

Covenant Service

3 January 2021

Led by Rev'd Dawn Saunders



This service will be a chance to pray through the covenant service prayers and promises. In this challenging time there may be opportunities for small gatherings to come together. This opportunity comes to you as an alternate option for those who cannot gather in person

Call to Worship & Candle lit

Praise my soul the king of Heaven

1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven,
to his feet your tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Praise Him, Praise Him!
Praise the everlasting King.

2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to our fathers in distress;
praise him, still the same for ever,
slow to chide and swift to bless;
Praise Him, Praise Him!
Glorious in his faithfulness.

3 Father-like, he tends and spares us.
Well our hopes and fears he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes:
Praise Him, Praise Him!
Widely as his mercy flows.

4 Angels, help us to adore him;
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space.
Praise Him, Praise Him!
Praise with us the God of grace.

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)

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Opening prayer

Let us pray

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.

Blessèd 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.

Blessèd be God for ever.

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.

Blessèd be God for ever.

To the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be praise and glory for ever. **Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

First Reading

A reading from the Law—

Exodus 24.3-11

For the wisdom that guides us

we praise you, O God.

Second Reading

A reading from the Prophets—

Jeremiah 31.31-34

For the word that inspires us

we praise you, O God.

Epistle

A reading from the Epistles—

Romans 12.1-2

For the truth that enlightens us

we praise you, O God.

Take my life and let it be

1 Take my life and let it be

Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

Take my moments and my days,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move

At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet and let them be

Swift and beautiful for Thee.

2 Take my voice and let me sing,

Always, only for my King.

Take my lips and let them be

Filled with messages from Thee.

3 Take my silver and my gold,

Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my intellect and use

Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

4 Take my will and make it Thine,

It shall be no longer mine.

Take my heart, it is Thine own,

It shall be Thy royal throne.

5 Take my love, my Lord, I pour

At Thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself and I will be

Ever, only, all for Thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

Gospel Reading

A reading from John 15.1-10

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Reflection and Sermon

Once upon a time there was a farmer who had two gardens. One was in the mountains and the other was in the plains. The farmer loved both gardens very much. But in particular he loved one tree in the mountain garden. This tree was a bamboo.

Bamboo was very tall and very beautiful. The farmer used to visit Bamboo every evening to admire and enjoy her beauty. When the farmer was visiting, Bamboo would always dance beautifully, which made the farmer even happier. The farmer loved Bamboo very much, much more than other trees.

It so happened that there was once a drought in the plains, and the lower garden started to dry. The drought was so severe that the plants started to die off. The farmer was desperate to find a way of watering this garden. There was plenty of water in the mountains, but he had no way of taking the water to the plains. Then the farmer remembered his friend Bamboo.

So the farmer went to Bamboo one evening and they started talking. "Bamboo," said the farmer, "I love you a great deal." Bamboo was very happy. Dancing, she responded, "I too love you so much, master." The master was pleased.

"So now, Bamboo," said the master, "I want to use you."

"I am ready, master," answered Bamboo.

"But there is one condition," the master went on. "In order to use you, I must cut you down."

Bamboo was grieved and very disturbed. "Master," said Bamboo, "you say you love me. Why then do you want to destroy me?"

"Bamboo," the master said, "I don't want to destroy you, I want to use you. But in order for you to be usable to me, I must cut you. If you are not ready to be cut, I cannot use you."

Bamboo was most unhappy, because she feared the pain. But because she loved the master and trusted him, she decided to let the master go on. So the master took a hatchet and cut down Bamboo. It was very painful.

The master said, "Good, but there is some more work to do on you; I have to chop off your branches."

Bamboo complained even more. "Master, you want to kill me now." The master remained silent; and seeing that he was serious, Bamboo decided to submit. The master took his hatchet again and cleaned off the branches until Bamboo was very clean. Then he said, "This is really good, Bamboo, but there is still one last thing. I have to pop out your inside."

Bamboo was terrified. The last two steps had been painful enough, but to pop out her inside -- that was unthinkable.

Bamboo struggled with this. But then the master said, "I cannot use you unless I pop out your inside." Seeing that the master was serious, Bamboo again submitted.

The master took an iron rod and popped out the inside until Bamboo was hollow. It was extremely painful. But Bamboo was now ready to be used.

