

Our Covenant



Small Group Booklet
January 2015

OUR COVENANT

Dear Small Group Members,

Over the next few weeks we will look at some of the Old Testament (OT) Covenants and what covenant means to us today. We will go deeper into the New Testament (NT) covenant asking what this promise means to me as an individual, to us as a small group, and if it is reflected in our lives and our church today.

The word 'covenant' refers to a solemn agreement, a binding oath or treaty. In the OT it is mostly an agreement between God and the people of Israel, and the bond it establishes is one of love and loyalty. Covenant is from God and is for everyone. God wants a deep meaningful bond with you!

From the start of the Methodist societies John Wesley invited his people to renew their covenant relationship with God. The emphasis of the Covenant is God's ever readiness to enfold us in his loving arms. This generous love does not depend on us "doing" anything to deserve it, but it is given freely through His GRACE. Our loving response to this marvelous gift is thankfulness, obedience and trust - recognizing God's grace in our lives. This transaction is not just made for our own benefit; it is given to share with all.

May this series be a journey of renewal - discovering again God's amazing Grace and love for you. May you find rest in the assurance of His unfailing love. It is wider, longer, higher and deeper than anything we know (Ephesians: 3:16-19). Rejoice in the fact that this love is yours forever!

God Bless!

Nadja



*This book was produced and printed through the **Grace of God** and with contributions from: Neil Oosthuizen, Dalene Jordaan, Festus Marumo, Anita Thomas, Kerry Wetton, Carol Roodt and Shakes Mashinini.*

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THIS SMALL GROUP BOOKLET:

We see every member of BMC connected, loved and fully assimilated into the life of BMC, living out their faith in their day to day lives. We see the river of God flowing through each and every member offering Christ's hope to the world. We believe that everyone living a Christ centered life is a person of spiritual influence. We believe that life happens in community: Small groups.

SMALL GROUPS: Intentionally transforming people in loving community!

***Romans 12:1-2** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be **transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

***Acts 2:42-47** The fellowship of the believers: They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

This booklet offers you **individual reflections** for every day and a **small group agenda** that takes into account your groups spiritual and emotional dynamics.

- Main Bible reading and Message

- Daily Devotions (Sunday to Saturday)



- Background information



- Small group Sessions

- Welcome: Getting to know each other (building relationship).
- Worship: Inviting God into our meeting.
- Accountability: Keeping us responsible for our promises.
- Word & Questions: Studying the bible with questions in community.
- Ministry to each other: Prayer.
- Reaching out: Helping or serving others.
- Going Deeper during the week.



Group members are encouraged to do the daily readings, prepare for the questions and investigate the background of the Biblical passages assigned to each week.

WEEK 1: THE OLD TESTAMENT COVENANT

MAIN SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 12:1-3

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

MAIN MESSAGE: GOD MAKES COVENANT WITH US - NOT US WITH HIM.



DAILY DEVOTIONS - WEEK 1:

SUNDAY 18 JANUARY: GENESIS 9:8-17

God has made a covenant with you - that you will not be destroyed at the end of your life - because of His sacrifice. Thank God for this new covenant that he has made with all who believe in Him.

Father God I thank and praise You for initiating this blessed Covenant of love and Grace that brings me into a deeper and more intimate relationship with You.

MONDAY 19 JANUARY: GENESIS 17:1-5

God in His grace gives us a "new name" as we follow him: Fearless Peter, Strong Betty. Do you know your new name?

Abba Father I thank You that I am accepted and named Beloved adopted into Your family. Reflection: I am my Beloved's and He is mine.

TUESDAY 20 JANUARY: EXODUS 34:10

A Covenant comes from God. What awesome promises has God made to you?

Lord I hold fast to the covenant promises of provision, health, long life and family as I seek to align myself in loving and faithful obedience to Your Word.

WEDNESDAY 21 JANUARY: 2 CHRONICLES 21:7

Where has the Lord been a lamp for your feet (guided you)?

Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Thank You for leading and guiding me in the way of righteous living as I meditate on the Word Lord.

