



Church at Home

Sunday 10th January 2021

Sunday worship on is on  YouTube

The easiest way to find the link to the YouTube meeting each Sunday is to find the link on the Corps web page. Type

www.salvationarmy.org.uk/ramsgate and select **Church on YouTube**

You can also find us by searching on YouTube and on the Ramsgate Facebook page.

But we want to still “meet together” and share our thoughts and prayers and testimonies. It will give a chance to share how God has spoken to us during the meeting – and allow us to encourage each other.

Sunday 10 th 10 am	Ramsgate Church at Home (YouTube)
Sunday 10 th 11.15 am	ZOOM fellowship
Sunday 10 th 12 noon	ZOOM Youth Group
Sunday 10 th 4.30 pm	ZOOM Children’s Church Kids Club (up to 11 years)
Tuesday 3 rd 7pm	ZOOM RAMSGATE PRAYERS followed by
Tuesday 12 th 7.30pm	ZOOM Divisional Prayers (see next page)
Wednesday 4 th 7pm	Zoom Quiz this week

Ramsgate ZOOM 8651865167

If you have no internet that we are providing each week's service on a DVD which we will deliver to you.



Please let us know if you **do not want** a DVD each week.

Also tell us if you **need help** watching the DVDs we are sending.



There is a full day of activities on Fortress Radio.

<https://www.fortressradio.online/listen-now.html>

Songs of Praise Sunday 12th January 12.25pm

Claire McCollum is in Stirling, exploring the city's connection to the King James Bible, and JB Gill meets a Scottish singer who found Jesus whilst battling addiction.



South East Division

Divisional Prayer Gathering

Tuesday 12th January 2021 - 7.30pm

Covenant: God's Promise and God's Choice

'I carried you on eagles' wings'

Exodus 19: 4

Zoom ID: 835 5418 1685

Passcode: 659884



Join the Zoom Prayer Gathering:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83554181685?pwd=T3JyTThtZdVjXm0w3cFdMTmJ0Y29hdz09>

Meeting ID: 835 5418 1685

Passcode: 659884

For those who are ill

Merciful God,
we entrust to your tender care
those who are ill or in pain,
knowing that whenever danger threatens
your everlasting arms are there to hold them safe.
Comfort and heal them,
and restore them to health and strength;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For hospital staff and medical researchers

Gracious God,
give skill, sympathy and resilience
to all who are caring for the sick,
and your wisdom to those searching for a cure.
Strengthen them with your Spirit,
that through their work many will be restored to health;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

From one who is ill or isolated

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing can separate me
from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For the Christian community

We are not people of fear:

we are people of courage.

We are not people who protect our own safety:

we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed:

we are people of generosity.

We are your people God,

giving and loving,

wherever we are,

whatever it costs

For as long as it takes

wherever you call us.

Maggie is available with the constant prayer line where you can call or text for prayer. You can contact her on 07840 753 603

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

Birthdays

Helen Harris 10-Jan

Joyce Hill 12-Jan

Rebecca James 14-Jan

Jan Penfold 14-Jan

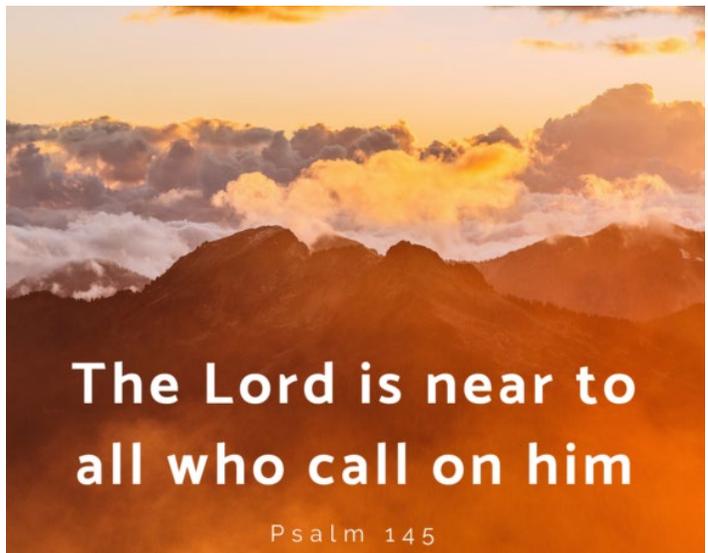


Prayers please for

For the family and friends of Liz Harden who was promoted to glory Friday morning. We pray especially for Nigel, Claire and Leah and for David and Sandra and Mavis and Peter. So many people will be mourning this sad news. We continue to pray for **Muriel** recovering at home, for **Inga**, for **Grant** who will need further treatment at Kings Hospital in London. For **Al**, and **David** also awaiting surgery. Pray this will come soon. **Kate** still recovering at home from COVID-19. She is a little better yet we still pray for a FULL AND SWIFT RECOVERY. **Paul**, son of Hazel who continues his chemotherapy;– and for **Archie** Lisa and Scott.

