

COVENANT

7/2/21

Caves Beach

CALL TO WORSHIP

God cares beyond our imagining;

God has staying power that never fades;

God gives power to the weak and strengthens the powerless.

Nothing is beyond those who trust God.

Weakness and exhaustion are facts of life;

the young and fit eventually tire.

But those who trust in God will renew their strength.

Like an eagle rising in the sky, like a marathon runner at peak performance, nothing will stand in their way. Tiredness and weakness are not an option!

Opening Prayer God: images for praise violence terror greed

Our times are shadowed by terror, violence, and greed.

Dawning Light, we praise you!

Our church is shadowed by uncertainty, fear, and apathy.

Dawning Light, we praise you!

Our lives are threatened by insecurity, selfishness, and change.

Dawning Light, we praise you!

Living God, Dawning Light, for our time, our church, and ourselves,

for the gift of Jesus, reflecting your light, we praise you. Amen.

HYMN 59 All people that on earth do dwell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-1dQ8t03mE>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

O God,

all your children are written on your hands:

you are a mother who neither forgets nor forsakes her own.

All creation is held within your very self.

Before we were born, you knew us.

In our mothers' wombs, you formed us.

All creation is held within your very self.

Before all beginnings, you called us by name.

Beyond all endings, you will remember us in your heart.

All creation is held within your very self.

You, O Wisdom, do not forget your children;

like a hen, you gather your chicks.

All creation is held within your very self.

Amen.

In penitence and faith,

let us confess our sins to almighty God.

After a time of silence.

Let us pray:

Merciful God,

our maker and our judge,

we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed:

we have not loved you with our whole heart,
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;
we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us.

Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

BREAK

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:

'Your sins are forgiven'.

Thanks be to God.

READINGS

· Jeremiah 31:31-34,

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

· JOHN 15:1-11

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed 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 my disciples.⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

HYMN 658 I the Lord of sea and sky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zr9SMm1gII>

SERMON

Well here we are at the business end of the New Year.. Schools are back. Most people are back from holidays and working, even if not all of them are in their offices in the cities. COVID certainly has changed some things. The dance school has stated again, so we are having to restack the chairs each week. Even the Bible Study has stated again.

Last year we started to set some targets for the year ahead. BOY, were we ever blindsided by lockdowns, restrictions and the whole Pandemic experience. This year we are much further ahead in some ways than we would have dreamed otherwise. We have fixed up the building and brought in some modern comforts and technology. The Pandemic has ended up meaning a massive disruption when reaching out physically to people.

In 2 Samuel the people of a reunited Israel make a covenant with King David in order to ensure that they remained united for the good times ahead. This is after a long time of wars and separation. This covenant picked up on the covenant that had been made between Yahweh and the former slaves escaping from Egypt. These covenants had been allowed to lapse with the consequence loss of connection and strength within the community and with God.

The idea of making an ongoing commitment to bring our gifts and our talents to the Lord in a personal and a community sense seemed to gain some modern traction among the persecuted English Puritans. It was also probably witnessed by John Wesley when he visited the Moravians in Europe. Scottish Presbyterians made similar commitments annually to re-affirm and deepen their faith. In 1755 John Wesley adapted a service from Congregationalist theologians Joseph and Richard Alleine. It is from that service that we base the covenant wording that we will use today.

A covenant is about what we can expect from ourselves and our response to God's actions in reaching out to us. A covenant is in some ways between a stronger person and a weaker participant. In our case we are making this commitment with our loving God.

In our monthly communion service we reflect on Jesus' words about the covenant made with Christ when his blood was shed for us.

While the experience of today's service might be comparatively new to some of us, for others who have regularly taken part in it in the past, there is a renewal and challenge to kick start the year.

With the year 2020 being so out of the ordinary for all of us, it is now time to stop drifting into the coming year and sort through the options before us. It is time to develop a new focus taking into account the changing times we live in.

- What is now the important focus for our lives?
- What can I do to allow God to shape my year ahead, rather than just drifting from day to day with no purpose?
- What challenges have I not yet recognised?
- Am I really prepared to fully commit my life to God for the year ahead?

