



THE TERRITORIAL COMMANDER'S COVENANT SUNDAY MESSAGE

Greetings to you! I hope you've had as good a conclusion to 2021 as was possible, including a blessing celebration of Christmas, however that worked out for you. And now I wish you all a very happy New Year and for whatever 2022 will hold for us, may these days be marked by us all walking ever closer to God, holding on to him and being led by him.

Just after the start of the New Year we also enter into the Christian season of Epiphany, a word which means to make known or to reveal. Epiphany marks and remembers the coming of the wise men to Bethlehem. Their bowing down in worship and, of course, their presentation of their gifts to the Christ child. By doing so these mysterious travellers reveal Jesus to the world as Lord and as King, a true epiphany. It's helpful to recognise that The Salvation Army calendar for the United Kingdom and Ireland territory, our Covenant Sunday, up until recently known as Commitment Sunday, falls in Epiphany, this season of making known and of revealing. Resources have been prepared for leaders of every corps, plant and fellowship, to shape and adapt as they choose for their own context so that together, we may revisit and renew the blessings of our covenant relationship with God.

Covenant Sunday is for us all, whatever part you play in The Salvation Army - attender, member, officer, employee. Whether you've been part of The Salvation Army family for a few days or several decades! Whether you're six or whether you're 106 and anything in between, our Covenant Day, most probably but not definitely a Sunday, it's for you. It's the opportunity to stop and to breathe and to take stock of where we are on this journey, which we take together as followers of Jesus, as his disciples, as his apprentices. It's about putting first things first, personally, yet being together as we live out God's covenant, just like the wise men, before even offering our gifts of time, talent and treasure.

We first bowed down in worship and in relationship. Do you recall the occasion when Jesus was asked 'Master what is the greatest commandment in the law?' And Jesus replied 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment' he said. 'And the second is to love your neighbour as yourself.' Life is all about loving God and loving others.

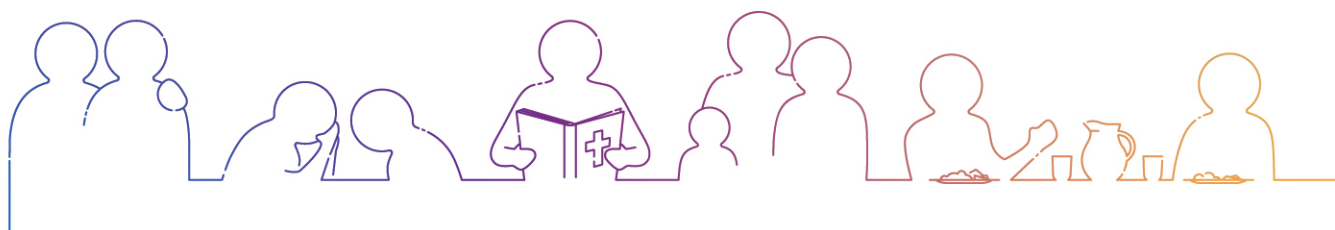
Although many of us may choose to renew existing covenants that have previously been made with God and with other people over our lifetime, this year, for our Covenant Sunday there is a simple, beautiful prayer of covenant that we're all invited to consider and enter into. A prayer that echoes the mandate of love God, love others. Here's the card, a covenant card. And on the back, it says this beautiful prayer:

"Loving Father, the depth of your love is beyond my comprehension. But today, I respond to that love. As your love lives in me, may my thoughts, my words, and my actions reflect you at all times and in every place. May my soul be a place where we meet, where all that I am becomes all that you want me to be in heart, mind and spirit. That in being one with you I might see you, know you and show you in every part of my life, that in me and through me,



Love God
Love Others

COVENANT
SUNDAY 2022





your Kingdom may come now. May this covenant of love draw me deeper and bring others closer to you"

As we own these words, these crafted words, I believe they have the capacity to change the world. Certainly, our world and certainly The Salvation Army. We've all been through horrendously challenging difficult days. A draining couple of years if truth be known. Many of us are desperate for an infusion of God's love and God's power. Back in 1949 there were very different circumstances in the world but the same need of an empowering and an infusion and an unfolding of the Spirit of God upon the Army. General Albert Orsborn, who himself was well known as a poet and gifted songwriter, held a Salvation Army day of renewal at the Westminster Central Hall, the Methodist Central Halls here in London, but he asked Will Brand to write the song for the day and he penned the words that we find in 634 in the songbook which I'd like to read to you just now.

When from sin's dark hole thy love had won me,
And its wounds thy tender hands had healed,
As thy blest commands were laid upon me,
Growing light my growing need revealed.
Thus I sought the path of consecration
When to thee, dear Lord, my vows were given,
And the joy which came with full salvation
Winged my feet and filled my heart with Heaven.

But my heart at times with care is crowded,
Oft I serve with weak, o'erladen hands,
And that early joy grows dim and clouded
As each day its heavy toil demands.
Have I ceased from walking close beside thee?
Have I grieved thee with an ill-kept vow?
In my heart of hearts have I denied thee?
Speak, dear Lord, O speak, and tell me now.

By the love that never ceased to hold me
In a bond nor life nor death shall break,
As thy presence and thy power enfold me,
I would plead fresh covenant to make.
From before thy face, each vow renewing,
Strong in heart, with purpose pure and deep,
I will go henceforth thy will pursuing,
With my Lord unbroken faith to keep.

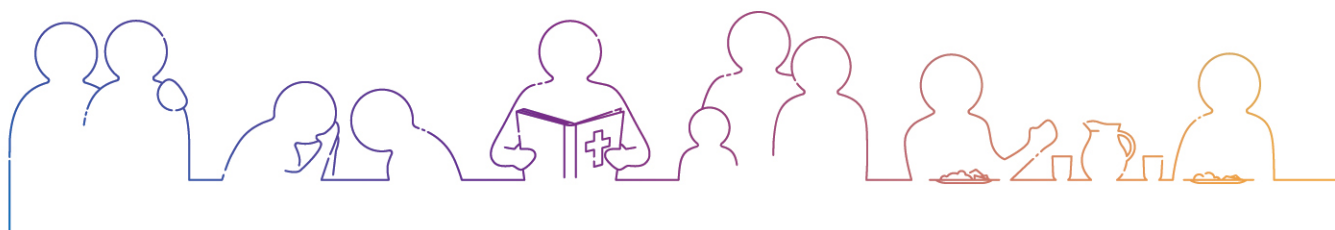
And the refrain says:

By the love that never ceased to hold me,
By the blood which thou didst shed for me,
Whilst thy presence and thy power enfold me,
I renew my covenant with thee.



Love God
Love Others

COVENANT
SUNDAY 2022





And that's our hope, that's our prayer for Covenant Sunday. Or if this is experienced on a different day of the week for you, perhaps even in your own home, that this will be a sacred life giving, life renewing moment for you that will shape our commitment, will shape our words, will shape our actions for 2022 as together we move forward for the glory and praise of God.

So Happy New Year, and may God bless our Covenant Day 2022.



COVENANT
SUNDAY 2022

