



George Romney, 1734-1802. No one knows when Romney painted this portrait of Wesley.

Greetings!

Each January during my pastoral career, I preached on the Covenant in the Wesleyan tradition. We used to call it the Covenant Prayer by John Wesley, but recent scholarship has suggested that perhaps the Rev. Wesley did not write the document, but rather aspects of the Covenant Prayer can be found throughout all his writings – sermons, letters, poetry and commentary on scripture. It is a good read for New Year's Day. I commend it to you. I have included both the traditional text and the modern version, both of which can be found in the Book of Worship and other United Methodist publications.

In this season of continued pandemics, this prayer, whether traditional or contemporary, or whether you believe John Wesley wrote it or that others cobbled it together from his writings, has a deeper meaning, particularly for individuals who are lonely and longing for the community of worship again, people missing physical touch, and those outraged and hurt over injustice and marginalization because of color or gender. And it has corporate implications, too. What we say and do together demonstrates whether we are who we say we are or we are just ghost figures of our own imaginations. This prayer has teeth. And it means what it says. The question for us individually and corporately is, "Do we have the courage to pray it?"

Traditional

"I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

*Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.*

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

*I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.*

*And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.*

*And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.”*

(United Methodist Hymnal #607, The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, TN, 1989)

Contemporary

I am no longer my own, but yours.

Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;

put me to doing, put me to suffering;

*let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
exalted for you, or brought low for you;*

let me be full,

let me be empty,

let me have all things,

let me have nothing:

*I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.*

*And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.*

And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen

(Methodist Church in Britain. Retrieved 6 January 2014)

Happy New Year!



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