

**I do here willingly put my neck under your yoke, to carry your burden. All your laws are holy, just, and good. I therefore take them as the rule for my words, thoughts, and actions, promising that I will strive to order my whole life according to your direction, and not allow myself to neglect anything I know to be my duty.**

The almighty God searches and knows your heart.

**O God, you know that I make this covenant with you today without guile or reservation. If any falsehood should be in it, guide me and help me to set it aright. And now, glory be to you, O God the Father, whom I from this day forward shall look upon as my God and Father. Glory be to you, O God the Son, who have loved me and washed me from my sins in your own blood, and now is my Savior and Redeemer. Glory be to you, O God the Holy Spirit, who by your almighty power have turned my heart from sin to God. O mighty God, the Lord Omnipotent, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you have now become my Covenant Friend. And I, through your infinite grace, have become your covenant servant. So be it. And let the covenant I have made on earth be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

Sermon Ann Jacob

Hymn 77 "How Great Thou Art" HOW GREAT THOU ART

Sending Forth

**JOYS AND CONCERNS**

*our prayers are with:*

- Art Carlson's brother-in-law, Sven, who is in Danbury Hospital and very ill.
- Steve Bowers who is now on dialysis and has been added to the transplant list.
- Anne Meehan's nephew, Scott, whose brain tumor was found to be malignant, but treatable.
- Kimber's friend, Linda, who has health issues which postponed her surgery.
- Roberta Buddle's niece, Cindy, who is undergoing chemotherapy.
- Roberta Buddle's niece, Wendy (Cindy's sister), who had a double mastectomy.
- Dorothy O'Rourke whose cancer has returned.
- Glenn Knapp, who fell and broke his hip, and is recovering in Village Crest.
- Laurel Partrick's cousin, Cynthia, is facing her third recurrence of cancer.
- Emily Nixon's cousin, who has been diagnosed with cancer.
- Steve and Adrienne Kern's friend, Steve, who has prostate cancer.
- Marlene Davis' son, who is undergoing chemotherapy.
- Kay Jones' niece, Sherri, whose cancer has returned.
- Jan and Gene Parsons' friend, Brad, whose cancer has returned.
- Sue Sterling's cousin, Mary, who has lung cancer.

**OUR LIFE IN COMMUNITY**

**We welcome visitors and are glad you are here. If you are visiting today, Welcome and please fill out an attendance card, located in the pews, and place it in the offering plate.**

**Church Office Closed**—The Church Office will be closed December 29th and 30th so that our office staff may enjoy the holidays with their families. We apologize for any inconvenience.

**Not Just Eggs**- Not Just Eggs will be serving on Sunday January 4, from 8:30 am 11:30 am and is open to all.

**Spaghetti Supper** will be serving on Saturday, January 10 from 5:00 - 7:00 pm. Please join us for spaghetti with homemade meat sauce, (vegetarian or butter

available upon request) plus salads, homemade desserts, and soft drink. For more information, please contact the church office at 860-354-4596.

**2015 Offering Envelopes** are available in the Narthex. If you do not have envelopes and would like them, please contact the church office at office@newmilfordumc.org or 860-354-4596.

**Cancellations and changes** to church services and events will be posted on WFSB (CBS Channel 3), WTNH (ABC Channel 8), on our website www.newmilfordumc.org, and on the church phone system.

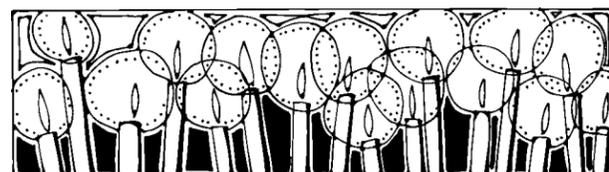
**New Milford United Methodist Church  
Every Member A Disciple**

**Ushers:** Sue Sterling, Lu Vivona, and Marlene Davis  
**Liturgist:** Chris Prause

**Meetings & Opportunities this week:**

- Mon., Dec. 29 at 10:30 am Tai Chi in Fellowship Hall  
at 6:00 pm Open Door Band Practice  
at 7:00 pm Wesley Group in Fellowship Hall
- Tues., Dec. 30 at 3:00 pm "Our Daily Bread" Food Barn
- Sun., Jan. 4 at 8:30 am "Not Just Eggs" in Fellowship Hall  
at 9:30 am Traditional Worship (Sanctuary)  
at 11:30 am Contemporary Worship (Sanctuary)  
at 2:30 pm Youth Group

