

***As you offered it to them, you offer it to us,  
and we receive it with thanks.***

We remember how, after supper, you took a cup of wine,  
You blessed it and offered it to them saying:  
“This is my blood. It is shed so that you may be fully alive.”

***As you offered it to them, you offer it to us,  
and we receive it with thanks.***

So now we come, because you have invited us freely,  
and we remember, through this meal, your self-giving.  
And we will keep doing this until your kin-dom has come.

*The people are invited to come forward to receive communion.*

### **We Go To Live The Life**

We thank you, Divine Lover,  
***for welcoming us at your table,  
for offering yourself to us again,  
and for nourishing us with your presence and strength.***

We have joined ourselves with you, O God,  
***With your life,  
With your Spirit,  
With your purpose,***

Now we go to live this life, and to share it with others.  
In Jesus' compassionate, healing name.  
Amen.

# **Taking Up The Yoke**

*A Liturgy for Covenant*

### **We Remember God's Invitation**

Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke fits perfectly, and the burden I give you is light.” (Mt.12:28-30 NLT)

***In response to your invitation, Jesus, we come;  
With our burdens and our treasures, we come;  
With our anxieties and aspirations, we come;  
Longing to live a life of value and meaning,  
But with nothing but ourselves to give,  
We come and seek to take up your yoke.  
Amen.***

### **We Celebrate God and Humble Ourselves**

God of hidden nearness and relentless love,  
From the beginning it is your breath that has given us life;  
And your hands that have formed and nurtured us.  
***We remember and celebrate that we belong to you;  
Forgive us when we forget who we are and why we live.***

For millennia your call has whispered through the hearts of women and men;  
And you have always been there for those who have made the choice to listen.  
***We are so grateful for your faithfulness;  
Forgive us when we close our ears and turn away.***

In love and compassion you became like us and lived our experience;  
And you absorbed the worst that we can do – forgiving, dying and rising.  
***We are so comforted by your gentle, challenging acceptance;  
Forgive us when we refuse to let the evil in us die.***

As with Abraham and Sarah, Moses, David and others you bind yourself to us;  
And you invite us into the covenant of healing, transforming grace.  
***Your commitment to us is surprising and unmistakable;  
Forgive us when we hesitate to accept your invitation.  
We turn back to you again, and lean into your ever-open arms.***

***In Jesus' Name. Amen***

*The Lord's Prayer is said or sung.*

### **We Hear God's Message**

*The Scriptures are read and the message is shared.*

### **We Seek God's Resources**

In you, Jesus, we recognise what a human life can be,  
we see the possibilities and we are inspired by the call;  
But we have tried to change before and failed,  
we have promised to do better and lost faith,  
we have joined the millions in our world who seek a make a difference  
but we have not had the power in ourselves to do it.

So we pray for ourselves,

***That your Spirit will fill us and your life will empower us  
that we may be true to the promises we make to ourselves and to you.***

We pray for our families, friends and communities,

***That your love may bind us and your compassion flow through us  
that we may be a source of healing and renewal to one another.***

We pray for our nation and leaders,

***That your wisdom may guide us and your truth inspire us  
that we may learn to see and hear you in each other,  
and may find a way to care and provide for every person.***

We pray for our world and its peoples,

***That your peace may spread and your purpose be fulfilled among us  
that we may work to embody and establish your kin-dom,  
and may be faithful stewards of the earth you have given us.***

***Amen.***

### **We Renew Our Commitment**

*(At this point in the service the traditional version of the Covenant Prayer may be used in place of this new version)*

Sister and Brothers, joined in the quest to follow Christ,  
God has invited us into the family of God,  
into a covenant – a lifelong commitment – with Christ.

To accept this invitation is to claim for ourselves  
the grace, love and promises of God

But it is also to take up the yoke of Christ  
to commit all of our energy and resources to God's purposes.

Some of the things God calls us to do are easy and some are hard,  
sometimes we will enjoy great benefit,  
and sometimes endure great sacrifice.

Sometimes following Christ gains us respect and honour  
and sometimes it leads to rejection and criticism.

Whatever life may hold, though, we have learned that it is best faced  
with our hands firmly clasped in that of Jesus,  
and with our hearts filled with God's strength and courage.

So, let's renew our commitment to God and to God's ways  
and let's trust in God's firm grasp of us,  
not in our weak grasp of God.

God of Disturbing Invitations,  
We hear again your call to join ourselves with you  
we recognise your generous offer of yourself  
and your desire for us to give ourselves to you in return;  
So now we take up your yoke  
and acknowledge you as our authority,  
our frame of reference  
our source of life, strength, and direction  
our yardstick for morality and ethics  
and the final word in every thought, action and relationship;

***God of the Covenant,***

***I place my life in your hands – for it to be yours to direct and not mine  
May you decide what I should do and with whom I should do it;  
May you guide when I should be active and when I should rest;  
May you sustain me when I am well and when I suffer;  
May you be reflected in me when I am praised and when I am challenged;  
May I give thanks to you when I enjoy abundance,  
and when I know what it is to go without;  
May my whole life be given in service of your love and salvation,  
use all that I have and all that I am for your purposes;  
And may I always remember that you, O God, and I belong to each other.***

***This is my commitment - I stand by it.***

***And I ask that you, Jesus, bear witness to it.***

***Amen.***

### **We Feast At The Lord's Table**

Let's celebrate the God who longs for union with the likes of us;  
***We are grateful and glad, and we celebrate the Lord.***

For the life you gave us,  
For the life you lived among us,  
For the life you willingly laid down to defeat evil and death,  
For the life you took up again in triumph,  
And for the new life we find in you  
***We give thanks and we praise you.***

We remember, Jesus, your total commitment to us,  
And the way you revealed it and ensured that we would never forget.  
We remember how, at supper with your friends, you took bread,  
You blessed it, broke it, and offered it to them, saying:  
"This is my body. It is broken to make you whole."