



The Aldershot and North Camp Anchor

Issue 37: Sunday 17th January 2021



Dear Friends,

This week's edition of 'The Anchor' provides us with the opportunity to share in part of the Methodist Covenant Service.

On 25th December 1747, and on many other occasions, John Wesley strongly urged Methodists to renew their Covenant with God. His first formal Covenant Service was held in Spitalfields in 1755, and since then it has been the custom of Methodist churches to hold a Covenant service annually, usually in January at the start of a new calendar year.

In 'The Anchor' we will use the traditional form of the Covenant Prayer. As we do so, we remember that the traditional words, 'Put me to doing, put me to suffering', do not mean that we ask God to make us suffer, but that we desire, by God's help, actively to do or patiently to accept whatever is God's will for us.

I pray that you will find this written service helpful as you renew your Covenant with God at the start of 2021.

Yours in His service

Chris Blake



Covenant Sunday Worship

Hymn (StF 549 verses 1 and 2)

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

Prayer 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 (Jeremiah 31 v 31-34)

'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the Lord. 'This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'



Covenant Prayer

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves this covenant which God has made with his people and take upon us the yoke of Christ. This means that we are content that he appoint us our place and work, and that he himself be our reward. 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. Lord God, holy Father, since you have called us through Christ to share in this gracious covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will. We are no longer our own but yours.

I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you or laid aside for you, exalted for you or brought low for you; let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing; I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Reflection

The Covenant Service is one of the great treasures of the Methodist tradition. Its invitation to renewed commitment is expressed in the words of the Covenant Prayer and is reflected in Charles Wesley's Covenant hymn, 'Come let us use the grace divine', which is included in this service.

The first line of that Covenant hymn, with its focus on grace, reminds us that, although the words we say are spoken with our lips, the strength to live out those words comes from God's grace. It is God's grace which invites us into a relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and it is God's grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to live out the commitment that we make in the Covenant prayer.

In the words of God spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, "This is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people'".

As we say the Covenant prayer with our lips, we open ourselves to God's grace, so that the values and ways of the followers of Jesus, can be written on our hearts.

Prayers of Intercession

This week let us pray especially:

- For all who work in the NHS or in care homes and Covid numbers increase.
- For schools, pupils and parents as they work together to provide home education.

Gracious God, we ask these prayers through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and Saviour. Amen

Hymn (StF 549 verses 3-5)

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.



Final Prayer: May the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon us and remain with us for ever. Amen.



For those with internet access there are two additional opportunities to share in a Covenant Service. This week's recorded service will have a Covenant Service theme and those who are able to use 'Zoom' are invited to share in a 'live' Zoom Covenant Service on Sunday 17th at 9.30 a.m. The Zoom details will be distributed by email but if you are not on our email lists and would like to join in the Zoom service please contact Chris Blake on chris.blake@methodist.org.uk

Precious Memories

This is a reminder that you are invited to submit a short article (150 to 200 words) describing a significant person, place or event under the heading of 'Precious Memories'. You might like to describe how that person, place or event was significant in your own faith journey. If you have a photograph to illustrate what you write, then please send that with your article.

Bible Reading: © Biblica 2011. Some prayers: Methodist Prayer Handbook © TMCP 2019/2020. Some prayers taken from "2000 prayers for public worship" by Nick Fawcett. CCLI No 000295.