

Marriage Services from *A New Zealand Prayer Book, He Karakia
Mihinare o Aotearoa*. © 1989 The Anglican Church in Aotearoa,
New Zealand and Polynesia.
Services for “Those Previously Married in a Civil Ceremony” and
“Renewal of Marriage Vows” are adapted from *Book of Common
Worship* and *Common Worship, Pastoral Services*.
Book of Common Worship, © 1993 Westminster/John Knox
Press. *Common Worship: Pastoral Services*, material from which
is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000,
2005 and published by Church House Publishing.

A wedding is one of life's great moments, a time for good wishes, feasting and joy. St John tells us how Jesus shared in such an occasion, and gave there a sign of new beginnings.

Marriage is intended by God to be a creative relationship - God's blessing enables husband and wife to love and support each other in good times and bad. For Christians, marriage is also an invitation to share life together in the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is based upon a solemn, public and life-long covenant between a man and a woman, made and celebrated in the presence of God and before a priest and congregation.

On their wedding day they face each other, make their promises with clear understanding, and receive the Church's blessing.

'Love is patient and kind. Love never comes to an end.'

A New Zealand Prayer Book, Introduction to Marriage

True relationships among people point to God. They are like prayers in the world. Sometimes the hands that pray are fully touching, sometimes there is distance between them. They always move to and from each other, but they never lose touch. They keep praying to the One who brought them together.

Henri Nouwen

CONTENTS

MARRIAGE CEREMONY FIRST FORM	8
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	8
THE READINGS.....	9
REFLECTION	9
THE DECLARATIONS.....	9
THE MARRIAGE VOWS.....	11
SIGNING THE REGISTER.....	12
THE PRAYERS	13
CHARGE AND BLESSING	14
MARRIAGE CEREMONY SECOND FORM	16
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	16
THE DECLARATIONS.....	17
THE READINGS.....	18
REFLECTION	18
THE MARRIAGE VOWS.....	19
SIGNING THE REGISTER.....	20
THE PRAYERS	20
CHARGE AND BLESSING	21
MARRIAGE CEREMONY THIRD FORM	22
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	22
THE READINGS.....	23
REFLECTION	23
THE DECLARATIONS.....	24
THE MARRIAGE VOWS.....	25
SIGNING THE REGISTER.....	26
THE PRAYERS	27
CHARGE AND BLESSING	28
MARRIAGE CEREMONY FOURTH FORM.....	30
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	30
THE READINGS.....	31
REFLECTION	31
THE DECLARATIONS.....	31
THE MARRIAGE VOWS.....	32
SIGNING THE REGISTER.....	32
THE PRAYERS	33
BLESSING	34
TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE CEREMONY.....	36
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	36
THE DECLARATIONS.....	37

THE MARRIAGE VOWS.....	38
THE BIBLE READINGS.....	40
THE PRAYERS	40
SIGNING THE REGISTER.....	41
THE MARRIAGE BLESSING	42
MARRIAGE BLESSING FOR COUPLES PREVIOUSLY MARRIED	
IN A CIVIL CEREMONY	44
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	44
THE READINGS.....	46
REFLECTION	46
DECLARATIONS.....	47
VOWS.....	48
SIGNING THE BLESSING CERTIFICATE.....	50
THE PRAYERS	50
CHARGE AND BLESSING	53
THANKSGIVING FOR MARRIAGE AND RENEWAL OF VOWS ..	54
WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION	54
READINGS AND SERMON	56
RENEWAL OF VOWS	56
THE RINGS.....	57
SIGNING OF THE CERTIFICATE.....	58
THE PRAYERS	58
THE DISMISSAL AND BLESSING	60
PRAYERS FOR THE MARRIAGE.....	62
PRAYER FORM 1	62
PRAYER FORM 2	63
PRAYER FORM 3	64
PRAYER FORM 4	65
PRAYER FORM 5	66
ADDITIONAL PRAYERS.....	66
THE FINAL BLESSING	68
BLESSING 1	68
BLESSING 2	68
BLESSING 3	68
BLESSING 4	69
BLESSING 5	69
BLESSING 6	69
BLESSING 7	70
BLESSING 8	70
HYMNS AND SONGS	71

BIBLE READINGS FOR CEREMONY	72
THE OLD TESTAMENT.....	73
THE PSALMS.....	78
THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES	82
THE GOSPELS	86
OTHER MARRIAGE READINGS	89
LOVE IS.....	89
TRUE WORTH.....	89
NOW YOU WILL FEEL NO RAIN.....	90
MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE.....	91
WHAT LOVE IS	91
PILLARS OF THE TEMPLE.....	92
SPEAK TO US OF CHILDREN	93
THE MARRIAGE OF TWO MINDS	93
WHAT GREATER THING	94
OH THE COMFORT.....	94
INSCAPE.....	95
LOVE IS A THING TO WALK WITH HAND IN HAND	95
TRUE RELATIONSHIPS.....	96
THE MARRIAGE CANOPY	96
A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN	96
THIS QUIETER LOVE.....	97
THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE	98

Marriage Ceremony First Form

Welcome and Introduction

During the entrance of the bride a hymn may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The couple stands before the Minister in front of the altar. The Minister may greet the people. The Minister says to the congregation

We have come together in the presence of God to witness and celebrate the marriage of N1 and N2, and to pray God's blessing upon them now and in the years ahead.

Marriage is a gift of God our Creator, whose intention is that husband and wife should be united in heart, body and mind. In their union they fulfil their love for each other.

Marriage is given to provide the stability necessary for family life, so that children may be cared for lovingly and grow to full maturity.

Marriage is a way of life to be upheld and honoured. No one should enter into it lightly. It involves a serious and life-long commitment to each other's good in a union of strength, sympathy and delight.

The Minister says to the couple

N1 and N2, we rejoice with you; we are glad to join with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows, to pray with you and to wish you joy in your life together.

The Minister prays

God our Creator,
be with us now as we celebrate
the marriage of N1 and N2.
Give them your blessing.
Grant them happiness and long life together
and help us to support them with our love.

Amen.

The Readings

*See **Bible Readings For Ceremony and Other Marriage Readings in Contents.***

If non-biblical readings have been chosen they may be read here.

A suitable Bible reading or readings follow here.

Reflection

After the Bible reading the minister may give a brief address on the significance of marriage.

The Declarations

The Minister asks the bridegroom

N1, of your own free choice will you take N2 to be your wife?

The bridegroom answers

I will.

Will you love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

The bridegroom answers

I will.

The Minister asks the bride

N2, of your own free choice will you take N1 to be your husband?

The bride answers

I will.

Will you love him, comfort him, honour and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

The bridegroom answers

I will.

The Minister may ask the whole congregation

You, as friends and family, have come to witness this exchange of vows. Will you do all in your power to support this marriage now and in the years ahead?

The people reply

We will.

The Minister prays

Eternal God,
creator and sustainer of us all,
give your grace to N1 and N2.
Grant that in the years ahead
they may be faithful to the vows
they make this day,
and that in the strength of the Holy Spirit
they may grow together in the love,
joy and peace of our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Marriage Vows

The bride and bridegroom face each other.

The bridegroom takes the bride's hands in his and says

**I, N1,
take you, N2,
to be my wife,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.**

The bride takes the bridegroom's hands in hers, and says

**I, N2,
take you, N1,
to be my husband,
to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.**

The couple loose hands. The Minister receives and blesses the rings.

Most holy God,
bless these rings.
Grant that they who wear them
may be faithful to each other
and continue bound together
in love to their lives' end,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

The giver places the ring on the other's ring finger, holds it there and says

**N2/N1, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
and all I have I share with you.**

The Minister declares the couple married

N1 and N2 have given themselves to each other with solemn vows and have declared their marriage by joining hand and the giving and receiving of rings; they are now husband and wife.

Let no one come between those whom God has joined together.

The marriage may be sealed with a kiss.

