



This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use while you are unable to attend worship in a church building. Why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. This service has been prepared for the first Sunday in the year in which Methodist normally hold Covenant Services. In many places that is not possible, but we will think about the Covenant prayer in anticipation of the time when the services can be held.

Call to Worship: Jeremiah 31.33-34

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.

Hymn: StF 364. O, for a thousand tongues to sing.

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and king,
The triumphs of His grace!

My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honours of Thy name.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease—
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.

He speaks; and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.

See all your sins on Jesus laid:
The Lamb of God was slain;

His soul was once an offering made
That all may heaven gain.

In Christ, our head, you then shall know,
Shall feel, your sins forgiven,
Anticipate your heaven below,
And own that love is heaven at.

Charles Wesley

Let us pray together

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 forever.

Glory to Jesus Christ our saviour,
Who, though he was rich,
Yet for our sakes became poor,
And was tested in every way as we are,
Yet without sin;
Who proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom,
It was obedient to the point of death,
Even death on the cross;
Who was raised from the dead and is alive
forever,
And has opened the Kingdom of heaven
To all who trust in him;
Who is seated at God's right hand and glory,
And will come to be our judge.

Blessed be God forever.

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 forever.

To the one God, father, son and Holy Spirit,

Be praise and glory forever. Are men.

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.**

Hymn: StF 776. In the Lord I'll be ever thankful.

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,

In the Lord I'll rejoice.

Look to God, do not be afraid,

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near;

Lift up your voices the Lord is near.

Taize

Gospel Reading: John 15.1-9



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.



Time to Reflect

The image of the vine is about togetherness.

That is one of the reasons why the passage is apt for the Covenant Service.

Jesus begins by talking about the role of the vine grower, who tends the vine with purpose to make it produce as much fruit as possible. That includes the skill of careful pruning. Jesus likens this to the work "the Father."

Jesus then uses the image of the interconnected vine that bears fruit to describe our relationship with him. If we are to be fruitful, we have stay connected to Jesus because it is through staying together with Jesus that we grow.

We are given a sense of the Father working in the Son and both working together in the lives of disciples. It is important to notice that Jesus is not talking to individuals but to the community of disciples. It is in being together that the Christian community is fruitful.

As he develops the theme Jesus shifts the focus from the vine to the idea of "abiding." Fruitfulness comes from living in and staying in a committed relationship with God and with each other that is based on love.

In the Covenant prayer that Methodists use every year we are reminded of the fundamentals of our “togetherness” as Christians. God, through Jesus, takes the initiative and invites us into a living relationship in which we are offered life, liberation and love. We respond by recentring our lives on Jesus. That is a personal commitment but also something we support each other in by doing it together. We make that commitment for ourselves today aware that others will be doing the same. We look forward to the time when we can be together in one place to renew this covenant relationship.

Today, we choose again to trust God, to walk with Jesus and to live in the ways of the kingdom.

One way of putting this into practice is found in “The Methodist Way of Life.” This is a set of commitments and practices that encourage and equip us to live a Christian life better. Before you say the covenant prayer, read through the commitments and reflect on which of these you want to grow in during the coming year.

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.

Hymn: StF 370. Breath on me breath of God

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Fill me with life anew,

That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch

A time of prayer

Take time to sit quietly. Then say the Covenant Prayer aloud:

**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**

Hymn: StF 439. Abba, Father

Abba Father let me be
Yours and yours alone
May my will forever be
Ever more your own
Never let my heart grow cold
Never let me go

Abba Father let me be
Yours and yours alone

Dave Bilborough

Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Remember the times when you have felt close to
God and the people who have shown God's
goodness to you ... give thanks to God.

Pray for your church ... that it may be a faithful
witness to God's love.

Pray for the church worldwide ...that in word and
action it may help people to see God's glory

Pray for the leaders of nations... that they act justly
and guide wisely.

Pray for those pushed to the margins of society
...that they and their gifts may be made welcome.

Pray for those in need...especially people we know

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father

Hymn: StF 489. All I once held dear.

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.

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.

Graham Kendrick

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

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