



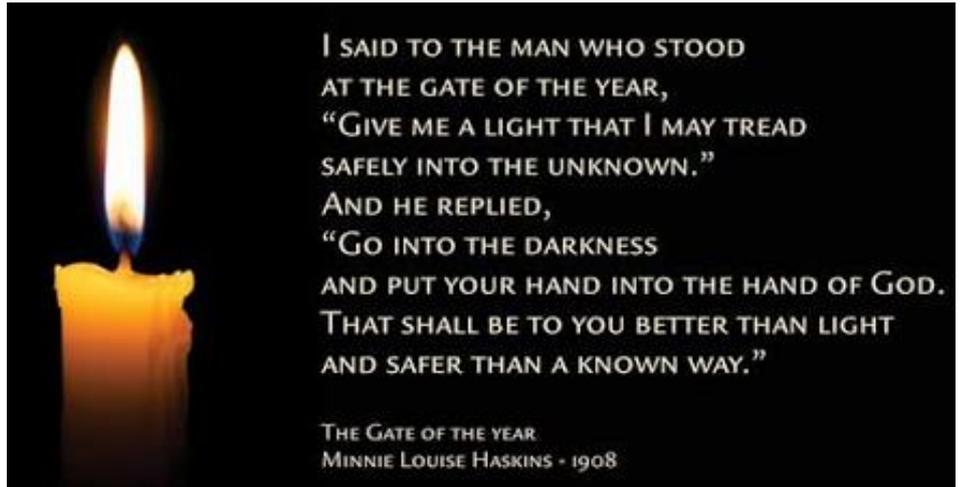
# JOIN THE CELEBRATION

*Worshipping together in spirit*

# A NEW YEAR COVENANT

## SETTING THE SCENE:

*No-one could have foreseen what 2020 was going to be like. No-one can foresee how 2021 will develop. The very best thing that we can do is to put our hands into the hand of God, and step out in trust and faith. A covenant is a two-sided promise, and*



*The Covenant is the promise that is made and renewed constantly throughout history between God and his people. It is traditional to renew our Covenant with God on this first Sunday of the New Year, to show that we intend to step out with God, accepting his love and grace, and offering our praise and obedience.*

*You may wish to have a pencil and paper to hand during this act of worship, as we shall reflect on past and future.*

## OPENING PRAYER:

Father, we know that you are all-powerful, that you are Sovereign, and that nothing is too difficult for you. Yet as we end such a hard year, and enter into the unknown, we still struggle with worry and fear, still carrying the same burdens leftover from yesterday. It's hard to shake them off, even though we are desperate to leave it fully in your hands. We lay all the things that are weighing us down at your feet. Give us the peace that only you can provide. We know that you care about whatever concerns us, and your ears are open to our prayers. Guard our hearts and minds in this New Year. **Amen.**

## HYMN – NEW EVERY MORNING IS THE LOVE

**New every morning is the love  
our wakening and uprising prove;  
through sleep and darkness safely brought,  
restored to life and power and thought.**

**New mercies, each returning day,  
hover around us while we pray;  
new perils past, new sins forgiven,  
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.**

**If on our daily course our mind  
be set to hallow all we find,  
new treasures still, of countless price,  
God will provide for sacrifice.**

**Old friends, old scenes will lovelier be,  
as more of heaven in each we see;  
some softening gleam of love and prayer  
shall dawn on every cross and care.**

**The trivial round, the common task,  
will furnish all we need to ask,  
room to deny ourselves, a road  
to bring us daily nearer God.**

**Only, O Lord, in thy dear love  
fit us for perfect rest above;  
and help us, this and every day,  
to live more nearly as we pray.**



## BIBLE VERSES ABOUT COVENANT AND NEW BEGINNINGS:

‘Now therefore, our God—the great and mighty and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love—do not treat lightly all the hardship that has come upon us, upon our kings, our officials, our priests, our prophets, our ancestors, and all your people.

