



Corff Llywodraethol Yr Eglwys yng Nghymru
The Governing Body of The Church in Wales

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE CHURCH IN WALES

REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

BILL TO INCORPORATE INTO THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER AN ORDER OF SERVICE OF BLESSING FOLLOWING A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP OR MARRIAGE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE OF THE SAME SEX

March 2026

MEMBERS OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE

THE VENERABLE MARK PREECE (CHAIR)

MRS ELIZABETH CRAWFORD

THE VENERABLE DR MATTHEW HILL

THE REVEREND DR ADRIAN MORGAN

MRS MARICE MORGAN

THE REVEREND LEE TAYLOR

THE REVEREND CANON RICHARD WOOD

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Background

The Bill was presented to the Standing Committee on 11 December 2025.

The Bill seeks the permanent authorisation, by way of addition to the Book of Common Prayer, of a liturgy of blessing following the civil partnership or civil marriage of two persons of the same sex. The form of service proposed is an amended version of that previously approved by the Governing Body in September 2021 for a five-year experimental period.

In accordance with section 27 (5) of Chapter II of the Constitution, the Standing Committee, being satisfied that the Bill was in order, published a copy of the bill in English and Welsh to all members of the Governing Body, together with an explanatory note.

The Standing Committee also decided that there should not be a formal consultation with the dioceses, in accordance with section 28 (2) of Chapter II.

The Lay Secretary advised all members of the Governing Body that a Select Committee had been appointed in accordance with Section 28 (1) of Chapter II for the purpose of considering and collating any amendments to the Bill put forward by members of the Governing Body and invited them to submit any such amendments within six weeks. By the closing date, 12 February 2026, two responses from members of the Governing Body had been received.

The first was from Mrs Della Nelson, elected lay person from the diocese of Llandaff, which proposed several amendments of detail to the Liturgy.

The second was from the Reverend Andy Kitchen, elected cleric from the diocese of St Asaph, who proposed two amendments, of (1) a new paragraph 6 to confirm that no person shall be refused ordination or admission to the discernment process on the basis of their unwillingness to officiate at a service authorised by this Canon and (2) an additional paragraph to the effect that no officeholder shall be obliged to participate at a service authorised by this Canon.

Within six months of its appointment the Select Committee must report to the Standing Committee on each proposed amendment and on whether or not the Bill should be deemed 'non-controversial'. The Select Committee may also make proposals of its own. The Standing Committee must then publish the Select Committee's report to all members of the Governing Body and must set down the Bill

for consideration in Committee at the next Governing Body meeting in accordance with section 29 of Chapter II of the Constitution.

The Select Committee has met twice, and this is its report to the Standing Committee.

Amendments proposed by Governing Body members

Amendments proposed by Mrs Della Nelson (and alternative proposed amendments from the Select Committee)

All the below amendments are proposed amendments to the text of the liturgy. Amendments numbered 1-17 without a corresponding letter are proposed by Mrs Nelson. Alternative amendments proposed by the Select Committee itself include a corresponding letter (e.g. 1A, 8A, 8B etc).

Page 4

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

Amendment 1 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

This amendment is not recommended by the Select Committee, but the Committee wishes to propose an alternative, similar amendment. The Committee felt it inelegant for a rubric to refer to 'N. and N.', which is generally used in Church in Wales Liturgies for texts, not rubrics, but is in agreement with the substance of this proposed amendment. Therefore the Committee proposes:

Page 4

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

Amendment 1A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 4

Change 'to celebrate the union of N. and N.' to 'to give thanks for the commitment of N. and N...'

Amendment 2 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee agreed that ‘give thanks’ rather than ‘celebrate’ was preferable wording, but did not agree that replacing ‘union’ with ‘commitment’ was desirable. Whether a civil partnership or a civil marriage, both are unions within the generally understood meaning of the term. The Committee therefore proposes an alternative amendment.

Page 4

Change ‘Beloved in Christ, we come together in the presence of God to celebrate the union of N. and N...’ to ‘Beloved in Christ, we come together in the presence of God to give thanks for the union of N. and N...’

