

The Marriage Service

Alternatives

using Common Worship Order 1

Notes to the Marriage Service

1 Preparation

It is the custom and practice of the Church of England to offer preparation for marriage for couples who are soon to be married, as well as to be available for support and counselling in the years that follow.

2 The Banns

The banns are to be published in the church on three Sundays at the time of Divine Service by the officiant in the form set out in The Book of Common Prayer or in the following form: I publish the banns of marriage between NN of ... and NN of ... This is the first / second / third time of asking. If any of you know any reason in law why they may not marry each other you are to declare it. We pray for these couples (or N and N) as they prepare for their wedding(s). A suitable prayer may be said (see page 135).

3 Hymns and Canticles

These may be used at suitable points during the service.

4 Entry

The bride may enter the church escorted by her father or a representative of the family, or the bride and groom may enter church together.

5 Readings and Sermon

At least one reading from the Bible must be used. Suggested readings are printed on pages 137ñ149. If occasion demands, either the Sermon or the Readings and Sermon may come after the Blessing of the Marriage. Chairs may be provided for the bride and bridegroom.

6 Giving Away

This traditional ceremony is optional. Immediately before the couple exchange vows (pages 108 and 123), the minister may ask: Who brings this woman to be married to this man? The bride's father (or mother, or another member of her family or a friend representing the family) gives the bride's right hand to the minister who puts it in the bridegroom's right hand. Alternatively, after the bride and bridegroom have made their Declarations, the minister may ask the parents of bride and bridegroom in these or similar words: N and N have declared their intention towards each other. As their parents, will you now entrust your son and daughter to one another as they come to be married? Both sets of parents respond: We will.

7 The Declarations and the Vows

The Book of Common Prayer version of the Declarations, and / or the alternative vows on pages 150ñ151, may be used. The couple repeat the vows after the minister, or may read them. If preferred, the question to the bride, and her vow, may come before the question to the bridegroom and his vow.

8 The Giving of Rings

If desired, the bride and bridegroom may each place a ring on the fourth finger of the other's hand, and may then say together the words 'N, I give you this ring Ö'. The prayer on page 151 may be used instead of the prayer on pages 109 and 124.

9 The Prayers

Several forms of intercession are provided. Other suitable forms may be used, especially prayers which the couple have written or selected in cooperation with the minister. Whatever form is used, silence may be kept as part of the intercession. Free prayer may be offered.

10 Registration of the Marriage

The law requires that the Registers are filled in immediately after the solemnization of a marriage. This may take place either after the Proclamation or at the end of the service.

11 Holy Communion

For communicant members of the Church it is appropriate that they receive communion soon after their marriage. For some this may make it appropriate for the marriage to take place within the context of a Celebration of Holy Communion.

12 The Marriage Service within a Celebration of Holy Communion

The Notes to the Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion, as well as the Notes to the Marriage Service, apply equally to this service. Texts are suggested at different points, but other suitable texts may be used. Authorized Prayers of Penitence may be used. In the Liturgy of the Word, there should be a Gospel reading, preceded by either one or two other readings from the Bible. If desired, the Blessing of the Marriage may take place between the Lord's Prayer and the Breaking of the Bread.

13 Ecumenical Provisions

Where a minister of another Christian Church is invited to assist at the Solemnization of Matrimony, the permissions and procedures set out in Canon B 43 are to be followed. The Church of England minister who solemnizes the marriage must establish the absence of impediment, direct the exchange of vows, declare the existence of the marriage, say the final blessing, and sign the registers. A minister invited to assist may say all or part of the opening address, lead the declarations of intent, supervise the exchange of rings, and join in the blessing of the marriage. He or she may also read a lesson and lead all or part of the prayers. Where the couple come from different Christian communions the bishop may authorize such variations to the marriage service as are set out in An Order for the Marriage of Christians from Different Churches, which is published separately.