The Minister says

The power of God keep you,
the love of God be in your life and work together,
the grace of God strengthen your love
that it may endure forever.
Amen

Signing the Register

*The register may be signed here in the presence of the congregation.
The couple take their place again standing before the altar.*

The Prayers

The Minister may say to the couple.

N1 and N2, we welcome you now as husband and wife. Pray, and we will pray with you. May God enrich the life you have chosen, and fulfil your hopes.

*The following may be used, or an alternative chosen from **Prayers for Marriage** (see contents page).*

Eternal God, creator of us all,
we praise you for all the ways
in which your love comes into our lives,
and for all the joys that can come
to men and women through marriage.
Today we especially pray for N1 and N2
as they begin their married life.
With them we thank you for the love
and care of their parents,
which has guided them to maturity
and prepared them for this commitment.

Give them strength to keep the vows
they have made, to be loyal and faithful to each other,
and to support each other throughout their life,
that they may bear each other's burdens
and share each other's joys.

Help them to be honest and patient with each other,
and to welcome both friends and strangers into their home.
In all their future together may they enjoy each other
and grow through the love they share,
until, at the end of this life,
you receive us all into your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Amen.

The Minister invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer

Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Charge and Blessing

*The Minister addresses the couple (see **The Final Blessing Contents page**)*

As God's own,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, and patience,
forgiving each other
as the Lord has forgiven you,
and crown all these things with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Col. 3:12-14

***The Final Blessing** (see **Contents page**)*

A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the wedding party departs the church.

Marriage Ceremony Second Form

Welcome and Introduction

During the entrance of the bride a hymn may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The couple stand before the Minister in front of the altar. The Minister may greet the people. The Minister says to the congregation

We have come together to ask God's blessing on N1 and N2, to witness their marriage and to bring them our love and support.

I ask you now to pray for them; and not just to pray today or only in this place but to pray in your hearts continually and over the years.

It is praying, their praying and ours, which will fulfil God's purposes for N1 and N2. Praying is an outlook, a sustained energy, which creates a marriage and makes love and forgiveness life-long.

Eternal love never fails; our love needs to forgive and be forgiven. As we pray and forgive we minister reconciliation. Those who marry are God's ministers to each other of reconciliation and change. As they grow together, wife and husband foster one another's strengths, they provide each other with the reassurance and love needed to overcome their weaknesses.

From this beginning God draws them now to a completely new life. They become awake to each other, aware of each other, sensitive to each other's needs.

The Minister says to the couple

N1 and N2, you are welcome. Pray that God will uphold and cheer your life together, that your promises be honoured, your words true, now and in time to come.

For our part we ask you to make your public declaration.

The Declarations

The bridegroom says

I love N2, and I want to marry her.

The bride says

I love N1, and I want to marry him.

The Minister may ask the whole congregation

You, as friends and family, have come to witness this exchange of vows. Will you do all in your power to support this marriage now and in the years ahead?

The people reply

We will.

The Minister says

May God's grace surround you and keep you all.

The Readings

See Bible Readings For Ceremony and Other Marriage Readings in Contents

If non-biblical readings have been chosen they may be read here.

A suitable Bible reading or readings follow here.

Reflection

After the Bible reading the minister may give a brief address on the significance of marriage.

Let us pray:

The peace of God
which is beyond our understanding
keep guard over your thoughts and hearts.
May God keep you friends with one another,
forgiving one another in kindness.
May you follow Christ in happiness or suffering.
May hope keep you joyful.
Stand firm in trouble. Be strong in prayer.
May God make you compassionate and brave.
Above all, may there always be love to bind
and keep you whole.
Amen.

The Marriage Vows

The bride and bridegroom face each other.

The bridegroom takes the bride's hands in his and says

N2, I take you to be my wife. All that I have I offer you; what you have to give I gladly receive; wherever you go I will go. You are my love. God keep me true to you always and you to me.

The bride takes the bridegroom's hands in hers, and says

N1, I take you to be my husband. All that I have I offer you; what you have to give I gladly receive; wherever you go I will go. You are my love. God keep me true to you always and you to me.

They loose hands. The Minister receives and blesses the rings.

Christ our light, encircle these rings with your blessing, to show the love and faithfulness of N1 and N2. Bind them together and keep them in your love eternally.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger, holds it there and says

N2/N2, this ring I give to you, with my body I honour you. God make me your true husband/wife in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Minister declares the couple married

N1 and N2, you have declared the love you have for each other and your hopes for the future.

You have made promises to each other,
and have symbolised them by joining hands and giving rings.
You are now husband and wife.

The marriage may be sealed with a kiss.

The Minister says

N1 and N2 may Christ's love
purify your love for each other,
Christ's humanity keep you sensitive and practical.
May the Light of the world illuminate your way ahead,
the Bread of heaven nourish you,
the true Vine enliven you.
May Christ be the beginning of a new,
fulfilled and blessed life,
and Christ be the end.

Signing The Register

The register may be signed here in the presence of the congregation.

The couple take their place again standing before the altar.

The Prayers

The Minister may say to the couple.

N1 and N2, we welcome you now as husband and wife. Pray, and we will pray with you. May God enrich the life you have chosen, and fulfil your hopes.

*The following may be used, or an alternative chosen from **Prayers for Marriage** (see contents page).*

Eternal God, creator of us all,
we praise you for all the ways
in which your love comes into our lives,
and for all the joys that can come
to men and women through marriage.
Today we especially pray for N1 and N2
as they begin their married life.
With them we thank you for the love
and care of their parents,
which has guided them to maturity
and prepared them for this commitment.
Give them strength to keep the vows
they have made, to be loyal and faithful to each other,
and to support each other throughout their life,

that they may bear each other's burdens
and share each other's joys.

Help them to be honest and patient with each other,
and to welcome both friends and strangers into their home.
In all their future together may they enjoy each other
and grow through the love they share,
until, at the end of this life,
you receive us all into your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Amen.

The Minister invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer

As Christ has taught us so we pray:

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen**

Charge and Blessing

The Minister addresses the couple.

Whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.

Colossians 3:17

The Final Blessing (see Contents page)

*A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the wedding party departs
the church.*

Marriage Ceremony Third Form

Welcome and Introduction

During the entrance of the bride a hymn may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The couple stand before the Minister in front of the altar. The Minister may greet the people. The Minister says to the congregation

We have gathered to celebrate the marriage of N1 and N2.

Marriage is the promise of hope between a man and a woman who love each other, who trust that love, and who wish to share the future together.

It enables two separate people to share their desires, longings, dreams and memories, and to help each other through their uncertainties. It provides the encouragement to risk more and thus to gain more. In marriage, husband and wife belong together, providing mutual support and a stability in which their children may grow.

Here in the presence of God we recognise and affirm their relationship as they begin their married life in the community.

The Minister says to the couple

N1 and N2, we welcome you. We are glad to join with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows, to pray with you, and to wish you joy in your life together.

The Minister prays:

Loving Creator,
touch us with an awareness of your presence
in the world around us.

Awaken in us a sense of wonder
that you have created us in love.

As we celebrate the marriage of N1 and N2,
deepen our love for those close to us,
and for those who, although strangers, need our concern.
Help N1 and N2 as they commit themselves to each other,
and grant us all a heightened sense of joy in life,
because we share this moment with them.

Amen.

The Readings

*See **Bible Readings For Ceremony and Other Marriage Readings in Contents***

If non-biblical readings have been chosen they may be read here.

A suitable Bible reading or readings follow here.

Reflection

After the scriptures are read, a brief reflection may be given.

The Declarations

The Minister asks the bridegroom

N1, do you love and trust N2 and want to be her husband?

The bridegroom answers:

Yes, I do.

The Minister asks the bridegroom

Will you stand by her no matter what happens, respecting her as a person, understanding her needs and enjoying her love until death parts you?

The bridegroom answers: **Yes, I will.**

The Minister asks the bride

N, do you love and trust N and want to be his wife?

The bride answers: **Yes, I do.**

The Minister asks the bride

Will you stand by him no matter what happens, respecting him as a person, understanding his needs and enjoying his love until death parts you?