THURSDAY 22 JANUARY: JEREMIAH 11:1-2

God blesses us to bless other people. Are you passing on blessings?

Father as You have so graciously blessed me with every spiritual blessing, may I be a blessings to those around me as I share my life and Your words with others.

FRIDAY 23 JANUARY: JEREMIAH 29:11

God promises you prosperity. Have you claimed yours?

Lord as I submit my life and will to Your plans I am strengthened and find comfort in the promising future of blessings and the hope that are found in You.

SATURDAY 24 JANUARY: MATTHEW 7:24

What is your security in times of trouble?

Lord, You are an ever present help in times of need and trouble. Affirmation: My life is secure, built and established on the Rock of Jesus Christ, my sure and strong foundation.



BACKGROUND:

God makes covenant with us now - today. In the OT he made covenants with Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. God's covenant is a gift of grace, a blessing and a promise that He makes with us.

Noah and all humanity received the promise that God will never again destroy the earth with a flood, and he sets the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of this covenant (Genesis 9:17).

In Genesis chapters 12-17 there are 3 promises that God made with **Abraham**:

- To make of Abraham a great nation and to bless him and make his name great so that he will be a blessing.
- To give Abraham and his descendants the Promised Land.
- To make Abraham the father of many nations (circumcision is the sign of this covenant).

God made a covenant with **Moses** and the Israelites (Deuteronomy) that He will bless them if they follow His laws. The 10 commandments represent this covenant, and Moses sprinkles the tablets and the people with blood to seal this promise. The Sabbath is given as the sign of this covenant (Exodus 34:28).

God established **David** and his descendants as the kings of Israel with salt (2 Chronicles 13:5, 21:7) and declared that the Messiah will be born from his descendants. Whilst Jewish theologians believe that Jesus did not meet the expectations of the messiah, we believe that Jesus fulfills this Davidic covenant.

In the OT covenants were often sealed by killing and cutting an animal, with the understanding that the one who breaks the covenant will be killed too - a binding

promise. God gave Jesus to die for us - the new mediator of this covenant as His *blood* is shed for us.

The OT is full of examples of God's immense love for us, how he seeks relationship with us and then guides us in our spiritual journey - always in a partnership - a bond of love and loyalty. Him in us and us in Him. He loves us first.



SMALL GROUP SESSION WEEK 1

WELCOME

What are you looking forward to do in 2015?

WORSHIP

Be creative and participate in prayer, singing, meditation, and thanksgiving.

WORD & QUESTIONS

Read: Genesis 12:1-3

1. Do you feel that God's favour and blessing is for "other people" only or for you too? Why?
2. What can you do to be more aware of God's blessings in your life? What would help you to recognise it?
3. Do you believe that God keeps his promises today and if yes, do you apply it in your life?
4. Do you keep your promises to God? How "seriously" do you take your promises to God?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Are you ready to renew your covenant with God in a few weeks' time?

MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

Pray for one another - for those who can't see God's blessing in their life anymore, and praise God for those who can see God's blessing.

REACHING OUT

What one thing can you do every day this week that will be a blessing to someone else? *How about inviting one or more of your friends to your group next week? Let them share in the blessing that you all are to each other.*

GOING DEEPER DURING THE WEEK

More information on the Covenants: www.reasonabletheology.org – 5 Covenants of the Old Testament.

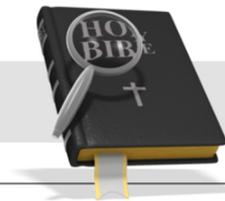
WEEK 2: THE NEW TESTAMENT COVENANT

MAIN SCRIPTURE: JEREMIAH 31:33

This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the LORD. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

MAIN MESSAGE: GOD'S COVENANT IS FOR EVERYONE.

DAILY DEVOTIONS – WEEK 2:



SUNDAY 25 JANUARY: JEREMIAH 31:33

See the verse above.

Do you know your purpose? Is it written in your heart – always first in mind when making decisions?

Lord, You purposed to make Yourself known to us and have called us Your own. Help me to put You first in all things by loving You with all my heart, my soul and mind.