Alternative Preface

*In the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we have come together
to witness the marriage of N and N,
to pray for God's blessing on them,
to share their joy
and to celebrate their love.
Marriage is a gift of God in creation
through which husband and wife may know the grace of God.
It is given
that as man and woman grow together in love and trust,
they shall be united with one another in heart, body and mind,
as Christ is united with his bride, the Church.
The gift of marriage brings husband and wife together
in the delight and tenderness of sexual union
and joyful commitment to the end of their lives.
It is given as the foundation of family life
in which children are [born and] nurtured
and in which each member of the family,
in good times and in bad,
may find strength, companionship and comfort,
and grow to maturity in love.
Marriage is a way of life made holy by God,
and blessed by the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ
with those celebrating a wedding at Cana in Galilee.
Marriage is a sign of unity and loyalty
which all should uphold and honour.
It enriches society and strengthens community.
No one should enter into it lightly or selfishly
but reverently and responsibly in the sight of almighty God.
N and N are now to enter this way of life.
They will each give their consent to the other
and make solemn vows,
and in token of this they will [each] give and receive a ring.
We pray with them that the Holy Spirit will guide
and strengthen them,
that they may fulfil God's purposes
for the whole of their earthly life together.*

Alternative Vows

Form 1

The bridegroom takes the bride's right hand in his, and says

*I, N, take you, N,
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,
till death us do part,
according to God's holy law.
In the presence of God I make this vow.*

They loose hands.

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

*I, N, take you, N,
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, cherish, and obey,
till death us do part,
according to God's holy law.
In the presence of God I make this vow.*

Form 2

The bridegroom takes the bride's right hand in his, and says

*I, N, take thee, N, 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 ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth.*

They loose hands.

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

*I, N, take thee, N, 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, cherish, and to obey, till death us
do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I give
thee my troth.*

[If desired, the word 'obey' may be omitted, as follows

*I, N, take thee, N, 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 ordinance; and thereto I give thee my
troth.]*

Prayer at the Giving of the Ring(s)

*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 this day
through your grace in the love of your Son
and in the power of your Spirit.*

All **Amen.**

The Blessing of the Marriage

One of the following forms may be used

*1 God of life and beginnings,
you created man and woman in your likeness
and joined them together in union of body and heart;
God of love and forgiveness,
you loved us in Jesus Christ
who humbled himself to death on a cross;
God of grace and strength,
you bring your people to faith
and fill them with your presence.
Blessed are you, O Lord our God,
for you have created joy and gladness,
pleasure and delight, love, peace and fellowship.
Pour out the abundance of your blessing
upon N and N in their new life together.
Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts,
and a crown upon their heads.
Bless them in their work and in their companionship;
awake and asleep,
in joy and in sorrow,
in life and in death.
Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that banquet
where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home.
We ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

All **Amen.**

2 *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 N and N.
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,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All Amen.

3 *Eternal God,
you create us out of love
that we should love you and one another.
Bless this man and this woman, made in your image,
who today become a sign of your faithful love to us
in Christ our Lord.*

All Amen.

*By your Holy Spirit,
fill bride and bridegroom with wisdom and hope
that they may delight in your gift of marriage
and enrich one another in love and faithfulness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All Amen.

*Bring them to that table
where your saints celebrate for ever in your heavenly home;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns,
one God, for ever and ever.*

All Amen.

4 *Blessed are you, Lord our God,
God of love, creator of all.*

All Blessed be God for ever.

*Bridegroom Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you make us in your image and likeness.*

All Blessed be God for ever.

Bride *Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you make man and woman to reflect your glory.*

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Bridegroom *Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you make us for joy and promise us life.*

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

Bride *Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you create a people to know your love.*

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

*May N and N enjoy the blessing of your kingdom.
Give them faith and joy in their marriage.
Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you give joy to bride and groom.*

All **Blessed be God for ever.
May their love be fruitful
and their home a place of peace.
Blessed are you, Lord our God,
you make marriage a sign of your love.**

All **Blessed be God for ever.
May they know the love of the Father,
the life of the Son,
and the joy of the Spirit.
Blessed are you, Lord our God,
Lover, Beloved and Friend of Love.**

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

5 *This form may be added to any of the preceding blessings,
or may be used on its own*

Blessed are you, heavenly Father.

All **You give joy to bridegroom and bride.**

Blessed are you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All **You bring life to the world.**

Blessed are you, Holy Spirit of God.

