

Suggestions for churches and housegroups

Preparing for the Covenant Service

Historical Precedent

John Wesley urged Methodists to give the Covenant Service a central place in their spiritual life.

In Wesley's day people would spend time in the days and weeks beforehand preparing for the Covenant Service. The final preparation event would be a day's retreat which they would spend "in prayer, fasting, reflection and self-examination".

Having renewed their relationship with God in Christ, people were encouraged to continue to work out the implications for their lives. Further pastoral guidance was offered in the weeks that followed the service.

Preparation Today

Opportunities for preparation will vary.

Minimal / No pre-preparation necessary:

- Plan a Quiet Morning using the videos on the Reflect webpage. You will also need the poems from the web page. This would allow for individual reflection.
- Plan a Quiet Day or 2 x Quiet Mornings etc by adding group sharing to individual reflection.

Some pre-preparation:

- A housegroup could take 4 or 5 sessions by both using the videos and reflecting on the "Approaching the Covenant Service" sheet from the Reflect webpage. This would need some additional material.

More preparation:

You might like to use the material mentioned above as part of a discipleship course or sessions aimed at consideration of the Christian life. It might be used part way through the course or as the final session(s) as per John Wesley's practice above.

Material to be used with the Quiet Morning Videos

Please find reflections and questions on the next page....

Session 1:

Personal Reflection:

- How do you see God? What is God like?
Is God a belief or idea in your head? Do you experience God in your heart?

Ponder your image of God.

What is helpful? What is not? And why not?

- Read from T.S. Elliott's Little Gidding: "*With the drawing of this LoveAnd know the place for the first time.*"

What have you discovered over the years about God?

Has your relationship deepened?

Can you detect how your encounter with God has led to transformation in your life?

Bible Reflection:

- *Read through one or more of the Bible Passages from the Covenant Service and ponder their impact on you.*

Exodus 24: 3-11, Deuteronomy 29: 10-15, Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Romans 12: 1-2, John 15: 1-10, Mark 14: 22-25

What attracts your attention? What "shimmers" for you?

What do they reveal about God to you?

Poem:

"Covenant of Love" (from Reflect's webpage)

Session 2:

Personal Reflection:

- *Spend time reading the Covenant Prayer*

What do you find easy to say and why?

What do you find difficult to say and why?

What particularly jumps out at you?

What things might God be asking you to stop? And to continue?

What new things may God be seeking to place in your life?

- *Read Gillian Collins' hymn "Listen, my people, here is my challenge:" (Singing the Faith Plus website).*

How does this covenant hymn resonate in your life?

Bible Reflection:

- *Continue reading the Bible Passages from the Covenant Service (see Session 1).*

Poem:

"Covenant Challenge" (from Reflect's webpage)