*Nehemiah 9.32.*

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

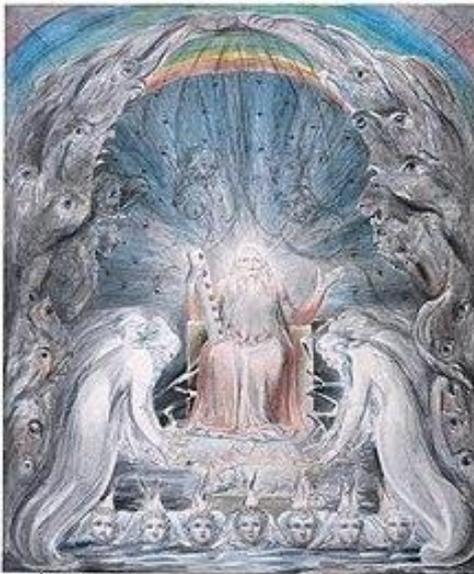
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

The wild animals will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

*Isaiah 43.18-21*

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! ... so, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

*2 Corinthians 5.17 & 20*



The one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also, he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’<sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.’<sup>7</sup> Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

*Revelation 21.5-7*

#### A REFLECTIVE ACTIVITY:

In the midst of all the difficulties of 2020, there are still good things that have happened. Let us reflect on them now. You might want to jot them down.

*There is a short time of silence (with music on the video).*

Despite entering into 2021 in Tier 4, with soaring infection rates, there are some signs of hope, including two vaccines. Let us reflect on the positive things that 2021 might hold for us. You might want to jot them down.

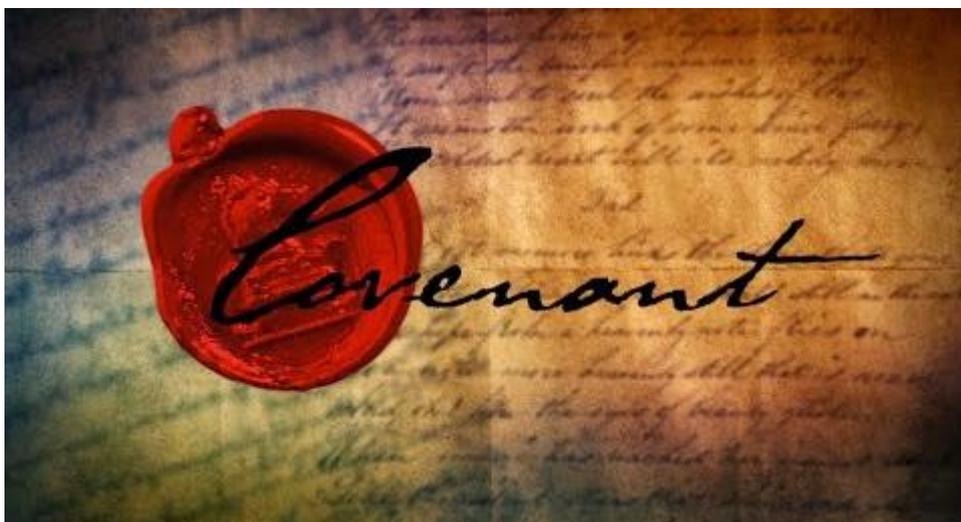
*There is a short time of silence (with music on the video).*

## THE RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT:

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law. The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience. In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God. We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God. Let us then seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

Let us pray.

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 appoints 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. Eternal God, in your faithful and enduring love you call us to share in your gracious covenant in Jesus Christ. In obedience we hear and accept your commands; in love we seek to do your perfect will; with joy we offer ourselves anew to you. We are no longer our own but yours.



**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 may 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.**

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 and worldwide 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, especially all those who have suffered as a result of the pandemic:  
**deliver them from their distress.**

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

Lord our God, you have helped us by your grace to make these prayers, and you have promised through Christ our Lord that when two or three agree in his name you will grant what they ask. Answer now your servants' prayers according to their needs; in this world grant that we may truly know you, and in the world to come graciously give us eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

HYMN – WILL YOU COME AND FOLLOW ME?

**Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?**

**Will you go where you don't know and never be the same?**

**Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?**

**Will you leave yourself behind if I but call your name?**

**Will you care for cruel and kind and never be the same?**

**Will you risk the hostile stare should your life attract or scare,  
will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?**

**Will you let the blinded see if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean in you and you in me?**

**Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found to reshape the world around  
through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?**

**Lord, your summons echoes true when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.**

THE BLESSING:

Jesus, Lord of time,  
**hold us in your eternity.**

Jesus, image of God,  
**travel with us in the life of faith.**

Jesus, friend of the vulnerable,  
**heal the brokenness of our world.**

Jesus, Lord of tomorrow,  
**draw us into your future.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us, through the coming year and always. **Amen.**