All **You bind us together in love.**

Blessed are you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

Additional Prayers

Longer Prayers and Litanies

1 *Eternal God,
creator and redeemer,
from whom comes every good and perfect gift,
fill N and N with the riches of your grace
and breathe into their marriage
the strength of your holy and life-giving Spirit.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Send upon them the gift of love
that puts no limit to its faith and forbearance.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Sow in their lives the joy that comes from sharing
and grows with giving.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Let peace spring from their faithfulness to each other
and flow deeper with the passing years.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Give them patience with their failures
and persistence with their hopes.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*May their kindness, born of a gracious heart,
be shown to others in a generous spirit.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Let goodness flower with forgiveness
and be the fruit of their married life.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*In gentleness let them be tender with each other's dreams
and healing of each other's wounds.
Lord, hear us:*

All Lord, graciously hear us.

*Gracious God,
accept our prayers for N and N,
that as their love ripens
and their marriage matures
they may reap the harvest of the Spirit,*

*rejoice in your gifts
and reflect your glory in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

2 A prayer for all people

*Almighty God, look graciously on the world which you have made
and for which your Son gave his life.*

Bless all whom you make one flesh in marriage.

*May their life together be a sign of your love to this broken world,
so that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt, and joy overcome despair.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

May N and N so live together

*that the strength of their love may reflect your love
and enrich our common life.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

*May they be gentle and patient, ready to trust each other,
and, when they fail, willing to recognize and acknowledge their
fault and to give and receive forgiveness.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

[May N and N be blessed with the gift of children.

Fill them with wisdom and love as they care for their family.

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.]**

*May the lonely, the bereaved, and all who suffer want or anxiety,
be defended by you, O Lord.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

*May those whose lives are today brought together
be given wisdom, patience and courage
to serve one another in Christ's name.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

*May friends and family gathered here,
and those separated by distance,
be strengthened and blessed this day.*

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

*We praise you, merciful God,
for those who have died in the faith of Christ.
May we be strengthened by their example.
Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.*

All **Grant that what we have asked in faith
we may by your grace receive,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

3 *Eternal God,
creator and preserver of all life and giver of grace;
look with favour on the world you have made,
and especially on this man and this woman
whom you in holy marriage have made one.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Give them wisdom and devotion in ordering their common life,
that each may be to the other
a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity,
a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will,
that they may grow together in love and peace
with one another and with you all the days of their life.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Give them grace when they hurt one another
to recognize and acknowledge their fault
and to seek each other's forgiveness
and your pardon and peace.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Make their life together a sign of Christ's love
in this broken and disordered world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal injury
and joy overcome despair.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

[Bestow on them, if it is your will,

*the heritage and gift of children
and the grace to bring them up
to know you, to love you and to serve you.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.]**

*Give them such fulfilment of their affection
that they may reach out in love and concern for others.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Grant that all those who have witnessed these vows
may find their lives strengthened
and their loyalties confirmed.
Lord, in your mercy*

All **hear our prayer.**

*Grant that the bonds of our common humanity
by which all your children are united to one another
may be so transformed by your grace
that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven;
where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit,
you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever.*

All **Amen.**

4 *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
reveals your purposes of love for the world.
We thank you today for N and N,
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.
[Bless this couple with the gift and care of children,
that they may grow up to know and love you in your Son.]
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.*

All **Amen.**

Thanksgiving

For the sharing of love

5 *Father of all,
in Jesus Christ you open to us
the treasures of your kingdom;
guide us by your Holy Spirit
that we may receive your redeeming grace
and reflect the perfect unity of your love,
for you live and reign
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

All **Amen.**

6 *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 N and N to each other
and for their desire to share that
love for the rest of their lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

Spiritual Growth

7 For the home

*Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home:*

*reign in the home of these your servants as Lord and King;
give them grace to minister to others
as you have ministered to them,
and grant that by deed and word
they may be witnesses of your saving love
to those among whom they live;
for the sake of your holy name.*

All **Amen.**

8 For the Holy Spirit

*Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of these your servants to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

9 For grace to live well

*Faithful God,
giver of all good things,
give N and N wisdom and devotion
in the ordering of their life together.
May they dwell together in love and peace
all the days of their life,
seeking one another's welfare,
bearing one another's burdens
and sharing one another's joys;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

10 For discipleship

*Eternal God,
without your grace nothing is strong, nothing is sure.
Strengthen N and N with patience, kindness, gentleness
and all other gifts of the Holy 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.
Make their life together a sign of Christ's love
in this broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer despair;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

