

## 2021 COVENANT RENEWAL SERVICE

Park Hill UMC, Denver, CO

December 27, 2020

“On December 26, 1747, John Wesley strongly urged the Methodists to renew their covenant with God. His first Covenant Service was held on August 11, 1755. He issued this as a pamphlet in 1780 and the form was used without alterations for nearly a century. After that, various modifications were made from time to time...This service [is edited] to make it more understandable to contemporary minds and hearts. This service has been a blessing to Methodists since 1755!”

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: God of all times and yet beyond time,  
you call us into a new year still to be discovered.

**All: Help us travel light, in faith and expectation.**

**Guide us in this new venture of imagination.**

One: Make us bold witnesses to the in-breaking of your future.

**All: Let us rest our time in yours,  
confident that we do not enter this new year alone.**

### OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open and all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### THE INVITATION

Leader:

Dearly beloved: the Christian life, to which we are called, is a life in Christ, redeemed from sin by Christ, and consecrated to God through Christ. We have entered upon this life, having been admitted into that new covenant of which our Lord Jesus Christ is mediator, and which Jesus sealed with his own coming, life, death, and resurrection, that it might stand forever.

On one side of the covenant is God’s promise to fulfill, in and through us, all that God declared in Jesus Christ, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. We are sure that this promise still stands, for we have known God’s goodness and proved God’s grace in our own lives day by day.

On the other side, we promise to live no more for ourselves, but for Christ, who loved us even to death. He called us to serve God so that the purposes of Christ's coming would be fulfilled.

From time to time we renew our vows of consecration—especially when we gather at the Lord's Table. But today we meet expressly, as generations of our ancestors have met, to joyfully and solemnly renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God, one another, and all of creation.

Remembering the mercies of God and the hope of God's calling, let us then examine ourselves by the light of the Spirit, that we may see where we have fallen short in faith and practice. Considering all that this covenant means, may we give ourselves again to God.

#### THE ACT OF ADORATION

Leader: Let us adore God, the Creator of Love who made us;  
who every moment preserves and sustains us;  
who has loved us with an everlasting love,  
and has given us the light of the knowledge  
of the Almighty's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

**All: We praise You, O God; we acknowledge You to be the Lord.**

Leader: Let us glory in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
who, though rich, yet for our sakes became poor;  
who went about doing good and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;  
who was tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin;  
who became obedient to death, even the death of the cross;  
who was dead, and lives forever;  
who opened the kingdom of heaven to all;  
who sits at the right hand of God in the glory of God.

**All: You are the King of glory, O Christ.**

Leader: Let us rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
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 waits to do for us abundantly more than we ask or think.

**All: All praise to You, O Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## SILENT PRAYER

### THE ACT OF THANKSGIVING

Leader: Let us give thanks to God for the Lord's many mercies.

O God our Creator, the fountain of all goodness,  
who has been gracious to us through all the years of our life:  
We give You thanks for Your loving kindness  
which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

**All: We praise Your holy name, O Lord.**

Leader: You have given us life and reason, and set us in a world which is full of Your glory.

You have comforted us with family and friends,  
and ministered to us through the hands and minds of others.

**All: We praise Your holy name, O Lord.**

Leader: You have set in our hearts a hunger for you, and 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.

**All: We praise Your holy name, O Lord.**

Leader: In darkness You have been our Light,  
in adversity and temptation our Rock of Strength,  
in our joys the very Spirit of Joy,  
in our work the all-sufficient Reward.

**All: We praise Your holy name, O Lord.**

Leader: You have remembered us when we have forgotten You,  
followed us even when we fled from You,  
met us with forgiveness when we turned back to You.

For all your patience and the abundance of Your grace,

**All: We praise Your holy name, O Lord. Amen.**

## SILENT PRAYER

### THE ACT OF CONFESSION

Leader: Let us now examine ourselves before God,  
humbly confessing our sins and watching our hearts,  
lest by self-deceit, we shut ourselves out from God's presence.

Let us pray:

**All: O God our Creator, who has set forth the way of life for us in Your beloved Son:**

**We confess with shame our slowness to learn of Jesus,  
our reluctance to follow Christ.**

**You have spoken and called, and we have not given heed.**

**Your beauty has shone forth, and we have been blind.**

**You have stretched out your hand to us through strangers among us,  
and we have passed by.**

**We have taken great gifts and given little thanks.**

**We have been unworthy of Your changeless love.**

**Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Leader: Forgive us, we ask You, the poverty of our worship,  
the formality and selfishness of our prayers,  
our inconstancy and unbelief.

Forgive our neglect of fellowship and of the means of grace,  
our hesitating witness for Christ, our false pretenses,  
and our willful ignorance of Your ways.

**All: Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Leader: Forgive us where we have wasted our time or misused our gifts.

Forgive us where we have excused our own wrongdoing or evaded our  
responsibilities. Forgive us that we have been unwilling to overcome evil  
with good;  
that we have drawn back from the cross.

**All: Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Leader: Forgive us that so little of Your love has reached others through us.

Forgive us where we have cherished the things that divide us from others,  
where we have made it hard for them to live with us,  
and where we have been thoughtless in our judgments,  
hasty in condemnation, and grudging in forgiveness.

**All: Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Leader: If we have made no ventures in fellowship,  
if we have kept in our heart a grievance against another,  
if we have not sought reconciliation,  
if we have been eager for the punishment of wrongdoers  
and slow to seek their redemption,

**All: Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.**

Leader: Let each of us in silence make confession to God.

### SILENT PRAYER

### WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Leader: This is the message we have heard from Jesus and proclaim to you,

that God is light, and in God is no darkness at all.  
If we walk in the light, as God is in the light,  
we have fellowship one with another,  
and Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.  
If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.  
As we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins,  
and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

### THE COVENANT

Leader: And now, beloved, let us bind ourselves with willing bonds to our covenant God,

one another, and all of creation and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

This means that we are heartily content that Christ appoints us our place and work,

and that Christ alone will be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done.

Some are easy, others are difficult;

some bring honor, others bring reproach;

some are suitable to our natural inclinations and temporal 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 assuredly given us in Christ,  
who strengthens us.

**All: Therefore let us make the covenant of God our own.**

**Let us engage our heart to the Lord,**

**and resolve in God's strength never to go back.**

**Being thus prepared, let us now,**

**in sincere dependence on God's grace and trusting in God's promises,  
yield ourselves anew to Christ.**

### THE COVENANT PRAYER

Leader: O Lord God, who has called us through Christ to participate in this gracious covenant:

We take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience,  
and engage ourselves, for love of You, one another, and all of creation  
to seek and do Your perfect will.

We are no longer our own, but Yours.

**All: 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 heartily yield all things to Your pleasure and disposal.**

**And now, O glorious and blessed God, Oh holy Trinity;  
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,  
You are mine, and I am Yours.  
So be it.  
And the covenant which I have made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

Leader: 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 throughout 2021 and beyond of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubts and temptations.

**Time of Reflection, Silent Prayer, and Opening the Church**

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Name

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Date

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