

Reflections on Covenant - an intergenerational tour
For Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, Lexington
February 6, 2022

The following is not a script - just main points.

Reebee: Have you ever heard of this word: Covenant? We say that we are united in Covenant, with each other and with God, here at church. But does anyone know what covenant means? Or what a covenant is?

Wait for responses.

One thing that Covenant means is Promise, and a church Covenant is a Holy Promise because any covenant that's part of church is made with God, and in God's sight. We thought today we'd talk about several kinds of Covenants that are part of our church and our faith - and instead of just talking about them, we're going to show you signs of them.

Sarah:

→*Show a photo of a natural rainbow*

The first kind of Covenant that we're going to talk about is God's Covenant with us, all the way back in the days of Noah. God put a rainbow in the sky and said that the rainbow would be a sign of God's commitment to all creation. So when we see a rainbow in the sky, we remember that God has promised to care for all of creation, and we remember that God asks us to care for all of creation, too. The rainbow also reminds us that every part of God's creation is good and beautiful.

But there's another Covenant Promise that our church shows in the form of a rainbow. What is it? (youth will say - welcome or ONA) Yes, the rainbow flag (show) is one of the ways our church lives out our Promise to be an Open and Affirming church that welcomes everyone. We made a promise when we wrote our Statement of Welcome. And our rainbow is a symbol of our belief that every person is a good and beautiful child of God.

Reebee:

From the Baptismal Font

Do you know what this is? It's our Baptismal Font. This is one place where we baptize folks - children and adults. (Earlier in CoVid we actually did a baptism outside!) And when we do that, we're remembering God's promise to love that person - and we make our own promise:

We receive and welcome this new person in Christ. We rejoice in their presence among us, and we support them and, their parents, in the covenant which you have made on her behalf. We enfold them in our love....

I love that part: we enfold them in our love. And here's an interesting thing - because we're committed to welcoming all kinds of folks, seeing everyone as beloved, it means we're a congregation of a lot of different kinds of people.

Sarah:

From near Susan Carabbio

Here's one more kind of Covenant that we make in this church. People - usually teens and adults - become members of the church. When they do, they promise to follow Jesus, and be active in this congregation. And the whole congregation makes a promise back to them: "We promise you our friendship and prayers as we share the hopes and labors of the church of Jesus Christ." And then....we put their name in this book, (Susan shows) which includes every person who's ever been a member of Pilgrim Church.

And (*with a youth*)

Some of our youth made those membership promises last spring as part of their confirmation, and the congregation made a special promise back:

We promise to walk with you on our journey as Christians.

Our confirmands got special gifts this year (show)

Reebee:

A covenant promise means that we are connected to each other in a way that is really strong, and really holy. We're all kinds of different people, working together as a church. We're committed to each other in this church, and committed to God, and God is committed to us. We're talking about this today because we have a very special thing happening after church: our Annual Meeting. We will live into our Covenant at that meeting. We have a special covenant to speak lovingly together. We'll make some decisions together, too - as the church, a community that's in covenant, a community of holy promise. And we'll do all of this in a way that is good and safe for everyone to participate in - so some of us will be at home (wave!!) and some of us will be here, but we will all be part of the covenant community that is Pilgrim Church.

Now, in a few minutes I'll share one more symbol of covenant with you....during the Communion Liturgy.

Reebee: At a very special meal, Jesus told his friends - and that includes us - that he was making a promise. A Covenant. A promise to love us always, a promise to give of himself for us. And he said that when people shared that meal, we would remember his covenant and become part of it. He said, do this in remembrance of me. So our final symbol of covenant today is the bread and the juice that we share at Communion. It's the way we remember Jesus' promise of love, and the way we welcome all people to the table the way Jesus did. So now, Deven is going to offer the Invitation to Communion:

Come to the Table of Grace, Come to the Feast of Hope. This is Jesus' table, where every one of us, *every one of us*, is an invited guest. You are welcome here.