

Wesley's Covenant Service

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 his servants.
He is the source of all salvation.*

*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, receive these admonitions:

*First, set apart some time, more than once,
to be spent alone before God;
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.

Open your hearts to God, as we pray:

COVENANT PRAYER

**O righteous God, for the sake of 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 allow.*

**Before all heaven and earth,
I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God.
I take you, Creator, Christ, 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 Jesus Christ
as the way and means of coming to God.*

**I do here accept Christ
as the living Way,
and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him.
O blessed Jesus, I come to you,
hungry, sinful,
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,
whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and.
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 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,
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; not only in word, but in writing. Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed. And when you have done this, sign it. Then keep it as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubts and temptations.

Name: _____

Date: _____

History of the Methodist Covenant 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.