

COVENANT RENEWAL SUNDAY

February 2, 2025

Prairieland Parish

As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.

May we together experience the presence of God

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We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord

COVENANT RENEWAL SERVICE

In 1663 Richard Alleine, a Puritan, published Vindiciae Pietatis: or, "A Vindication of Godliness in the Greater Strictness and Spirituality of It". In 1753, it was again published in John Wesley's A Christian Library. Wesley used one chapter, "The Application of the Whole," on Monday, August 11, 1755, in what probably was the first real celebration of the Covenant Service in the Methodist movement.

Wesley found the service rich and meaningful, as expressed in his Journal: "Many mourned before God, and many were comforted" (April 1756); "It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing" (October 1765). "It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences ... I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backslidings" (January 1, 1775). In London these services were usually held on New Year's Day. Around the country the Covenant Service was conducted whenever John Wesley visited the Methodist Societies.

After the time of Wesley several versions of the Covenant Service were developed, gradually giving Wesley's material less place in the total service. The present service follows our Basic Pattern of worship, enables the congregation to participate more fully, and updates language. Most significant, the liturgy beginning with the Invitation is taken directly from Wesley's service of 1780.

The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God. This covenant is serious and assumes adequate preparation for and continual response to the covenant.

ENTRANCE

GATHERING

GREETING

*HYMN

LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks for all of God's mercies.

O God, our Covenant Friend,

you have been gracious to us through all the years of our lives.

We thank you for your loving care,

which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have given us life and reason,

and set us in a world filled with your glory.

You have comforted us with family and friends,

and ministered to us through the hands of our sisters and brothers.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have filled our hearts with a hunger after you,

and have given us your peace.

You have redeemed us, and called us to a high calling in Christ Jesus.

You have given us a place in the fellowship of your Spirit

and the witness of your Church.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have been our light in darkness
and a rock of strength in adversity and temptation.
You have been the very Spirit of joy in our joys
and the all-sufficient reward in all our labors.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You remembered us when we forgot you.
You followed us even when we tried to flee from you.
You met us with forgiveness when we returned to you.
For all your patience and overflowing grace.

We praise your holy name, O God.

PROCLAMATION

SCRIPTURE LESSON (S)

Deuteronomy 31:9-13 **New Revised Standard Version** **The Law to Be Read Every Seventh Year**

9 Then Moses wrote down this law, and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 Moses commanded them: "Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths,[a] 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people—men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns—so that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law, 13 and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

2 Kings 23:1-3 **New Revised Standard Version** **Josiah's Reformation**

23 Then the king directed that all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem should be gathered to him. 2 The king went up to the house of the Lord, and with him went all the people of Judah, all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, both small and great; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. 3 The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to follow the Lord, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. All the people joined in the covenant.

Brothers and sisters in Christ,
the Christian life is redeemed from sin and consecrated to God.
Through baptism, we have entered this life
and have been admitted into the new covenant
of which Jesus Christ is the Mediator.
He sealed it with his own blood, that it might last for ever.
On the one side, God promises to give us new life in Christ,
the Source and Perfecter of our faith.
On the other side, we are pledged
to live no more for ourselves but only for Jesus Christ,
who loved us and gave himself for us.

From time to time we renew our covenant with God,
especially when we reaffirm the Baptismal Covenant
and gather at the Lord's table.

Today, however, we meet, as the generations before us have met,
to renew the covenant that binds us to God.
Let us make this covenant of God our own.

INVITATION

Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants.
Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him.
Christ has many services to be done.
Some are more easy and honorable,
others are more difficult and disgraceful.
Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests,
others are contrary to both.
In some we may please Christ and please ourselves.
But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ
except by denying ourselves.
It is necessary, therefore,
that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ.
Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

Let me be your servant, under your command.

I will no longer be my own.

I will give up myself to your will in all things.

Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.

Lord, make me what you will.

