

**Shropshire and Marches Methodist Circuit
Covenant Service 2021**

Call to worship

Hymn: STF 548 "Blessed Assurance"

1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

2 Perfect communion, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. *[Refrain]*

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest.
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love. *[Refrain]*

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Prayer of Adoration

Glory to the God of Love,
you created us;
you continually preserve and sustain us;
you love us with an everlasting love
you give us the light of the knowledge of your glory
in the face of Jesus Christ.

Blessèd be God for ever

Blessèd be God for ever

Glory to you, Lord Jesus,
You were rich, but became poor for our sake,
you were tempted as we are, yet without sin,
you preached the good news of the kingdom
and were obedient to death, even death on a cross.
You were raised from death and are alive forever.
You sit at God's right hand in glory
and will come again to judge us.

Blessèd be God for ever

Blessèd be God for ever

Glory to you, Holy Spirit,
the Lord, 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 for us more than we can ask or think.

Blessèd be God for ever

Blessèd be God for ever

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

Amen.

The Collect

God of grace,
through the mediation of your Son,
you call us into a new Covenant.
Help us to draw near with faith
and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Readings – Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34 & John 15: 1 – 10

Reflection

THE COVENANT

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 today, as generations before us have done, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

Let us, then, humbly seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim on us.

Prayer of Confession

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

You showed us how to live in the life of Jesus. We confess that we have been slow to learn from him, failed to follow him and showed our reluctance to carry the cross.

Lord have mercy.

Lord forgive.

We confess the poverty of our worship, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, our evasion of responsibilities in your service and our imperfect stewardship of your gifts.

Lord have mercy.

Lord forgive.

Have mercy upon us, O God, through your constant love.

In the fulness of your mercy, blot out our offences.

Wash away all our guilt and cleanse us from our sin.

Create in us a new heart and renew a right spirit within us.

Amen

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**

Hymn: StF 549 "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 Jesu's 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 the covenant blood apply,
Which takes our sins away;
And register our names on high,
And keep us to that day!

The Promise

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.
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.**

Prayers of Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father.....

LOVE FEAST

Jesus said to Nicodemus "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" and "those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Our God is a God of second chances. Early in this New Year, we have committed ourselves to a fresh start as we have said the words of the Covenant Prayer. Though we have made the promises as individuals, perhaps isolated in our own homes, we are aware that we have made them also as part of a community, the family of the church.

As we seek to fulfil our calling, through worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism and enter into the Methodist Way of Life, may our lives be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Jesus promises us life in all its fulness, supported by the Holy Spirit who comes as our Helper and Guide, and shared in the fellowship of the Church, his Body on earth. Jesus is not only the True Light, but also the Bread of Heaven and the Water of Life, on whom we depend.

So now we reach our hands to take and eat what is before us, the symbol of our fellowship with Christ and one another. We drink from the cup to refresh our spirits in God. We rejoice to be God's people, confident that, whatever lies before us in the coming year, God is with us.

(We eat and drink together)

And now we pray together:

Holy God, we praise you for all that you are.

We thank you for the love we witness through the ebb and flow of cosmic rhythms.

We thank you for the grace that you show to us as individuals.

Give to us courage to enact a way of life to which you have called us.

Give us boldness to be holy people, called to serve the world.

May we be kingdom people who always dare to live and speak out, motivated by our faith in God. Amen.

(Prayer by the Rev'd Carla Quenet taken from A Brief Guide to a Methodist Way of Life)

Hymn: StF 550 “Forth in thy name O Lord I go”

1 Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labour to pursue;
thee, only thee, resolved to know,
in all I think or speak or do.

2 The task thy wisdom hath assigned
O let me cheerfully fulfil;
in all my works thy presence find,
and prove thy good and perfect will.

3 Thee may I set at my right hand,
whose eyes my inmost substance see,
and labour on at thy command,
and offer all my works to thee.

4 Give me to bear thy easy yoke,
and every moment watch and pray,
and still to things eternal look,
and hasten to thy glorious day;

5 For thee delightfully employ
whate'er thy bounteous grace hath given,
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with thee to heaven.

Blessing