The bride answers: **Yes, I will.**

The Minister asks friends and family members

Will you, their friends and family, do all in your power to support this couple now, and in the years ahead?

The people reply: **We will.**

The Marriage Vows

The bride and bridegroom face each other.

The bridegroom takes the bride's hands in his and says

N2, I take you to be my wife,
to be with you whatever happens to us.
In prosperity and in hardship, in health and in sickness,
in sorrow and in joy,
I will love, protect and serve you as long as we live.
This I vow before God.

The bride takes the bridegroom's hands in hers, and says

N1, I take you to be my husband,
to be with you whatever happens to us.
In prosperity and in hardship, in health and in sickness,
in sorrow and in joy,
I will love, protect and serve you as long as we live.
This I vow before God.

They loose hands. The Minister receives and blesses the rings.

Eternal God,
bless these rings
as symbols of the love and trust
between N1 and N2.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger, holds it there and says

**N2/N1, this ring is a token
of my faithfulness and love,
and a symbol that all I have I share with you.**

The Minister declares the couple married

N1 and N2, you have declared the love you have for each other and your hopes for the future. You have made promises to each other, and have symbolised them by joining hands and giving of rings. You are now husband and wife.

The marriage may be sealed with a kiss.

The Minister says

May God give you light to guide you and love to unite you, so that you may be faithful to the vows you have made this day, and live together in joy and peace till your lives end.

Amen.

Signing the Register

The register may be signed here in the presence of the congregation.

The couple take their place again standing before the altar.

The Prayers

The Minister may say to the couple.

N1 and N2, we welcome you now as husband and wife. Pray, and we will pray with you. May God enrich the life you have chosen, and fulfil your hopes.

*The following may be used, or an alternative chosen from **Prayers for Marriage** (see contents page).*

Eternal God, creator of us all,
we praise you for all the ways
in which your love comes into our lives,
and for all the joys that can come
to men and women through marriage.
Today we especially pray for N1 and N2
as they begin their married life.
With them we thank you for the love
and care of their parents,
which has guided them to maturity
and prepared them for this commitment.

Give them strength to keep the vows
they have made, to be loyal and faithful to each other,
and to support each other throughout their life,
that they may bear each other's burdens
and share each other's joys.

Help them to be honest and patient with each other,
and to welcome both friends and strangers into their home.
In all their future together may they enjoy each other
and grow through the love they share,
until, at the end of this life,
you receive us all into your eternal kingdom,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Amen.

The Minister invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer

As Christ has taught us so we pray:

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Charge and Blessing

The Minister addresses the couple.

As God's own,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, and patience,
forgiving each other
as the Lord has forgiven you,
and crown all these things with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Col. 3:12-14

The Final Blessing (see Contents page)

A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the wedding party departs the church.

Marriage Ceremony Fourth Form

Welcome and Introduction

During the entrance of the bride a hymn may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The couple stand before the Minister in front of the altar. The Minister may greet the people. The Minister says to the congregation

We have come together to witness the promises of N1 and N2 in marriage; to share with them in their happiness and in their hopes for the future

Here before God, N1 and N2 wish to pledge their love for each other and their desire to spend their lives together.

Marriage involves caring and giving. It involves learning to share one's life with another person, forgiving as Christ forgives; enjoying the love and meaning which can be found together. It involves facing together whatever adversity may arise.

The Minister says to the couple

N and N, we welcome you. We are glad to join with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows, to pray with you, and to wish you joy in your life together.

The Minister prays:

God of love,
we thank you for the gift of marriage
and for the joys it brings.
Bless us as we share in this wedding.
We thank you for the love which has brought
N1 and N2 to each other
and for their desire to share that love
for the rest of their lives.

Amen.

The Readings

*See **Bible Readings For Ceremony and Other Marriage Readings in Contents***

If non-biblical readings have been chosen they may be read here.

A suitable Bible reading or readings follow here.

Reflection

After the scriptures are read, a brief reflection may be given.

The Declarations

The Minister asks the bridegroom

N1, will you take N2 to be your wife? Will you share her joys and ease her burdens? Will you be honest with her, and be faithful to her always, as long as you both live?

*The bridegroom answers: **Yes, I will.***

The Minister asks the bride

N2, will you take N1 to be your husband? Will you share his joys and ease his burdens? Will you be honest with him, and be faithful to him always, as long as you both live?

*The bride answers: **Yes, I will.***

The Minister asks friends and family members

Will you, their friends and family, do all in your power to support this couple now, and in the years ahead?

*The people reply: **We will.***

The Marriage Vows

The bride and bridegroom face each other.

The bridegroom takes the bride's hands in his and says

NN2, today I take you to be my wife.

Whatever life may bring, I will love and care for you always.

The bride takes the bridegroom's hands in hers, and says

NN1, today I take you to be my husband.

Whatever life may bring I will love and care for you always

They loose hands. The Minister receives and blesses the rings.

Eternal God,
bless these rings
as symbols of the love and trust
between N1 and N2.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger, holds it there and says

**N2/N1, this ring is a token
of my faithfulness and love,
and a symbol that all I have I share with you.**

The Minister declares the congregation

We have witnessed the promises made by N1 and N2, and now recognise them as husband and wife.

N1 and N2, you have committed yourselves to one another in love, joy and tenderness. Become one. Fulfil your promises. And may God's grace be with you for ever.

The couple may kiss.

Signing the Register

The register may be signed here in the presence of the congregation.

The couple take their place again standing before the altar.

The Prayers

The Minister may say to the couple.

N1 and N2, we welcome you now as husband and wife. Pray, and we will pray with you. May God enrich the life you have chosen, and fulfil your hopes.

*The following may be used, or an alternative chosen from **Prayers for Marriage** (see contents page).*

Eternal God, without your grace no promise is sure.
Strengthen N1 and N2 with patience, kindness, gentleness, and all other gifts of your Spirit, so that they may fulfil the vows they have made.

Keep them faithful to each other and to you. Fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home of peace and welcome. Guide them by your Word to serve you all their days.

Help us all, O God, to do your will in each of our homes and lives. Enrich us with your grace so that, supporting one another, we may serve those in need and hasten the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Minister invites the congregation to pray the Lord's Prayer

As Christ teaches us we pray:

**Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

The Final Blessing (see Contents page)

A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the wedding party departs the church.

Traditional Marriage Ceremony

Book of Common Prayer 1662, 1928

Welcome and Introduction

During the entrance of the bridal party a hymn may be sung or instrumental music may be performed.

Psalm, Hymn or Spiritual

At the day and time appointed for solemnization of Matrimony, the persons to be married shall come into the body of the church with their friends and neighbours: and there standing together, the man on the right hand and the woman on the left, the Minister shall say:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony; which is an honourable estate, instituted of God himself, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of Galilee, and is commended in Holy Writ to be honourable among all men; and therefore is not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly; but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God, duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.

First, It was ordained for the increase of mankind according to the will of God, and that children might be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.

Secondly, It was ordained in order that the natural instincts and affections, implanted by God, should be hallowed and directed aright; that those who are called of God to this holy estate, should continue therein in pureness of living.

Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity.

Into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined.

Therefore if any man can shew any just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.

Speaking unto the persons that shall be married the Minister shall say:

I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgement when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that so many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow are not joined together by God; neither is their Matrimony lawful.

At which day of Marriage, if any man do allege and declare any impediment, why they may not be coupled together in Matrimony, by God's law, or the laws of this realm; then the solemnization must be deferred, until such time as the truth be tried.

The Declarations

If no impediment be alleged, then shall the Minister say unto the man:

N1, wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together according to God's law in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health? and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

The man shall answer

I will.

Then shall the Minister say unto the woman

N2, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together according to God's law in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love him, comfort him, honour and keep him, in sickness and in health? and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so, long as ye both shall live?

The woman shall answer

I will.

The Marriage Vows

Then shall the Minister say

Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?

