



LAKESIDE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH & PRESCHOOL

The Proclamation

Leader: Christian family and friends, true life, **good life** is found **in Christ**; in **turning away** from sin and being **solely dedicated** to God's will. Christians are those who have responded to God by choosing to follow Jesus in this new covenant that he has made with us through his cross. He sealed this covenant with His own blood so it would last forever.

On **one side** of this covenant is **God**, who promises to give us new life in Jesus Christ. Every day God proves His goodness and grace to us, showing us that His promise still stands firm.

On the **other side, we** promise not to live life for ourselves but to live solely for Jesus Christ because He has loved us and given His life for us. We do this by **gathering** new people to faith, **growing** in the likeness of Christ, and **sowing** the love of Christ for the transformation of our families, church, community, and world.

As we enter the New Year, it is important for us to **remember and reaffirm** our promises and vows. Today, we are invited to renew our covenant with God as many generations have done before us. Today, we make the covenant our own, renewing it with both joy and sincerity.

The Confession

Leader: We seek to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, but sometimes we fall short. Let us now examine ourselves before God, humbly confessing where we have missed the mark and re-submitting our hearts so that we do not deceive ourselves and cut ourselves away from God. Let us pray:

People: Father God, You have set forth the way of life through Your beloved Son Jesus Christ. We shamefully confess the times we have not gathered new people to faith in you because we've been fearful or doubtful or too focused on ourselves. We confess that we are often quick to spend time and energy on many things more than on growing our relationship with you through prayer, worship, and Bible reading. And we confess the times You put people in need before us so we could sow your love into their lives to help, but we did not. Many times You have spoken and called to us but we have not listened. You have revealed Your beauty to us, but we have been blind. You have stretched out Your hands to us, but we have passed by them. We have accepted Your gifts and offered little thanks. We are unworthy of Your unchanging love.

Leader: Take a moment **honestly evaluate** how you did **gathering, growing, and sowing** the love of Christ in 2016. Assign yourself a number between 1 and 10, 1 meaning "I didn't do well at all" and 10

meaning "I did great!" for gathering, growing, and sowing the love of Christ. Here are some questions to help you:

1. Gathering

1. How much time did you spend in relationships with non- or nominal Christians?
2. How much did you pray that God would give you opportunities to serve them and share your faith with them?
3. How often did you help and serve them?
4. How often did you invite them to worship or pray or serve with you?

2. Growing

1. How much time did I spend in prayer, Bible study, and worship this year compared to my other priorities?

3. Sowing

1. How much time, money, and energy did I devote to helping meet the needs of my neighborhood, community, and world this year?

Write these down in the "Notes" section of your bulletin. Then screen shot them into your phone or place the list on your fridge to remind you to ask God to help you grow in these areas of faithfulness in 2017.

We **now confess** to you our sins.

Please forgive us for the poverty of our worship...

-for the selfishness of our prayers...

-for our inconsistency and unbelief...

-for the ways we neglect fellowship and Your grace...

-for our hesitation to tell others about Christ....

-for the ways we deceive others...

People: Forgive us for when we waste time and when we misuse the gifts you have given us. Forgive us for when we have made excuses for the wrong things we have done and when we have purposefully avoided responsibility.

Leader: Forgive us when we have been unwilling to overcome evil with good and unwilling to carry our cross. Forgive us when we have not allowed Your love to work through us to help others and that we have not made their suffering our own. Forgive us for those times when instead of working for unity we made it hard for others to live with us because of our lack of forgiveness, inconsiderate judgment, and quick criticism.

People: Forgive us for when we have not tried to reconcile with others and when we have been slow to seek redemption.

Leader: Forgive us also for any other sins we have committed.

Words of Assurance and Pardon

Leader: God, the Father of all mercies, is faithful to cleanse us from our sins and restore us to Christ's image. Praise and glory be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

The Invitation

Leader: In God's presence now let us renew our covenant commitment to Christ as his servants. Let us give ourselves to gathering, growing, and sowing love with Him so that we may fully belong to Him. Jesus Christ has left us with many services to be done. Some of these are easy and honorable, but some are difficult and disgraceful. Some line up with our desires and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we please both Christ and ourselves. In others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Take a few moments in prayer and jot down how God may want you to improve how you gather new people to faith, grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ, and sow the love of Christ in 2017. Here are a few questions to help you:

1. Gathering

1. Who do you feel God wants you to develop or deepen a personal relationship with?
2. Who do you feel God wants you to reach out to so you can share your faith and invite them to explore life with God?