We prayer for our divisional leaders **Mark** and **Linda** as they isolate following positive Covid tests.

Amen



Quiz
1.Van Gogh 2.Clint Eastwood 3.Queen Victoria 4.Butter 5.Hobart
Performing Arts
1.Theatre Royal Drury Lane 2.Puccini 3.Paris 4.Bix Beiderbecke 5.Manchester
Anagrams
1.NUMBERS 2.ZECHARIAH 3.JUDGES 4.LEVITICUS 5.MALACHI

From Major John

Written in Red

In the Vision and Commitment meeting last Sunday the song 'Written in Red' was sung by Liverpool Walton Songsters. The beautiful words written by Gordon Jensen begin....

In letters of crimson, God wrote his love
On a hillside so long ago;
For you and for me Jesus died'
And loves greatest story was told.
I love you, I love you – that's what Calvary said;
I love you, I love you,
I love you written in red.

My mind turned to some words of a hymn written by the great hymn writer Isaac Watts many years before. He also picks up the theme of 'Written in Red' and refers to 'letters of crimson'

Nature with open volume stands
To spread her Maker's praise abroad,
And every labour of his hands
Shows something worthy of a God.

**But in the grace that rescued man
His brightest form of glory shines;
Here on the cross 'tis fairest drawn
In precious blood and crimson lines.**

O the sweet wonders of that cross
Where God the Saviour loved and died!
Her noblest life my spirit draws
From his dear wounds and bleeding side.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **1 John 4. Verse10**

Time to Smile

A little boy asked his mother why the vicar got four weeks holiday a year, while his dad only got two weeks.

His mother answered, 'Well, if he's a good vicar, he needs it, if he isn't, the congregation needs it.'

A minister arrived at his new church and was interviewed by a young reporter from the local paper. The minister was on good form and told the reporter many of his finest and funniest stories. 'But don't print them, I want to use them in my sermons.' The reporter reluctantly agreed, but the minister was horrified to read in the newspaper, 'The minister told some good stories which cannot be repeated.'

Quiz

1. Who painted a 'Self Portrait with the Bandaged Ear'?
2. Which actor portrayed Rowdy Yates in 'Rawhide'?
3. Who opened the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894?
4. What word can go before, cup, scotch, and fly?
5. What is the capital of Tasmania?

Performing Arts

1. Which is London's oldest theatre?
2. Who wrote 'Tosca'?
3. In which city is Europe's largest opera house?
4. Which cornetist/pianist was considered to be the first great white jazz musician?
5. Which city does the Halle Orchestra come from?

Anagrams. Old testament books. 1. BURNS ME 2. CHAIR HAZE 3. EDS JUG
4. EVIL IS CUT 5. HAIL MAC

New Year Message from General Brian Peddle

Welcome to 2021!

These past months have been gruelling and uncertain for some, filled with unimaginable human pain that, at times, was simply overwhelming. My prayers have been constant, and throughout I have placed my faith in three realities:

First of all, that I know Jesus Christ died for my sins. I know that he rose from the grave. And I know he is coming again. So when there were moments that were dark, seemingly dismal, and the way was not clear I have repeated these words of comfort in my own heart: the Cross, the tomb, the sky. I have been able to say to myself God is steadfast and he is present.

For as long as I can remember, I have always welcomed the new year – loving its unwritten pages, anticipating the impossible and doing so with faith and courage, and in the full knowledge that my God, Jehovah, was going before me. With all that in place I acknowledge that, looking forward today, I do see shadows. I do see promised dates that I am not certain will come to fruition.

The shadows are the ongoing impactful realities of a pandemic, with all the fallout that will require the very, very best of us. It will require men and women of faith. The promises that might not be realised according to my agenda is centred around a vaccine, a relief from the number of cases reported, and some relief from the number of deaths. And then there is the loss of employment, the damage to our world economy.

