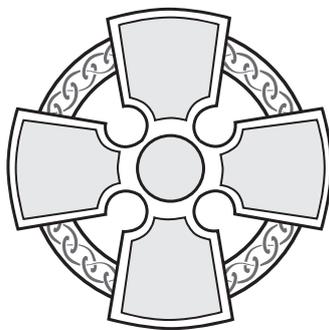


**Liturgy for the Blessing of
a Same-sex
Civil Marriage or Civil Partnership**

**October
2021**



A Diocesan Bishop shall have power to authorise for experimental use in the churches within their diocese the form set out in the following text for a service of Blessing following a Civil Marriage or Civil Partnership between two people of the same sex for a period of five years from 1 October 2021.

**Liturgy for the Blessing of
a Same-sex
Civil Marriage or Civil Partnership**

The couple may enter the church together as a sign of their commitment already made in their Civil Marriage or Civil Partnership.

Music may be played or a hymn sung.

The Welcome

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Words of welcome are extended to the couple, their families, friends, and supporters.

Introduction

Either:

Beloved in Christ, we come together in the presence of God to celebrate the union of *N.* and *N.* and to ask his blessing on their future together.

Jesus said, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment.'

Matthew 22. 37-38

Following this way of commitment to God means that Jesus is our guiding light, to whom we constantly turn for support, affirmation and boundless love. On our part, being committed to him means bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit; it means living a life of loving self- sacrifice; it means to live the life of Christ.

God is the Creator of all, yet is closer to us than our very breath. Love is God's way, and all who know love, know God. Let us therefore turn to God in prayer.

Or:

Beloved in Christ, we are gathered here today in the presence of God to celebrate *N.* and *N.*'s love for each other, to support them in life's journey and to pray for God's blessing on their *Marriage / Civil Partnership* as together they live a life of faithful love and commitment.

We are reminded in Holy Scripture that human beings are created to live lives in relationship with one another and in relationship with the God who called us into being and created us in God's own image. When two people commit themselves to one another in a lifelong covenant of love and faithfulness their relationship reveals to us the loving purposes of God and the unconditional nature of divine love for the whole human family.

Opening prayer

Either:

Almighty God,
from whom all good things come
and in whom all loving relationships have their beginning,
we ask that your Holy Spirit be with us
on this day of great rejoicing.
We give you thanks for calling *N.* and *N.* to be your servants.
Help them to respond gladly to your call and obey your will.
Make them ready for every demand you make upon their lives,
that they may serve you faithfully
and show forth your love to the world
through the life-long commitment
they make before your Church gathered here this day.
We make this, and all our prayers,
through Christ, our living, loving Lord. **Amen.**

Or:

Holy and blessed Trinity,
you reveal yourself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
living and reigning in a perfect unity of love;
may the love which ever flows within your heart
overflow into the lives of *N.* and *N.*
May it bind them together in a perfect covenant of love,
that they may grow in love and commitment
to one another and to you,
for you live and reign one God,
world without end. **Amen.**

A hymn may be sung.

Readings

One or more readings from Scripture follow.

The following list includes some examples of appropriate readings. One reading must be from one of the Gospels.

Song of Solomon 2. 10-13; 8. 6, 7

Isaiah 43. 1-3a, 4-5a

Ruth 1. 16-18

Psalms 67 *or* 121

Matthew 5. 1-10

John 2. 1-11

John 15. 9-17

Romans 12. 1, 2, 9-13

1 Corinthians 13

Philippians 4. 4-9

Colossians 3. 12-17

Ephesians 3.14-end

1 John 4. 7-12

The Scriptural reading(s) may end with ...

Either:

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Or:

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

At the discretion of the minister, an appropriate non-biblical reading may be included.

The Address

An address may be given at this point.

The couple then stand before the minister and the congregation to make their promises before God and the Church.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. Amen.

1 John 4. 7b

Either:

The Repeating of Promises

At the discretion of the minister, the couple may repeat the promises made at their Marriage / Civil Partnership ceremony.

N. and N. are legally married / have contracted their Civil Partnership and now before God and the Church repeat their promises made on (insert date here).

The couple face each other and join hands and repeat their promises.

Or:

Act of Commitment

*N. and N. you have already committed yourselves to each other at your *Wedding / Civil Partnership* when, [in the presence of your family and friends] you made solemn promises to establish a covenant of love and faithfulness between you for the rest of your life together.*

I now invite you, to renew your commitment to one another before God and the Church.

N. and N. is it your desire to proclaim afresh your love and commitment to one another [before your family and friends and] in the presence of God?

*Couple: **It is.***

Each person responds to the following questions in turn.

N., do you give yourself in love, faithfulness and commitment to *N.* in a covenant of love for the rest of your life?

I do.

N., do you give yourself in love, faithfulness and commitment to *N.* in a covenant of love for the rest of your life?

I do.

Family and friends / Brothers and sisters will you do all that you can to love, support and care for *N.* and *N.* as they live out their covenant of love for one another?

We will.

The couple may express their response to God's love in the words of Psalm 16, using either of the versions below, or another at the discretion of the minister.

Psalm 16

(Psalms Redux [Carla Grosch-Miller])

True Home, how could I choose another?
Fullness to my emptiness,
water to my thirst,
ocean to my raindrop, still centre point
that draws me in
and knows my name.