MONDAY 26 JANUARY: MATTHEW 26:28

Do you believe that Jesus died for YOUR sins on the cross?

Jesus Your redeeming love has delivered and set me free. I am forgiven! Meditate: The body and blood of Jesus represents the New Covenant through Christ's atoning death.

TUESDAY 27 JANUARY: MALACHI 3:7

God is knocking we just have to open the door. What is keeping you from opening it?

The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the godly run to Him and are safe.

Lord I open my life and my heart to You today. I invite You to come into every area of my life.

WEDNESDAY 28 JANUARY: ROMANS 2:29

We are known as Christians by our hearts not by any outward signs. Can others see God's heart in you?

Sovereign Lord, take my heart of stone and give me a tender, loving heart. By Your Spirit may I continue to love, forgive and bless others as You did.

THURSDAY 29 JANUARY: HEBREWS 8:7-13

God says he will “remember their sins no more”. If he doesn’t, do you?

Lord Jesus, Your grace helps me to walk without offense. Give me the ability to love unconditionally and forgive freely without judgment.

FRIDAY 30 JANUARY: HEBREWS 10:11-12

God sacrificed himself for us once and for all! How do you feel about that?

Loving Savior, You became the perfect sacrifice. Your blood cleansed me from all sin. Thank You for Your willingness to suffer and die on my behalf.

SATURDAY 31 JANUARY: JOHN 3:16

Do you really “get it” that because you believe you will live forever?

Lord Jesus, I choose to believe the truth and revelation this Word brings.

Reflection: I can enjoy a loving relationship and fellowship with God - both now and forever.



BACKGROUND:

God says in Jeremiah that he will make a new covenant with his people. He will put the law not on stone but in our minds and on our hearts. Don't you love the words "I will be their God and they will be my people"? - Jeremiah 31:31-34. It makes me feel that I belong to God and His family!

In this passage God makes two distinct promises:

1. He will forgive the sins of His people (vs 34b).
2. He will give them the ability and the desire to follow Him. He will change their hearts and give them a zeal for obedience (vs 34).

This promise finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus as it is through Him we receive forgiveness of our sins and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit who enables us to seek after the things of God. *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creature, the old things passed away; behold, new things have come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The New Covenant was predicted in Jeremiah and was instituted at the last supper which in the Gospel of John includes the New Commandment. Jesus is the new sacrifice and mediator of this covenant as his blood is shed as the required blood of the covenant. In Luke 22:19-20, Jesus said, "This is My body which is given for you" and v20, "this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." Jesus had to understand both parties (God and us), in order to become the go-between. He died

for everyone so that those who believe should no longer live for themselves but for the One who died and rose again for them.

What the First covenant failed to accomplish, the new covenant, through Jesus Christ succeeded when Jesus said, "It is finished." We are now able to be what God wants us to be and to keep the law of God in our heart. To seek God first.



SMALL GROUP SESSION WEEK 2

WELCOME

If you had to choose to be a fruit, which one would you be and why?

WORSHIP

Be creative and participate in prayer, singing, meditation, and thanksgiving.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Did you notice God's blessings more in the past week? Please share with the group.

GOING DEEPER LAST WEEK

Which of the 5 covenants spoke to you the most?

WORD & QUESTIONS

Read any/all of the passages that spoke to you most during the week.

1. Do you believe that ALL your sins are forgiven (the slate wiped clean)?
2. What do you look like as a "new creature" in Christ? What difference has Jesus made in your life?
3. Are you seeking God first in all you do? Is God's "law" written on your heart? If yes, can other people see it? If not, what is distracting you?
4. Why do you think God has placed you in Johannesburg, in this church, in this small group?

MINISTRY TO ONE ANOTHER

Pray for one another around the answers you have shared. Pray for God to take away the barriers to putting Him first. Pray for each member of the group and praise God for what they contribute to the greater well-being of the group.

REACHING OUT

Connect with someone you know this week that is being held captive by their beliefs about themselves. Make them feel loved in a special way.

GOING DEEPER DURING THE WEEK

Read Jeremiah 31:31-33.

