



United Methodist Church
of Westport and Weston

December 27, 2020
1st Sunday after Christmas

*Our Vision is to Know, to Live
and to Share the Love of Jesus Christ.*

Online Worship – 10:00am

PRAYER FOR MEDITATION

O God, Searcher of all our hearts, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your children. As we come to acknowledge your power and grace, and to enter into a new covenant with you, reveal any stumbling blocks within us. Let your Spirit write your truth on our hearts, and receive us in mercy, in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRELUDE

Angels from the Realms of Glory
Ahyoung Son, organ

H.T. Smart

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pastor Heather

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

HYMN

Tell Out, My Soul

UMH 200

Verse 1

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;
Tender to me the promise of God's word;
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Verse 2

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of God's name!
Make known God's might, who wondrous deeds has done;
God's mercy sure, from age to age the same;
God's holy name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Verse 3

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of God's might!
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;

Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight;
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Verse 4

Tell out, my soul, the glories of God's Word!
Firm is God's promise, and God's mercy sure.
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord
To children's children and forevermore!

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In 1775, John Wesley introduced a covenant service as an important part of spiritual life in the Methodist Societies. This renewal service was a time for the Methodists to gather annually in a time of self-examination, reflection, and dedication, wholly giving up themselves and renewing covenant with God. Repentance through confession and commitment was a key focus of the service, demanding humility from those willing to submit themselves to the dynamic words stated within the liturgy.

According to Wesley's journal, though the covenant renewal service was held on various occasions throughout the year, by the end of his life, the service was observed typically on or the Sunday nearest January 1st. The covenant renewal service is a practice that continues in churches and Christian communities today, often near the beginning of the new year. It has undergone many revisions and adaptations, but its purpose as an evocative ceremony of commitment to ongoing discipleship and Christ-like character has always remained intact.

Wesley found the service rich and meaningful, as expressed in his Journal: "Many mourned before God, and many were comforted" (April 1756); "It was, as usual, a time of remarkable blessing" (October 1765). "It was an occasion for a variety of spiritual experiences ... I do not know that ever we had a greater blessing. Afterwards, many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, or for a fresh manifestation of His graces, healing all their backslidings" (January 1, 1775)

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:12-17

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

UMH 206

Verse 1

I want to walk as a child of the light.
I want to follow Jesus.
God sent the stars to give light to the world.
The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him, there is no darkness at all.
The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

Verse 2

I want to see the brightness of God.
I want to look at Jesus.
Clear sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,
and show me the way to the Father. **Refrain**

(continues on next page)

Verse 3

I'm looking for the coming of Christ.
I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race,
we shall know the joy of Jesus. **Refrain**

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WESLEYAN COVENANT SERVICE

THE PROCLAMATION

Dearly loved brothers and sisters, the Christian life is a life found in Christ, redeemed from sin, and consecrated to God. We are those who have entered into this life and have been admitted into the new covenant of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Mediator of this covenant. Christ sealed it with his own blood so it would last forever. On one side of this covenant stands God, who promises to give us new life in Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. Every day God proves God's goodness and grace to us, showing us that God's promise still stands firm.

On the other side, we stand as those who promise to no longer live life for ourselves but instead to only live for Jesus Christ because Christ has loved us and given his life for us.

There are times in our lives when it is important for us to remember and reaffirm our promises and vows. In this same way, we come today to renew our covenant with God. Many generations have done this before us. Today we make the covenant our own, renewing with both joy and sincerity the covenant that binds us all to God.

THE CONFESSION

We are those who seek to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, but sometimes we fall short. Let us now examine ourselves before God, humbly confessing our sins and submitting our hearts so that we do not deceive ourselves and cut ourselves away from God. Let us pray:

God, You have set forth the way of life through Jesus Christ, whom You love dearly. We shamefully confess that we have been slow to learn of him and have been reluctant to follow him. You have spoken and called to us but we have not listened. You have revealed Your beauty to us, but we have been blind. You have stretched out Your hands to us through our friends, but we have passed by them. We have accepted Your gifts and offered little thanks. We are unworthy of Your unchanging love.

Please forgive us for the meagerness of our worship...

for the selfishness of our prayers...

for our inconsistency and unbelief...

for the ways we neglect fellowship and Your grace...

for our hesitation to tell others about Christ....

for the ways we deceive others...

Forgive us for when we waste time and when we misuse the gifts you have given us. Forgive us for when we have made excuses for the wrong things we have done and when we have purposefully avoided responsibility.

Forgive us that we have been unwilling to overcome evil with good and that we have not been ready to carry our cross. Forgive us that we have not allowed Your love to work through us to help others and that we have not made their suffering our own. Forgive us for those times when instead of working for unity we made it hard for others to live with us because of our lack of forgiveness, inconsiderate judgment, and quick criticism.

Forgive us for when we have not tried to reconcile with others and when we have been slow to seek redemption.

Forgive us also for these sins that we silently confess to you now.

SILENT PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE AND PARDON

God of all mercies is faithful to cleanse us from our sins and restore us to Christ's image. Praise and glory be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

THE INVITATION

Let us gather here before the Lord now in covenant commit ourselves to Christ as his servants. Let us give ourselves to Christ so that we may fully belong to him. Jesus Christ has left us with many services to be done. Some of these services are easy and honorable, but some are difficult and disgraceful. Some line up with our desires and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we please both Christ and ourselves, but then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Jesus Christ, we offer You this prayer:

Let me be Your servant. Let me follow your commands. I will no longer follow my own desires. I give myself completely to your will.