11 For a glimpse of eternal love

*Eternal God, our maker and redeemer,
as you once enriched the wedding at Cana
when your Son turned water into wine,
so by his presence now bring your joy to this day.
May we drink deeply from your boundless love
and know in our hearts the delights of your Holy Spirit.
As we honour the union of a man and a woman,
let the love we celebrate today be a sign of your eternal love,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

All **Amen.**

12 For the gift of love

*God of wonder and of joy:
grace comes from you,
and you alone are the source of life and love.
Without you, we cannot please you;
without your love, our deeds are worth nothing.
Send your Holy Spirit,
and pour into our hearts
that most excellent gift of love,
that we may worship you now
with thankful hearts
and serve you always with willing minds;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

13 For marriage as a sign to the world

*Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being,
look graciously upon the world which you have made
and for which your Son gave his life,
and especially on all whom you make to be one flesh
in holy marriage.
May their lives together be a sign of your love to this broken
world,
so that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy overcome despair;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

Faithfulness, Joy, Love,
Forgiveness and Healing

14 For the joy of loving

*God our creator,
we thank you for your gift of sexual love
by which husband and wife
may delight in each other
and share with you the joy of creating new life.
By your grace may N and N remain lovers,
rejoicing in your goodness all their days.*

All **Amen.**

15 For the healing of memory

*Loving God,
you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that those who are suffering the hurts of the past
may experience your generous love.
Heal their memories, comfort them,
and send them all from here
renewed and hopeful;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

16 For the joy of companionship

*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 N and N.
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;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

17 For grace and delight

*God of love, ever gracious and kind,
we pray for N and N as they make the promises of marriage.
Let them know you
as the God of mercy and new beginnings,*

*who forgives our failures and renews our hope.
May the grace of Christ
be poured into their wedding
for celebration and for joy.
God of love, ever present and faithful,
may N and N know that their marriage is your delight and will.
May the promises they make govern their life together,
as your presence surrounds them,
and your Spirit strengthens and guides them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

For faithfulness

*18 God of all grace,
friend and companion,
look in favour on N and N,
and all who are made one in marriage.
In your love deepen their love
and strengthen their wills
to keep the promises they have made,
that they may continue
in life-long faithfulness to each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

*19 Gracious God,
as you have brought N and N together in love,
enable them through the power of your Holy Spirit
to make and keep the solemn promises of marriage;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

*20 O gracious and ever-living God,
male and female you have created us in your image:
look mercifully upon this man and this woman
who come to you seeking your blessing;
assist them with your grace,
that with true fidelity and steadfast love
they may honour and keep the promises and vows they make;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.*

All **Amen.**

21 For faithfulness and peace

*O God of love,
look mercifully upon N and N in the new life
which they begin together this day.
Unite them evermore in your love.
Keep them faithful to the vows they have made one to the other;
strengthen them with every good gift;
and let your peace be with them,
now and always;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

22 For daily following of Christ

*Heavenly Father,
we thank you that in our earthly lives
you speak to us of your eternal life:
we pray that through their marriage
N and N may know you more clearly,
love you more dearly
and follow you more nearly,
day by day;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

Children, other Family Members
and Friends

23 For children and home

*Heavenly Father,
maker of all things,
you enable us to share in your work of creation.
Bless this couple in the gift and care of children,
that their home may be a place of love, security and truth,
and their children grow up to know and love you in your Son
Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

24 For children and family

*Lord of life,
you shape us in your image,
and by your gracious gift
the human family is increased.
Grant to N and N the blessing of children.
Fill them with wisdom and love
as they care for their family,
so that they and their children
may know and love you;
through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

25 For an existing family

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

All **Amen.**

26 For the families of the couple

*Gracious Lord,
bless the parents and families of N and N
that they may grow in love and friendship.
Grant that, as they have witnessed these vows today,
they may find their lives enriched and strengthened
and their loyalties confirmed;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

27 For the support of friends

*Holy Spirit of God,
you know our strength
and have compassion on our frailty.
Be with N and N
in all they undertake.
And grant that we their friends,
with all who become their friends,
may sense and understand their needs;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**