

Covenant Service 2022

Welcome. Happy new year

StF224 As with gladness men of old

MWB p282 items 2, 13

Moses addresses the people as they renew their covenant with God:
Deuteronomy 30:11-20

We didn't have a covenant service last year, not in the usual way anyway, because we had gone into lockdown. I did it via livestream from home.

Who would have thought...

And what about the future? What does 2022 look like to you? For Mark and I.... How about you?

But, really, what does anyone of us actually KNOW about what will happen in 2022? Who of us actually knows what will happen next month or next week, tomorrow or even later today? None of us.

Humans would go crazy, I think, if we looked too much into the future and really realised how little we do know, how uncertain everything truly is and how shifting the sands beneath our feet. That's why we make so many plans – we need to know we have some control over our lives. Or, rather, perhaps I should say, we need to feel we have some control over our lives. If we studied how much control we actually have we might get too frightened to go forward.

This is part of the human condition, our curse as well as our blessing, you might say. I look at my cat and I realise that she has got it sussed – she doesn't look into the future, she looks at where the warmest safest place is. She curls up and sleeps, then she gets up, checks the food bowl is full, has a little snack then heads out into the wild (my back garden) and has a root around, does a bit hunting, before coming back to curl up and sleep some more. As long as she has , a good place to sleep and some humans to stroke her, she is content.

Humans aren't like that. We see too far into the future, or try to. We make plans, we order our lives, we build defences against the unknown. Our hyperactive minds are our curse. But they are also our blessing, given to us by God to choose our way. We have free will to choose.

And this, really, is the only thing I want to say to you this morning. How are you going to choose this year – what to do, what not to do? And, really, it's not complicated. The reading from Deuteronomy made it clear. All our decisions, really, are pretty basic – are their decisions for life or for death?

It's like I say in the baptism service to every family who brings their child – which way are you facing?...

The same choice faces us every day. Which way are we facing? Which way are we heading? And in whom do we put our trust to accompany us and lead us forward?

We can plan as much as want but, still, we cannot control the future. What really matters is which way we are heading and who we trust to show us the way.

Again and again in the Bible, we are told plainly. Do not be afraid. Trust in God. Place yourself in his hands and follow in his ways.

In Jeremiah 6:16 the Lord says, "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."

And in Rev 3:20 Jesus says, "Here I am! Right here in front of you. I stand at the door of your life and knock. If you will only hear my voice and open the door to me, I will come in and share with you and you with me." Let me in! let me take you by the hand and I will lead you where you need to go.

As we look forward into 2022, trying to see the way ahead but knowing it is impossible, that's actually all we have to do - open the door to Jesus, put your hand in his hand and let him lead you into the future. We can trust in him. In 2022, whatever happens, choose life, choose God.

MP269 I do not know what lies ahead (I know who holds the future)

The Covenant MWB p285 items 15, 17

Lord's Supper MWB p291 items 18, 21, 22, 23, 30

StF545 Be thou my vision

Blessing and sending out MWB p296 items 32, 33