

Covenant Reflections

John Wesley began the tradition of renewing our covenant with God on the first Sunday of the New Year. It is a time for us to reflect, not upon New Year's resolutions which often seem destined to fail as soon as they are uttered, but rather upon our relationship with God, which makes it possible for us to face a new year filled with hope.

Although John Wesley is the one who encouraged Christians to renew their commitment, our practice traces back further than that, to the people of Israel, who annually renewed their commitment to God, and remembered as well, God's commitment to them.

At this time, as we face the beginning of a new year, it is fitting that we pause to remember that we are in a special relationship with God, that God's grace provides us strength, wisdom, and courage. Covenant renewal or a service of commitment provides us with the communal recognition and celebration of our special, intimate relationship with God.

Better than resolutions, God knows our needs. God knows our dilemmas. God knows our strengths as well as our weaknesses. There isn't one of us here who can't rely upon God for courage and strength. Our participation in a ritual as old as the people of Israel and as new as this year, reminds us of our special bond with God. Our participation reminds us as well of the strength and durability of that bond. Nothing can shake it. Nothing can break it.

During the past year we have been involved in conversations with other congregations in the city as we seek God's guidance and direction for the life of this congregation and of our sister congregations. As we begin this new year we will continue to seek to

discern God's direction. And as we search we can be certain that God continues with us in the journey. Each of our challenges will bring its own answer. Each will help to shape who we are becoming. Each will be brought before God that we might truly seek God's direction for our future. Our discernment is continuing. We are beginning to move into the future that God holds out to us.

May this time of renewal be an opportunity for each of us to openly and freely acknowledge our dependence upon God. May it also serve as a reminder throughout the coming year, with its tasks and its challenges, that we are inextricably linked to the greatest source of power there is. Amen.