Monday - Friday at noon AA meeting in Fellowship Hall



**First Sunday after Christmas**



*An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream: Take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel. MATTHEW 2:13*

The Service of Worship  
New Milford United Methodist Church  
68 Danbury Road  
New Milford, Connecticut 06776  
860-354-4596  
NewMilfordUMC.org

*First Sunday after Christmas Day  
John Wesley's Covenant Renewal Service  
Sunday, December 28, 2014 at 10:00 am*

*John Wesley established Covenant Services as an important part of early Methodist life. The first Methodist Covenant Service was held August 11, 1755. Wesley found the service rich and meaningful. Eventually these services came to be held on New Year's Eve, New Year's Day or a Sunday early in the year.*

*Though the structure of this service is somewhat different than the one conducted by John Wesley, much of it is taken directly from Wesley's service of 1780.*

*The heart of the service, focused in the Covenant Prayer, requires persons to commit themselves to God. This covenant is serious and asks congregants to participate sincerely.*

*You are advised to make this covenant not only in you heart, but in work; not only in word, but in writing. Therefore, with all reverence, lay the service before the Lord as your act and deed. And when you have done this, sign it. Then keep it as a reminder of the holy agreement between God and you that you may remember it during doubt and temptations.*

**ENTRANCE AND PRAISE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome and Announcements**

*Stand or sit, as you feel called, for the singing of the song.*

**Song 2** "Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord"

**Greeting**

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

Come let us worship the Lord who established a new covenant through his Son Jesus Christ.

**We come in spirit and in truth.**

*All Sit.*

**PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD**

**Prayer for Illumination**

**Open our hearts and minds, O God, by the power of your word and Holy Spirit, so that, as the word is read and proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us this day. Amen.**

**Old Testament Lesson**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1-13**

*Page 616 in the Old Testament in your pew Bible.*

## Gospel Lesson

**Matthew 25:31-46**

*Page 28 in the New Testament in your pew bible.*

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

*All sit.*

## CHILDREN’S CHURCH

*The children are invited to come forward and sit at the chancel with the pastor as the congregation sings the first verse of “Jesus Loves Me,” hymn number 191.*

## Children’s Sermon

### Prayer

#### The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.  
Amen.**

## OFFERING

### Invitation to the Offering

#### Offertory

*Please stand for the Doxology.*

#### Presentation, Hymnal 95

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

#### Offering Prayer

*The Congregation sits.*

#### Opening Prayer

O God, Searcher of all our hearts, you have formed us as a people and claimed us for your own. As we come to acknowledge your sovereignty and grace, and to enter anew into covenant with you, reveal any reluctance or falsehood within us. Let your Spirit impress your truth on our inmost being, and receive us in mercy, for the sake of our Mediator, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## LITANY OF THANKSGIVING

Let us give thanks for all of God’s mercies.

O God, our Covenant Friend, you have been gracious to us through all the years of our lives. We thank you for your loving care, which has filled our days and brought us to this time and place.

**We praise your holy name, O God.**

You have given us life and reason, and set us in a world filled with your glory. You have comforted us with family and friends, and ministered to us through the hands of our sisters and brothers.

**We praise your holy name, O God.**

You have filled our hearts with a hunger after you, and have given us your peace. You have redeemed us, and called us to a high calling in Christ Jesus. You have given us a place in the fellowship of your Spirit and the witness of your Church.

**We praise your holy name, O God.**

You have been our light in darkness and a rock of strength in adversity and temptation. You have been the very Spirit of joy in our joys and the all-sufficient reward in all our labors.

**We praise your holy name, O God.**

You remembered us when we forgot you. You followed us even when we tried to flee from you. You met us with forgiveness when we returned to you. For all your patience and overflowing grace.

**We praise your holy name, O God.**

## RESPONSES

*Stand or sit, as you feel called, for the singing of the song.*

**Song 69** “Here I am to Worship”

*All stand for the singing of the hymn.*

**Hymn 117** “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” ST. ANNE

### Proclamation

Dearly beloved, the Christian life, to which we are called, is a life in Christ, redeemed from sin, and through him consecrated to God. Upon this life we have entered, having been admitted into that New Covenant of which our Lord Jesus Christ is mediator, and which He sealed with His own blood, that it might stand for ever.