Amendment 2A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 4

Change ‘to pray for God’s blessing on their Marriage / Civil Partnership’ to ‘to pray for God’s blessing on them.’

Amendment 3 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee felt that it is in accordance with the purpose and aim of this Bill and the associated liturgy to pray God’s blessing on the [civil] Marriage or Civil Partnership and not simply on the individuals. Therefore it does not recommend this amendment.

Page 4

Change ‘commit themselves faithfully to one another in a lifelong covenant’ to ‘commit themselves faithfully to one another in a life-long promise.’

Amendment 4 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee felt it is not appropriate to change the word ‘covenant’ to ‘promise’. The word covenant is foundational biblical language describing faithful, accountable relationship before God. Within Anglican liturgy it extends beyond holy matrimony to baptismal, ordained, and vowed life. Its use here does not redefine marriage; it recognises the seriousness of a commitment made under God.

Page 5

Change *'bind them together within your perfect covenant'* to *'guide them within your perfect promise.'*

Amendment 5 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee repeats the point made in respect of Amendment 4, but proposes a small addition to the sentence as follows:

Page 5

Change *'May it bind them together within your perfect covenant...'* to *'May it bind them together in your love within your perfect covenant...'*

Amendment 5A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 5

Change *'through the life-long commitment they make before your Church gathered here this day'* to *'through the commitment they bring before your Church gathered here this day.'*

Amendment 6 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee could not recommend this amendment and the implication that the relationships subject to these services of blessing are not intended to be life-long. However, it did accept that it was more accurate to refer to the *bringing* of the commitment than the *making* of the commitment (which was made at the preceding civil ceremony). The Committee therefore proposes an alternative amendment.

Page 5

Change *'through the life-long commitment they make before your Church gathered here this day'* to *'through the life-long commitment they bring before you and your Church gathered here this day.'*

Amendment 6A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 7

Change 'The couple then stand before the minister and the congregation to make their promises before God and the Church.' to 'N. and N. come forward, and the minister prays with them in the presence of the congregation.'

Amendment 7 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee repeats the point previously made about 'N. and N.' in rubrics. However, it was noted that this section of the liturgy is optional, and that a simpler rubric would make this clearer. The Select Committee therefore proposes

Page 7

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

Amendment 7A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 7-8

*Remove The Repeating of Promises and Act of Commitment in their entirety and replace with: 'The minister says: N. and N., do you wish to place yourselves before God in prayer today?
Couple: We do.'*

Amendment 8 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee does not agree with the deletion of a major part of the liturgy as proposed. However, it does feel that the directions as to what is required and what is required on Pages 7-9 are somewhat confusing. The Select Committee's understanding is that the couple have the option of either repeating their promises from the civil ceremony, OR making an Act of Commitment, OR saying Psalm 16. They may also say Psalm 16 in addition to either repeating their promises or making an Act of Commitment

The committee also recognises that the Blessing of Rings is optional, as is the Exchange of rings or gifts or lighting of a symbolic candle. The Select Committee therefore proposes the following amendment to make this clearer:

Page 8

Insert 'AND/OR' before 'The couple may express their response to God's love in the words of Psalm 16'

Amendment 8A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Furthermore, in the Act of Commitment, the Select Committee suggests using the word 'reaffirm', rather than 'renew', again recognising that the commitment has already taken place and is not being made afresh in the service of blessing:

Page 7

Change 'I now invite you, to renew your commitment to one another before God and the Church' to 'I now invite you, to re-affirm your commitment to one another before God and the Church'

Amendment 8B – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 8

Remove the section beginning 'Each person responds to the following questions in turn' up to 'We will.'

Amendment 9 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee notes that this section forms part of the Act of Commitment. If Amendment 8 is passed this section is therefore already deleted. If Amendment 8 is not passed, then the passing of this amendment would keep the introductory words to the Act of Commitment in place, but leave the Act of Commitment with no substantive content. Therefore the Select Committee does not recommend this amendment.

