

Dear Friends

## **WISHING YOU ALL A BLESSED 2021**

For this January newsletter I thought it would be a good idea to share with you a little of the history of the Methodist Annual Covenant Service. This year the Covenant Service may take place a little later in many Churches due to the pandemic. The Covenant Service is an act of worship that celebrates the faithfulness of God and God's eternal and abiding love. It is also a Service in which we rededicate ourselves to following Christ, loving God and loving our neighbour.

### ***THE HISTORY OF THE COVENANT SERVICE;***

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

### ***AN EXPLANATION FROM THE 1999 PUBLICATION OF THE METHODIST WORSHIP BOOK - Pg.281***

"The Present Covenant Service moves from praise of the Trinity to listening to the word of God in Scripture and in Sermon. The response is penitential followed by a renewed act of corporate commitment. The Emphasis of the whole service is on Gods readiness to enfold us in generous love not dependent on our deserving"

### ***GODS GENEROUS LOVE AND EVER FAITHFUL COMMITMENT TO ALL CREATION***

This generous love offered out to all is known as Prevenient Grace. The Baptism Service in the Methodist Worship Book (pg.92) helps us in our understanding of the nature of Prevenient Grace. Just prior to Baptism this prayer is offered.

(ALL THIS FOR YOU)

For you Jesus Christ came into the world;  
For you he lived and showed God's love;  
For you he suffered death on the cross;  
For you he triumphed over death,  
Rising to newness of life;  
For you he prays at Gods right hand;  
All this for you,  
Before you could know anything of it.  
In your Baptism,  
The word of scripture is fulfilled;  
We love, because God first loved us!

We are all so dependent upon this amazing Grace. The Prayers offered in the Covenant Service of Intercession are prayers that emphasize our unity with all humanity. The Service proceeds to the Lord's Supper in which we remember Christ's dying love for all.

All our welcome to join the Covenant Service and indeed many other branches of Christianity have adopted their own format. The first ever Covenant God entered into was with our Jewish brothers and Sisters and this Covenant remains.

At New Year it is always a great challenge to meditate on the corporate words of commitment shared by the congregation, as below;

***CORPORATE PRAYER OF COMMITMENT AND REDEDICATION;  
METHODIST COVENANT SERVICE.***

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.

I am praying that it will not be too long before we can come together for our Annual Methodist Covenant Service.

Love and God Bless you all

Rev'd Diane

***Stay Safe***