For Commissioner Rosalie and myself, it is about anticipating travel, and reconnecting with our international Salvation Army as we embrace Salvationists around the world. I long for the promise of a new normal. I might not know all the detail, but I want included in that being able to share with my family, being able to worship together with my friends and the freedom to embrace without reservation all that God has for me – for us – for The Salvation Army in 2021. I do want to be full of faith – and I am being very careful that that faith is well placed. For me, that faith is in a sovereign God, who is Alpha and Omega. I have often said any faith that fails in trial, or plunges in the midst of things like a pandemic, is not the kind of faith I'm looking for. I want to know that God is with us! And of that I am sure.

Hebrews 11:1 says: 'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what do not see.' This verse, in fact the whole chapter, is a testament to God's



impeccable faithfulness to his people. By faith we engage with God – the God of the impossible – as we become a part of his story.

From my vantage point, despite the challenges, chaos, uncertainty and much doubt, I still stand and I ‘raise my Ebenezer’. I pray for the courage and faith that we find in the story of the Israelites who, when facing their worst enemy, the Philistines, turned to Samuel and, ultimately, to God; and God acted on their behalf – the enemy was destroyed. The victory on that occasion was marked by a memorial stone. In the Scriptures we understand that the stone was named Ebenezer – and it represented the simple truth: ‘so far the Lord has helped us’. I am very privileged to lead an international Salvation Army, but let it be known that I only rest when I acknowledge that our God, a God who is faithful, a God who acts on our behalf, has the Army in his hands. So far he has helped us, carried us on eagle’s wings, sheltered us under the shadow of the Almighty, shielded us by his power and, best of all, assured us we can be more than conquerors. The only way that we can welcome this new year with confidence is to do so with faith in a God who has proven that he is able.

My Call to Mission, a call I believe God has placed on The Salvation Army, is a call that cascades down to every corps and centre of ministry. It is a call that reaches out to every soldier and officer, asking us: to **Be Ready** – prepared and living out the mission of God in the world; to **Be Engaged** – active in God’s plan, with obedient faith; and to **Take Responsibility** – never leaving my task for someone else to do.

If there was ever a time in history when our world needs the presence, ministry, love and service of The Salvation Army, **it is now!**

It is my prayer that in 2021 we will be an Army that is out there, not confined to barracks by COVID or any other oppression, but that we will be a people mobilised by the Spirit, compelled by love and battle-ready because God is with us.

A ‘Happy New Year’ is my wish for you, but it comes in the context of challenging difficulties and in some ways in a time when happiness eludes us.

But I am praying for you and those you love, those you seek to serve, that we might know in every challenge the sustaining grace of a mighty God who holds us in the hollow of his hand.

So far the Lord has helped us, and I believe he will be with us in this new year.

May God bless you.

Day 1

Isaiah 43:18,19

Lord God, as we come
before you in prayer help us

to perceive the new thing you are doing; to listen, to understand and
be willing to participate. May we seek to let go of past fears and
embrace new possibilities, guided by your Holy Spirit and
strengthened by your grace.

GOING
FORWARD
together
LIVING IN GOD'S
Covenant



Day 2

Isaiah 43:19b

‘God will make a way where there seems to be no way’ is a line from
a song (SASB 492) that reflects God’s enabling power and encourages
us to trust him. In Scripture the wilderness is often a place of
encounter with God and his transforming power. God is present with
us in the darkest circumstances and the deepest sorrows. As you pray
today, place your situation in God’s hands and resolve to move
forward in faith.

Day 3

Whether you are praying at home or able to gather with other people,
the territory’s theme for this season is ‘Going Forward Together -
Living in God’s Covenant’. May we each encounter the presence of
God this day, praising and thanking him that he calls us into covenant
relationship with him and with each other. Pray for those with whom
you worship regularly. Perhaps you could send a message this week to
one or two people to let them know they are in your prayers.

Day 4

Genesis 8:22

Isn't it amazing that God our creator invites us to partner with him in the agreement known as covenant? God's creative, sustaining and redemptive acts are promised to us, his people. In Genesis 9:8-17 God establishes his covenant, through Noah, with all life on Earth. Let us consider this day how God's covenant has been fulfilled to his creation unconditionally. God keeps his word.