Then shall they give their troth to each other in this manner.

The Minister, receiving the woman at her father's or friend's hands, shall cause the man with his right hand to take the woman by her right hand, and to say after him as follows:

I, N1, take thee, N2, to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse: for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and thereto I give thee my troth.

Then shall they loose their hands; and the woman, with her right hand taking the man by his right hand, shall likewise say after the Minister, one or other of these vows

I, N2, take thee, N1, to my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse: for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and thereto I give thee my troth.

Then they shall again loose their hands; and the man shall give unto the woman a ring, laying the same upon the book.

Before delivering the ring the Minister may say

Bless, O Lord, this ring, and grant that he who gives it and she who shall wear it may remain faithful to each other, and abide in thy peace and favour, and live together in love until their lives' end.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Or if there are two rings

Bless, O Lord, these rings, and grant that they who wear them may remain faithful to each other, and abide in thy peace and favour, and live together in love until their lives' end.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

And the Minister, taking the ring, shall deliver it to the man, to put it upon the fourth finger of the woman's left hand. And the man, holding the ring there, and taught by the Minister, shall say

With this ring I thee wed; with my body I thee honour; and all my worldly goods with thee I share: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. **Amen.**

Then shall the man leave the ring upon the fourth finger of the woman's left hand, and they shall both kneel down; but the people shall remain standing. Then shall the Minister say

O Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: Send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy name; that, living faithfully together, they may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, whereof this ring given and received is a token and pledge; and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Then shall the Minister join their right hands together, and say

Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

Then shall the Minister speak unto the people

Forasmuch as N1 and N2 have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other, and have declared the same by the giving and receiving of rings, and by joining of hands; I pronounce that they be husband and wife together, In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. **Amen.**

And the Minister shall add this Blessing

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you; and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting. **Amen.**

Psalm, Hymn or Spiritual

The Bible Readings

A reading shall be made from The Holy Bible

After the scriptures are read, a brief sermon is delivered.

Psalm, Hymn or Spiritual

The Prayers

The Psalm ended, the people kneeling, and the man and the woman kneeling before the Lord's Table, the Minister standing at the Table, and turning his face towards them, shall say

Let us pray.

**Our Father, which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen.**

Minister

O God of our fathers, bless these thy servants, and sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts; that whatsoever in thy holy Word they shall profitably learn, they may in deed fulfil the same; that so, obeying thy will, and always being in safety under thy protection, they may abide in thy love unto their lives' end; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

This Prayer next following shall be omitted, where the woman is past child-bearing.

O merciful Lord and heavenly Father, by whose gracious gift mankind is increased; bestow, we beseech thee, upon these two persons the heritage and gift of children; and grant that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up to thy praise and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

This Prayer shall follow

O God, who hast taught us that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom thou by Matrimony hadst made one, and hast consecrated the state of Matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church: Look mercifully upon these thy servants, that both this man may love his wife, according to thy Word, (as Christ did love his spouse the Church, who gave himself for it, loving and cherishing it even as his own flesh,) and also that this woman may be loving and amiable, and faithful to her husband, and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace, be a follower of holy and godly matrons. O Lord, bless them both, and grant them to inherit thy everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Signing the Register

The register may be signed here in the presence of the congregation.

The couple take their place again standing before the altar.

Then shall the Minister say this Blessing

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Pour upon you the riches of his grace, sanctify and bless you, that ye may please him both in body and soul, and live together in holy love unto your lives' end.

Amen.

The Marriage Blessing

If there be a Communion, the foregoing prayer and blessing shall be said over the man and woman immediately before the final blessing of the congregation at the Communion.

If there be no Communion, the Minister shall dismiss those that are gathered, saying

Let us pray.

O almighty Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of thy laws, and in the works of thy commandments; that through thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always.

Amen.

A hymn, or instrumental music may here be played, as the wedding party departs the church.

Marriage Blessing for Couples Previously Married in a Civil Ceremony

Welcome and Introduction

At the appointed time the couple come and stand before the minister.
During the entrance of the couple a hymn may be sung, or instrumental
music may be played.

One of the following sentences of scripture may be read.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.

1 John 4:16

Or

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Ps. 118:24

Or

O give thanks, for the Lord is good.
God's love endures forever.

Ps. 106:1

Or

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.
All who love are born of God and know God. All who do not love do
not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8

The minister says:

N1 and N2 you have been married according to civil law, and have spoken vows pledging loyalty and love. Now, in the presence of God and the church, you come to reaffirm those vows and seek God's blessing.

God created us male and female, and gave us marriage so that husband and wife may help and comfort each other, living faithfully together in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, throughout all their days.

God gave us marriage for the full expression of the love between a man and a woman. In marriage a woman and a man belong to each other, and with affection and tenderness freely give themselves to each other.

God gave us marriage for the well-being of human society, for the ordering of family life, and for the birth and nurture of children.

God gave us marriage as a holy mystery in which a man and a woman are joined together, and become one, just as Christ is one with the church.

In marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life, created, ordered, and blessed by God. It is to be lived prayerfully, and in joyful obedience to Christ.

N1 and N2, we rejoice with you; we are glad to join with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows, to pray with you and to wish you joy in your life together.

The minister prays:

Guide us, O God,
by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find freedom,
and in your will discover your peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Or

God of mercy,
your faithfulness to your covenant
frees us to live together
in the security of your powerful love.
Amid all the changing words of our generation,
speak your eternal Word that does not change.
Then may we respond to your gracious promises
by living in faith and obedience;
through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The congregation may be seated.

The Readings

See *Bible Readings For Ceremony and Other Marriage Readings in Contents*

If non-biblical readings have been chosen they may be read here.

A suitable Bible reading or readings follow here.

Reflection

After the scriptures are read, the minister may give a brief reflection.

Let us pray:

Gracious God,
you are always faithful in your love for us.
Look mercifully upon N1 and N2, who have come seeking your
blessing. Let your Holy Spirit rest upon them so that with steadfast love
they may honour the promises they make this day,
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.
Amen.

Declarations

The minister addresses the man and woman:

N1 and N2,
you have committed yourselves to each other in marriage,
and your marriage is recognized by law.
The Church of Christ understands marriage to be,
in the will of God,
the union of a man and a woman,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
till parted by death.
Is this your understanding?

Answer: Yes, it is.

N1, have you resolved to be faithful to your wife,
forsaking all others, so long as you both shall live?

Answer: Yes, I have.

N2, have you resolved to be faithful to your husband,
forsaking all others, so long as you both shall live?

Answer: Yes, I have.

The minister addresses the congregation:

Will all of you witnessing these vows do everything in your power to
uphold N1 and N2 in their marriage?

Answer: We will.

Vows

The minister addresses the couple:

N1 and N2, I invite you to join your hands, and in faith make your promises to each other as husband and wife.

The couple faces each other and joins their hands. They, in turn, then make their vows to each other with either of the following:

Option 1

The man says:

**N2, you are my wife,
and I promise,
before God
and these witnesses,
to be your loving
and faithful husband;
to have and to hold
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.**

The woman says:

**N1, you are my husband,
and I promise,
before God
and these witnesses,
to be your loving
and faithful wife;
to have and to hold
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.**

Option 2

The man says:

**N2, you are my wife.
Before God
and these witnesses,
I promise to love you,
and to be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.**

The woman says:

**N1, you are my husband.
Before God
and these witnesses,
I promise to love you,
and to be faithful to you
as long as we both shall live.**

If rings are to be exchanged, the minister may say to the couple:

Do you bring rings as the sign of your promise?

When the rings are presented, the minister may say one of the following prayers

Option 1

Most holy God,
bless these rings.
Grant that they who wear them
may be faithful to each other
and continue bound together in
love
to their lives' end,
through Jesus Christ,
our Lord.

Amen.

Option 2

Heavenly Father,
by your blessing
let these rings be
to N and N
a symbol of unending love and
faithfulness
and of the promises they have
made to each other;
through Jesus Christ,
our Lord.

