



Written covenant service for Jan 10th

Call to worship – written by Joanna Harader
Holy One, dwell within us.
Whisper in our ears;
Glimmer in our vision;
Write upon our hearts.
We wait
with open ears, open eyes, open hearts.
Amen

228 StF, 125 H&P, 204MP Hail to the Lord's anointed

Opening prayer – written by Thomas Sutcliffe
Loving God, present and near.
You are beyond our words and our understanding.
Help us to remember that You are at once
infinite, boundless, timeless and eternal
but, at the same time intimately entwined with our lives.
You are with us no matter where we find ourselves.

When we have forgotten You
Lord, have mercy.

When we have failed to speak words of love
Lord, have mercy.

When we have neglected the need of another
Lord, have mercy.

Loving God, present and near
help us to recognise Your presence and nearness with us
as we worship this day.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In this act of worship, we are invited to reflect on our relationship with God and God's relationship with us. It contains the words of the Covenant. Usually we say these words together as a congregation and follow it with Holy Communion. In these strange times, it's not possible for all of us to be alongside each other physically but we remember that the Covenant we make is not just a one-to-one transaction between us and God, it's an act of the whole faith community. God is ready to enfold us all in generous love. This love is not dependent on our behaviour, on our faith or on anything. It flows from the very heart of God. How are we to respond? We will be thinking about that as the service goes on.

Read Jeremiah 31.31-34

Here is God's promise of a new covenant told through the words of the prophet Jeremiah. This will be a radically new covenant, says God. My laws will not be written on tablets of stone, they will be within you, written on your hearts and you will know me.

It's clear that God wants to be in a very close relationship with the people. God wants God's will to be known so completely, that people will know within themselves how to live. God's word and laws will be not be separate, they will be within the people.

People throughout time have yearned for this close relationship and have found many ways of drawing closer to God. This could be through prayer, creativity, nature, reading the Bible, discussing our faith, being alone or being with others. I wonder when you feel closest to God. How might you nurture those activities, prioritise and give space to them?

Do not worry about this; it's not a competition or a test. God wants a relationship with us, just as we are. Simply reflect on when and where you are able to spend time with God. Rejoice in that time and return there as often as you can.

Through Jeremiah, God said these wonderful words—I am your God and you are my people.

Imprint these words anew on our hearts, O God,
so that we know you in all your fullness,
love you as you love us,
and worship you as you deserve.

556 StF, 697 H&P, 396 MP Just as I am without one plea

Read John 15:1-10

Jesus is talking here to the disciples, those who have already chosen to follow him. It speaks of a deep and wonderful relationship between God, Jesus, and people. In verse 3, Jesus tells the disciples that they are already cleansed because of the word he has spoken to them. Sometimes as disciples we may feel useless, tired and sinful. Yet here, Jesus reminds us that our sins are forgiven. God forgives our iniquities and remembers our sins no more (Jeremiah 31:34)

The relationship that we are offered is pure and life changing. Remain in me, says Jesus as I remain in you. This is mutual indwelling. Togetherness like no other relationship. Jesus says, apart from the vine, you can't do anything. As part of the vine, you have the continual support of God and you will bear fruit that glorifies God. What is this fruit? I believe it is rooted in the answer Jesus gave when he was asked to name the greatest commandment. To love God, with all our heart, soul and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

In these strange times, what can we offer to God, to ourselves and to our community?

I wonder where God is asking you to show kindness, to build new relationships, to heal broken hearts, to fight for justice, to speak for those whose voices are silenced. God gives us the Spirit to live within us, prompting and guiding us. Let us be open to hearing the Spirit's voice this year.

And best of all, God is with us. God tends the vine that is Jesus and his followers. God has put God's law in our hearts and God will never let us go.

You are invited to read the Covenant out loud, wherever you are, in the knowledge that you are part of God's kingdom, living in relationship with God and with people across all time and space.

The Covenant

I am no longer my own but yours.
Your will, not mine, be done in all things,
Wherever you may place me,
In all that I do
And in all that I might endure;
When there is work for me
And when there is none;
When I am troubled
And when I am at peace.
Your will be done
When I am valued
And when I am disregarded;
When I find fulfilment
And when it is lacking;
When I have all things,
And when I have nothing.
I willingly offer
All that I have and am
To serve you,
As and where you choose.
Glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
You are mine and I am yours.
May it be so for ever.
Let this covenant now made on earth
Be fulfilled in heaven.
Amen

560 StF My eyes be open to your presence or 378 H&P, 51 MP Be thou my vision

Prayer for Others - written by Rev. Fraser Penny
Jesus Christ, the true vine,
in our need we come to You,
in weakness, needing Your strength
for we too easily become dry and lifeless
without Your life-giving spirit.

Jesus Christ, the true vine,
teach us to remain in You
and so to find Your life flowing in us
giving strength and vigour to our discipleship.

And as we come closer to You
our lives are drawn closer to others.
Our minds turn to images of violence we have seen on the news
in places of fear and terror,
to where people are at loggerheads,
over race, religion, land, power.

Our thoughts turn to Christians living with persecution
who face danger, simply for being linked to You.
Father, prune back all that stands in the way of peace.

Our thoughts turn to people in leadership and power – who have decisions to make
over the economy
and people whose jobs and livelihood will be affected.
We pray for our nation, and its leaders.
May changes and choices be shaped by the values of the kingdom.

On our hearts are people in need in our church and community.
Wherever hearts are breaking,
bodies are failing,
minds are confused
families are ruptured:
Lord, come with Your help and healing.

We give thanks for the saints of the past
and the fruit they have borne in our community and beyond.
Like them, help us to remain in You
that we may be fruitful and bring glory to Your name.
Through Jesus Christ, the true vine. **Amen**

The Lord's prayer

563 StF, 704 H&P, 501MP O Jesus I have promised

May God bless us through this year and give us opportunities to spread love,
kindness and light in our communities. May we always be rooted in God and may
we bring forth fruit that glorifies God, and that enriches all the people with whom we
share time and space. **Amen**

Opening prayer ~ written by Joanna Harader, and posted on **Spacious Faith**. <http://spaciousfaith.com/2012/01/18/wednesday-worship-piece-isaiah/>

Second prayer ~ written by Thomas Sutcliffe, and posted on the Church of Scotland's *Weekly Worship* website. http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly_worship/

Third prayer ~ written by Rev. Fraser Penny, Minister of Dunkeld Parish Church, and posted on the Church of Scotland's **WeeklyWorship** website. http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/48423/A_29_April_Fraser_Penny_5_after_Easter_formatted.pdf