- What does the passage tell you about God?
- What does this passage tell you about man and woman?
- What does this passage tell you about His relationship with you?
- Is there anything you need to do this week?



WEEK 3: GOD'S COVENANT

MAIN SCRIPTURE: PSALM 23

*The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

MAIN MESSAGE: WHO IS THIS GOD THAT MAKES THIS COVENANT?

DAILY DEVOTIONS – WEEK 3:



SUNDAY 1 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23

Read slowly through this Psalm, letting God speak his words of love to you.

Loving Lord, Thank you for the fullness and richness of a life that is restored, revived, refreshed and made safe and secure as I acknowledge You as my Shepherd-King.

MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23: 2-3A

Praise God that you have everything you need.

Lord God, You meet my every need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. You are Jehovah Jireh, My Provider! Thank You!

TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23: 2-3A

Go and find a spot in your garden or home where you can sit still and experience God's peace and presence. Be still and know that He is God.

Meditation: Be Still. Be silent and mediate on God's presence with you and His power within you. Praise and thank Him.

WEDNESDAY 4 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23: 3B

Pray to God to help you to put Him first so that He can take the lead in your life.

Lord, I surrender all. I lay my life down and trust that You lead and guide me in the way I should go to give glory to Your Name.

THURSDAY 5 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23:4

Are you walking through a dark valley right now? Where has God rescued or protected you with his "rod" and "staff"?

Lord You have been my comfort, my guide, by protector ... the Shepherd who reassures, leads, guides and carries me through the hills, valleys and pressures of life.

FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23:5

Do what you know to be right with God. God will bless you. There will always be enemies sitting at your table.

Lord, You invite me to sit at Your table where I come under Your Lordship and Your protection where I have ample provision in the midst of enemy attack. Thank You!

SATURDAY 7 FEBRUARY: PSALM 23: 6

Actively seek and think of the good things in your life.

I rejoice and celebrate the covenant benefits of goodness and love graciously given me throughout my life. Father, I receive Your unfailing, everlasting, unconditional love and full acceptance.



BACKGROUND

Who is this God we serve and with whom we make a covenant? We cannot have a relationship with someone if we do not know who he/she is or spend time with them. Here are some of God's characteristics:

God is **Love**. His sacrifice on the cross is the ultimate act of love. Jesus lived "love in action".

1 John 4:8, Psalm 36:7

God is **Faithfull**. Everything that God promises will happen. He guarantees this and our faith rests on it.

Deuteronomy 7:8, 1 Kings 8:23, 2 Chronicles 6:14

God is **Just and Wise** – he doesn't make mistakes.

1 Corinthians 1:25, Deuteronomy 32:4

God is actively compassionate – **Merciful**.

Joel 2:13, Deuteronomy 4:31

God is **Infinite, Sovereign, Omnipotent, Eternal, Relationship** (part of a trinity).

Jeremiah 32:18, Psalm 90, Jeremiah 10:10

God is **Holy, Omnipotent and Omnipresent** - perfect, pure and all-powerful, ever present forever.

Psalm 99, Leviticus 19:2, Psalm 73:26

God **IS** - He has no beginning and end – He just is – He never changes.

Exodus 3:15, Revelation 1:8

God is **Good and Gracious** – full of goodwill towards all, blessing those who love Him even if they do not deserve it.

Psalm 145, 2 Samuel 7:28, Psalm 84:11

Instead of answering questions we are going to spend some time with God this week getting to know Him better.



SMALL GROUP SESSION WEEK 3

WELCOME

What is your favourite place in your house? Why?

WORSHIP

Be creative and participate in prayer, singing, meditation, and thanksgiving.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Who did you bless with your love last week?

GOING DEEPER LAST WEEK

Did you get to do anything from your “to do” list you made last week?

A MEDITATION - PSALM 23 (READ, MEDITATE, PRAY, CONTEMPLATE)

Each member of the group does this by him/herself:

Pray asking/inviting God to lead your reading of Psalm 23.

Read it slowly several times – focusing on different things every time.

Meditate - Ponder on a passage without ascribing meaning to it. Listen to the inner message of the scripture – seek communion with God.

