

8.

As we have opportunity we will seek the good one of another and so also of all men, both with respect to their spiritual and temporal state.

9.

It shall be our endeavor to stand complete in all the will of God ---to cleave to the Lord and one to another through all adversity. We do sincerely and solemnly engage in the right of God of Men and Angels in a humble dependence of faith upon the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ for our acceptance with and for the power of his spirit to work in us to forfeit that doth concern us to the praise of his glory.

Dated Bridgewater July 7<sup>th</sup> 1718

*I do consent to and approve of  
of above written covenant  
As witness my hand  
Signed Benjamin Allen  
Elizabeth Allen*

Prayer. Spirit of Loving faithfulness, with grateful hearts we rest in your hands. Spirit of Goodness, thank you for redeeming us as a covenantal people of God. Amen.

## "Covenant"

Two teachings from Jesus on love come to us as relationship mandates. The first and greatest commandment is, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength'. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. In gospel speak this means that there is no relationship in life, law, or eternity greater than these. In his commentary on the first relationship biblical scholar Marcus Borg wrote: 'You can keep the commandments and still be a jerk. But you cannot be in relationship with the loving God, without being continually transformed by 'God, the Great, 'I AM' which means, to be what the future demands. Rev. Ron Buford explained: 'Our God is not a God of outmoded rules and laws, keeping people separated--- people do that. By contrast, the rule of God's living love is to always take another look and see the relationship with each other and God as primary. If you want to know where God is, Jesus says, look to where the Love of God bends toward making the life of each person as wonderful as God wants life to be for us in light of the present.

In the Pilgrim tradition of faith, and in the Protestant way of being church, we bend together in the light of Holy Love by making and keeping covenants with each other. It's a Biblical model of promise making and keeping that God first established with Abraham and Sarah, in which Yahweh said: "You will be my people and I will be your God." After that, God set out the non-negotiable terms of the covenantal relationship, and let the folks say "yes, thank you", or no. Biblical history records that God renewed the terms of the covenant with the Jewish people several times. We remember the Ten Commands with Moses: the covenant with David when he became king; and, for Christians, Jesus, the bread of life, and the cup of the new covenant poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

Three hundred years ago our forefathers and foremothers of faith in this congregation said farewell to one another. The parting was amicable. It was just too far for folks to walk for Sunday services. But because keeping covenant was central to

their identity, faith, and spirit of unity, Benjamin Allen, the first settled minister of new congregation, wrote the "Covenant of the brethren in the South Preceint of Bridgewater" as a binding document of faith and order.

'We the inscribers who in times past were in full communicants in the Church of Christ in Bridgewater being now under a Divine Call unto a coalition in Church fellowship with God and one another under a soul humbling sense of all our violations of former covenant engaging with earnest prayers and supplications to God for ye pardon of all our transgressions for the sake of Christ and for the helps of his holy Spirit that we may keep covenant with God when we engage.

1.

That we will take the Lord Jehovah to be our God by a free choice of him and a firm dependence on him and satisfaction in him as our chief good renouncing all other interests whatever.

2.

That we will cleave to the holy scriptures as our only rule of obedience of faith.

3.

That we will acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ in his threefold office as our prophet, priest, and king. Particularly as in his Kingly government that all his laws and ordinances be upheld with us in the purity and power of them. That an able and faithful ministry be encouraged and upheld among us. That in all the administrations in the house of God we will have time regard to ye power of office belonging to the ministry and to the privilege belonging to the believer as to judgment and consent, we will endeavor faithfully to attend to the rules of holiness with respect to the gratifications of those that are admitted unto Church Communion that ye table of the Lord be not polluted, that they be such who have a competent understanding in the mysteries of godliness and of a well ordained conversation such who upon examination hold forth repentance from dead works and faith in

our Lord Jesus Christ. We will conscientiously observe ye rules and discipline which Christ hath prescribed that ye temple of God be not defiled, will endeavor that church censures be faithfully dispensed to such as are full communicants and to the children of ye covenant as for souls in church relation and that be adult, but not yet admitted to full communion who walk orderly and waiting upon God to prepare them for the full enjoyment of ordinances. They shall at their desire have the privilege of this initiating seat of baptism for their children. As for such parents we shall be concerned that they enacted and encouraged to follow ye Lord in all ye ways of his appointments and when they offer themselves to the table of ye Lord that they be examined upon their proficiency under the means; and hold forth such evidences of the grace of God as may render their communion comfortable.

4.

We will walk in love towards one another in love endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. That this may be no schism or rent in the body of Christ.

5.

In all doubtful cases we will apply to neighboring ministers and churches of Christ for counsel.

6.

We will walk with God in our houses with a perfect heart in a due attendance on family worship on family rule and government in the faithful discharge of all relative duties---endeavouring that true religion may be propagated to posterity, that the Lord our God may be the God of our children after us.

7.

We will bear our faithful testimony against the growing sins of the times and of this place. It shall be our endeavour that the work of the reformation be carried on in all the parts of it.