I am not my own. I am Yours alone. Make me into what You will. Rank me with those You will. Put me to use for You. Put me to suffering for You. Let me be employed for You. Let me be laid aside for You. Let me be lifted high for You. Let me be brought low for You. Let me be full or let me be empty. Let me have all things or let me have nothing. With a willing heart, I freely give everything to Your pleasure and disposal. Amen.

Christ is Savior to those who are his true servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. To be his servant is to consent fully to his will. Christ accepts nothing less. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing. Now confirm this truth in holy covenant. Make it a reality in your life in these three ways:

First, set apart time in your day, perhaps more than once, to be spent alone with the Lord. Seek to perceive God's special care for you and gracious acceptance of you. Carefully think through the words of this covenant and its conditions. Examine your heart, even if you have freely given your life to Christ. Name the sins in your life. Reflect on whether you are willing to choose Christ's holy laws and strict commands. Be sure you are clear in all of these so you do not lie to God! Name the places in your day where you grew closer to God and those where you stepped away from God. What can you do the next day to move closer to the God that loves you?

Second, uphold a serious spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant. Do not trust in your own strength and power but rely upon God's promise of giving grace and strength. In this way, God will empower you to keep your promise.

Fourth, be determined to be faithful. You have given your heart and life to God. You have opened your mouth to dedicate yourself to the Lord. With God's power, never go back to your former way of living.

And last, be prepared to renew your covenant with God. Fall on your knees. Lift your hands. Open your hearts.

THE COVENANT PRAYER

My righteous God, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, see me now as I fall down before You. Forgive my unfaithfulness when I have not done your will. You promise mercy if I turn to You with my whole heart.

God requires that you rid yourself of every idol in your life.

From the bottom of my heart, I here and now renounce every idol in my life, covenanting with You that I will not commit any known sin. By turning against Your will I have turned my love toward the world. In Your power I will watch for any temptation that will lead me away from You.

Through Jesus Christ, God offers to be your God again, if you allow it.

Before all heaven and earth, I here and now acknowledge You, Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit, as my Lord and God. I vow to give all of myself, body and soul, to be Your servant and to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.

God has given us Jesus as the way and means to salvation.

Jesus, I here and now accept You as the new and living Way. I join myself in covenant with You. I come to You hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of Your servants.

With all my power, I accept You as my Savior. 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.

Jesus, I here and now make this covenant with You and accept whatever comes in life. Through Your grace I promise that neither life nor death will separate me from You.

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.

I here and now willingly take on Your yoke and burden. All Your laws are holy, just, and good. I accept them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising I will strive to order my whole life around your direction. I will not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.

The Almighty God searches and knows you, even the thoughts of your heart.

O God, You know that we have made this covenant today in sincerity, without deceit or reluctance. If You find anything false in us, guide us and help us to set it right.

And now, glory be to You, God the Father. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my God.

Glory be to You, God the Son. You have loved me and washed me from my sins in Your own blood. From this day forward, I shall look upon You as my Savior and Redeemer.

Glory be to You, O God the Holy Spirit. By Your almighty power, You have turned my heart from sin to God. From this day forward I shall look upon You as my Comforter and Guide.

O mighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through Your infinite grace, have become Your covenant servant. You are mine and I am Yours. So be it. May this covenant that I have made here on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

GIVING THANKS FOR OUR GIFTS

The ministry of the church is ongoing during these days. Your gifts, tithes and offerings continue to allow us to "be the church." Checks may be sent to the church office or given online through our website. Your generosity is a blessing. Thank you.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God of hope and joy, the gifts we offer to you pale when our minds try to grasp all we have been given in this season: wholeness in our woundedness, hope in our despair, peace in our turmoil, forgiveness in our rebellion. Our eyes have seen your salvation, and you give us light in our darkness. Help us embrace your extravagant generosity as we give ourselves to others. In our Savior's holy name, we pray. Amen.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Away in the Manger/Silent Night
Heather & Grace Hisey, piano

J.R. Murray, J. Mohr, F. Gruber

DOXOLOGY

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow
Ahyoung Son, organ

UMH 94

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER *You are invited to pray in the version and language of your heart.*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for yours is the kingdom, and the glory, forever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

Christmas Medley
UMC Worldwide Virtual Choir

This medley, produced by UMC Discipleship Ministries, includes four carols beginning with "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" by Charles Wesley. The second carol is the beloved spiritual "Amen," which includes choir and soloist Nowell Felder. This is followed by "The First Noel," and the medley concludes with two verses of "Joy to the World." This arrangement by Rev. Jared Wilson, from Madison Street UMC in Clarksville, Tennessee, incorporates organ, piano, violin and handbells.

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Joy to the World
Chris Hisey, strings

I. Watts, G. F. Handel, L. Mason

Portions of the Order of Worship are adapted from:
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Our Mission is:
To Know the love of Jesus in personal ways through worship, prayer and study
To Live the love of Jesus through acts of compassion, gentleness and justice
To Share the love of Jesus in our homes, our community and the world
To Welcome all of God's children regardless of age, race, ability,
sexual or gender orientation, and economic circumstance.

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OUR MINISTERS

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