

Opening Prayer

**O God, Searcher of all our hearts,
you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own.**

**As we come to acknowledge your sovereignty and grace,
and enter anew into covenant with you,
reveal any reluctance or falsehood within us.**

**Let your Spirit impress your truth on our inmost being,
and receive us in mercy for the sake of our Mediator, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

#464 "O for a Heart to Praise My God"

(on screen) "From the Inside Out"

Offering

Offering of Worship

Psalm 50

#200 "As With Gladness Men of Old"

#566 "Living By Faith"

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Pastoral Prayer

O God, our Covenant Friend,
you have been gracious to us through all the years of our lives.
We thank you for your loving care,
which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have given us life and reason,
and set us in a world filled with your glory.
You have comforted us with family and friends,
and ministered to us through the hands of our brothers and sisters.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have filled our hearts with a hunger after you,
and have 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.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You have been our light in darkness
and a rock of strength in adversity and temptation.
You have been the very Spirit of joy in our joys
and the all-sufficient reward in all our labors.

We praise your holy name, O God.

You remembered us when we forgot you.
You followed us even when we tried to flee from you.
You met us with forgiveness when we returned to you.
For all your patience and overflowing grace,

We praise your holy name, O God.

Pastoral Prayer

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Homily

If you joined us during Sunday school or Wednesday evenings in recent months, you had the opportunity to hear teaching on the variety of covenants God used throughout the Bible. We talked about how these ancient Middle Eastern societies had established forms for conducting business and diplomacy and settling conflicts and so on; covenants were used all the time for all kinds of things. And so we explored what sorts of covenants God made with and through Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus.

If you weren't there and want to know more, we'll have to catch you up on the details some other time. But the basic idea is that God entered into the mess of human history and used language that we were familiar with to relate to us. God took the initiative because He had a plan to redeem us and our world from the sin and death we had subjected it to, and God was willing to lower Himself to speak our language to do it.

What we do today is not quite in the same league as what God did through those heroes of the Bible. This is not a covenant, properly speaking, like those of Old Testament times. But it is a reminder to us, and a recommitment of our lives, because of what God has done for us. While we were yet sinners, Jesus Christ came to us, and He died for us so that we could know God. By His blood, He has invited us to enter into a new and lasting covenant. Today we take stock of our response to His invitation, and we affirm once

again that we are ready, with His help, to live in that covenant in the coming year that He has given us.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the Christian life is redeemed from sin and consecrated to God.

Through baptism, we have entered this life and have been admitted to the new covenant of which Jesus Christ is Mediator.

He sealed it with his own blood, that it might last forever.

On the one side, God promises to give us new life in Christ, the Source and Perfecter of our faith.

On the other side, we are pledged to live no more for ourselves but only for Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us.

From time to time we renew our covenant with God, especially we affirm the Baptismal Covenant and gather at the Lord's table.

Today, however, we meet, as generations before us have met, to renew the covenant that binds us to God.

Let us make this covenant of God our own.

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 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 the prayer of servanthood printed in your bulletin inserts:

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 your 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 none but his servants.
He is the source of salvation to those who obey.
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, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spend alone before the Lord;
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 that 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
that 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.
Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord as
we pray:

Covenant Prayer

**O righteous God, for the sake of your Son 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 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 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 let him.

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

**Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ
as the only new and living Way,
and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him.
O blessed Jesus, I come to you,
hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked,
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 unworthiness,
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 would strive to order my whole life according to your direction, and not allow
myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.**

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 set it aright.

And now, glory be to you, O God the Father,

whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father.

Glory be to you, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own blood, and is now my Savior and 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, O Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
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.

Celebration of the Lord's Supper

#455 "Take My Life and Let It Be Consecrated"