However, the Select Committee does propose two amendments to this section:

Page 8

- (i) *Change 'Each person responds to the following **questions** in turn.' to 'Each person responds to the following **question** in turn.';*
- (ii) *Delete the repetition of the question which ends '...for the rest of your*

life?'; and

- (iii) *Change the same question from 'N., do you give yourself in love, faithfulness and commitment to N. in a covenant of love for the rest of your life?' to N., do you re-affirm your faithfulness and commitment to N. in a covenant of love for the rest of your life?*

Amendment 9A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 8

*Put square brackets around the question 'Family and friends will you support and care for N. and N. in their covenant of love for one another? **We will.**' and insert a rubric immediately preceding it stating 'The minister may invite the congregation to respond:'*

Amendment 9B – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 9

1. *Remove The Blessing of the Rings.*

2. *Change 'The Exchange of Rings or Gifts or Lighting of a Symbolic Candle' to 'The Exchange of Gifts or Lighting of a Symbolic Candle.'*

3. *Change*

'N. this ring / gift is the token of my love for you... 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...'

to

'N., this gift is a token of my love for you, or [N., I light this candle as a token of my love for you], a sign of my care and commitment, and an expression of the gift of myself to you. May this sign encourage us in love and faithfulness, and strengthen us in the days ahead. May God, who made us, loves us, and gives us life, guide and uphold us.

Amendment 10 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

These three points hang together and are therefore treated as a single amendment. The Select Committee does not recommend this amendment. It believes that rings do not belong exclusively to holy matrimony; they belong to the human language of commitment. Across cultures and traditions, a ring is

simply a sign of fidelity and constancy and its use is therefore appropriate in the context of this liturgy.

However, the Select Committee thinks that a rubric making clear the exchange of rings, exchange of gifts or lighting of a symbolic candle are all optional parts of the liturgy would be helpful.

Page 9

Add the word '(optional)' after 'The Exchange of Rings or Gifts or Lighting of a Symbolic Candle'

Amendment 10A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 10

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

Amendment 11 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee does not recommend the removal of the rubric, but suggests a revised form of wording as follows, in part to conform to recent Church in Wales practice to avoid using 'his / her' where possible:

Page 10

Change 'The minister may wrap his / her stole around the couple's hands' to 'The minister's stole may be wrapped around the couple's hands'

Amendment 11A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 10

Remove 'As the couple hold their hands together:'

Amendment 12 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee does not agree to remove this, as it felt that this would have a somewhat dampening effect on the service of blessing a marriage or civil partnership. However, it would be appropriate to make the holding of hands optional (as with the wrapping of the stole above), so the Select Committee proposes an amendment as follows

Page 10

Change ‘As the couple hold their hands together.’ to ‘The couple may hold their hands together.’

Amendment 12A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Page 10

Change ‘May the infinite and glorious Trinity strengthen the covenant between you, and so bind your lives together in love’ to ‘May the infinite and glorious Trinity strengthen the love you share, and guide your lives together in faith and hope.’

AMENDMENT 13 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee repeats points made previously about the use of the word ‘covenant’ in the liturgy.

Pages 11–12

Change ‘Strengthen N. and N. as they receive your blessing on the covenant of their love’ to ‘Strengthen N. and N. as they receive your blessing on their lives.’

AMENDMENT 14 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee repeats points made previously about the use of the word ‘covenant’ in the liturgy.

Page 12

Change ‘Help them to remain true to the promises they have made here today’ to ‘Help them to remain faithful to the intentions they bring before you today.’

AMENDMENT 15 – NOT RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee does not agree with the removal of references to promises. However, in line with previous amendments proposed, the Select

Committee proposes an amendment to make it clear that the promises were made in the civil ceremony:

Page 12

Change 'Help them to remain true to the promises they have made here today' to 'Help them to remain true to the promises they bring before you today.'

