



THE FIRST WORD

News from the First United Methodist Church
of South Bend, Indiana

In the heart of the city since 1831

January 12, 2011

Issue #426

Wesley's Covenant Service

For more than 250 years, the people called Methodists have renewed their commitment to God by using a worship service which was created by John Wesley. It has been modified over the years, but the contents remain the same.

On the first Sunday of the year we used it in both services – but I wanted you to have a sort of modified copy, if you would like to use it in your private or family devotionals. I changed the “we” to “I” for use individually, rather than in corporate worship. This service has changed and shaped my life over the years, and I hope you have the same blessing. It begins with a thanksgiving – as our prayers so often do. But then it evolves into a confession, and then the words from the bible for forgiveness.

At the end, it culminates in a powerful prayer, which is also found separately in our hymnal – the covenant prayer. This is a prayer we use every year at our Annual Conference, when we gather as representatives from more than 1,600 churches across Indiana. It is a powerful prayer of commitment, which the rest of the service builds toward.

A Covenant is a two way agreement, where each side promises to do something. The example I usually use is that of my mortgage – I was surprised to find it titled, in archaic, Gothic script, **Mortgage Covenant**, in which the bank promised I could live in my house as long as I paid them money, and I promised to pay them; a nice, two-way agreement!

Turn the page of this newsletter (or, if you are receiving it via e-mail, click as appropriate!), and use this service for yourself. You can do it in sections, you can take a sentence at a time if you like, and really work with it. You can take the whole thing in one swallow if you like, and come back to sections you need to work on later.

If you do it seriously, it can change your life.

Continued on next page

Mary L. Hubbard

Continued from front page

God loves me. The Christian life, to which I am called, is a life in Christ, redeemed from sin by Christ, and through Christ consecrated to God. Upon this life I have entered, having been admitted in that new covenant of which my Sovereign Jesus Christ is mediator, and which was sealed with Christ's own blood, that it might stand forever.

On one side the covenant is God's promise that God will fulfill in and through me all that was declared in Jesus Christ, who is the author and perfecter of my faith. That this promise still stands I am sure, for I have known God's goodness, and experienced God's grace in my life day by day.

On the other side I stand pledged to live no more just for myself, but for Christ who loves me and gave himself for me and called me to serve God that the purposes of Christ's coming will be fulfilled.

I remember the mercies of God and the hope of God's calling, and now examine my life by the light of God's Spirit, that I may see where I have failed or fallen short in faith and practice, and, considering all that this covenant means, may give myself anew to God.

I will thank God for all of God's many mercies.

O God my creator, the fountain of all goodness, who has been gracious to me through all the years of my life: I have you thanks for your loving kindness which has filled my days and brought me to this time and place.

You have given me life and reason, and set me in a world which is full of your glory. You have comforted me with family and friends, and ministered to me through the hands and minds of my fellows.

You have set in my heart a hunger for you, and given me your peace. You have redeemed me and called me to a high calling in Christ Jesus. You have given me a place in the fellowship of your spirit and the witness of your Church.

In darkness you have been my light, in adversity and temptation a rock of strength, in my joy the very spirit of joy, in my work the all sufficient reward.

You have remembered me when I have forgotten you, followed me even when I fled from you, met me with forgiveness when I turned back to you. For all your patience and the abundance of your grace, I praise your holy name, O God.

I will now examine myself before God, humbly confessing my sins and watching over my heart, so that I will not deceive myself and shut myself out from God's presence.

Continued on next page

Continued from page 2

O God, my Creator, who has set forth the way of life for me in your beloved Son: I confess with shame my slowness to learn from Christ, my reluctance to follow Christ. You have spoken and called, and I have not given heed; your beauty has shone forth, and I have been blind; you have stretched out your hands to me through my fellows, and I have passed by. I have taken great benefit with little thanks; I have been unworthy of your changeless love.

Forgive me, I beseech you, the poverty of my worship, the formality and selfishness of my prayers, my inconstancy and unbelief, my neglect of fellowship and the means of grace, my hesitant witness for Christ, my false pretenses and my willful ignorance of your ways.

Forgive me for when I have wasted my time or misused my gifts. Forgive me for when I have excused my own wrongdoing or evaded my responsibilities. Forgive me that I have been unwilling to overcome evil with good, that I have drawn back from the cross.

