The Covenant Service

# from the Methodist Worship Book

© 1999 Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes First published in 1999

This edition published in 2022

*The Methodist Worship Book* is available in the following editions:

Standard full text, English, ISBN 978 1 85852 116 9 Presentation editions, full text

Bound in blue, ISBN 978 1 85852 119 0

Bound in red, ISBN 978 1 85852 120 6

Bound in green, ISBN 978 1 85852 121 3

Bilingual (Welsh/English) edition, ISBN 978 1 85852 117 6

Large print, English, ISBN 978 1 85852 118 3

The contents of this book have been authorized by the Methodist Conference for use in the Methodist Church. They may not be reproduced either in whole or in part, whether for sale or otherwise, by any method without the consent of the Methodist Church (publishing@ methodistchurch.org.uk).

A uniform pagination is used throughout all editions of *The Methodist Worship Book*.

# Acknowledgements

Every effort has been made to ensure that the following list of acknowledgements is as comprehensive as possible, but the experience of those involved in the preparation of **The Methodist Worship Book** is similar to that of the compilers of the **Book of Common Order** of the Church of Scotland, who state:

Many sources have contributed to the compilation of this book, and not all of them are now traceable. Individual members of the Committee prepared drafts, which were revised more or less drastically by the Committee, often resulting in final versions which looked little like the original drafts. Among the casualties of this sometimes protracted process was the identity of many of the sources; they could not be recalled, nor did there seem to be any way to track them down. The Panel wishes to record at once both its indebtedness to any who may recognise in this book rhythms and patterns, expressions and phrases, ideas and images which are their own, and its regret that it became impossible to ask permission or seek consent for their inclusion...

If, through inadvertence, copyright material has been used without permission or acknowledgement, the publisher will be grateful to be informed and will be pleased to make the necessary correction in subsequent editions.

Except where indicated below, all psalms, scripture readings and scripture sentences are taken from **The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (Anglicized Edition)**, © 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some scripture sentences are from **The Revised Standard Version**,

© 1946 and 1952 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

The texts of *Glory to God in the highest*, the Nicene Creed, the Apostles’ Creed, *Sursum Corda*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus Qui Venit*, *Agnus Dei*, *Gloria Patri*, *Te Deum Laudamus*, *Benedictus*, *Magnificat*, *Nunc Dimittis* and the left hand column version of the Lord’s Prayer are from **Praying Together**,

© 1988 by the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC).

The text\* of Psalm 51 on page 286 appears in A New Zealand Prayer Book - He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, © 1989 The Provincial Secretary, the Church of the Province of New Zealand.

# THE COVENANT SERVICE

## INTRODUCTION

From the earliest days of the Methodist societies, John Wesley invited the Methodist people to renew their covenant relationship with God. Wesley drew much of his material for the service from seventeenth-century Puritans and subsequently made changes to it. The Wesleyan Conference revised it twice during the nineteenth century and other branches of Methodism had versions of it.

**The Book of Offices** (1936) included a form of ***The Covenant Service*** which quickly achieved great popularity. **The Methodist Service Book** (1975) version strengthened the link between the renewal of the covenant and the Holy Communion, but at the cost of losing some familiar and much loved passages. In the present service, some of these have been recast and restored, not least in the penitential section.

The present ***Covenant Service*** moves from praise of the Trinity to listening to the word in scripture, read and preached, and then follows a penitential approach to the words of the Covenant. Changes in the use and understanding of language have led to the provision of two forms of this part of the service. The first form is offered as a contemporary version of the Covenant Prayer; the second form is the more traditional text. In this form, the words, ‘Put me to doing, put me to suffering’, have raised difficulties for some people. These words do not mean that we ask God to make us suffer, but rather that we desire, by God’s help, actively to do or patiently to accept whatever is God’s will for us.

The emphasis of the whole service is on God’s readiness to enfold us in generous love, not dependent on our deserving. Our response, also in love, springs with penitent joy from thankful recognition of God’s grace. The covenant is not just a one-to-one transaction between individuals and God, but the act of the whole faith community. The prayers of intercession which follow emphasize our unity with all humanity. The service proceeds to the Lord’s Supper, for which a special form has been provided to emphasize the continuity between word, response and sacrament. The service is meant to lead us, by a path both similar to and differing from that of normal Sunday worship, to that commitment which all worship seeks both to inspire and to strengthen.

## NOTES

1. ***The Covenant Service*** should normally be held only once in each year.
2. At whatever time of day this service is held, it should be regarded as the principal service and used in full.

————————–––––

### THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

1 Hymn

2 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.**

3 Silence

4 Collect

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.**

### THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

5 A reading from the Law.

Exodus 24:3-11 or Deuteronomy 29:10-15 is read.

For the wisdom that guides us

**we praise you, O God.**

6 A reading from the Prophets.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 is read.

For the word that inspires us

**we praise you, O God.**

7A reading from the Epistles.

Romans 12:1-2 is read.

For the truth that enlightens us

**we praise you, O God.**

8 Hymn

9A reading from the Gospel according to…

Hear the Gospel of Christ.

**Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

The Gospel, John 15:1-10 or Mark 14:22-25, is read.

This is the Gospel of Christ.

**Praise to Christ our Lord.**

10 Sermon

11 Hymn

### THE COVENANT

12God 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 upon us.