The master used Bamboo as a pipe to connect his two gardens. Soon water started to flow from the mountain garden into the garden in the plains. The plants were revived. Seeing her usefulness, both Bamboo and the master were very happy. They ended up greater friends than before.

I know that certain theologies demand that God alone is the active one when it comes to salvation. Some people may think of us as passive recipients who have no part to play at all. But I think there is a different kind of emphasis here: the picture of the vine and the branch is one of partnership with God through connection to Christ. Because we have to choose to live in Christ, chose to allow Christ to live in us.

In our covenant promises, we will promise to accept God's purpose for us, whatever that may bring, some easy some harder. We may have to accept that this might require us to be lifted out of our comfort zone out of a place where we may think we are doing his will to the place where he truly wants us to be.

Immanuel

Immanuel, O Immanuel
Bowed in awe I worship at your feet
And sing Immanuel
God is with us
Sharing my humanness, my shame
Feeling my weaknesses, my pain
Taking the punishment, the blame
Immanuel
And now my words cannot explain
All that my heart cannot contain
How great are the glories of your name
Immanuel

*Graham Kendrick (born 1950) Arr L Burdett
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THE COVENANT

Confession

Let us pray.

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.
For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ,
reluctant to follow him, and afraid to bear the cross:
Lord, have mercy,
Lord, forgive.

For the sin that has caused 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 our 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.

Take a moment of quiet

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 within 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'.

Amen. Thanks be to God.



Come let us use the grace divine

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

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

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

4 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.

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

The Covenant continued

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 and serve God in all our life and work.

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.
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.**

A moment of quiet

Prayers of Intercessions

Let us pray....

Loving God, we pray for those whose faith is being tested,
for those who have lost their way and or those who do not have the words to pray to you, for help.

We ask that you be with them as they reach out to you and that their fear is replaced by your comfort and peace and that the faith they do have is deepened and strengthened.

We pray for those who are responsible for our world's economy and in Leadership positions, who are deciding



the fates of others and whom have to make difficult ethical decisions. We ask that you be with them and give them wisdom and courage to do what is right for all people.

We pray that the world we live in becomes a better place filled with people whom look after one another, care for one another and reach out to others in their time of need. We ask that your love and grace surround all people and the world so it may become a place of understanding, where people respect and honour each other and see what can connect us together not divide us and rip us apart.

Almighty God, we pray for victims of illness, disasters, abuse and those who are facing great trials in their lives all over our world. We pray especially for those who are affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, separated from loved ones, experiencing loss of income and jobs, fighting for their lives in hospitals or alone in their homes, people who are isolated and afraid who feel vulnerable and those who have lost people during this most devastating time. For those places in our world facing surging Covid cases including Jersey and places in our world where they cannot even afford a vaccine, especially Zimbabwe, Mexico and Pakistan.

We pray for those still living in divided places where hate is overshadowing freedom and people are angry and hope has been diminished. For those who are abusing our systems and lining their

pockets and living off the backs of others. For the people of Mozambique as they face an economic crisis and violence due to extreme poverty and Islamist attacks. For Venezuela as it faces extreme hardship due to rising fuel prices and political unrest. For places besieged with war and a great humanitarian crisis' in places like Beirut, Yemen, Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Syria, the Congo, Columbia, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and so many other unnamed places.

For those on our hearts today who need your lifegiving grace as they face great difficulties in their lives, we lift them silently up to you now..... Help us to bring comfort and strength and may we have faith that you hear our prayers as we petition on behalf of others. Lord in your mercy.....

Hear our Prayer

With love in our hearts for you Gracious God, may this world reflect more of your image through what we do, in our actions and words and by the way we honour our covenant with you. And finally, may we all know the gentle authority of Jesus in all parts of our lives, leading us, guiding us, encouraging and directing us, now and always. We ask all of this in your Holy name. **AMEN.**

And now let us say the prayer that Jesus taught us to say:
Our Father

Great is thy faithfulness

1 Great is Thy faithfulness,
O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not,
Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.

*Great is Thy faithfulness,
Great is Thy faithfulness
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed
Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*

2 Summer and winter,
and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature
in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Refrain

3 Pardon for sin and a
peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and
bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain

Blessing

Wishing you a peaceful, happy and
healthy New Year!
And the blessing of God,
Father, Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, be with those you love
And those you struggle to love
This day and for ever more.

Amen.