Pray - Enter into a loving conversation with God.

Contemplate - Silent prayer that expresses love to God and “hearing” God’s word.

Did you realize something you never knew before that is true for you?

Share your experience with the rest of the group.

MINISTERING TO ONE ANOTHER

End the session with prayer encouraging each member to pray at least one sentence of gratitude to God.

REACHING OUT

Tell someone you don’t know one good thing God has done for you that reflects His character.

GOING DEEPER DURING THE WEEK

Read Hymn 48 (below):

The Lord is my help, my shepherd, and guide; whatever I want, He'll kindly provide; To sheep of His pasture his mercies abound; His care and protection His flock will surround. The Lord is my help, then what shall I fear? No dangers can fright when Jesus is near: And when His voice calls me to pass through the vale of deaths gloomy shadow, my heart shall not fail. Though weak in myself, through all the dark way His rod and His staff shall comfort convey. He'll be my sure guardian till danger is past and safely to glory conduct me at last. The Lord is become my strength and my song, to Him, for His love, my praises belong. I'll bless Him and praise Him, so long as I breathe, and shew forth His goodness, in life and in death.

Spend some time alone with God, meditating on this Hymn, singing God's praises.



WEEK 4: MY COVENANT

MAIN SCRIPTURE: JOHN 15: 1-7

The Vine and the Branches: I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

I am no longer my own but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things. Wherever You may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none; when I am troubled and when I am at peace Your will be done. When I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfillment, and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all I have and am to serve You, as and where You choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, You are mine and I am yours. May it be so forever. Let this covenant now made on earth be fulfilled in heaven. Amen.

THE COVENANT (BY JOHN VAN DE LAAR)

God of Disturbing Invitations,

We hear again your call to join ourselves with you, we recognize your generous offer of yourself, and your desire for us to give ourselves to you in return;

So now we take up your yoke and acknowledge you as our authority; our frame of reference, our source of life, strength, and direction; our yardstick for morality and ethics; and the final word in every thought, action and relationship;

God of the Covenant,

I place my life in your hands - for it to be yours to direct and not mine

May you decide what I should do and with whom I should do it;

May you guide when I should be active and when I should rest;

May you sustain me when I am well and when I suffer;

May you be reflected in me when I am praised and when I am challenged;

May I give thanks to you when I enjoy abundance, and when I know what it is to go without.

May my whole life be given in service of your love and salvation, use all that I have and all that I am for your purposes;

And may I always remember that you, O God, and I belong to each other.

This is my commitment - I stand by it.

And I ask that you, Jesus, bear witness to it.

Amen

MAIN MESSAGE: MY COVENANT WITH GOD.

DAILY DEVOTIONS – WEEK 4:



SUNDAY 8 FEBRUARY:

Are you ready to hand over control to God? It isn't always easy to do. Remember that God loves you and has promised that he has plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Lord, may my life be given in service of your love and salvation. Use all that I have and all that I am for your purposes.

MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY:

There are so many people with so many gifts. Do you know what your spiritual gifts and talents are? How can you serve God with what He has given you?

Lord, You ask me to stir up the gifts within and to desire spiritual gifts given by Your grace. I purpose and intend to use these gifts to extend Your kingdom purposes today.

TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY:

Sometimes God calls us to do things that seem too big for us to undertake. Are you willing to be inconvenienced?

Father, strengthen me in my commitment to obey the call placed upon my life and let me not waiver and falter in my desire to serve You and the Body of Christ.

WEDNESDAY 11 FEBRUARY:

We lead such busy lives that we often feel that we do not have time to get to "church things". What is God asking you to stop doing to make more time for Him and His commandment in your life?

Holy Spirit, I ask for the discernment, wisdom and knowledge needed to fulfill the call to loving service and faithful commitment to You and then to others.

THURSDAY 12 FEBRUARY:

We lead busy lives and often feel guilty when we do nothing. But one of God's gifts to us is rest. What is God calling you to do?

Lord, teach me what it means to rest in You and to celebrate the Sabbath more intentionally so that I can be in tune with the rhythm of life.