Day 5

The first covenant in Scripture that God made with Noah and for all generations to come is symbolised by the rainbow. These days we know that a rainbow can be explained scientifically as reflected and refracted sunlight shining through water droplets to create a spectrum. We may understand more about this meteorological phenomenon than Noah did but we still cannot create a rainbow. Take time in prayer to recognise God's gifts to us in creation and our response to his covenant as stewards of his provision.

Day 6

Many words are used to define a covenant - agreement, bond and contract are among them. The Hebrew word used in Scripture meaning to seal a covenant literally translates as 'to cut'. In Genesis 15 God revealed himself to Abraham and promised to make him the father of a great nation. His descendants would eventually inhabit the land of Israel. God instructed Abraham to prepare animal sacrifices and arrange them in a particular way. Heavenly fire passed between the cut pieces of flesh, sealing the covenant that God was making with Abraham. A spiritual relationship was sealed in a practical way, although it would be many years before God's promises were fulfilled. Let this prompt us to pray for patience and faith in God's promises to us.

Worship at Home Sunday 10th January 2021

Goodness, what a week.

If you are a glass half full sort of person you may have hoped that the first week of 2021 would see us turn a corner – and you may well be right – maybe we have because the news that we have vaccinated more people in the UK than the rest of the whole of Europe – yes you heard it - more here than in every other European country put together - is tremendous news. I'm sure you all now know someone who has had the jab – or is about to.

We've been told that it is only the vaccinations that will stop Covid and the news is once again proving this to be true. The relaxation at Christmas is now today's news – more cases in a single day since the pandemic started. Lockdown helps – but alone it won't stop the virus. The experts continue to state that only mass vaccination will end this nightmare. Thank God for the scientists, for the chemists and bio chemists manufacturing the vaccinations and for all who are delivering it.

We really agonised over the decision on what to do Christmas day for dinners and we know just how many people were disappointed they could not eat with family and friends at the hall. I now know we made the right decision. And we continue to make the correct decision about volunteering activities at the hall. We know how much some of you have valued being able to practically help at the hall – yet we believe this is now just too dangerous and we are right to stop you coming.

As you sit at home in these cold and dark days - the good news is that there is good news coming. We can begin to believe we will be able to worship in the hall soon – maybe as soon as Easter – wouldn't that be incredible news

Sing song 378

Lord, I come before your throne of grace;
I find rest in your presence and fullness of joy.
In worship and wonder I behold your face,
Singing, 'What a faithful God have I'.

*What a faithful God have I,
What a faithful God.
What a faithful God have I,
Faithful in every way.*

2 Lord of hesed love, you have heard my cry;
Through the storm you're the beacon, my song in the night.
In the shelter of your wings, hear my heart's reply,
Singing, 'What a faithful God have I'.

3 Lord, all sovereign, granting peace from Heaven,
Let me comfort those who suffer with the comfort you have given.
I will tell of your great love for as long as I live,
Singing, 'What a faithful God have I'.

Robert and Dawn Critchley

Prayers



Merciful God, hear our prayers for a world that continues to grapple with a relentless virus, and our gratitude for the light beginning to emerge at the end of a long and deadly tunnel.

As vaccines are at last becoming available for COVID-19 and as people begin to be inoculated around the globe, we give thanks for all whose tireless labours have brought us to this day: technicians, scientists, medical personnel, biotech

companies and government agencies that have worked together to find a cure that will restore our communities to wholeness and health.

We pray that the reach of these vaccines will encompass the world, especially those places where medical resources have far too often been inadequate to the need — places where histories of colonialism have left abiding scars and where under resourced medical systems are overwhelmed by the essential work of caring for those who have been infected.

We continue to pray for healthcare workers around the globe who are running ragged after months of high-risk essential work on the frontlines of this pandemic.

Grant them strength, endurance, wisdom and courage for the living of these days.

We pray for all who are desperately ill, for those who grieve the loss of loved ones and for those whose physical, mental and economic well-being have been most severely impacted by the havoc wrought by the pandemic.

Grant wisdom to all entrusted with civic leadership as they discern and negotiate just ways in which to aid those most afflicted.

Let us live in the Spirit of Christ for one another and for our world.

God, in your hesed love, hear our prayers. Amen.