Amen.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger, and says:

**N, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
and all I have I share with you.**

The minister joins the couple's hands saying:

N1 and N2,
you have made solemn promises
to each other as husband and wife,
and have symbolized them by the joining of hands
and the giving and receiving of rings.

Those whom God has joined together let no one separate.

The couple may kiss

Signing The Blessing Certificate

At this time the couple may sign their marriage-blessing certificate.

The Prayers

The couple faces the minister.

N1 and N2 we celebrate with you the promises you have made. Pray and we will pray with you, that God may enrich the life you have chosen and fulfill your hopes for the future.

Let us pray:

One of the following prayers are said:

1

Eternal God, Creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation and giver of all grace: look with favour upon the world you have made and redeemed, and especially upon N1 and N2.

Give them wisdom and devotion in their life together, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy.

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and each other all the days of their life.

Give them the grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and confess their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours.

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair.

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual love that they may reach out in concern for others.

Grant that all who have witnessed these vows today may find their lives strengthened, and that all who are married may depart with their own promises renewed.

Enrich with your grace all husbands and wives, parents and children, that, loving and supporting one another, they may serve those in need and be a sign of your kingdom.

Grant that the bonds by which all your children are united to one another may be so transformed by your Spirit that your peace and justice may fill the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

2

Eternal God,
without your grace no promise is sure.
Strengthen N1 and N2 with patience, kindness, gentleness, and all other
gifts of your Spirit,
so that they may fulfil the vows they have made.
Keep them faithful to each other and to you.
Fill them with such love and joy
that they may build a home of peace and welcome.
Guide them by your Word and Spirit
to serve you all their days.

Help us all, O God,
to do your will in each of our homes and lives.
Enrich us with your grace
so that, supporting one another, we may serve those in need
and hasten the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As Jesus has taught us we pray:

Our Father,
which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
in earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Charge And Blessing

The minister addresses the couple with one of the following:

1

As God's own,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, and patience,
forgiving each other
as the Lord has forgiven you,
and crown all these things with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Col. 3:12-14

2

Whatever you do,
in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God through him.

Col. 3:17

***The Final Blessing** (see Contents page)*

A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the wedding party leaves.

Thanksgiving for Marriage and Renewal of Vows

This service is provided for couples that would like to celebrate their years of marriage by renewing their marriage vows.

Welcome and Introduction

The minister welcomes the people, introduces the service informally and invites those present to pray.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you.

One of the following sentences of scripture may be read.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.

1 John 4:16

Or

This is the day that the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Ps. 118:24

Or

O give thanks, for the Lord is good.
God's love endures forever.

Ps. 106:1

Or

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.
All who love are born of God and know God. All who do not love do
not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:7-8

God our Father,
you have taught us through your Son
that love is the fulfilling of the law;
grant to your servants *N* and *N*
that, loving one another,
they may continue in your love until their lives' end;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A hymn or song may be sung.

We have come together in the presence of God to give thanks [*with N and N*] for [... *years of*] married life,
[to ask his forgiveness for all that has been amiss,]†
to rejoice together and to ask for God's blessing.
As our Lord Jesus Christ was himself a guest at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, so through his Spirit he is with us now.

Marriage is a gift of God in creation and a means of his grace; it is given that a husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in times of need as well as in plenty, in sadness and in joy, in sickness and in health; it is given that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love.
[It is given as the foundation of family life in which children may be born and nurtured in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory.]

In marriage a couple belong together and live life in the community; it is a way of life created and hallowed by God, that all should honour. Therefore we pray with them that, strengthened and guided by God, they may continue to fulfil his purpose for their life together.

† *There may be occasions when this should be omitted; it may be important to include it when a couple are celebrating their reconciliation.*

Silence is kept for reflection on the years that have passed and on shared experiences, good and bad.

Readings and Sermon

One or more passages from the Bible is read. Other songs and readings may be used. A sermon may be preached.

Renewal of Vows

The minister says to the couple(s)

I invite you now to recall the vows that you made at your wedding.

Husband and wife face each other and hold hands.

The husband says

I, N, took you, N, to be my wife;
to have and to hold from that day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
till death us do part, according to God's holy law,
and this was my solemn vow.
Today, in the presence of our family and friends,
I affirm my continuing commitment to this vow.

The wife says

I, N, took you, N, to be my husband;
to have and to hold from that day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish,
till death us do part, according to God's holy law,
and this was my solemn vow.
Today, in the presence of our family and friends,
I affirm my continuing commitment to this vow.

The minister says to the congregation

Will you, the family and friends of N and N,
continue to support and uphold them
in their marriage now and in the years to come?
We will.

The Rings

If a new ring (or new rings) is to be blessed, this prayer may be used

Heavenly Father,
source of everlasting love,
revealed to us in Jesus Christ
and poured into our hearts through your Holy Spirit;
that love which many waters cannot quench,
neither the floods drown;
that love which is patient and kind,
enduring all things without end;
by your blessing, let *these rings* be to N and N
symbols to remind them of the covenant
made on their wedding day,
through your grace in the love of your Son
and in the power of your Spirit.

Amen.

If a ring (or rings) is to be given these words are used

I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Or, if not, each may touch the wedding ring(s) with the words

I gave you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God the Father,
God the Son,
God the Holy Spirit,
bless, preserve and keep you;
the Lord mercifully grant you the riches of his grace
that you may please him both in body and soul,
and, living together in faith and love,
may receive the blessings of eternal life.
Amen.

Signing of the Certificate

Music may be played as the couple sign a certificate celebrating the renewal of their marriage vows.

The Prayers

The couple kneel together. The minister or others may pray, using these or similar prayers

Blessed are you, heavenly Father.
You give joy to husband and wife.
Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.
You have brought new life to humankind.
Blessed are you, Holy Spirit of God.
You bring us together in love.
Blessed be Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
One God, to be praised for ever.
Amen.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we lift up our hearts to you through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him you have made a covenant of grace with your people
by the outpouring of your Holy Spirit.

We praise you for the gift of marriage in which the love of husband and wife is brought together and reflects your plan of love for the world.
We thank you today for *N* and *N*, and for leading them to each other in friendship and love, commitment and trust, and for bringing them here for the blessing of their marriage.

Living God,
by the presence of your Holy Spirit, may they know the risen Christ to
be with them now, as they celebrate this covenant together.
May their lives be a witness to your saving love in this troubled world.
As you pour out your love, may they grow together in your sight, and
each be to the other a companion in joy, a comfort in sorrow and a
strength in need.

As you blessed the earthly home at Nazareth with the presence of your
Son, may their home be a place of security and peace.
And bring us all at the last to that great marriage banquet of your Son
in our home in heaven, where, with all your saints and angels,
in the glory of your presence, we will for ever praise you;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Dismissal and Blessing

The couple may pray together

Heavenly Father,
we offer you our souls and bodies,
our thoughts and words and deeds,
our love for one another.
Unite our wills in your will,
that we may grow together
in love and peace
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The minister blesses the couple and the congregation with the following or another blessing (see contents page).

God the Holy Trinity make *you* strong in faith and love,
defend *you* on every side, and guide *you* in truth and peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.
Amen.

A hymn, or instrumental music may be played, as the couple leave.

Prayers For The Marriage

After the couple have made their vows and signed the marriage register the Minister will pray for their marriage. As an alternative to those in each service you may choose from one of the prayer forms below.

Prayer Form 1

Eternal God, creator of us all, we praise you for all the ways in which your love comes into our lives, and for all the joys that can come to men and women through marriage.

Today we especially pray for N1 and N2 as they begin their married life. With them we thank you for the love and care of their parents, which has guided them to maturity and prepared them for this commitment.

Give them strength to keep the vows they have made, to be loyal and faithful to each other, and to support each other throughout their life, that they may bear each other's burdens and share each other's joys. Help them to be honest and patient with each other, (*to be wise and loving parents*) and to welcome both friends and strangers into their home. In all their future together may they enjoy each other and grow through the love they share, until, at the end of this life, you receive us all into your eternal kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Additional prayers may be offered (see below).

