



Covenant Service

Introduction

The Covenant Service was first celebrated by John Wesley in 1755. It is the most significant of Methodism's liturgical gifts to the whole Church and reflects Wesley's debt to many streams of Christian devotion, in this case English Puritanism and in particular the words of Richard Alleine.

This service is intended for occasional use by the whole congregation. There should be encouragement for the congregation (including presbyter and leaders) to make prior spiritual preparation for the service. The covenant prayer, however interpreted, should not be entered upon lightly.

Early in the year (after time for preparation), the church anniversary, or any other significant occasion in the life of the congregation is an appropriate time for renewing the covenant with God.

Rupert Davies says of the Covenant Service:

"The distinctive quality of the service has, in its full expression, the spiritual ethos of Methodism at its best and most genuine."

This order, when followed by Holy Communion, is a complete act of worship.

COVENANT SERVICE

STAND

Leader: Let us worship God who has established an everlasting covenant and calls us through Jesus Christ to be a faithful people.

People: **We are here to make our response to God.**

A hymn may be sung

SIT

Leader: Let us adore the God of love:

People: **You created us, O God;
you continually preserve and sustain us;
you love us with an everlasting love;
through the light of Christ
you have given us the knowledge of your glory.
We praise you; we acknowledge you to be the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks for the grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ;

People: **Though you were rich,
yet for our sake you became poor.
You were tempted at all points as we are
yet without sin.
You went about doing good
and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.
You were obedient to the point of death,
even death on the cross;
you were dead, yet are alive for ever;
you have opened the kingdom of heaven
to all who trust in you.
You sit at the right hand of God;
you will come again to be our judge;
you, O Christ, are the king of glory.**

Leader: Let us rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

People: You are the giver of life;
by you we are born into the family of God
and made members of the body of Christ.
Your witness confirms us;
your wisdom teaches us;
your power enables us.
You will do far more for us than we ask or think.
All praise to you, O Holy Spirit.

SILENCE

Leader: Let us make our confession to God: Merciful God, in Christ you have shown us the way of life. We confess with shame our slowness to learn, our failure to follow, our reluctance to bear the cross.

All: Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Leader: We confess that too often we have impoverished the life of the church by the half-heartedness of our worship, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, our hesitating witness for Christ, our evasion of responsibilities in your service, our imperfect stewardship of your gifts.

All: Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Leader: We confess that too little of your love has reached others through us. Often we have been hasty in our judgments, grudging in forgiveness, slow in reconciliation, unwilling to help our neighbour.

All: Have mercy on us and forgive us.

Leader: Let each of us in silence make our own confession to God.

SILENCE

Leader: Make us pure in heart, O God;

People: Breathe into us a new and faithful spirit.

Leader: If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Therefore I declare to you, we/you are forgiven.

All: Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer (*in any language*)

Ministry of the Word

First Reading: Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Second Reading: John 15: 1-8

Alternatively, the Lectionary readings for the day or other appropriate Scripture passages may be read.

Sermon

The prayers of intercession may follow here or after the communion.

The Covenant

Leader: In covenant God chose Israel to be a servant people.
Through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ,
God has declared the covenant to be with all who trust in Christ.
We stand within this covenant and we bear Christ's name.
On one hand, God promises to give us new life in Christ:
on the other, we pledge to live not for ourselves but for God.
Today we meet, as generations before us have met,
to renew the covenant which bound them
and which now binds us to God.

The traditional Covenant hymn (MHB 749) or an alternative on the same theme may be sung.

SIT

Leader: Let us claim this covenant for ourselves and take again the yoke of Christ upon us. To take this yoke upon us means that we are willing for Christ to appoint us our place and work, and for Christ alone to be our reward.

All: Christ has many services to be done:
some are easy, others are difficult;
some bring honour, others bring reproach;
some are suited 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.

STAND

Leader: Loving and holy God, with joy we take upon ourselves the yoke of obedience and for love of you commit ourselves to seek and do your perfect will. We are no longer our own, but yours.

Either

All: 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 whole-heartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.

Or

All: 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 fulfillment 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 forever.
Let this covenant now made on earth
be fulfilled in heaven.
Amen

The Methodist Worship Book(UK)

A hymn may be sung

The Ministry of the Sacrament follows. (see page 19 in the Order for Holy Communion)

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