While we can't expect a full answer to all of these questions today we can at least give ourselves a jolt to get started. Given everything that has happened now is the time to commence the new way for 2021.

Let us understand that this year will be different even from last year.

What we have before us is an exciting journey to discover the 'new normal' and be part of a community which brings peace and love to the fore. We need to keep our hearts and minds open to build on the opportunities which God presents to us. The old way of doing things might not fit exactly with the world we live in now but we can adapt and modify our efforts to meet the new opportunities.

In having the confidence to do these things we recall what Paul tells us in detail in this passage from Hebrews.

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to

Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

We are enlightened by the covenants which have been made down through the ages. At the same time we are like the vine that John refers to.

If you have ever had a grape vine growing in your yard you will know that it springs out fresh shoots every year. Shoots come from unexpected places and the fruit is delicious when the vine has been properly treated.

Have you ever spent some time looking at a grape vine? If you looked closely at the branches you can see that none of them are exactly the same. They branch out at different points and twist for differing reasons. This is just like each of us being individual and unique in our own way. Together we make the vine, not individually.

The bunches of grapes seem to be very haphazard. There is no exact pattern. This is why I think that this is such a wonderful passage for us to reflect of today.

All of us are different, different shapes, different ages, different life experiences, different gifts, different abilities and different views on our faith. This is the beauty of being part of God's family. While we are all different, we all form part of the vine. Through the vine runs the life blood which sustains and nourishes the plant.

While I have spoken generally about things in terms of us as a community I must point out that this covenant applies just as strongly to each of us individually. We each have gifts to offer. Some of our gifts might have changed over the years. Certainly many of us cannot do everything that we would like. However, this just means that we can adapt to better use those gifts we now have. This is equally an individual covenant between God and each of us.

Through our lives the Holy Spirit, a gift from Christ on his ascension, runs deeply to guide us.

Today we are acknowledging that life blood and keeping ourselves connected to the vine.

HYMN 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlNoxoOocZs>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

O God, in Christ Jesus, take these our gifts

and guide us in offering them to others

without cost.

Every time, when we use them, may we remember your kindness.

This we pray in your name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE (Lu Piper)

Almighty God, you sent your only Son as the Word of life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Help us to believe with joy what the Scriptures proclaim. May our minds be filled with knowing that you are the one who gives purpose to our lives as we focus today on Covenant Sunday. As we thank you for our past, we place our trust in you for the present and for the future ahead of us. We thank you that you are the One who does not change through all the passage of time, and that you journey with us always.

We look beyond ourselves to the wider world, aware that so many countries are not so fortunate as ours. We pray for those suffering war and unrest, praying at present for a resolution in troubled Myanmar; we pray for those suffering greatly from the Coronavirus, praying for the quick and safe administration of vaccines where they are most needed; and we pray for world leaders of international organisations that they might ensure justice and fairness as resources are shared across the globe.

We give thanks for the freedom we have here in our own country to live out our Christian faith - that we are free to share the Good News in word and action. We pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives that we will be enabled to witness for Christ this coming week in our relationships amongst family and friends, and beyond to the wider community.

We pray for those amongst us who have asked our prayers as they manage issues relating to sorrow, need, sickness or any other trouble. Especially we pray for (see February bulletin). We give thanks for doctors and nurses who are there for us in time of need, for ambulance drivers and paramedics. We thank you for all who enable us to manage day by day with support services from government and church agencies. Lord, we pray that you would give to all family members and friends who are carers for aged and frail people, the gifts of wisdom, patience and gentleness and, to us all, your peace.

This morning as we are to be nourished with the remembrance of our Lord's death by the shared bread and wine, we thank you, Holy God, that we are assured of your goodness and love. We praise you, we honour you, and we ask that you accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN All to Jesus I surrender

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SW8EA7DEQ2M>

COVENANT

The minister says:

In the Old Covenant,

God chose Israel as his people

and gave them the gift of the Law.