FRIDAY 13 FEBRUARY:

God says that everything belongs to Him. What has become so important to you that you can't let go "at all cost"?

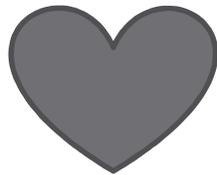
Lord Jesus, where there are altars, idols and strongholds established in my life that do not honour You, forgive me for my selfish, indulgent worship of other gods.

SATURDAY 14 FEBRUARY:

Are you willing to surrender ALL to God and let Him take the lead? What would God taking the lead mean to you?

Father I adore You, I lay my life before You. How I love You....Spirit I adore You... Jesus I adore You (Express your love to the One who loves you)

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY! May you feel God's love for you in a very special way today!



A PRAYER (BY JOHN VAN DE LAAR)

Rainbows And Promises

In the damp dark uncertainty,
in the ominous threat of the storm,
appears a gentle arc of colors
the rainbow that remembers the light.

In the silent questions of doubt,
in the disturbing vertigo of Your seeming absence
whispers a silent promise
the covenant of your forever being-here

I praise You, God, for rainbows and promises
and the courage I find
in their comforting presence
Amen.





SMALL GROUP SESSION WEEK 4

WELCOME

Do you have a favourite poem? Please share it with the group.

WORSHIP

Be creative and participate in prayer, singing, meditation, and thanksgiving.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How did it feel to tell someone about one of the good things God has done for you last week?

GOING DEEPER LAST WEEK

What was it like praising God and spending time with Him?

WORD & QUESTIONS

Read: John 15:1-7

1. What plant best describes you now: a towering oak, a weeping willow, tumbleweed, apple tree? Explain to the group why you see yourself like this at the moment. For example: you feel like an apple tree: you have many blessings that you would like to share OR you feel like a thorn tree: all dry and prickly, sensitive to the touch?
2. If we see ourselves as the vine, what loss would your pruning bring about? What do you have to let go?
3. If you let go what would you have to replace it with so that you can feel closer to Christ (Him in you and you in Him)?
4. What is the one thing you are going to do this year to make sure you bear more fruit?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for one another that you may hear God speak to you with regards to a more fruitful life – and spend some time in silence as you listen for His voice. Give each other the opportunity to share if anyone wants to at the end of this time.

REACHING OUT

You are already “picking the fruits” of being in a small group. In order for your group to produce more fruit you can do one of the following:

1. Invite more people to your group so that you can multiply when it gets too large (the core group can stay together and just help plant the new group).
2. If you are already a large group, identify someone that can lead a second group and plant a new one.
3. Start a connect group! Do you like reading, surfing, walking, and/or tennis? Contact nadjaa@bmc.org.za and she will advertise for people to join you in doing what you love doing! BMC would love to have everybody in the congregation connected in some form of group to share fellowship in 2015,

GOING DEEPER DURING THE WEEK

Read John 15:1-7

Get a piece of paper with 3 columns, the headings: “the biblical text”, “the text in my own words”, “discoveries made”. Write down the bible text, put it in your own words and then write down any discoveries. Share with your group your text, why did you choose certain words/thoughts and then the discoveries you made. Every member commits to live out their discovery for the week and share their understanding with at least one other person.

WEEK 5: RESPONDING TO THE COVENANT

MAIN SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-28

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are

indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

MAIN MESSAGE: RESPONDING TO GOD IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.

BACKGROUND



In order for Jesus to accomplish his work on earth, he had a human body. In order to accomplish his work today Jesus has a body that consists of many human beings. All Christians share as members of this one body through one Spirit. Are we as a church experiencing this kind of fellowship and unity in God's work? Do we live out the reality of the Spirit's presence and power? This "living the Spirit" is a reality that can be experienced - daily! It is our "birthright"!

We are Christ's and each other's (15:16, 21), this means that:

1. We need one another (we need each person's unique gifts to bless the whole and for the individual and the church to grow to its full potential).
2. We differ from one another (a body can't be all eyes, each part is distinct has its function and is irreplaceable). Each part should be celebrated and capitalized on building a community of diversity.
3. We are to care for one another (mutual care is intrinsic to the body). We have to depend on each other to make the body work. We need to give special care to the weaker parts of the body by rejoicing with those that rejoice and weeping with those that weep (how we face and use suffering is crucial to the integrity of our testimony).

