**Covenant and Covenanting at the Queen’s Foundation**

Covenant is a rich concept in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Though meaning ‘agreement’ or ‘set of commitments’, in contrast to the language of ‘contract’ the term covenant seeks to emphasize the willing, voluntary nature of the participation of both parties into what is nevertheless a binding relationship. In biblical traditions, where God is one of the parties, then it is recognised that God will never go back on the commitment made, however faltering may be resolve of the other party.

In the Methodist tradition it is common to participate in a Covenant Service each year (usually at the start of the calendar year). The text of that service was originally taken and adapted by John Wesley from Puritan traditions. In that service Methodists celebrate God’s faithful love and offer themselves afresh to God’s service. It is a demanding (and lengthy) liturgy, shaping experiences of both joy and seriousness in the renewal of commitment to God in Christ. Methodist students and staff are encouraged to participate in such a service in their home or link churches. For more details about the service, go to: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/what-is-distinctive-about-methodism/a-covenant-with-god/the-covenant-service/>

Without using the Methodist Covenant Service itself (which is a service of Holy Communion), as last year we take up the spirit of what the Methodist Covenant Service is ‘getting at’ by making some commitments ourselves in our online service. In the life of the Queen’s community we recognise that there are many ways, formal and informal, in which we are enacting, before God, covenant commitments to each other. Alongside the formal relationships Queen’s has with the Church of England, the Methodist Church in Britain and the Wesley Holiness Church, there are other churches represented within our life as a community. The Covenanting Service we shall hold is a way to acknowledge, as an ecumenical body, that we seek to offer the best of what we are in our traditions to each other, to recognize the limitations and weaknesses in our traditions, and above all to respect, listen to and learn from those of other traditions alongside whom we study, train and are being formed as Christian disciples.

These are the prayers we shall use towards the end of the service:

Holy Spirit of God, you give us each other

as neighbours, fellow-learners, teachers, colleagues and friends.

You speak to us in and through our words, our gestures, our actions.

You nourish us in our unity and in and through our disagreements.

Fill us with patient love for each other

**Teach us how to listen and to learn**

**To weep with those who weep**

**To rejoice with those who rejoice**

**To challenge and be challenged**

**To forgive as we are forgiven.**

Christ of God, as whose Body we seek to be your Church

You acknowledge all people in your generous embrace

Open our hearts to the richness of the diversity of our community

**Teach us how to recognise you in each other.**

**Root out from within us all discrimination and prejudice.**

**Help us to hear your voice and see your face**

**In our neighbours and in the stranger**

**In those who differ from us in background and expression of faith**

God of all, you are the source of all unity, despite our denominations,

You enable us to be one beyond the walls we so easily build.

Steer us towards that unity which is both gift and call,

and strengthen us to work as one,

even as we recognise and celebrate different gifts.

**Help us to work as one, we pray,**

**and to rejoice in the diverse gifts you have given us.**

**We ask this in Christ’s name:**

**for our whole community**

**for the sake of all churches everywhere**

**and for the peace of the world. Amen**

Whether or not you are able to attend the service online, we trust that you will find the words helpful for your own prayer and reflection.