2. Growing

1. What things do you waste time on that could be used for prayer and study instead?
2. What might help you engage God in the Bible more? Who can you ask for help from?
3. How can you make more time for more regular worship, small group attendance?

3. Sowing

1. What needs are you passionate about meeting?
2. How can you use the gifts, time, financial resources God gives you to make a difference?

Jesus Christ, we offer You this prayer:

People: Let me be Your servant. Let me follow your commands. I will no longer follow my own desires. I give myself completely to your will.

Leader: The power and strength to live as true servants is given to us in Christ. We accept the place and work that He gives us, acknowledging that He alone will be our reward.

People: I am not my own. I am Yours alone. Make me into what You will. Rank me with those You will. Put me to use for You. Put me to suffering for You. Let me be employed for You. Let me be laid aside for You. Let me be lifted high for You. Let me be brought low for You. Let me be full or let me be empty. Let me have all things or let me have nothing. With a willing heart, I freely give everything to Your pleasure and disposal.

Leader: Christ is Savior to those who are His true servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. To be His servant is to consent fully to His will. Christ accepts nothing less. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing.

Now confirm this truth in holy covenant. **Make it a reality** in your life in these three ways:

First, set apart time in your day, more than once, to be spent alone with the Lord. Seek to perceive God's special care for you and gracious acceptance of you. Carefully think through the words of this covenant and its conditions. Examine your heart, even if you have freely given your life to Christ. Name the sins in your life. Reflect on whether you are willing to choose Christ's mission for you to gather, grow, and sow the love of Christ for the transformation of your family, neighborhood, church, and world. Be sure you are clear in all of these so you do not lie to God!

Second, uphold a serious spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God's covenant. Do not trust in your own strength and power but **rely upon God's** promise of giving grace and strength. In this way, He will empower you to keep your promise.

Fourth, be determined to be faithful. You have given your heart and life to God. You have opened your mouth to dedicate yourself to the Lord. With God's power, never go back to your former way of living.

And **last, be prepared to renew** your covenant with God. Fall on your knees. Lift your hands. Open your hearts.

The Covenant Prayer

Leader: All who are able and willing, come kneel on the steps and let us pray together:

People: My righteous God, for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ, see me now as I kneel down before You. Forgive my unfaithfulness when I have not done your will. You promise mercy if I turn to You with my whole heart. From the bottom of my heart, I here and now renounce every priority in my life I put in first place ahead of you, covenanting with You that I will not commit any known sin. In Your power I will watch for any temptation that will lead me away from You.

Leader: Before all heaven and earth, we here and now acknowledge You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as our Lord and God. We vow to give all of ourselves, body and soul, to be Your servants and to serve You in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.

Leader: Jesus Christ is the way God gives us to salvation.

People: Jesus, we here and now accept You, our living Way, truth, and life. We join ourselves in covenant with You. We renounce our own unworthiness, and vow that You are the Lord, our righteousness. We renounce our own wisdom and take You as our only guide. We renounce our own will and take Your will as our law.

Leader: Christ has told us that at times we must suffer with him.

People: Jesus, in this covenant we accept whatever comes in life. Through Your grace we promise that neither life nor death will separate us from You.

Leader: God has given us the law of loving God and others as our rule of life.

People: We willingly take on Your yoke and burden of love. All Your laws are holy, just, and good. We accept them as the rule for our words, thoughts, and actions, promising to order our whole lives around your direction. We will not allow ourselves to neglect anything we know to be our duty.

Leader: The Almighty God searches and knows us, even the thoughts of our hearts.

People: O God, You know that we have made this covenant today in sincerity, without deceit or reluctance. If You find anything false in us, guide us and help us to set it right. And now, glory be to You, God our loving and gracious Father; glory be to You, God the Son, who loves us and washes us from our sins in Your own blood; and glory be to You, God the Holy Spirit, whose power has turned our hearts from death to life in God and who is our Comforter and Guide. O mighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have now become our Covenant Friend. And we, through Your infinite grace, have become Your covenant servants. You are ours and we are Yours. So be it. May this covenant we have made here on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.