13Let 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.**

Silence

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.

The presiding minister says:

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.

14 Hymn

**Come, let us use the grace divine,**

**And all, with one accord,**

**In a perpetual cov’nant join**

**Ourselves to Christ the Lord:**

**Give up ourselves, through Jesu’s power,**

**His name to glorify;**

**And promise, in this sacred hour,**

**For God to live and die.**

**The cov’nant we this moment make**

**Be ever kept in mind:**

**We will no more our God forsake,**

**Or cast his words behind.**

**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.**

**To each the cov’nant blood apply,**

**Which takes our sins away;**

**And register our names on high,**

**And keep us to that day.**

15 The people remain standing and the presiding minister says:

EITHER

**A**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 blessèd 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.

OR

**B** Beloved in Christ,

let us again claim for ourselves

this covenant which God has made with his people,

and take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content

that he appoint us our place and work,

and that he himself be our reward.

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.

Lord God, holy Father,

since you have called us through Christ

to share in this gracious covenant,

we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience

and, for love of you,

engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.

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 blessèd 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.**

16 Silence, all seated

17As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God’s servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:

**make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Inspire 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 from 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…

Silence

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. **Amen.**

### THE LORD’S SUPPER

18 The Peace

All stand.

The Lord has made an everlasting covenant of peace with his people.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also with you.**

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

19 Hymn

20 The offerings of the people are presented. Bread and wine are brought to the table (or if already on the table are uncovered). The presiding minister takes the bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

21 All stand.

The presiding minister leads the great prayer of thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

God our Father, fountain of goodness,

creator of all that is,

you have made us in your own image.

You have given us life and reason,

and love for one another,

setting in our hearts a hunger for you.

In darkness you are our light,

in adversity and temptation our strength.

You bear patiently with our folly and sin,

granting us your law to guide us

and your prophets to renew our faith.

In the fullness of time

you came to us in love and mercy

in Jesus Christ, your living Word,

full of grace and truth.

He lived among us,

declaring your forgiveness

and revealing your wisdom

in works of mercy and in his word of power.

For us he suffered and died upon the cross,

by death destroying death.

You raised him from the dead

and exalted him to your right hand on high.

Through him you sent your Holy Spirit

to be the life and light of your people,

gathered together in every time and place

to glorify your holy name.

With them and all the company of heaven

we join in the unending hymn of praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,

God of power and might,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy God, pour out your Spirit

that these gifts of bread and wine

may be for us the body and blood

of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

who, on the night in which he was betrayed,

took bread, gave thanks, broke it,

and gave it to his disciples, saying,

‘Take this and eat it.

This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way, after supper,

he took the cup, gave thanks,

and gave it to them, saying,

‘Drink from it, all of you.

This is my blood of the new covenant,

poured out for you and for many,

for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, whenever you drink it,

in remembrance of me.’

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

And so, Lord, we obey his command

with this bread and this cup,

by which we recall his death and resurrection,

the source of our life and salvation.

Grant that we, who share in this holy sacrament,

may be united by your Spirit

and grow into perfect love.

Bring us,

with those who have done your will in every age,

into the light of your presence

and the joy of your kingdom.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ,

in the power of the Holy Spirit,

we worship you in songs of everlasting praise.

Blessing and honour and glory and power

be yours for ever and ever. Amen.

22 The Lord’s Prayer

EITHER OR

We say together the prayer As our Saviour taught his

that Jesus gave us: disciples, we pray:

**Our Father in heaven, Our Father, who art in**

**hallowed be your Name, heaven,**

**your kingdom come, hallowed be thy Name;**

**your will be done, thy kingdom come;**

**on earth as in heaven. thy will be done;**

**Give us today our daily on earth as it is in heaven.**

**bread. Give us this day our**

**Forgive us our sins daily bread.**

**as we forgive those who And forgive us our**

**sin against us. trespasses,**

**Save us from the time of as we forgive those who**

**trial trespass against us.**

**and deliver us from evil. And lead us not into**

**For the kingdom, the temptation;**

**power and the glory but deliver us from evil.**

**are yours, For thine is the kingdom,**

**now and for ever. Amen. the power, and the glory,**

**for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

23 The presiding minister breaks the bread in the sight of the people in silence, or saying:

The things of God for God’s holy people.

Jesus Christ is holy;

Jesus Christ is Lord.

Glory to God the Father.

24 Silence, all seated or kneeling

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

25 The presiding minister, those assisting with the distribution, and the people receive, according to local custom.

The presiding minister may invite the congregation to receive communion with these or similar words:

Jesus said: ‘I am the bread of life.

Those who come to me shall not hunger

and those who believe in me shall never thirst.’

Draw near with faith.

26 Words such as the following are said during the distribution:

The body of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

27 During the distribution there may be appropriate music.

28 The elements that remain are covered with a white cloth.

**PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL**

29 Silence

30 Let us pray.

Faithful God,

with these holy gifts

you have fed and strengthened us

in Jesus Christ your Son.

Guide us on our way,

that with all your faithful people

we may come to share the feast

of your eternal kingdom;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

31 Hymn

32 The presiding minister says:

The blessing of God,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be upon *you/us* and remain with *you/us* for ever. **Amen.**

33 The presiding minister says:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**