

# STAYING CONNECTED

Sun 10<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021  
Week 43



The One sitting on the throne said,  
"LOOK, I AM MAKING EVERYTHING NEW"  
Revelation 21:5

## COVENANT & COMMUNION ZOOM FROM HOME Sunday 2 p.m.



Today is our annual covenant service. Like many other things in our COVID disrupted life, it will look & feel different from previous years. Page 2 shows our membership covenant & what we agree to. Obviously we look at it with the caveat of 'together' referring currently mostly to 'online or virtual togetherness', but nevertheless the underlying covenant details to support each other in TCF remain the same.

As we read our verse-of-the-year from Rev.21:5 take time to consider the LORD's invitation to "LOOK". Notice that now, in 2021, he is "making everything new". Whilst change is unwelcomed by many, it is actually what we sing for in some of the Christmas carols & refer to in readings.

Last month Tom Wright said, "Christmas reminds us that the Word became flesh, the Word through whom all things were made came to be part of that world that was made, so that the world can be remade (or made new)." The words of Rev. 21:4 paint a beautiful picture of total newness in eternity, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, & death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

When we look, we see that we live in times of uncertainty, fear & change. 2020 was full of sadness & grief for many people. 2021 looks like continuing that for some time yet. One news headline this morning said, 'ICU hospital staff: 'Scared, sad, petrified, worried'.' We wait on vaccines being rolled out & watch how new variants of the virus behave. We look around us, look out for ourselves, for our families & neighbours. We look

to see where God is during this & what is He doing. The old normal has gone, but as yet we don't see the new normal.

The poster above shows a rainbow, reminding us Christians that as we look, we do so with our understanding of God as a covenant keeping good God. This brings fresh hope & a positive perspective to these changing times. I am not a scientist, but I read that in history there has never been a vaccine developed so quickly (under a year) to counter a major public health threat. The previous quickest developed was for mumps & that took 4+ years. God is faithful in keeping His covenant with His people & has enabled science to progress faster than ever before.

Using Phil Jump's focused word, we are 'rooted' in 'covenant' relationship with the LORD, and so we can again take encouragement from the familiar words of Jeremiah 29:11-14 that remain true, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you & not to harm you, plans to give you hope & a future. Then you will call on Me & come & pray to Me, & I will listen to you. You will seek Me & find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you & will bring you back from all the places I have driven you."

We Christians across the denominations are people of covenant. It is central in our Bible & to our faith. In a covenant people enter into a formal agreement. The making of covenants was a common feature in the ancient world, & would often be made with a solemn action, such as a blood sacrifice. The idea of covenant is so important in the Bible that the two parts of it came to be called the Old & the New Testaments ('Testamentum' being the Latin word for covenant). The maxim, "the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed" tells us that the two covenants point to & come from God's abounding love for us.

As we meet & share the Communion emblems, we remember Jesus' words from Luke 22:19-20 (NLT) that emphasize this is a covenant of sacrificial love, "He took bread & gave thanks to God for it. Then He broke it in pieces & gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' After supper He took another cup of wine & said, 'This cup is the new covenant between God & His people—an agreement confirmed with My blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you'."

In this New Covenant Jesus is our strength as per Psalm 148:14 "He has made His people strong, honouring His faithful ones, the people close to His heart". Not only are all the provisions that we will ever need are found in Christ, but the new covenant goes further. The Message says we, "are intimate friends of God". Intimate friends understand everything about each other, so God understands all of our concerns, & He asks us to trust Him, our covenant keeping, faithful God.

## MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Gathered together in the family of God our Father,  
with whom we are at peace through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
we gladly promise to love him with all our heart,  
and we solemnly covenant with Him and with one another to support loyally  
this church,  
believing that it is a habitation of God through the Spirit,  
and part of the one Church of the redeemed,  
belonging to both heaven and earth,

We promise that we will assemble regularly,  
in order to offer to the Lord our prayer and praise,  
to hear his word,  
to partake of the symbols of his body once broken,  
and to share in the fullness of life  
of his continuing body, the Church,  
we will support this church financially,  
and take our share in its work and witness,  
using the gifts and power he has given us,  
thus helping to extend His kingdom  
at home and abroad.

We will endeavour to be an example to each other  
in love and humility,  
to bear one another's burdens,  
and to keep the unity of the Spirit  
in the bond of peace.

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine,  
according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church  
and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever, Amen."

By the power and grace that comes from the Holy Spirit, I commit myself to the  
Body of Christ and the work of God at Tanterton Christian Fellowship.

Signed.....

Date.....