Sing Song 777

'Mid all the traffic of the ways,
Turmoils without, within,
Make in my heart a quiet place
And come and dwell therein:

2 A little shrine of quietness
All sacred to thyself,
Where thou shalt all my soul possess

And I may find myself:

3 A little place of mystic grace,
Of self and sin swept bare,
Where I may look into thy face
And talk with thee in prayer.

4 Come, occupy my silent place,
And make thy dwelling there!
More grace is wrought in quietness
Than any is aware.

John Oxenham (1852-1941)

If you were able to watch the service from headquarters on YouTube last week you may remember Anthony, our TC, introduce the theme of covenant. Maybe you used that meeting as an opportunity at the beginning of the year to think about your promise to God – as a soldier – as a disciple – as a friend of God. You may have renewed your promise to serve God faithfully in this year – maybe you committed to do some new activity in service, or deepen your prayer life or study the scriptures more.

I have been really excited to hear several people share how they have been using the Examen that we included in the newsletter – a spiritual discipline that can help you be more honest with God each day.

Often on the first meeting of the year we ask about new year promises – and its amusing to hear some of the things you hope to do - Anthony wrote that a few years ago he made a new year promise that he has never broken –



not to make new year promises – but he challenged himself – and us – to wonder if this was a time to commit to something new.

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.

2 Take my voice and let me sing
Always, only for my King;
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from thee.
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.

3 Take my will and make it thine,
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart, it is thine own,
It shall be thy royal throne.
Take my love; my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.

Frances Ridley Havergal (1836-1879)

So lets look deeper into covenant.



This is a summary helpfully prepared by the Bible Project that we have made a bit more personal for us. Hear what covenant means to God and how we might respond.

If you've been around Christians, you've probably heard of the idea of having a personal relationship with God which could mean different things in the Bible like having God as a friend or your father or maybe your teacher.

But there's one particular way that the Bible talks about this relationship that you find all over but strangely we don't talk about it that much.

That's the idea of a partnership with God.

A partnership where we work alongside someone to accomplish a goal together.

And this is actually what you see at the beginning of the Bible.

God creates this good world full of all of this potential and then God appoints these unique creatures – humans as his partners in bringing more and more goodness out of all that potential.

But the humans don't want a partner with God.

They rebel and try to create a world on their own terms.

And so this broken partnership is the Bible's explanation for why we're stuck in a world of corruption and injustice and the tragedy of death.

It's not like there's just one or two humans have rejected the relationship.

In the story of the Bible everyone abandoned the partnership with God.

So what God does is select a smaller group of people out of the many and he makes a new partnership with them called a covenant and in the covenant God makes promises and then in exchange asks his partner to fulfil certain commitments and the purpose of all of this is to somehow use this Covenant relationship to renew his partnership with everybody else.

Now. There are actually four times in the Old Testament that we're told God initiates a covenant relationship with Noah, Abraham the nation of Israel and King David

And it's through these that God is forming a covenant family into which all people will eventually be invited.

So, let's see how these work.

The first one is with Noah.

So in this story God has just brought the flood to cleanse the world of humanity's corruption and Noah and his family are the only ones left. And so God makes a covenant with Noah saying listen, I know that humans will continue to be evil but despite that I'm not going to destroy it like this again Instead the earth will be this reliable place for us to work together.

And what does Noah have to do? Nothing! and that's what's so interesting about this first Covenant is that God is promising to be faithful even though he knows humans won't be.

The next time we see God make a covenant is with a man named Abraham

God chooses him, promises to bless him gives him a large family lots of land where they can flourish. and in return God asked Abraham to trust him and train up his family to do what is right and just and the whole reason for this Covenant is God says it somehow he's going to bring his Blessing to All Families of the world through this one family.

So that's Abraham the next time we see God make a covenant is when Abraham's family grows into the tribe of Israel

In this Covenant is with the whole tribe.

God asks them to obey a set of laws which are these guidelines for living well as a community of God's partners and if they do this then God promises to bless them and that they will become a people who then represent him to the rest of humanity.

That's the Covenant with Israel.

The last Covenant is with King David. Yeah, the tribe of Israel has become this large nation ruled by David and God asked David and his descendants to partner with him by leading Israel in obeying the laws and doing what is right and just and God promises that one day one of David's sons will come and extend God's kingdom of peace and blessing over all the nations.

So those are the four covenants that God makes in order to restore his partnership with the whole world.

But this is what happens Israel breaks the covenant, they worship other gods, they allow horrible injustice.

And so they lose their land and are forced off into Exile.

