

Service for Caversham Park United Reformed Church
Sunday 14 January 2024
Covenant and Renewal

This service is based on the Methodist Covenant Service on pp 57-61 of the Caversham Park Church Service Book 1995, with elements from the URC Worship Book - Service of the Word (p83), and Service of Rededication on the Theme of Unity (pp325-333).

Introduction and Lighting of Candles

Call to Worship

Let us worship God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Lord you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God. *Psalm 90:1-2*

Welcome to worship at Caversham Park United Reformed Church, both to you here in the hall at Caversham Park Primary School and to you who are watching us over the internet. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It has long been our practice, when we were part of a Local Ecumenical Partnership with the Methodist Service, to hold a Covenant Service early in January after the Methodist tradition. The United Reformed Church also holds rededication services, although it suggests the first Sunday in October for the purpose. Margaret and I renew our vows as Franciscan Tertiaries around the feast of St Francis, which is in the same week. So today I will ask us as a Church to renew our Covenant with God and to dedicate ourselves, individually and as a body of believers, to his service.

Let us first light our candles, to symbolise the presence of Christ among us, and to give thanks to God and pray for individual needs. First, I will invite Margaret, who celebrated her 80th birthday on Thursday and will be having a party this afternoon, to light the Peace Candle.

Who else would like to light one?

(lighting)

Can I ask you here in the hall to stand for the hymns, and to sing joyfully?

Hymn O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (MP529)

Prayer of Adoration

Let us pray.

Let us adore the Father, the God of love. He created us; he continually preserves and sustains us; he has loved us with an everlasting love, and given us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

You are God; we praise you; we acknowledge you to be the Lord.

Let us glory in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin; he went about doing good and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom; he became obedient to death, death on the Cross; he was dead and is alive for ever; he has opened the kingdom of heaven to all who trust in him; he sits at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father; he will come again to be our Judge.

You, Christ, are the King of Glory.

Let us rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life. By him we are born into the family of God, and made members of the body of Christ; his witness confirms us; his wisdom teaches us; his power enables us; he will do for us far more than we ask or think,

All praise to you, Holy Spirit.

Confession of Sin

Let us humbly confess our sins to God. God our Father, you have set forth the way of life for us in your beloved Son: we confess with shame our slowness to learn of him, our failure to follow him, our reluctance to bear the Cross.

Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive us.

We confess the poverty of our worship, our neglect of fellowship and of the means of grace, our hesitating witness for Christ, our evasion of responsibilities in your service, our imperfect stewardship of your gifts.

Have mercy on us, Lord, and forgive us.

Let each of us in silence make her or his own confession to God.

Silence

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a new heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Absolution

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you: that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Collect

Father, you have appointed our Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator of a new Covenant: give us grace to draw near with fullness of faith and join ourselves in a perpetual covenant with you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn Father, hear the prayer we offer (MP132)

The Lessons

Jeremiah 31:31-33

Hebrews 12:22-25a

Hymn I, the Lord of sea and sky (MP857)

The Gospel

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to Christ our Saviour.

John 15:1-8

Praise to Christ our Lord.

Sermon

Hymn Guide me, O thou great Jehovah (MP201)

The Covenant

Please be seated.

In the Old Covenant, God chose Israel to be his people and to obey his laws. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by his death and resurrection, has made a New Covenant with all who trust in him. We stand within this Covenant and bear his name.

On the one side, God promises in this Covenant to give us new life in Christ. On the other side, we are pledged to live no more for ourselves, but for him. Today, therefore, we meet expressly, as generations before us have met, to renew the Covenant which bound them, and binds us, to God.

Hymn Come, let us use the grace divine (Hymns and Psalms 649)

The Covenant continued

Please remain standing.

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves this Covenant which God has made with his people, and take the yoke of Christ upon us. To take his yoke upon us means that we are content that he appoints 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 of God our own. Let us give ourselves anew to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

Please sit or kneel.

Lord God, Holy Father, since you have called us through Christ to share in this gracious Covenant, we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience, and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will. We are no longer our own, but yours.

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. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Intercessions

For the worship offered in prayer and praise, for the preaching of the Word, for the celebration of the Sacraments, through this church. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the faith of all believers in Christ, for the carrying of the gospel into all the world, for the furtherance of the unity of all God's people enabled by this church. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the support and nurture of God's people, for the care of young and old, for the calling of all to a life of service, through this church. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the proclamation of God's truth, for the care of the downtrodden, for the giving of hope and courage enabled by this church. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For the opposing of all that is evil, for the promoting of human worth, for action for peace and justice, through this church. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For all who by word and deed have brought this church into being, for their living example to us, for their faith and their hopes and dreams built upon Jesus Christ the cornerstone. **All praise and thanks to God.**

For all who lead and serve this Church, and our developing relationship with the wider United Reformed Church. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For the peace of the whole world, and for the victims of warfare and injustice, especially in the Holy Land and in Ukraine, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our responsible care for the environment, and those suffering from floods, droughts and other climate disasters, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those suffering injustice through the faults in the Horizon project at the Post Office, and for people in organisations involved who had no part in these faults, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For ourselves, our families and friends and neighbours, particularly for Margaret and others who are celebrating birthdays, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, and that Janikka will be well looked after in a new home, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who have died, that we may share with them the joy of your kingdom, Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Dedication of Offerings

We have offered all we are and all we have to you, to be used in your service. Accept, we pray, these offerings of money as a small part of all that we owe you. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Notices

Hymn You are the King of Glory (MP790)

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for ever. Amen.