Forgive me that so little of your love as reached others through me, and that I have borne so lightly wrongs and sufferings that were not my own. Forgive me for when I have cherished the things that divide me from others, and for when I have made it hard for others to live with me, and for when I have been thoughtless in my judgments, hasty in condemnation, grudging in forgiveness.

If I have made no ventures in fellowship, if I have kept in my heart a grievance against another, if I have not sought reconciliation, if I have been eager for the punishment of wrongdoers and slow to seek their redemption, have mercy on me and forgive me, O God.

(Spend some time in silent reflection and confession to God)

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my sins. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Amen.

This is the message we have heard from Christ, and proclaim, that God is light, and in God is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And now, I will bind myself with willing bonds to my covenant God, and take the yoke of Christ upon me.

Continued on next page

Worship Schedule

Worship, Chapel
9:00 a.m.

Sunday School
10:00 a.m.

Worship, Sanctuary
11:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours

Monday - Thursday

7:00 a.m. - Noon

12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Friday: 7:00 a.m. - Noon

Phone: (574) 233-9463

Fax: (574) 233-9478

First Staff

Mary L. Hubbard

Senior Pastor

Marsha Dollar

Administrative Assistant

Wishart Bell

Director of Music

Betty Woodland

Organist

LouAnne Wilson

Financial Manager

Diana Green

Coord. of Children's Ministries

David Frey

Coordinator of Youth Ministries

Ben Noell

Building Manager

John Jung-Zimmerman

Upper Room Director

**HAVE YOU REMEMBERED
FIRST CHURCH IN YOUR
WILL?**

Continued from page 3

This taking of Christ's yoke means that I am heartily content that Christ appoint me my place and work, and that God alone is my reward.

Christ has many services to be done; some are easy, others are difficult; some bring honor, others bring reproach; some are suitable to my natural inclinations and temporal interests, others are contrary to both. In some I may please Christ and please myself; in others I cannot please Christ except by denying myself. Yet the power to do all these things is assuredly given me in Christ, who strengthens me.

I will make the covenant of God my own. I will engage my heart to God, and resolve in God's strength never to go back.

Being thus prepared, I will now, in sincere dependence on God's grace and trusting in God's promises, yield myself anew to God.

O Sovereign God, holy Creator, who has called me through Christ to be a partaker in this gracious covenant: I take upon myself with joy the yoke of obedience, and engage myself, for love of you, to seek and do your perfect will.

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 heartily yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit, you are mine, and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

DIANA GREEN, OUR BELOVED STAFF

Diana Green, as you know, does a superlative job with our kids. The problem is, the number of our children has shrunk rather drastically. As a consequence, Diana's job shifted, and last year we asked her to do visiting for us as well.

Things have continued to change, and we continue to struggle with our church budget; it still looks as though we will be receiving less from pledges this year than last. This is the second year that no one on staff has received increases – indeed several have again received decreases, while we have tried to keep our staff and provide the services you have come to expect.

Now we are reshuffling once again.

Diana Green will continue to be our Children's Coordinator; she is fantastic there on the second floor. We just need more kids.

But another staff member, David Frey, will be taking over some of Diana's duties.

David is our Youth Director (and does a fantastic job, along with Cathy Johnson); David will now be doing our visiting. He is a fully ordained pastor, who is able to work for us part-time, and we appreciate him – and Diana!

Let's work together to help Diana, so that we can keep her at what she does the best – working with our kids! We appreciate her so much... let's invite families with children, and fill the second floor. Tell Diana how much you appreciate her!

A WORK IN PROGRESS

When you made your New Year's resolutions recently, did you think about how you might develop your Christian life this year? May we suggest that you consider becoming a member of a Covenant Group. Members of these groups are Christian disciples who are a "work in progress".

Here's what we do: We meet weekly for an hour only. Time is spent in sharing what is going on in our lives and our church. When difficulties occur for one of our group, we discuss how each of us can help. In addition we talk about how we can further serve God as His disciples. We also read scriptures and share our understanding of the passages as well as how each relates to our lives. From time to time we discuss our role as Christians in local, national and world situations.

We would like to invite you, our church members and church family, to attend some of the sessions. The daytime group meets on Monday at 11:30 a.m. in the Covenant Bible Room on the second floor. Pauline Medhurst is the convener for the group. Sue and Stew Church are the leaders for the Monday evening group, which meets at 7:30 p.m. Please call these leaders if you have questions. Pauline can be reached at (574) 277-2726 and Sue or Stew can be reached at (574) 247-0959.