Prayer Form 2

Holy creator Spirit, you made us and you change us.
Let your loving wisdom work with N1 and N2, deepening and
developing their desire, moulding and freeing their generosity.

May they achieve stability and sweetness in their daily lives until their
lives shall end. May they train, support and inspire the children with
whom you entrust them to enjoy your blessing and to serve your world.

Holy Spirit of God, you know our strength and for our frailty you have
compassion. Be with N1 and N2 in all they undertake. And grant that
we their friends, with all who become their friends, may sense and
understand their needs and help as opportunity demands.

Additional prayers may be offered (see below).

Prayer Form 3

Loving Spirit, grant to N1 and N2, that in giving and forgiving they may receive from each other lasting joy.

Bind them together with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind them together with love.

Grant that they may always take delight in each other, and each remain the other's heart's desire.

Bind them together with cords that cannot be broken.
Bind them together with love.

May they reach such trust and confidence in each other as shall keep them from unnecessary distress. May they find courage to meet the heartaches, disappointments and agonies life can bring.
Be their rock, their fortress, for they put their trust in you.

Help them to look beyond their own family and their own concerns to see the world, suffering and struggling, the world you have given us to share with one another.

Open their eyes and their hearts.
Give them grace to accept that they are mortal,
to face the possibility of death and the separation it must bring.

Jesus, you are resurrection, you are life.

Additional prayers may be offered (see below).

Prayer Form 4

Eternal God,
Creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation,
and giver of all grace:
look with favour upon the world you have made and especially upon
N1 and N2.

Give them wisdom and devotion in their life together, that each may be
to the other a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity, a comfort in
sorrow, and a companion in joy.

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their
spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you
and each other all the days of their life.

Give them the grace, when they hurt each other,
to recognize and confess their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness
and yours.

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this broken world, that
unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy
conquer despair.

Give them such fulfilment of their mutual love that they may reach out
in concern for others.

Grant that all who have witnessed these vows today may find their lives
strengthened, and that all who are married may depart with their own
promises renewed.

Enrich with your grace all husbands and wives, parents and children,
that, loving and supporting one another, they may serve those in need
and be a sign of your kingdom.

Additional prayers may be offered (see below).

Prayer Form 5

Eternal God, without your grace no promise is sure. Strengthen N1 and N2 with patience, kindness, gentleness, and all other gifts of your Spirit, so that they may fulfil the vows they have made.

Keep them faithful to each other and to you. Fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home of peace and welcome. Guide them by your Word to serve you all their days.

Help us all, O God, to do your will in each of our homes and lives. Enrich us with your grace so that, supporting one another, we may serve those in need and hasten the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Additional prayers may be offered (see below).

Additional Prayers

A1

Creating and redeeming God, it is your love which in marriage makes two persons fully one. As N1 and N2 love each other, may they also grow in love for you. Walking together with Christ as their companion on the way, may they come to those inexpressible joys which you have prepared for all who love you.

Amen.

A2

God of peace, your love is generous, and reaches out to hold us all in your embrace. Fill our hearts with tenderness for those to whom we are linked today. Give us sympathy with each other's trials; give us patience with each other's faults; that we may grow in the likeness of Jesus and share in the joy of your kingdom.

Amen.

A3

Father of all, we thank you for this new family, and for everything these parents and their children have to share; by your Spirit of peace draw them together and help them be true friends to one another. Let your love surround them and your care protect them, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A4

Dear God, you are merciful and forgiving. Grant that N1 and N2, their family and all who care for them, may accept your generous love. Heal their memories, comfort them, and send them all from here renewed and hopeful.

Amen.

A5

Creator Spirit, we thank you for your gift of sexual love, by which husband and wife may express their delight in each other, find refreshment, and share with you the joy of creating new life. By your grace may N1 and N2 remain lovers, rejoicing in your goodness.

Amen.

A6

God, the source of love, we pray now for all who are committed to each other in love. Through their love may they know your love and so be renewed for your service in the world.

Amen.

A7

God, the author of love, we pray for all who are married. Through their love for each other may they know the reality of your love for the whole world; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Final Blessing

One of the following blessings may be said conclude the ceremony.

Blessing 1

All praise and glory to you most gracious God, for in the beginning you created us men and women. Grant your blessing then, we pray, to N1 and N2, so that in marriage they may be a source of blessing to each other and to all, and live together in holy love until their lives' end.

Amen.

Blessing 2

Ma to Atua Matua, ma to Atua Tama, ma to Atua Wairua Tapu, korua a manaaki, a tiaki; ma to Ariki tohu a titiro atawhai ki a korua, e whakakii o korua ngakau ki nga mea pai katoa o to wairua; kia pai ai to korua noho tahi i tenei ao, kia whiwhi ai hoki korua ki to ora tonu i tera ao atu.

Amine.

Blessing 3

All praise and blessing to you, God of love, creator of the universe, maker of man and woman in your likeness, source of blessing for married life. All praise to you for you have created courtship and marriage, joy and gladness, feasting and laughter, pleasure and delight. May your blessing come in full upon N1 and N2. May they know your presence in their joys and in their sorrows. May they reach old age in the company of friends and come at last to your eternal kingdom.

Amen.

Blessing 4

May the strength of the totara be yours,
may the light of the rising sun show you the way,
the gliding moon guide your footsteps at night.
May the song of the wind in the tussock,
the chuckle of the river,
the sparkle of the sea
lighten your heart.
May the peace of the lapping lake be yours,
the hope of the uncurling koru be yours,
the joy of the black robin be yours.
May the lashing rains refresh you,
the kumera nourish you,
the bracken give you rest.
May the Christ walk with you
and meet you over the next ridge.

Rev Rob Ferguson, "Bush Blessing"

Blessing 5

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord be kind and gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favour
and give you peace.
Amen.

Blessing 6

The grace of Christ attend you,
the love of God surround you,
the Holy Spirit keep you,
that you may live in faith,
abound in hope,
and grow in love,
both now and forevermore.
Amen.

Blessing 7

God bless you, my friends.

May your wisdom increase like a deep-rooted tree
and may peace always nest in its branches
to sing to you above the noise of the storms.

May you always see yourself
in God's plan for a blossoming earth,
and may the fragrance of your truth
be a celebration for all.

God bless you, my friends.

- Joy Cowley, *"Psalms for the Road"*

Blessing 8

Now, may the courage
of the early morning's dawning,
The strength of eternal hills
and wide open fields,
The joy of silent streams and the gentle wind,
The beauty of flowered gardens and the song of birds,
And the faith of youth be in your hearts.

And the love of God,
That alone can build happiness,
That makes family love flourish with the
radiance of great joy, be with you always.

And the peace of a quiet evening's ending
and of the midnight,
be yours now and for ever.

Amen

Hymns and Songs

You may like to include songs or hymns in your celebration. The following are offered as suggestions.

All Things Bright And Beautiful
Amazing Grace
A New Commandment
Arahina, E Ihowā
Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord
Be Thou My Vision
Bind Us Together
Brother, Sister, Let Me Serve You
E Te Atua, Kua Ruia Nei
For The Beauty Of The Earth
Give Me Joy In My Heart
I Vow To Thee My Country
Jerusalem
Lord Of All Hopefulness
Lord Of The Dance
Lord Jesus Christ (Living Lord)
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
Mā Te Mārie A Te Atua
Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace
Morning Has Broken
Now Thank We All Our God
Praise, My Soul, The King Of Heaven
Praise To The Lord, The Almighty
Tama Ngākau Mārie
The King Of Love My Shepherd Is
The Lord's My Shepherd

Bible Readings For Ceremony

A Bible Reading must be included in the Marriage Ceremony. The following Biblical readings are intended as a guide only. If there is a particular reading from the scriptures you would like that isn't included below please let us know.