AMENDMENT 15A – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

Concluding Remarks on Mrs Nelson's proposed amendments

Whilst the Select Committee has not recommended any of Mrs Nelson's amendments as drafted, it wishes to place on record its thanks to her for her submissions. The Committee found them extremely useful in shaping their debate, and as a result of the points made has made several proposals of its own, which it believes will improve the Bill, and which adopt some of the points she has helpfully raised.

Amendments proposed by the Reverend Andy Kitchen

In the substantive Bill:

After Paragraph 5, insert new Paragraph 6 to read:

No person shall be refused ordination or admission into any stage of the discernment and training process for ordained or licensed ministry on the basis of being unwilling to participate in a service authorised by this Canon. No Cleric shall be denied licensing or consecration on the basis of being unwilling to officiate at a service authorised by this Canon.

The Secretariat consulted Mr Kitchen to clarify the intention of his first amendment, and with his agreement it was adjusted to read as follows:

No person shall be refused ordination or admission into any stage of the discernment and training process for ordained or licensed ministry on the basis of being unwilling to participate in a service authorised by this Canon. No cleric shall be denied institution, collation, appointment, licensing, admission to office, consecration or permission to officiate on the basis of being unwilling to officiate at a service authorised by this Canon.

AMENDMENT 16 – RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

The Select Committee is aware that within the Church's historic faith and order, clergy of differing theological convictions may be unable to preside at such services. Having established that the Backers (the Bishops) were willing to accommodate this amendment, the Select Committee felt it was right to recommend it.

In the substantive Bill:

After Paragraph 5 (and after the new Paragraph 6):

No officeholder bound by the constitution of the Church in Wales shall be obliged to participate at a service authorised by this Canon.

AMENDMENT 17 – RECOMMENDED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

For the same reasons as Amendment 16, the Select Committee backed this proposed amendment and recommends it to the Governing Body. The Select Committee notes that the adoption of either or both Amendment 16 and/or Amendment 17 should be understood to include the consequential amendment of the subsequent paragraph numbering.

Further Amendments proposed by the Select Committee to the Bill

The Select Committee has power to propose its own amendments to the Bill, set out in Chapter II, section 28 (4) of the Constitution.

Proposed new Notes Section

Following consultation with the Backers, the Select Committee recommends the addition of the following notes section to the published liturgy:

NOTES

- 1.) *This service may be used in any Church in Wales church. In addition to any other permissions required, permission of the Diocesan Bishop must be sought to use this service at any other venue.*
- 2.) *This service may only be used for couples of the same sex who have already contracted a civil partnership or marriage recognised by the civil law of England and Wales. The minister should see a copy of the relevant marriage or civil partnership certificate prior to the service taking place. If a civil partnership or marriage has been contracted in another legal jurisdiction and that partnership is not recognised by the law of England and Wales, the Diocesan Bishop must be consulted for further guidance.*
- 3.) *There is no residency, membership or qualifying connection requirement in respect to the use of a particular church building, although it is expected that couples should be able to demonstrate some connection with the church building or congregation at which they request the use of the service.*
- 4.) *There is no time limit following any civil ceremony as to when this service may be requested.*
- 5.) *Where a couple wish to repeat the vows made in their civil ceremony, this must be done without amendment. Use of the vows from any authorised Church in Wales marriage liturgy (with or without adaption) is not permitted.*
- 6.) *As set out in the promulgating canon, no cleric is obliged to officiate at this service. Where a cleric does not feel able to officiate at such a service nor to delegate to a colleague, the couple must be referred to the Diocesan Bishop who shall make arrangements for alternative provision.*
- 7.) *The provincial fees set for the Service of Blessing (following a Civil Marriage or Civil Partnership) apply to this service.*

AMENDMENT 18 – PROPOSED BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE

In addition to consultation with the Backers, an earlier draft of these Notes was circulated to all Governing Body members in advance of the Select Committee's meeting.

Comments were received from Dr Heather Payne, which resulted in a series of minor changes to the text, changing 'should' to 'must' in some places.