In the New Covenant,

He made the gift of his Son Jesus Christ,

who fulfils the Law for us.

We stand within the New Covenant

and we bear the name of Christ.

God promises us new life in him.

We receive this promise

and pledge to live not for ourselves but for God.

This covenant is renewed each time we meet

at the table of the Lord.

Today we meet, as generations before us have met,

to renew that which bound them and now binds us to God.

Beloved in Christ,

let us again claim this covenant for ourselves,

and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

To take this yoke upon us 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 us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant with God our own, trusting in the eternal promises

and relying on divine grace.

GROUPS

Church Council & Elders

Do you, as members of the Church Council, undertake to give your best efforts to this role?

We will, God being our helper.

People who assist with worship, music, Bible Reader, prayers, offering, door welcomers, morning tea, etc

Do you as, who all contribute to our worship, undertake to give your best efforts in this role?

We will, God being our helper.

Bible study members

do you, who join in the weekly Bible Study, undertake to give your best efforts in this role?

We will, God being our helper.

Prayer Group

Do you, as faithful members of the Prayer Group , undertake to give your best efforts in this role?

We will, God being our Helper.

People whose ministry is beyond the church; Village committees, tennis groups, wherever you volunteer in the community.

Do you, as people who contribute willingly to the wider community, undertake to give your faithful efforts in this role?

We will, God being our helper.

Minister

I will continue to live out my ordination vows to provide servant leadership to this community and those around us to whom we can offer God's message of love and grace.

Let us pray:

Lord God,

in baptism, you brought us into union with Christ

who fulfils your gracious covenant;

and in bread and wine

we receive the fruit of his obedience.

So with joy

we take upon ourselves the yoke of obedience,

and commit ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.

Silence is kept for a time.

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,
to the glory and praise of your name.**

Amen.

THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

According to Luke when our Risen Lord was at
table with His disciples, He took the bread,
blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And
their eyes were opened and they recognised

Him. From that day onwards they gave witness to the Risen Lord through Word and
Sacrament. Today we do the same.

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!

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,
for you strengthen the powerless
and renew those who wait for you in trust.

You are the Creator of the earth
who stretched out the sky like a curtain

and sent down rain, clothing the mountains in green.

You gathered your people from exile,

healing the broken hearted and binding their wounds.

You came among us, as one of us,

in your child Jesus the Christ,

sharing our weakness in order to save us.

Healing the sick and casting out demonic powers,

he proclaimed your mercy and peace.

Turning his back on the acclaim of the crowds,

he faithfully followed your call

all the way to death on a cross.

You raised him up

and promised that all who trust in him

will rise up with wings like eagles

and run the race without ever growing weary ...

And so we praise you

with the faithful of every time and place,

joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation

in the eternal 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.

We thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations.

Through Moses you taught us to love your law, and in the prophets, you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy you became one with us in Jesus Christ, who gave himself up for us on the cross. You make us alive together with him, that we may rejoice in his presence and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit you open the kingdom to all who believe, and welcome us to your table: for by grace we are saved, through faith.

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands: we celebrate the redemption he has won

The bread we now break and the cup we take are a sharing in the life of Christ ... (fraction) ... As we take this cup of blessing and as we share this bread of life we proclaim his death with gratitude and celebrate his resurrection with joy ...

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ. Make us one with him, one with each other, and one in ministry in the world, until at last we feast with him in the kingdom. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, in your holy Church, all honour and glory are yours, Father almighty, now and for ever. AMEN.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world:

HAVE MERCY ON US.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world:

HAVE MERCY ON US.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world:

GRANT US YOUR PEACE.

Receive this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Most gracious God, you have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life, and renewed us for your service. Now we give ourselves to you, and ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your

kingdom. May our love be your love, reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

HYMN 531 Sent forth with God's blessing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nt2aU6ItXt0>

BENEDICTION

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in harmony with one another,
in accordance with Christ Jesus,
so that together you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;

Romans 15:5-6

and may almighty God bless you,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Shalom

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IiH_HdkWs74