

THE COVENANT

✠ *Then, the people standing, the minister shall say,*

And now, beloved, let us bind ourselves with willing bonds to our covenant God, and take the yoke of Christ upon us.

This taking of his yoke upon us means that we are heartily content that he appoint us our place and work, and that he alone 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.

Therefore let us make the covenant of God our own. Let us engage our heart to the Lord, and resolve in his strength never to go back.

Being thus prepared, let us now, in sincere dependence on his grace and trusting in his promises, yield ourselves anew to him.

✠ *Here let the people bow, and the minister say in the name of all,*

O Lord God, holy Father, who hast called us through Christ to be partakers in this gracious covenant: We take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience, and engage ourselves, for love of thee, to seek and to do thy perfect will. We are no longer our own, but thine.

✠ *Then all shall say,*

I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee; 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 thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

An Order of Worship for Such as Would Enter into or Renew Their Covenant with God

ADORATION

✠ *Then the minister shall say, the people responding,*

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

We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.

Let us glory in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;
who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor;
who went about doing good and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom;
who was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin;
who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;
who was dead, and liveth for evermore;
who opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers;
who sitteth at the right hand of God in the glory of the Father.

Thou art the King of glory, O Christ.

Let us rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and 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 exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

All praise to thee, O Holy Spirit.

✠ *Here shall follow a period of silent prayer.*

THANKSGIVING

✠ *Then the minister shall say, the people responding,*

Let us rise and give thanks to God for his manifold mercies.

✠ *Here let the people stand.*

O God our Father, the fountain of all goodness, who hast been gracious to us through all the years of our life: We give thee thanks for thy lovingkindness which hath filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

We praise thy holy name, O Lord.

Thou hast given us life and reason, and set us in a world which is full of thy glory. Thou hast comforted us with kindred and friends, and ministered to us through the hands and minds of our fellows.

We praise thy holy name, O Lord.

Thou hast set in our hearts a hunger for thee, and given us thy peace. Thou hast redeemed us and called us to a high calling in Christ Jesus. Thou hast given us a place in the fellowship of thy Spirit and the witness of thy Church.

We praise thy holy name, O Lord.

In darkness thou hast been our light, in adversity and temptation a rock of strength, in our joys the very spirit of joy, in our labors the all-sufficient reward.

We praise thy holy name, O Lord.

Thou hast remembered us when we have forgotten thee, followed us even when we fled from thee, met us with forgiveness when we turned back to thee. For all thy long-suffering and the abundance of thy grace,

We praise thy holy name, O Lord. Amen.

✠ *Here shall follow a period of silent prayer, the people seated.*

CONFESSION

✠ *Then the minister shall say, the people responding,*

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

Let us pray.

O God our Father, who hast set forth the way of life for us in thy beloved Son: We confess with shame our slowness to learn of him, our reluctance to follow him. Thou hast spoken and called, and we have not given heed; thy beauty hath shone forth, and we have been blind; thou hast stretched out thy hands to us through our fellows, and we have passed by. We have taken great benefits with little thanks; we have been unworthy of thy changeless love.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.

Forgive us, we beseech thee, the poverty of our worship, the formality and selfishness of our prayers, our inconstancy and unbelief, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, our hesitating witness for Christ, our false pretenses, and our willful ignorance of thy ways.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.

Forgive us wherein we have wasted our time or misused our gifts. Forgive us wherein 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.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.

Forgive us that so little of thy love hath reached others through us, and that we have borne so lightly wrongs and sufferings that were not our own. Forgive us wherein we have cherished the things that divide us from others, and wherein we have made it hard for them to live with us, and wherein we have been thoughtless in our judgments, hasty in condemnation, grudging in forgiveness.

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.

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,

Have mercy upon us and forgive us, O Lord.

✠ *Then, the people still kneeling or bowed, the minister shall rise and say,*

Let each of us in silence make confession to God.

✠ *After a period of silent prayer the minister and people shall say,*

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.

✠ *Then the minister shall say,*

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 Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no 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.