If we look after each other – everybody will feel that their need is met, but it is important to remember that the body of Christ is placed in the world to serve!

DAILY DEVOTIONS – WEEK 5:



SUNDAY 15 FEBRUARY: COLOSSIANS 3:15

Who are you not at peace with today? Find a way to make peace –even if it is just in your own heart.

Holy Spirit, I seek healing and wholeness in order to resolve places of tension and disunity. Help me to make peace with myself and with others.

MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY: EPHESIANS 4:15.

The truth might hurt, but by speaking it in the right way we mature as the body of Christ.

Lord, strengthen my commitment to speak the truth in love at all times. Help me to mature in this area of godly relationships.

TUESDAY 17 FEBRUARY: GALATIANS 2:20

Do you experience Christ in you? And do you live it out in the body?

Let me live with the awareness that I have Christ in me the hope of glory and an understanding that greater is He that is in me than he that is in the world.

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:37

Do you feel part of BMC? What can you do to feel more a part of BMC?

Jesus, help me to integrate and participate more fully in the body of Christ. Thank you for communal fellowship experienced and the healing and wholeness that it brings.

THURSDAY 19 FEBRUARY: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

Scary words.....what is God saying to you?

Father, may my life become a full expression and extension of walking in the gifts of the Spirit within Your Church. Reflection: 2 Timothy 1:6 Stir up the gift of God given you.

FRIDAY 20 FEBRUARY: EPHESIANS 4:1

Do you know your calling? Are you living a life worthy of it?

Reflection: As I reflect upon this invitation to serve You and the body, I choose to respond to this challenging Word and commit to lead a life that is worthy of my calling.

SATURDAY 21 FEBRUARY: EPHESIAN 5:23

God is the head of the church. Do we show servant leadership like he did to our fellow members and clergy?

Father God, I accept the call to responsible leadership in the same spirit of self-giving and devoted servant-hood as expressed through Your Son, Jesus Christ.



SMALL GROUP SESSION WEEK 5

WELCOME

I am happiest when my life is unpredictable/routine? Please discuss.

WORSHIP

Be creative and participate in prayer, singing, meditation, and thanksgiving.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Has your small group spoken about how you could serve in the church, as individuals or as a group?

GOING DEEPER LAST WEEK

What new discoveries did you make last week after reading the bible differently?

WORD & QUESTIONS

Read: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-28

1. (FUN question 😊) If you had to choose a part of the body - which part would you be? Why? Ask the group if they would agree with your assessment (only kind comments allowed!).
2. What role do you think your small group plays in the church and how can you be more effective (make disciples).
3. What role do you think YOU play in the church and how do you think that you could add value to the body of Christ as you live out your covenant?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for one another that you may hear God speak to you with regards to your role in the body - and spend some time in silence as you listen for His voice. Give each other the opportunity to share at the end of this time.

REACHING OUT

Contact the church to volunteer your own or the groups gifts and services. We have many places that need a hand!

GOING DEEPER DURING THE WEEK

If you do not know your spiritual gifts there are lots of web-sites that have questionnaires that you can answer to find out yours, try www.spiritualgiftstest.com. Always check with other members of your group or people that know you well to confirm these gifts for you.

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21

RESOURCES USED IN THIS MATERIAL:

Building a church of small groups.
Hymns for the use of the New Church
Malihambe Reading the bible in SA today
Preparing for Covenant.
The Methodist Worship book
The message of 1 Corinthians
The blood Covenant
The blood Covenant
www.allaboutgod.com
www.sacradise.com
www.biblegateway.com

Donahue and Robinson
The New Jerusalem Church
Dr. Neil T. Oosthuizen
Rev Angus Kelly (Weltevreden Methodist, 2014)
Methodist Publishing house.
David Prior
Andrew Sandala (www.faithwriters.com)
Tom Broon (www.faithwriters.com)
Attributes of God