So it seems hopeless but during this time Israel's prophets talked about a day when God would restore these covenants and in spite of Israel's failure somehow.

They called it the New Covenant

We will look at the new covenant next week – but let's just focus on the key themes from the four covenants

Cornerstone – Hillsong

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest friend

But wholly trust in Jesus name
My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest friend
But wholly trust in Jesus name
Christ alone
Cornerstone
Weak made strong
In the Saviour's love
Through the storm
He is Lord
Lord of all
When darkness seems to hide His face
I rest on His unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil
My anchor holds within the veil (Oh)

Genesis 9:8-17. The covenant with Noah

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: 9 “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you 10 and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. 11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth. ”

12 And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, 15 I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. 16 Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see

it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

17 So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Joshua 24:13-17 – The covenant restored

So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

¹⁶ Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we travelled.

Sing song 49

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds thy hands have made;
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee:
How great thou art! How great thou art!

2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze:

3 And when I think how God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
That on the cross, my burdens gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

4 When Christ shall come with shouts of acclamation,
To take me Home, what joy will fill my heart!
Then I will bow in humble adoration,
And there proclaim, my God, how great thou art!

Stuart Wesley Keene Hine (1899-1989)

2 Samuel 7:8-16 Looking to the New Covenant

Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“‘The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:

¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son.

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever. ”

Above all powers, above all kings,
Above all nature and all created things;
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man,
You were here before the world began.

2 Above all kingdoms, above all thrones,
Above all wonders the world has ever known;
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth,
There's no way to measure what you're worth.

Crucified, laid behind the stone;
You lived to die, rejected and alone;
Like a rose trampled on the ground,
You took the fall and thought of me,
Above all.

Lenny LeBlanc and Paul Baloche

One of the commentaries I have read on biblical covenants said something along these lines

I have had a tough time understanding the bible. That's not to say I have had all my questions answered now, but before my epiphany moment what I read made me question what was going on. How could it make sense? Why would God allow such suffering? Could I love and follow a God of the Old Testament. And when I look at the new Testament was that a different God?

You may have asked the same questions. I know in bible study – at least when we could sit around the table and there was more freedom when the difficult parts came up – this is what we heard each other saying. It doesn't make sense.

So what was the epiphany moment – I'm praying we might all have one today – if we understand that the bible is built around the idea of covenant

The framework – the skeleton – the building block – of the bible is based on the promise God makes to us – and the way we are to respond.

I know we have looked before at the idea of the chosen people.

How does that make you feel?

That you are chosen

God has taken you and set you apart from other people.

You are special.

I wish I could hear you answer.

Some of you would look radiant and know that is what God's grace is all about.

Wonderful grace

That gives what I don't deserve, pays me what Christ has earned

And lets me go free

Wonderful grace, that gives me the time to change, Washes away the stain, That once covered me

And all that I have, I lay at the feet, Of the Wonderful Saviour who loves me

Wonderful love

That held in the face of death, Breathed, in it's final breath, Forgiveness for me

Wonderful love, who's power can break every chain

Giving us life again, Setting us free

And all that I have, I lay at the feet, Of the Wonderful Saviour who loves me

Do you feel chosen – yes you know it and thank God that despite everything you have ever done wrong – He loves you with Hesed love. Unfailing love, covenant love.

This is the covenant. It is very different to a contract – it cannot be broken. What God has said will remain – it will never change. God has promised

Psalm 145:9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.

Isaiah 40:31 But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you', declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Deuteronomy 31:8 The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Joshua 1:9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Psalm 23:4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Philippians 4:6-7 The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

These are covenant promises. God is faithful and no matter how much we fail Him – He will not let you down.

Henri JM Nouwen wrote ‘When God makes a covenant with us, God says: “I will love you with an everlasting love. I will be faithful to you, even when you run away from me, reject me, or betray me.” In our society we don’t speak much about covenants; we speak about contracts. When we make a contract with a person, we say: “I will fulfil my part as long as you fulfil yours. When you don’t live up to your promises, I no longer have to live up to mine.” Contracts are often broken because the partners are unwilling or unable to be faithful to their terms.

‘But God didn’t make a contract with us; God made a covenant with us, and God wants our relationships with one another to reflect that covenant. That’s why marriage, friendship, life in community are all ways to give visibility to God’s faithfulness in our lives together.’

Do you feel chosen?

