him whatever the circumstance. There is not one moment when God will stop being our God, and not one moment when we will stop being his people. As such, we dedicate our lives to God: our thinking, our choices, our actions.



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

Yet when we think that we are giving away so much of our independence and life, we discover with joy, just how much more life there is to live and to enjoy.

It is a scary service in part because we read that familiar passage from John's Gospel and hear again how the Father removes every branch that bears no fruit and prunes the branches that do, in order that they may be even more fruitful. It is easy to focus on the cutting away and perhaps feel an obligation to be fruitful because we fear being cut away. That sort of self-reflection can be a sobering activity.

Yet, we are also reminded that we are the branches of the Vine and that we are intimately linked to God and that the goodness of God flows through the vine. So we can expect to see fruit of many kinds and be assured that God is with us.

In these days of lockdown it's unwise to meet together to worship God because of the danger of infection. God loves and values us all too much for us to risk spreading the virus. So in lockdown it can feel as if we are not connected to the vine. We cannot see the other branches and we miss their company so much. Yet we remain connected because we are branches that spread from the True Vine.

This year, perhaps more than some others, when we renew our Covenant with God some of the words will have even

more resonance than usual – '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'.

How do we remain connected to the True Vine in these testing times? Perhaps a place to start is by reflecting on the commitments on the Methodist Way of Life cards, and as we reflect upon them we can ask for God's help to grow in the different areas. These helpful reminders hold us together as God's people in God's world, whether we are together or apart. And they encourage us to support each other as we seek to fulfil our part of the Covenant we renew today.



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

A Methodist Way of Life

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

As far as we are able, with God's help:

Worship

- We will pray daily.
- We will worship with others regularly.
- We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.

Learning and Caring

- We will care for ourselves and those around us.
- We will learn more about our faith.
- We will practise hospitality and generosity.

Service

- We will help people in our communities and beyond.
- We will care for creation and all God's gifts.
- We will challenge injustice.

Evangelism

- We will speak of the love of God.
- We will live in a way that draws others to Jesus.
- We will share our faith with others.

**May we be a blessing within and beyond God's Church,
for the transformation of the world.**



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

A Methodist Way of Life

**A Methodist Way of Life encourages us to grow together.
Make time to discuss these questions regularly with others.**

Worship

- What is the pattern of your prayer life?
- How easy or hard do you find it to pray?
- What has spoken to you recently in worship or in the Bible?
- When, lately, have you felt close to God or distant from God?

Learning and Caring

- How have you practised generosity since we last met?
- How have you shown hospitality to others recently?
- How are you caring for yourself?
- How and what are you learning now?

Service

- How are you seeking to serve others in your communities and beyond? What has helped or hindered you in your service of others?
- How are you caring for God's creation?
- How are you using God's gifts (including your financial resources)?
- What issues of injustice are you currently concerned about? What are you doing in response?

Evangelism

- When was the last time you were able to talk about God?
- What opportunities to share your faith have there been since we last met?
- How have you responded to opportunities to share your faith?
- Is there anyone you might invite to consider Christian faith?

How can we support each other in our Way of Life commitments?



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021



*Come, let us use the grace divine,
and all, with one accord,
in a perpetual covenant join
ourselves to Christ the Lord:*

*Give up ourselves, through Jesu's power,
his name to glorify;
and promise, in this sacred hour,
for God to live and die.*

*The covenant we this moment make
be ever kept in mind:
we will no more our God forsake,
or cast his words behind.*

*We never will throw off his fear
who hears our solemn vow;
and if thou art well pleased to hear,
come down, and meet us now.*

*To each the covenant blood apply,
which takes our sins away;
and register our names on high,
and keep us to that day.*

Charles Wesley (1707–1788) CCL 25980

The Covenant

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.

**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.**



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

**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.**

Let us pray.

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 . . .

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.**



All I once held dear,
built my life upon,
all this world reveres,
and wars to own,
all I once thought gain
I have counted loss;
spent and worthless now,
compared to this.
*Knowing you, Jesus,
knowing you,
there is no greater thing.
You're my all, you're the best,
you're my joy, my righteousness,
and I love you, Lord.*

Now my heart's desire
is to know you more,
to be found in you
and known as yours.
To possess by faith
what I could not earn,
all-surpassing gift
of righteousness.



Worship at Home : 10th January 2021

Oh, to know the power
of your risen life,
and to know you in
your sufferings.
To become like you
in your death, my Lord,
so with you to live
and never die.

A prayer of blessing

May the God of heaven and earth bless us
and keep us; may his face shine upon us
that we might know God's peace and live
in ways that reflect his love, now and
always.

Amen

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950) CCL 25980

BUT HALLOW THE
LORD
CHRIST
IN YOUR HEARTS.