I put myself fully into your hands:

put me to doing, put me to suffering,

let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,

let me be full, let me be empty,

let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and with a willing heart

give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants.
He is the source of all salvation to those who obey.
Christ will have no servants except by consent;
Christ will not accept anything except full consent
to all that he requires.

Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.
Confirm this by a holy covenant.

To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once,
to be spent alone before the Lord;

in seeking earnestly God's special assistance
and gracious acceptance of you;

in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant;

in searching your hearts

whether you have already freely given your life to Christ.

Consider what your sins are.

Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are,
and whether you, after having carefully considered them,
are willing to choose them all.

Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant,

rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength,
so you can keep your promise.

Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful.

You have given to the Lord your hearts,
you have opened your mouths to the Lord,
and you have dedicated yourself to God.

With God's power, never go back.

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord.

Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven,
open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

COVENANT PRAYER

**O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
see me as I fall down before you.**

**Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done your will,
for you have promised mercy to me
if I turn to you with my whole heart.**

God requires that you shall put away all your idols.

**I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all,
covenanting with you that no known sin shall be allowed in my life.**

Against your will, I have turned my love toward the world.

In your power

I will watch all temptations that will lead me away from you.

**For my own righteousness is riddled with sin,
unable to stand before you.**

Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again if you would let him.

Before all heaven and earth,

I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God.

I take you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion,

and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as your servant,

to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

God has given the Lord Jesus Christ

as the only way and means of coming to God.

Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ

as the only new and living Way,

and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him.

O blessed Jesus, I come to you,

hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked,

unworthy even to wash the feet of your servants.

I do here, with all my power, accept you as my Lord and Head.

I renounce my own worthiness,

and vow that you are the Lord, my righteousness.

I renounce my own wisdom, and take you for my only guide.

I renounce my own will, and take your will as my law.

Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

I do here covenant with you, O Christ,

to take my lot with you as it may fall.

Through your grace I promise

that neither life nor death shall part me from you.

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

I do here willingly put my neck under your yoke, to carry your burden.

All your laws are holy, just, and good.

I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions,
promising that I will strive

to order my whole life according to your direction,

and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

O God, you know that I make this covenant with you today

without guile or reservation.

If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright.

And now, glory be to you, O God the Father,

whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father.

Glory be to you, O God the Son,

who have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own blood,

and now is my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit,

who by your almighty power have turned my heart from sin to God.

O mighty God, the Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

you have now become my Covenant Friend.

And I, through your infinite grace, have become your covenant servant.

So be it.

And let the covenant I have made on earth be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

You are advised to make this covenant not only in your heart, but in word; Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed. Then keep it in your heart as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubts and temptations. For it is written in the Gospel of Matthew...

Matthew 25:31-46
New Revised Standard Version
The Judgment of the Nations

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' 40 And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family,[a] you did it to me.' 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' 44 Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' 45 Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

HYMN UMH

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.

When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets, who looked for that day when justice shall roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people.

He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your Church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.

At his ascension you exalted him to sit and reign with you at your right hand.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:

"Drink from this, 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, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever.

Answer us, O merciful God, for our prayers are joined with the One who stands before you in heaven, Jesus Christ our Lord – Our Father ...

Offertory/Doxology/Prayer

Loving God, we have been blessed with so much through your goodness. As we bring our gifts in gratitude this morning, you remind us that it doesn't matter what we have in our lives, if we do not have love, we have nothing. This love is not the love of Valentine's Day cards, and not even the love we feel among families, which are both rich blessings. You long for us to experience agape love – the love of the world, the love for those we don't even know. Open our eyes and our hearts. In Christ, our teacher, we pray. Amen. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

***Departing Hymn**

Let us depart today with the words written in the Gospel of...

John 15:1-8
New Revised Standard Version
Jesus the True Vine

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. 2 He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes[a] to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed[b] by the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. 6 Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become[c] my disciples.