On one side the covenant is God’s promise that he will fulfill in and through us all that He declared in Christ Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of our faith. That His promises still stand we are sure, for we have known His goodness, and proved His grace in our lives day by day.

On the other side we stand pledged to live no more unto ourselves, but to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and has called us to serve Him that the purpose of His coming might be fulfilled.

From time to time we renew our vows of consecration, especially when we gather at the Lord’s Table: but on this day we meet expressly, as generations of our fathers have met, that we may joyfully and solemnly renew the Covenant which bound them and binds us to God.

Let us then remembering the mercies of God, and the hope of His calling, examine ourselves by the light of His Spirit, that we may see wherein we have failed or fallen short in faith and practice, and, considering all that this Covenant means, may give ourselves anew to God.

## WESLEY’S COVENANT SERVICE

### Invitation

Commit yourselves to Christ as his servants. Give yourselves to him, that you may belong to him. Christ has many services to be done. Some are more easy and honorable, others are more difficult and disgraceful. Some are suitable to our inclinations and interests, others are contrary to both. In some we may please Christ and please ourselves. But then there are other works where we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

It is necessary, therefore, that we consider what it means to be a servant of Christ.

Let us, therefore, go to Christ, and pray:

**Let me be your servant, under your command.**

**I will no longer be my own.**

**I will give up myself to your will in all things.**

Be satisfied that Christ shall give you your place and work.

**Lord, make me what you will. I put myself fully into your hands: put me to doing, put me to suffering, let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and with a willing heart give it all to your pleasure and disposal.**

Christ will be the Savior of none but his servants. He is the source of all salvation to those who obey. Christ will have no servants except by consent; Christ will not accept anything except full consent to all that he requires. Christ will be all in all, or he will be nothing. Confirm this by a holy covenant. To make this covenant a reality in your life, listen to these admonitions:

First, set apart some time, more than once, to be spent alone before the Lord; in seeking earnestly God’s special assistance and gracious acceptance of you; in carefully thinking through all the conditions of the covenant; in searching your hearts whether you have already freely given your life to Christ. Consider what your sins are. Consider the laws of Christ, how holy, strict, and spiritual they are, and whether you, after having carefully considered them, are willing to choose them all. Be sure you are clear in these matters, see that you do not lie to God.

Second, be serious and in a spirit of holy awe and reverence.

Third, claim God’s covenant, rely upon God’s promise of giving grace and strength, so you can keep your promise. Trust not your own strength and power.

Fourth, resolve to be faithful. You have given to the Lord your hearts, you have opened your mouths to the Lord, and you have dedicated yourself to God. With God’s power, never go back.

And last, be then prepared to renew your covenant with the Lord. Fall down on your knees, lift your hands toward heaven, open your hearts to the Lord, as we pray:

### Covenant Prayer

*The people kneel or bow.*

**O righteous God, for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, see me as I fall down before you. Forgive my unfaithfulness in not having done your will, for you have promised mercy to me if I turn to you with my whole heart.**

God requires that you shall put away all your idols.

**I here from the bottom of my heart renounce them all, covenanting with you that no known sin shall be allowed in my life. Against your will, I have turned my love toward the world. In your power I will watch all temptations that will lead me away from you. For my own righteousness is riddled with sin, unable to stand before you.**

Through Christ, God has offered to be your God again if you would let him.

**Before all heaven and earth, I here acknowledge you as my Lord and God. I take you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for my portion, and vow to give up myself, body and soul, as your servant, to serve you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life.**

God has given the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way and means of coming to God.

**Jesus, I do here on bended knees accept Christ as the only new and living Way, and sincerely join myself in a covenant with him. O blessed Jesus, I come to you, hungry, sinful, miserable, blind, and naked, unworthy even to wash the feet of your servants. I do here, with all my power, accept you as my Lord and Head. I renounce my own worthiness, and vow that you are the Lord, my righteousness. I renounce my own wisdom, and take you for my only guide. I renounce my own will, and take your will as my law.**

Christ has told you that you must suffer with him.

**I do here covenant with you, O Christ, to take my lot with you as it may fall. Through your grace I promise that neither life nor death shall part me from you.**

God has given holy laws as the rule of your life.