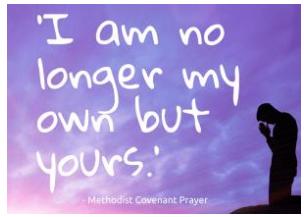




## The Central Norfolk Methodist Circuit

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026:** 2<sup>nd</sup> of Christmas

**Theme for today is “The Covenant” Prepared by Della Collingwood – Local Preacher**



### Opening prayer

Speak Lord, for thy servant hearth, grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to obey, hearts to love; then declare what thou wilt, reveal what thou wilt, commend what thou wilt, demand what thou wilt for Christ sake. Amen *Christina Rossetti*

As this is near Epiphany when we remember the wise men visiting the baby Jesus & offering gifts of Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh, our first hymn is on this theme, as we sing.

### **Hymn 227 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning**

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;  
star of the east, the horizon adorning,  
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;  
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;  
angels adore him in slumber reclining,  
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,  
Oduors of Edom, and offerings divine,  
gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,  
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q5A4TctOn0>

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,  
vainly with gifts would his favour secure:  
richer by far is the heart's adoration,  
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,  
dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid;  
star of the east, the horizon adorning,  
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

### Prayer

Lord, we cannot praise you enough for your creation of the world and for your love poured out by you for all peoples and activities that take place. Especially for giving us the greatest gift to the world in the form of Jesus Christ, born of Mary and setting his life here on earth to teach, heal, to show us true worship and how to live our lives. He ended his life on a cross where he suffered and died, for the very people he came to save, but we plead forgiveness for ourselves by renewing our covenant with you at the beginning of this year. So help us to rededicate our lives to thy service and to start again our mission in the church and the world.

### Readings      Isaiah 60 v 1-6, Ephesians 1 v 3-14, John 1v 6-14

### Our Covenant service.

A covenant is a mutual agreement entered into, that is to be adhered to, to be obedient to God or the maker of the contract being made. It was especially made with Adam representing mankind, and Abraham representing the father of the Jewish nation, but we see it being made by all the generations following and still practice today. The men were to be circumcised by removing the foreskin of the men as a reminder that they are made in the image of God and are dedicated to him. Thus it is adhered to by Abraham's family, and Moses, the prophets and Kings up to a including Jesus, and is still practiced today.

What about us? Do we practice this and do we enter into a covenant and promise with God? We start our lives as children baptised with water and promises made on behalf of the child. This then is made by the children taking on the promises to live a life unto God by being received into membership. We also dedicated ourselves unto our spouses in marriage, and the full cycle is seen by the promises of baptism to our own children.

The promises we make in the covenant service is a copy of the covenants made by John and Charles Wesley and in turn the people of the Churches they attend, so that we become committed Christians and church people living only unto God. We do not make the promises to live wholly unto him, for life is too difficult. We are pouring out our whole being unto Lord so that God will be in us and that all our being and actions belong to Him. But Jesus says “I am the way, the truth and the life.” No one comes unto the Father but by me. He also says “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” We live no longer unto ourselves but to him.

He is the main stem of the vine, we are all joined to him and who we are and what we grow into is seen when the branches break out into leaves and fruits which shows our nature and talents unto Christ is seen and is a copy of him

and all his inheritors of the Kingdom of God. Thus in this spirit we can come to make our promises to him, resting in the assurance that we now belong to him.

**Hymn 548      Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WQdwkCdXpU>

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,  
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.  
This is my story, this is my song,  
praising my Savior all the day long.*

Perfect communion, perfect delight,  
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.  
Angels descending bring from above  
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

[Refrain]

Perfect submission, all is at rest.  
I in my Savior am happy and blessed,  
watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

[Refrain]

**The Covenant Service**

We will proceed with this service as taken from the Methodist Worship book uniting with Christian people throughout the world on this first Sunday in January, and may the Lord bless it to our hearts, minds and Souls. We start with prayers of confession.

Let us pray.  
God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.

For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ, reluctant to follow him, and afraid to bear the cross:

Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has caused the poverty of our worship, the formality and selfishness of our prayers, our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, and our hesitating witness for Christ:

Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has led us to misuse your gifts, evade our responsibilities, and fail to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has made us unwilling to overcome evil with good, tolerant of injustice, quick to condemn, and selfish in sharing your love with others:

Lord, have mercy,  
**Lord, forgive.**

**Silence**

**Have mercy on me, O God, in your constant love; in the fullness of your mercy blot out my offences. Wash away all my guilt and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Give me the joy of your help again and strengthen me with a willing spirit.**

**The presiding minister says:**

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Therefore to all who truly repent this is his gracious word: 'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

**Hymn 546      Behold the servant of the Lord**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wsnzm6mSiao>

Behold the servant of the Lord!  
I wait Thy guiding eye to feel,  
To hear and keep Thy every word,  
To prove and do Thy perfect will,  
Joyful from my own works to cease,  
Glad to fulfil all righteousness.

Me if Thy grace vouchsafe to use,  
Meanest of all Thy creatures, me,  
The deed, the time, the manner choose,  
Let all my fruit be found of Thee;  
Let all my works in Thee be wrought,  
By Thee to full perfection brought.

My every weak, though good design,  
O'errule, or change, as seems Thee meet;  
Jesus, let all my work be Thine!  
Thy work, O Lord, is all complete,  
And pleasing in Thy Father's sight;  
Thou only hast done all things right.

Here then to Thee Thy own I leave;  
Mold as Thou wilt Thy passive clay;  
But let me all Thy stamp receive,  
But let me all Thy words obey,  
Serve with a single heart and eye,  
And to Thy glory live and die.

### **The covenant prayer**

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves this covenant which God has made with his people, and take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content that he appoint 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 to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.

Let us give ourselves to him, trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

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.**

**Silence, all seated**

As we have entered this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses, let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, hear us as we pray for your holy catholic Church:  
**make us all one, that the world may believe.**

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world:  
**establish justice and peace among all people.**

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble:  
**deliver them from their distress.**

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:  
**bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.**

### **Prayer**

O eternal God, make my body and soul to be a holy temple, purified for the habitation of thy Holy Spirit, cast out of it, O Lord, all Worldly affections, all covetous desires; let it be a place of prayer and holy meditation; of pure intensions, and to desire to please thee; so that loving thee above all the world, and worshipping thee in humblest adoration, we may be prepared to glorify thee to all eternity in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

*Jeremy Taylor*

Let us make our prayers for other people by saying:-

We pray for

- Families and friends this new year, that God will be with us.
- For Churches and Charities in their word amongst us.
- For places of work, that we may witness to all those in their workplaces, find blessing and fulfilment in life.
- For the inflicted, mentally ill, the sick and injured, that they may receive the help, support, healing and blessing each day which is so vital to them
- For warring factions that they may cease taking up arms and replace with love and friendship to one another.

- For Christ to come owning us and ruling in our hearts now and always. Amen

**Hymn 353      I am a new creation**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Teva2\\_x2aXo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Teva2_x2aXo)

I Am a New Creation,  
No more in Condemnation,  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

My Heart is Overflowing,  
My Love just keeps on Growing,  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

And I will Praise You, Lord,  
Yes, I will Praise You, Lord,  
And I will Sing of all that You have done.

A Joy that knows no limit,  
A Lightness in My Spirit  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

And I will Praise You, Lord,  
Yes, I will Praise You, Lord,  
And I will Sing of all that You have done.

A Joy that knows no limit,  
A Lightness in My Spirit  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.  
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.

**Benediction**

May we take with our journey in life, the mind of God, the body of Christ + the power of the holy Spirit. Now and forever. Amen.