Some of you will look to the floor and feel unworthy. I am not chosen – I am not good enough. God is working in my life – but I’m not there yet – and so I can’t possibly be chosen.

Some people struggle the whole of their life believing they are not good enough.

You might well have started this year promising to read the bible every day, pray every day, call and encourage the people you know you must care for. And today it’s the 10th of January and you have already failed. You are already beating yourself up for the fact you have got it wrong again, as you did last year and the year before.

You must believe that we are never told to “be good” in order to gain God’s approval.

Quite the opposite. All of our good efforts to impress God are like dirty rags. They’re offensive to Him. They belittle the all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus.

God doesn't want a top performer on His team. - He wants devoted followers.

He wants a child who goes to their father not with fear of not being good enough, but with the cheerful assurance that he loves us just the way we are

My shortcomings, my brokenness, and my weaknesses don't embarrass God; they are exactly what qualify me for God's love and grace.

Jesus says: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mark 2:17)

Why do you insist on trying to be good when Jesus asks you to admit your failings and celebrate His lavish love?

You don't need to make God proud of you: you are chosen

You don't need to do anything to get God's stamp of approval: just claim Jesus's finished work on the cross as your righteousness!

You don't need to convince God you're a worthy addition to His team: You are already welcomed as His beloved child.

God's unmerited love doesn't just secure eternal salvation—it assures grace for every day.

God isn't disappointed in our failings. He takes great delight in you and me, and he rejoices over us with singing.

Sing – Your Grace still amazes me

My faithful Father, enduring friend

Your tender mercy like a river with no end

It overwhelms me, covers my sin

Each time I come into your presence I stand in wonder once again

Your grace still amazes me

Your love is still a mystery

Each day I fall on my knees

'Cause Your grace still amazes me
Your grace still amazes me

Oh patient saviour, You make me whole
You are the author and the healer of my soul
What can I give You, Lord what can I say
I know there's no way to repay You only to offer You my praise

It's deeper, it's wider, it's stronger, it's higher
It's deeper, it's wider, it's stronger, it's higher
Than anything my eyes can see

Your grace still amazes me
Your love is still a mystery
Each day I fall on my knees
'Cause your grace still amazes me
Your grace still amazes me

“In Christ, you have nothing to prove. You’re chosen.

And maybe some of you might feel a little uncomfortable by this

Me chosen, what is so special about me – what about everyone else.

Well the fact is that the covenant promise is for all peoples.

In Timothy it says Jesus wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.
Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away

John 6:37

John Wesley was one of the greatest preachers who has ever lived. He was a man and a human being, but he was a miracle himself. John Wesley crossed the Atlantic Ocean thirteen times when it was a miracle if anyone got across without disaster. He rode across this country on horseback and muleback, establishing Methodist churches and sowing the seed of the Gospel. John Wesley had an unusual voice. He never used a microphone. He would preach to as many as forty thousand people in an open field without a P.A. system. It is said that his voice would carry a mile. He would lift up his voice and it would fairly ring across the heads of thousands of people.

One day when he had preached to a large open-air crowd, Lady Huntington and other royalty went up to him and said “Mr. Wesley, we would like to entertain you for tea.” So he went to tea. But just before he went into the home of this royalty of England, someone handed Wesley a little dirty piece of paper, which he stuck into his long Prince Albert coat.

While being entertained at tea, one of the royalty said, “Mr. Wesley, we think you went a little too far today in your preaching. ” “Why do you say that?” this great Methodist preacher asked.

“Because you made the statement that God would never refuse anyone. You went so far as to say that Jesus would take people whom the Devil was even tired of. You said the Lord would take the Devil’s castaways.”

“Yes, I believe that,” he answered. As she was talking, John Wesley reached into his pocket, got the note and read it.

We are just two old, sinful women, two soiled doves of the London underworld who heard you preach today. We have lived in sin all of our lives. We heard you say that Jesus would take even the Devil’s castaways. Hearing that and believing it, we have trusted Him and have been saved.

Mr. Wesley folded the note and looked through the glass of the large and beautiful doors. Out there he saw two old women with their rags gathered about them, standing shuddering in the cold. After reading the note to Lady Huntington and the other royalty, he said, “There are two people out there who have been

away from God all of their lives, who have lived in the very gutters of this city.
The Lord saved them today.

