**2021 Session 1: Covenant: John 15:1-8**

**As we begin 2021, we’re spending this session thinking about how committed we are to God, individually and as a family of faith where there is always room for one more. How committed do we want to be to God this year? The Bible reading and the Methodist Covenant Prayer will give us space to explore the answer, which may well be different for each of us, but which ought to enable us to set out how we want to live in the coming year.**

**A Session Outline - 40 mins total, but can be longer or flexible if you wish**

**Introduction - 10 mins (longer if you’re in a group I suspect!)**

1. How are you?
2. What notable things have happened recently?
3. Is there anything distracting you from focusing on God today? If yes, think or talk about that and then pray and give it to God as you begin.

**Time With the Bible - 15-20 mins**

*What does this passage tell me about God?* To answer this question, you might want to think about whether the passage speaks about God directly or indirectly. Is there a prophecy quoted, or does the passage remind you of another part of scripture? If so, spend some time following the leads. How does the passage remind you of what you’ve known about God before? Does it make you think differently about God than you have done before?

*What does this passage tell me about myself?* To answer this question you might want to ask how you felt as you read the passage and how you feel as you reflect on it now. Do you identify with a particular character? Does it make you feel happy or sad, hopeful, excited, confused or any other emotions?

If you feel challenged, or as if something in the passage is really speaking to your or feels personal to you today, spend a few minutes thinking: what is it? What about it feels important to you?

*What is this passage inviting me to do differently?*

As Christians we are meant to live according to the truth that is in Jesus and to not be the same as before we knew him (Ephesians 4:20-24). As we learn the good news of Jesus and the truth about his love we are bound to change.

Spend time thinking about things in your life you might want to be or to do differently as a result of today’s study and pray about those things.

For each session, we will also provide a few questions to pick out the key elements of the passage and try and help you to be guided through the study.

**Time in Prayer - 10 mins**

Each time you meet or spend time reflecting alone, make sure you leave plenty of time to pray. You could pray about:

The Church and its leaders, both ours, Churches nearby and the worldwide Church

Situations locally or in the world around us

Things shared by people during your time together

Those who are afraid, sick or those who are bereaved

Committing to God that you will follow through on what you’ve been invited to do by today’s study.

Your neighbours and the street you live in.

Those who govern us locally, nationally and internationally.

**Study Questions**

1. First, spend time reading the Covenant Prayer line by line. Which lines stick out to you particularly? Which remind you of yourself? Which would you most like to focus on this year?
2. Say the prayer together, slowly, pausing at each line. At the end, talk about how you are feeling and if saying it has brought to mind any thoughts of what this year might feature for you.
3. Turning to John 15 and its vision of Jesus as the vine: does the idea of being a branch of the vine bring you comfort, or something else?
4. Do you think pruning is good, bad, or something else?
5. What does this passage say about the process of the Christian life?

**Covenant Prayer**

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 wholeheartedly yield all things

to your pleasure and disposal.

And now, glorious and blessed God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'

The Methodist Covenant Prayer

**Something To Do This Week**

Where do you think you can bear fruit this year? Are there any parts of you that need pruning? Spend some time reflecting on these questions and ask God to do what needs to be done in you.