As you acquaint yourself with the two groups, you may wish to join one of them. We would also like to develop other groups that may meet at more convenient times. This is a wonderful way to grow and share the love of God.

PRAYER LIST

Following is a prayer list. Please remember to include these people in your regular prayers:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chris Dooley (Dolly Slack's Grandson) - Deployed to Afghanistan | |
| Elijah Jones - In military service | Liz Reinke - Health concerns |
| Michael Pershell - In military service | Peggy Soderberg - Health concerns |
| Stephen Gramza - In military service | Al & Maxine Jones - Health concerns |
| Jonathan Mayers - In military service | Debbie Webb - Health concerns |
| Jeremy Martin - Special needs | Marilyn Prue - Health concerns |
| Barbara Dobson - Health concerns | Maria Dattilo - Health concerns |
| Ron Florey Health concerns | Joan Martin - Health concerns |
| Wayne Jackson - Health concerns | Carol Goodhew - Health concerns |
| Mary Lou Gordon - Health concerns | Chris Leeke - Health concerns |
| David Case - Health concerns | Bruce Slack - Health concerns |
| Margaret Wickizer - Health concerns | Virginia O'Hair - Health concerns |
| Joe Harnish - Health concerns | Dylan Mayers - Health & Family concerns |

Also remember to pray for our members in long-term care, assisted living, and independent living:

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Martha Abernethy | Betty Byers | Mary Jo Beemer | Mary Etta Rees |
| Ruth Garen | Virginia O'Hair | Rich Daniels | JoAnn Ballard |
| Clem Gramza | Clarence Dickey | Jo Perkey | Betty Barnes |
| Hugh & Lois Warren | Marian Wilson | Jim Borden | Thair Best |
| Freda Mossman | Melvena Stenger | Betty Fisk | Al & Maxine Jones |
| Hannah Messersmith | Margaret Wickizer | | |

Additionally pray for:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Our Bishop Mike | Our Church | Our Pastor Mary |
| Our District Superintendent, Cindy | Our Church Staff | |

The staff would like to thank the congregation for your generous Christmas Gift and for the love that accompanied it. We are deeply grateful!

Ben Noell
Mary Hubbard
Wishart Bell
Cathy Johnson
David Frey
Marsha Dollar
Betty Woodland
John Jung-Zimmerman
Lou Anne Wilson
Doreen Green

THE DANGER OF BELIEVING TOO LITTLE

Some people warn us against the danger of believing too much about God and becoming religious fanatics. I want to warn you against the opposite danger. It is also possible to believe too little about God and become a spiritual pigmy. Take a look under your fingernails. There you will find countless tiny germs living out their lives. If you were to circulate a questionnaire among these organisms, you would find that even the most intelligent ones would not believe in skyscrapers, or in stars, or in the existence of Paris, France. They might not even believe in the existence of you.

The same is true of what we believe about God. Just as it is possible to believe too much, it is also possible to believe too little. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.... Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things... Strive first for the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:25-33).

I genuinely believe that people who trust God with their money will find their finances in good hands.

During the past forty years of my life, nine-tenths with God's help has totaled up to more than ten-tenths without God.

Be careful that you do not use your money to believe too little about God.

[Herb Miller]

DECEMBER 2010 MISSION TALLIES

Food Pantry: For the month of December, the Food Pantry served 414 families, representing 1,598 individuals. 27.13% of those served were new for the month of December.

Soup Kitchen: 710 people were served and 562 carry-out bags were given away for a total of 2,811 cups of soup served in December. FYI - The Soup Kitchen was closed December 24 through December 31.

Upper Room: 19 residents at the end of December (17 men and 2 women)

***Do not judge, and you will not be judged.
Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.
Forgive, and you will be forgiven.***

Luke 6:37

The First Word is published bi-monthly by:

First United Methodist Church

333 North Main Street

South Bend, IN 46601

Phone: 574-233-9463

Fax: 574-233-9478

Check out the website:

www.firstumcsb.org

**NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SOUTH BEND, INDIANA
PERMIT NO. 752**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

A GREETING FROM THE CELTIC MUSICIANS



*May your troubles be less
And your blessings be more.
And nothing but happiness
Come through your door.*

Please join us for Worship in the Chapel Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and hear the Celtic Musicians play.