Comments were also received from Mrs Della Nelson. These focussed on notes 3 and 6. Mrs Nelson was of the view that the proposals where a minister is unwilling to officiate are insufficiently precise and it would be preferable for a formal opt-in system to be created so that this new liturgy would only be available in such churches which had opted in (and then a list of those churches could be advertised publicly).

The Select Committee did not agree with this proposal in substance, but also noted that such a restriction on the lawful use of the liturgy would be better placed in the text of the bill itself, rather than in liturgical notes.

Recommendation as to whether the Bill should be deemed non-controversial

Under Section 28(6) of Chapter II of the Constitution, the Select Committee has to recommend to the Standing Committee whether or not the Bill should be deemed non-controversial.

Members of the Governing Body have proposed amendments (some of which the Select Committee has recommended and some of which it has not), and the Select Committee itself has recommended several amendments to the text of the Bill, the Select Committee unanimously considers that its recommendation to the Standing Committee is that the Bill should be deemed not non-controversial.

If the Standing Committee agrees with this recommendation, each amendment proposed by the Select Committee will be debated at the Governing Body in a Committee stage.

The recommendations from members of the Governing Body to the Select Committee, and by the members of the Select Committee, have all been carefully considered and the Select Committee offers its report unanimously.

Appendices to this Report

Appendix 1 to this Report reproduces the explanatory paragraphs from the submissions of Mrs Nelson and the Revd Mr Kitchen.

**For and on behalf of the Select Committee
The Venerable Mark Preece, CHAIR**

Submissions from members of the Governing Body

1. Mrs Della Nelson (Llandaff elected lay member)

Explanatory note

The Bishops' Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the experimental provision stated that it was "pastorally unsustainable for the Church to make no formal provision for those in same-gender relationships". The proposed rite was therefore framed as a pastoral response, explicitly distinguished from marriage, and not as a doctrinal development or redefinition of the Church's teaching on marriage.

The Memorandum reaffirmed that the Church has historically received marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman, a definition also set out in the Catechism and in the Marriage Services (2010), and acknowledged that any reconsideration of the Church's teaching on marriage would require separate and explicit theological work. It is therefore important that a service of blessing does not unintentionally function as a parallel or implicit marriage rite.

Language of union, covenant, binding, and lifelong covenantal commitment, together with symbolic actions closely associated with marriage, carries established theological and liturgical meaning within the Church's doctrine and practice and functions publicly as signs of marriage. Their use within a rite explicitly described as not being a marriage service risks obscuring the distinction the bishops have sought to maintain and may lead couples and congregations to conclude that the Church is unclear about its teaching on marriage, or that it is, in effect, offering marriage under another name.

The proposed amendments therefore seek to ensure that the rite functions clearly and honestly as a pastoral provision of prayer and blessing, focused on guidance, faithfulness, and God's sustaining grace, while avoiding marriage-specific language and symbolism. In doing so, they uphold the permissive character of the provision, respect conscience, preserve unity, and remain consistent with the principles set out in the bishops' own Explanatory Memorandum.

2. The Reverend Andy Kitchen (elected Cleric, St Asaph diocese)

Explanatory Note

Throughout the period of discernment, the Bench has consistently affirmed that no individual will be required to participate in, or officiate at, any service authorised under the proposed amendments to the Canon. Within the Church's historic faith and order, as part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, it is clear that clergy of differing theological convictions, may be unable to preside at such services.

The proposed amendments to the Constitution are therefore intended to safeguard this principle by ensuring that no person is excluded from ministry within the Church in Wales on the basis of their theological convictions regarding this matter, and no-one is obliged to participate in such a service against their conscience. These proposed amendments will also safeguard the consciences of the many lay office holders — including Churchwardens, Sub-wardens, Sidespeople, and members of Ministry Area Councils— who faithfully care for our churches and places of worship, but who may not feel able to facilitate or enable such services. I believe—along with colleagues who hold similar concerns—that these additions are essential should this bill be passed. They provide the necessary assurance that the protections and provisions promised will hold the same permanence and clarity in the lived practice of the Church in Wales as the liturgy itself.