OLD TESTAMENT

Gen. 1:26–31 Humankind created in the image of God
Gen. 2:18–24 Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh
Ruth 1:16–17 Faithful companionship
Song of Sol. 8:6–7 Set me as a seal upon your heart
Song of Sol. 2:8–14 The voice of my beloved
Prov. 3:3–8 Trust the Lord with all your heart
Isa. 54:5–8 Your Maker is your husband
Jer. 31:31–34 The Lord will make a new covenant

PSALMS

Ps. 8 Mortals crowned with glory and honour
Ps. 67 May God be gracious to us
Ps. 95:1–7 O come, let us sing to the Lord
Ps. 100 Make a joyful noise to the Lord
Ps. 103:1–5, 15–18 Bless the Lord, O my soul
Ps. 117 Great is God's steadfast love
Ps. 121 Lift up my eyes to the hills

EPISTLES

Rom. 12:1–2, 9–18 A living sacrifice . . . let love be genuine
1 Cor. 13:1–13 Faith, hope, love . . . greatest is love
Eph. 5:21–33 The Christian Household
Col. 3:12–17 Clothe yourselves with love
1 John 4:7–12 Let us love one another . . . God is love
Rev. 19:1, 5–9 Rejoicing at the marriage of the Lamb

GOSPELS

Matt. 5:1–10 The Beatitudes
Matt. 5:13–16 Salt of the earth . . . light of the world
Matt. 22:35–40 Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind
Mark 10:6–9 What God has joined, let no one separate
John 2:1–11 The wedding at Cana
John 15:1–17 Jesus, the true vine

The Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-31

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." ²⁹ God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 2:18-25

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Ruth 1:16-17

“Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

¹⁷ Where you die, I will die –
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!”

Song of Solomon 2:8-14

⁸ The voice of my beloved!
Look, he comes,
leaping upon the mountains,
bounding over the hills.
⁹ My beloved is like a gazelle
or a young stag.

Look, there he stands
behind our wall,
gazing in at the windows,
looking through the lattice.

¹⁰ My beloved speaks and says to me:

“ Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;

¹¹ for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.

¹² The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.

¹³ The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.

¹⁴ O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face,
let me hear your voice;
for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

⁶ Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.

⁷ Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one's house,
it would be utterly scorned.

Proverbs 3:3–8

³ Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴ So you will find favor and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.

⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.

⁸ It will be a healing for your flesh
and a refreshment for your body.

Isaiah 54:5–8

⁵ For your Maker is your husband,
the Lord of hosts is his name;
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,
the God of the whole earth he is called.

⁶ For the Lord has called you
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,
like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off,
says your God.

⁷ For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with great compassion I will gather you.

⁸ In overflowing wrath for a moment
I hid my face from you,
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,
says the Lord, your Redeemer.

Jeremiah 31:31–34

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The Psalms

Psalm 8

¹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

² Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

³ When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

⁴ what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

⁵ Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.

⁶ You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,

⁷ all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

⁸ the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

⁹ O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 67

¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, *Selah*

² that your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

³ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁴ Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity
and guide the nations upon earth. *Selah*

⁵ Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁶ The earth has yielded its increase;
God, our God, has blessed us.

⁷ May God continue to bless us;
let all the ends of the earth revere him.

Psalm 95:1–7

¹ O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

³ For the Lord is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth;
the heights of the mountains are his also.

⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.

⁶ O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

⁷ For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.

O that today you would listen to his voice!

Psalm 100:1–5

¹ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.

² Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.

³ Know that the Lord is God.

It is he that made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him, bless his name.

⁵ For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 103:1–5, 15-18

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits –

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

¹⁵ As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;

¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,
and its place knows it no more.

¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to
everlasting
on those who fear him,

and his righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant
and remember to do his commandments.

Psalm 117

¹ Praise the Lord, all you nations!
Extol him, all you peoples!

² For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.
Praise the Lord!

Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?

² My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.

⁸ The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

The New Testament Epistles

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

⁹Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. ¹¹Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I

became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³ And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (Traditional Version)

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. ² And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. ³ And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. ⁴ Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵ Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ⁶ Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷ Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. ⁸ Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away. ⁹ For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. ¹⁰ But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. ¹¹ When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. ¹³ And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity.

Ephesians 5:21–33

²¹ Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴ Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands

should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³²

This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.

³³Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Colossians 3:12–17

¹²As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 4:7–12

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Revelation 19:1, 5-9

¹After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying,
“Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God.”

⁵And from the throne came a voice saying,
“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
and all who fear him,
small and great.”

⁶Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out,
“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.

⁷Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready;
⁸to her it has been granted to be clothed
with fine linen, bright and pure” —
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”

The Gospels

Matthew 5:1-11

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:13–16

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 22:35–40

³⁵ One of them, a lawyer, asked Jesus a question to test him. ³⁶ "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" ³⁷ He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the greatest and first

commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Mark 10:2–9

² Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵ But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

John 2:1–11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. ⁹ When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 15:1–17

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹²“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Other Marriage Readings

The following non-biblical readings are suggestions only.

You may or may not want to include a non-biblical reading in your ceremony.

Love Is

The love of which I speak is slow to lose patience;

It looks for ways of being constructive.

It is not possessive.

It is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage.

It is not touchy.

It does not keep account of evil.

It is always eager to believe the best.

Always hopeful.

Always patient.

It is a love which knows no limit to its endurance, no fading to its hope.

It is in fact the one thing that still remains when everything else has disappeared.

Adapted from Saint Paul

True Worth

A person's struggle for significance apart from God's will and purposes is in vain.

We build homes and institutions; we acquire property and possessions; we crowd the cities with the clutter of questionable achievements; we fill the better part of every day with self-centered activities; we push and prod in an anxiety-ridden quest for some ephemeral treasure; we strive incessantly to get to the top.

And all the while worth and value are within us or very close to us.

They are the precious gifts of God that come in some measure to each of us.

There are visible signs of a person's worth: the beloved mate who brings us joy, the children we beget, the ability to supply our own and our family's needs through our daily labours.

But even beyond this, and long before this, our true worth was established by the Lord our God.

Now You Will Feel No Rain

Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter to the other.

Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now there is no loneliness for you,
now there is no more loneliness.

Now you are two bodies,
but there is only one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling place,
and enter in your days together.

And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

From Broken Arrow (1950)

My Love is like a Red, Red Rose

O my luv is like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June.

O my luv is like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

As far as thou, my bonnie lass
So deep in luv am I.

And I will luv thee still my dear
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry my dear
And rocks melt wi' the sun.

I will luv thee still my dear
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel my only luv.
And fare thee weel a while

And I will come again my luv
Though it were ten thousand mile.

What Love Is

Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an orientation of character which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not towards one "object" of love.

If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of their fellows, their love is not love, but a symbiotic attachment or an enlarged egotism.

Yet, most people do not see that love is an activity, a power of the soul. They believe that all that is necessary is to find the right object - and that everything goes by itself afterward.

This attitude can be compared to that of a person who wants to paint but who, instead of learning the art, claims that they just have to wait for the right object, and that they will paint beautifully when they find it. If I truly love one person, I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, "I love you", I must be able to say, "I love you in everybody; I love through you the world; I love in you also myself."

Pillars Of The Temple

Then Almitra spoke again and said
And what of marriage, master?
And he answered saying:

You were born to be together
and together you shall be fore evermore.
You shall be together
when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Aye, you shall be together
even in the silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness
And let the winds of the heavens, dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
let it rather be a moving sea, between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup, but drink not from the one cup.
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
even as the strings of a lute are alone, though they quiver with the same
music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping; for only the hand of
Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together.
For the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the
cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

by Kahlil Gibran

Speak to us of Children

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, "Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts.

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of to-morrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees that mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you with His might, that His arrows may go swift and far.

Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow that is stable.

by Kahlil Gibran

The Marriage of Two Minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.

Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds, or bends with the remover to remove.

Oh no! It is an ever fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wandering bark, whose worth's unknown, although its height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks within its bending
sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the
edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved
I never writ, nor no one ever loved.