Wide Plain, where else would I want to roam?
Astonishing vistas,
expanding horizons,
infinite grace,
room to breathe
and the risk of love in the gift of self.

Trustworthy Way, who else could I follow?
Path well-worn and patient,
bounding freedom,
nurturing wisdom,
fulfilling joy.
Even stumbling
is not stumbling to You.
You lift me tenderly and invite me on.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.

Psalm 16

(NRSV)

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.'
As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink-offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

The Blessing of the Rings (*optional*)

The couple may remove their rings and place them on the prayer book of the officiating minister, or they may hold their left hands together as their rings are blessed.

Gracious God,
through the power of your Spirit,
gentle as a dove yet burning with the fire of your love,
may these rings be to N. and N.
a sign and symbol of your unending love for them
and of their love for each other.
May these rings bind them to one another and to you
in a perfect covenant of love and faithfulness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The couple then place the rings on the hand of the other or if they are already in place, hold them on each other's hand, and say the words below. Alternatively they may offer each other a gift or symbol, or may each light a candle of a triple candlestick, when the words in brackets are used.

The Exchange of Rings or Gifts or Lighting of a Symbolic Candle

N. this ring/gift is the token of my love for you,
[N. I light this candle as a token of my love for you]
the sign of my commitment to you,
the offering of all that I am and all that I have to you.
I will love you when we are well and times are good.
I will love you when we face sickness and life is hard going.
May this sign bind us together in an unending covenant of love
for the rest of our life together.
I make this covenant in the presence of God
who made us, loves us and gives us life.

If candles are lit a third candle is then lit by the couple together and the single candles either side extinguished.

The Blessing of the Couple

The minister may wrap his/her stole around the couple's hands.

Either:

The love of the Lord bind you together
with cords that cannot be broken. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord nurture you
as you learn to love each other more and more. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord challenge you
to become people fully alive to him. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord watch over you
and protect you from all that is evil. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord bless you
as you journey on together. **Amen.**

The love of the Lord bring you to eternal life. **Amen.**

Or:

As the couple hold their hands together:

May God the Father, who created you and breathed life into you, bless you.
May God the Son, who extended his arms in love upon the cross, bless you.
May God the Holy Spirit, who kindles the flame of love in your hearts, bless you.
May the infinite and glorious Trinity strengthen the covenant between you,
and so bind your lives together in love, that you may be a blessing to each other
and a visible sign of God's loving purposes for all his children. **Amen.**

A hymn may be sung.

[The Presentation of a Certificate]

An appropriately worded certificate may be presented to the couple at this point to remind them both of the promises made before God.

The Prayers

Either:

Loving Lord, as we continue to give thanks for *N.* and *N.* and support them in the commitment they have made today in your presence, help them to trust you and one another so that that they may be able to face the future with excitement, confidence and hope. May they know your peace and presence throughout their life together.

Lord of all life and love,
hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, we give thanks for all who rejoice with *N.* and *N.* today. Your Son shared the life of an earthly home and so we ask that these families become ever more ready and willing to love and serve you as they care for one another's needs. Give them those blessings which will enable them to make their homes more worthy of your presence.

Lord of all life and love,
hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, may the home of *N.* and *N.* be a place of peace and unity where their love of one another, their love of neighbour, their love of life itself and their love for you may grow. We ask that their home be a foretaste of the eternal home which Christ has gone to prepare for us.

Lord of all life and love,
hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, we pray for the church community [to which *N.* and *N.* belong], asking your blessing on all who share in her life and work in the ministry of word and sacrament, in teaching and pastoral care, in service to the diocese and to all who have any kind of need, and in fellowship and cooperation with other churches.

Lord of all life and love,
hear our prayer.

Loving Lord, we pray that *N.* and *N.* may they face their future recognising that difficulties will come, the sun will not always shine on them and pain sometimes enters happiness, and that each is an individual with a point of view and a need. May they never grow apart whether in adversity or prosperity, and may they be mindful of the promises they have made today. May they be strengthened by the knowledge of their love for each other and your love for them.

Lord of all life and love,
hear our prayer.

Other prayers may be offered as appropriate.

Or:

Almighty God you have made us in your image and you redeem us with your love. You have called us to live in a covenant of love with you and one another; bless *N.* and *N.* as they receive your blessing on the covenant of their love already given in their *Marriage / Civil Partnership*.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Pour down upon *N.* and *N.* the loving gift of your Spirit to strengthen and renew them in their life together that their relationship may be life-giving and life-long. May they be a support and strength to one another in life's journey, especially in times of anxiety, difficulty or sorrow.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Bless their home [*any family names may be inserted here as appropriate*] as a place of welcome and hospitality for family, friends, or strangers. May they share from the fullness they have received to bring peace, hope and joy to neighbours in need and to comfort any who are in distress.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Guide and guard them through the gift of your word and the riches of your sacraments that their faith in you may be the solid foundation upon which their relationship stands firm.

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Other prayers may be offered as appropriate.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Being made one by the Spirit, Lord teach us to pray.

Either:

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who 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.**

Or:

**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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

The Blessing

The God whose Spirit fills our hearts with love, joy and peace,
be with you, those you love, and those you pray for,
this day and forever;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you all. **Amen.**

As the couple leave the church, music is played or a hymn sung.

Acknowledgements

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