

## East Durham Methodist Circuit: Covenant Service, 9th January 2022

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### Theme: Re-focus

**Introduction:** adapted from the introduction to EDWJ: Jan/Feb 2022 by Dr Micha Jazz

Our annual covenant service is a chance to re-focus our minds on God's Word, God's Will and God's Work.

God's purpose is to reveal His goodness through His disciples. How can we cultivate lives that reflect His Kingdom? How can we keep on the right track?

Let's join together today to recommit ourselves to His service and as we walk forward through this New Year let us develop our knowledge of Him through Scripture, Prayer and this, our renewed dedication.

**Hymn:** **Father Hear the Prayer we offer** Love Maria Willis **StF: 518H&P 436**

1. Father, hear the prayer we offer:  
not for ease that prayer shall be,  
but for strength, that we may ever  
live our lives courageously.

2. Not for ever in green pastures  
do we ask our way to be;  
but the steep and rugged pathway  
may we tread rejoicingly.

3. Not forever by still waters  
would we idly rest and stay;  
but would smite the living fountains  
from the rocks along our way.

4. Be our strength in hours of  
weakness,  
in our wanderings be our Guide;  
through endeavour, failure, danger,  
Saviour, be thou at our side.

### **What is a covenant**

According to the dictionary a **Covenant** is a formal and serious agreement. There is a promise - or covenant - with God, such as the covenant of marriage. In commercial law it is a formal written agreement between two or more people or businesses - even countries.

For example, the Property industry deals with covenants all the time. In return for the right to occupy a Landlord's property the Tenant has to promise (or covenant) to do certain things like pay the rent and keep the property repaired.

**A gathering prayer:** from the Methodist service book

Let us pray. Please respond when I ask with '**Blessed be God for ever**'

**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 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**

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**

### **A reading from the Law: Deuteronomy 29:10-15** New International Version

<sup>10</sup> All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God - your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, <sup>11</sup> together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. <sup>12</sup> You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, <sup>13</sup> to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>14</sup> I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you <sup>15</sup> who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today.

**For the wisdom that guides us we praise you O God.**

### **A reading from the Prophets: Isaiah 43: 1-7** New International Version

<sup>1</sup>But now, this is what the Lord says - he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

<sup>3</sup>For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

<sup>4</sup>Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.

<sup>5</sup>Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.

<sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - <sup>7</sup> everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

**For the word that inspires us we praise you O God.**

### **A reading from the Epistles: Romans 12:1-2** A Living Sacrifice New International Version

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup>Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your



3. Poor old Moses had it tough you know  
Even though I say it Myself  
He got the job of laying it down  
On stones and labyrinthine books on shelves.  
Dealing with all the rules that followed  
When **'All you need is Love'**  
For widows, orphans and Channel migrants  
Simple really; but not simple enough.

4. They clearly didn't get it  
Even though I'd made it plain,  
So I tuned My guitars and flutes  
And said it all over again.  
This time, I wrote it down in song  
I wrote better than Beatle John or Paul  
"He will rescue the poor when they cry to him"  
Psalm 72, verse 12 and more!

5. Listen to Malachi or Zechariah  
And Dylan spoke truth as well,  
For **'The times they are a changin''**  
Though there's still time to burn in Hell.  
"Show justice, mercy and compassion.  
To widows, orphans, outcasts and the poor  
Do not plot evil against each other"  
I sent My messengers, who told it all.

6. And Jesus wept. Yes Jesus wept  
My Son - you made Him cry  
Not only over Lazarus but about My truth  
Rejected before He died.  
Outside the walls, beyond the pale  
The fate of goats foretold  
But the sheep that I will gather in  
Look after the sick and the old.

7. After they'd killed Him on the cross  
My Son, my only Son,  
The fallen angels danced a jig  
They must have thought they'd won.  
But the Good News was out, the game afoot  
It was spreading all over the world  
My truth in the Gospels and the  
Apostle's letters:  
"Come to me I love you all."

8. They can't say I never told 'em  
Can't say they never knew.  
'Cos from first beginnings throughout the ages  
My message was bang on cue.  
To the Promised Land, I marked the way  
From Egypt, Babylon and Rome  
Nothing was going to get in the way  
Of those who were looking for Home.

9. So eat and drink and be merry  
And celebrate at Christmas time  
There's nothing wrong with a bit of fun  
But don't **'Party like it's nineteen ninety-nine'**  
And forget what I've told you in My Book  
Time after time after time  
So I'll tell you what I told 'em  
It's your turn now to tell it again ...  
Line after line after line.

10. Because I love you so  
My promise I'll renew  
And My promise, made in Heaven,  
Gives Eternal life to you.  
So those who follow Me, have My  
covenant deep within  
A covenant sealed with My Son's blood,  
freeing you from your sin.  
But there's a second part, and that part  
belongs to you  
You must freely promise your life to Me  
and say ... "I do, I do, I do."

Highlighted song references: thanks to Lennon & McCartney, Bob Dylan and Prince

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Let us now join in prayer together as we say the Lord's prayer:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,**

**As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,  
For ever and ever.**

**Amen**

**The Covenant:** from the Methodist service book

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 on us.

**Prayers of confession:** from the Methodist service book

Let us pray:

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

For the sin that has made us slow to learn of Christ, reluctant to follow Him, and afraid to bear His cross.

Lord have mercy... **Lord, forgive**

For the sin that has caused us 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 Your 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...** **reflect for a few moments in silence, then 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 in me. Give me the joy of Your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

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".

Thanks be to God.

**Amen**

**Covenant Hymn: Come let us use the grace divine** C. Wesley **StF 549 / H&P 647**

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

4. We never will throw off the fear  
of God who hears our vow;  
and if thou art well pleased to hear,  
come down and meet us now.

2. Give up ourselves, thru Jesus'  
power,  
his name to glorify;  
and promise, in this sacred hour,  
for God to live and die.

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

3. The covenant we this moment make  
be ever kept in mind;  
we will no more our God forsake,  
or cast these words behind.

**The Covenant Promise:**

from the Methodist service book

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 God in all our life and work.

Christ has many services to be done, some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honour, others 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. You 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 that 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.**

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

Lord God, hear us as we pray for Your holy catholic Church:

**Make us all one that the world may believe.**

Imagine 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 in 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.

**Hymn:        I am a new creation**

Dave Bilborough

**StF 553**

I am a new creation,  
No more in condemnation,  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.  
My heart is overflowing,  
My love just keeps on growing,  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.

And I will praise You, Lord,  
Yes I will praise You, Lord,  
And I will sing of all that You have done.  
A Joy that knows no limit,  
A Lightness in my spirit  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.  
Here in the Grace of God I stand.

**Blessing:**

And may the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. **Amen.**