There is no record of Jesus Christ ever refusing anyone. Thieves came to Him, and He took them in. When people flung a woman at His feet and said that she deserved to be stoned, He took her in. When a cursing, swearing fisherman crossed His path, He took him in. This Bible teaches that Jesus has never refused anyone. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

We cannot boast that God has chosen us – He has do so because he loves us and wants us to know that love – now, today and forever.

But this is where the covenant is reciprocal

What is our response.

Throughout the bible – from beginning to end it is clear

Love God with all you heart and love your neighbour as yourself.

Why

Because the world need to see the way we are supposed to live

We are chosen

We are covenanted people

We are set apart so that the world can see God's love through us.

This is the covenant theme throughout the bible

That God wants relationship with all peoples and we – you and me – we are the people who are to point the way to God by the way that we live and the way that we love

And we return to the word Heseḏ – covenant love

What is covenant love to us – how do we show that covenant love to this world

A story Jesus told is probably the best known of all the stories in the bible

A man comes to Jesus and says – what is the most important law in the bible, I have not got time to read the whole bible – just tell me in a word how to live my life

Jesus said it is very simple

Love God, love your neighbour as you yourself

Already this was too hard so the man tried to dodge the question – who is my neighbour

And Jesus says let me tell you a story

And Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan

Some men who do nothing, and one man – a foreigner – actually more than a foreigner – one from a part of the country that was utterly hated – who does everything.....

And Jesus says who was the neighbour

And the man replied – the man who showed the most Heseḏ love

You cannot love your neighbour as yourself without being merciful

Do you believe that this week God will allow you to speak to someone in need – someone you can show Heseḏ love to?

Maybe alone, maybe depressed, maybe hungry, maybe homeless,

But I can guarantee that if you look – you will see how God sets you up to be able to share hesed love

But there is more

Give people a second chance

But that is not how the world works

When we get hurt we do one of two things

We get them back, take revenge, pay back an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth

Or we ignore them, push them aside, have nothing to do with them

That's the way the world acts – but we are called to be different – to show hesed love

How do you rate yourself when people need a second chance?

Do you show hesed love or are you rude, bitter, angry, harsh, hurtful?

I asked what your favourite word is

And my challenge is that it should be hesed love

And more than anything I would love this Salvation Army to be known as group of people who show hesed love

Who are patient with people who have odd ways

Who help anyone around who is hurting

Who give people second chances...and third....and forth

People won't say, we love your band, we think your uniforms are great, we think you do great food

No – they say we love the Salvation Army because you show hesed love

Do good to those who hurt me

Hesed love is giving people what they need not what they deserve

If I got what I deserved – I would not be standing here. None of us deserve God's love – but he loves us because he is God and that is his nature. No matter what I do he will love me

And it needs to be the same for us. The fact is the people who hurt us the most are the people who need the most love. They need hesed love. Who has hurt you the most in life

They need your hesed love

Who has hurt you this week?

They need your hesed love

Sing 699

Every promise we can make,
Every prayer and step of faith,
Every difference we can make
Is only by his grace.
Every mountain we will climb,
Every ray of hope we shine,
Every blessing left behind
Is only by his grace.

Grace alone which God supplies,
Strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone,
We will go forth in grace alone.

2 Every soul we long to reach,
Every heart we hope to teach,

Everywhere we share his peace
Is only by his grace.
Every loving word we say,
Every tear we wipe away,
Every sorrow turned to praise
Is only by his grace.

Scott Wesley Brown and Jeff Nelson

One of the shortest songs in The Song Book of The Salvation Army, 604, is written by Charles Wesley. It forms the perfect benediction to these days reflecting on and praying about covenant. These verses encapsulate the joy of making and renewing our covenant relationship with God. Let us make this our prayer today:

Lord, in the strength of grace,
With a glad heart and free,
Myself, my residue of days,
I consecrate to thee.
Thy ransomed servant, I
Restore to thee thine own,
And from this moment live or die
To serve my God alone.



Find the underlined words

By the love that never ceased to hold me
In a bond nor life nor death shall break,
As thy presence and thy power enfold me,
I would plead fresh covenant to make.
From before thy face, each vow renewing,
Strong in heart, with purpose pure and deep,
I will go henceforth thy will pursuing,
With my Lord unbroken faith to keep.



You are so loved.



LOVE

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God,
the faithful God who keeps covenant and
steadfast love with those who love Him and
keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.

Deuteronomy 7:9