William Shakespeare

What Greater Thing

What greater thing is there for two human souls,
than to feel that they are joined together
to strengthen each other in all labour
to minister to each other in all sorrow,
to share with each other in all gladness,
to be with each other in the silent
unspeakable memories?

by George Eliot

Oh The Comfort

Oh the comfort,
the inexpressible comfort,
of feeling safe with a person.

Having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words,
but pour them all out just as they are,
chaff and grain together,
and a faithful hand will take and sift them.
Keep what is worth keeping,
and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.

by George Eliot

Inscape

Out of wild exuberance of creation throughout millions of years,
You two have appeared – each of you unique, distinctive, wondrously
personal.

You have chosen to journey together down this earth valley in the brief
moment of time that is yours.

From this day forth you become a unit of life that will bring forth
futures.

You are both called into a new existence.

The old things have passed away; the new heaven and a new earth have
become your dwelling place.

For the whole of the universe has come to each of you in the form of a
particular person who has a unique love for you, and is beloved to you.

by Ross Snyder

Love Is A Thing to Walk With Hand In Hand

Love is a thing to walk with hand in hand
Through the ever dayness of this workaday world;
Bearing its tender feet to every flint,
Yet not letting one heart-beat go astray
From beauty's law of plainness and content.

Such is try love, which steals into the heart
With feet as silent as the lightsome dawn;
That kisses smooth the rough brows of the dark
And has its will through gentleness.

A love that gives and takes, that sees the faults
But loving kindly ever looks them down
With the o'ercoming faith that still forgives;
A love that shall be new and fresh each hour

James Russell Howell

True Relationships

Many human relationships are like the interlocking fingers of two hands... Human relationships are meant to be like two hands folded together. They can move away from each other while still touching with the fingertips. They can create space between themselves, a little tent, a home, a safe place to be.

True relationships among people point to God. They are like prayers in the world. Sometimes the hands that pray are fully touching, sometimes there is distance between them. They always move to and from each other, but they never lose touch. They keep praying to the One who brought them together.

Henri Nouwen

The Marriage Canopy

Under the huppah (marriage canopy) we pronounce a special blessing that renders the couple loving, kind friends, always at each other's side, always encouraging each other, and when necessary, criticizing and gently showing where the other erred. God has endowed each of us with unique gifts. When our mates become our best friends, we pool our spiritual resources and strengthen each other. In such a relationship, life's trials become less threatening, and even the most formidable challenges become manageable. 'Two are better than one' is the wise teaching of King Solomon. If one falls, the other is there to pick him/her up. If one is attacked, the other is there to rescue him; if one is depressed, the other is there to buoy her spirits.

When husband and wife are loving, kind friends, they perceive each other's feelings so totally that there is no need for explanations. Their relationship is virtually symbiotic. There is total empathy with the needs of the other.

Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

A Marriage Made In Heaven

They say they will love, comfort, honour each other to the end of their days. They say they will cherish each other and be faithful to each other

always. They say they will do these things not just when they feel like it, but even -- for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health -- when they don't feel like it at all. In other words, the vows they make could hardly be more extravagant. They give away their freedom. They take on themselves each other's burdens. They bind their lives together... The question is, what do they get in return?

They get each other in return... There will always be the other to talk to, to listen to... There is still someone to get through the night with, to wake into the new day beside. If they have children, they can give them, as well as each other, roots and wings. If they don't have children, they each become the other's child.

They both still have their lives apart as well as a life together. They both still have their separate ways to find. But a marriage made in heaven is one where a man and a woman become more richly themselves together than the chances are either of them could ever have managed to become alone.

Frederick Buechner

This Quieter Love

If the old fairy-tale ending 'They lived happily ever after' is taken to mean 'They felt for the next fifty years exactly as they felt the day before they were married,' then it says what probably never was nor ever would be true, and would be highly undesirable if it were. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years? What would become of your work, your appetite, your sleep, your friendships? But, of course, ceasing to be 'in love' need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense -- love as distinct from 'being in love' - is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by the grace which both partners ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself. They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be 'in love' with someone else. 'Being in love' first moved them to promise fidelity: This quieter love enables them to keep the promise. It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it.

C. S. Lewis

The Meaning of Marriage

You Never Marry the Right Person

By Timothy Keller

In generations past, there was far less talk about “compatibility” and finding the ideal soul-mate. Today we are looking for someone who accepts us as we are *and* fulfills our desires, and this creates an unrealistic set of expectations that frustrates both the searchers and the searched for.

In John Tierney’s classic humor article “Picky, Picky, Picky” he tries nobly to get us to laugh at the impossible situation our culture has put us in. He recounts many of the reasons his single friends told him they had given up on their recent relationships:

“She mispronounced ‘Goethe.’”

“How could I take him seriously after seeing *The Road Less Traveled* on his bookshelf?”

“If she would just lose seven pounds.”

“Sure, he’s a partner, but it’s not a big firm. And he wears those short black socks.”

“Well, it started out great ... beautiful face, great body, nice smile. Everything was going fine – until she turned around.” He paused ominously and shook his head. “... She had dirty elbows.”

In other words, some people in our culture want too much out of a marriage partner. They do not see marriage as two flawed people coming together to create a space of stability, love and consolation, a “haven in a heartless world,” as Christopher Lasch describes it. Rather, they are looking for someone who will accept them as they are, complement their abilities and fulfill their sexual and emotional desires. This will indeed require a woman who is “a novelist/astronaut with a background in fashion modeling,” and the equivalent in a man. A marriage based not on self-denial but on self-fulfillment will require a low- or no-maintenance partner who meets your needs while making almost no claims on you. Simply put – today people are asking far too much in the marriage partner.

The Bible explains why the quest for compatibility seems to be so impossible. As a pastor I have spoken to thousands of couples, some working on marriage-seeking, some working on marriage-sustaining and some working on marriage-saving. I've heard them say over and over, "Love shouldn't be this hard, it should come naturally." In response I always say something like: "Why believe that? Would someone who wants to play professional baseball say, 'It shouldn't be so hard to hit a fastball'? Would someone who wants to write the greatest American novel of her generation say, 'It shouldn't be hard to create believable characters and compelling narrative'?" The understandable retort is: "But this is not baseball or literature. This is love. Love should just come naturally if two people are compatible, if they are truly soul-mates."

The Christian answer to this is that no two people are compatible. Duke University Ethics professor Stanley Hauerwas has famously made this point:

Destructive to marriage is the self-fulfillment ethic that assumes marriage and the family are primarily institutions of personal fulfillment, necessary for us to become "whole" and happy. The assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough we will find the right person. This moral assumption overlooks a crucial aspect to marriage. It fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person.

We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. For marriage, being [the enormous thing it is] means we are not the same person after we have entered it. The primary challenge of marriage is learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married.

Hauerwas gives us the first reason that no two people are compatible for marriage, namely, that marriage profoundly changes us. But there is another reason. Any two people who enter into marriage are spiritually broken by sin, which among other things means to be self-centered – living life *incurvatus in se*. As author Denis de Rougemont said, "Why should neurotic, selfish, immature people suddenly become angels when they fall in love...?" That is why a good marriage is more painfully hard to achieve than athletic or artistic prowess. Raw, natural talent does not enable you to play baseball as a pro or write great

literature without enduring discipline and enormous work. Why would it be easy to live lovingly and well with another human being in light of what is profoundly wrong within our human nature? Indeed, many people who have mastered athletics and art have failed miserably at marriage. So the biblical doctrine of sin explains why marriage – more than anything else that is good and important in this fallen world – is so painful and hard.

The reason that marriage is so painful and yet wonderful is because it is a reflection of the Gospel, which is painful and wonderful at once. The Gospel is – we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared to believe, and at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. This is the only kind of relationship that will really transform us. Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God’s saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God’s mercy and grace.

The hard times of marriage drive us to experience more of this transforming love of God. But a good marriage will also be a place where we experience more of this kind of transforming love at a human level.

Excerpt from THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE © 2011 by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller. Published by Dutton, A Member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc. All Rights Reserved.