

ORDER FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

This marriage service is brief and may be used in a variety of settings, although a Christian marriage service should be held in the church. Where alternatives are given (prayers, declarations of intent, affirmations, lessons, vows, ring exchange, declaration, and dismissal), the minister together with the couple may select the portions to be used.

As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister and the supervision of the consistory.

As people gather, music appropriate to the praise of God may be offered. At the appointed time the bride, groom, and other members of the wedding party stand before the minister. The families of the bride and groom may stand with the couple.

During the entrance of the wedding party, the people may stand and sing a hymn, an anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

PREPARATION

SENTENCES

The minister calls the people to worship, either before or after the entrance, using one or more of the following, or another appropriate verse from Scripture.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124:8

Amen.

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

1 John 4:16b

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

Psalm 118:24

SALUTATION

Grace and peace be yours in abundance,
through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

2 Peter 1:2 (NIV)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

After the people have been seated, the minister may state the gift and purpose of Christian marriage, using the following or similar words:

We have come together in the presence of God
for the marriage of *N_____* and *N_____*,
to share their joy,
and to promise them our support and love.

Christian marriage is a joyful covenanting
between a man and a woman.
In this covenant they proclaim,
before God and human witnesses,
their commitment to live together
in spiritual, physical, and material unity.
In this covenant they acknowledge
that the great love God has shown for each of them
enables them to love each other.
They affirm that God's gracious presence
and abiding power are needed
for them to keep their vows,
to continue to live in love,
and to be faithful servants of Christ in this world.
Human commitment is fragile and human love imperfect,
but the promise of God is eternal
and the love of God can bring our love to perfection.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our maker and redeemer,
as you gladdened the wedding at Cana
by the presence of your Son,
so by your Spirit bring joy to this day.
Let the love we celebrate today
be a sign of your eternal love.
As we honor the union of a man and a woman,

draw us into unity with you,
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Or

Gracious God,
who gives the covenant of marriage,
be with us now
as we celebrate the marriage of *N*_____ and *N*_____.
Give them your blessing,
grant them happiness and long life together,
and help us support them with our love. Amen.

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

A

The minister addresses the groom:

N (*Christian name*), do you take *N*_____ to be your wife?

The groom says:

I do.

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and protect her,
and forsaking all others, be faithful to her
as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will.

The minister addresses the bride:

N (*Christian name*), do you take *N*_____ to be your husband?

The bride says:

I do.

Will you love him, comfort him, honor and protect him,
and forsaking all others, be faithful to him
as long as you both shall live?

The bride says:

I will.

Or

B

The minister addresses the groom:

N (*Christian name*), will you receive *N* _____ as your wife and bind yourself to her in the covenant of marriage?
Will you promise to love and honor her in true devotion,
to rejoice with her in times of gladness,
to grieve with her in times of sorrow,
and to be faithful to her
as long as you both shall live?

The groom says:

I will, with the help of God.

The minister addresses the bride:

N (*Christian name only*), will you receive *N* _____ as your husband and bind yourself to him in the covenant of marriage?
Will you promise to love and honor him in true devotion,
to rejoice with him in times of gladness,
to grieve with him in times of sorrow,
and to be faithful to him
as long as you both shall live?

The bride says:

I will, with the help of God.

AFFIRMATIONS OF FAMILIES AND CONGREGATION

Affirmations may be made at the discretion of the minister in consultation with the couple. It is important to consider use of affirmations when there are children from previous relationships. The minister may address the parents:

Will you, the parents of *N* _____ and *N* (*Christian names only*) give your blessing to this new family?
Will you support it with your love and care?

We will, with the help of God.

The minister may ask children of the bride or groom:

N _____(s), will you accept and support this marriage?

We will.

The minister may address the bride and groom:

N _____ and *N* _____,
will you be faithful and loving parents
to *N/s* _____?

We will.

The minister may ask the congregation:

Will you, their friends and family,
support this couple now,
and in the years ahead?

We will.

The families return to their places, the minister continues:

THE WORD OF GOD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

O Lord our God,
give us grace to receive your Word in faith and love,
that we may be obedient to your will
and live always for your glory;
through Jesus Christ. Amen.

READINGS FROM SCRIPTURE

One or more lessons from Scripture shall be read.

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.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 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.” God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a

Then the Lord God said,
“It is not good that the man should be alone;
I will make him a helper as his partner.”
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.
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.

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.
And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man
he made into a woman
and brought her to the man.
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.”
Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother
and clings to his wife,
and they become one flesh.
And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:18-25

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

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Do not let loyalty and faithfulness forsake you;
bind them around your neck,
write them on the tablet of your heart.
So you will find favor and good repute
in the sight of God and of people.
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:3-6

Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
He will make your vindication shine like the light,
and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

Psalm 37:3-6

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.
Do 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.
Let love be genuine;
hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;

outdo one another in showing honor.
Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.
Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.
Bless those who persecute you;
bless and do not curse them.
Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.
Live in harmony with one another;
do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly;
do not claim to be wiser than you are.
Do not repay anyone evil for evil,
but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.
If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters,
I do not want you to be uninformed.
But strive for the greater gifts.
And I will show you a still more excellent way.
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.
And 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.
If 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.
Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;
it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love 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.

1 Corinthians 12:1, 31–13:8a

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved,
clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
Bear 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.
Above all, clothe yourselves with love,
which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,
to which indeed you were called in the one body.
And be thankful.
Let 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.
And whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

Beloved, let us love one another,
because love is from God;
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
Whoever does not love does not know God,
for God is love.
God's love was revealed among us in this way:
God sent his only Son into the world
so that we might live through him.
In 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.
Beloved, since God loved us so much,
we also ought to love one another.
No one has ever seen God;
if we love one another, God lives in us,
and his love is perfected in us.
By this we know that we abide in him and he in us,
because he has given us of his Spirit.
And we have seen and do testify
that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.
God abides in those who confess
that Jesus is the Son of God,

and they abide in God.

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.
God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God,
and God abides in them.

1 John 4:7-16

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain;
and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

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

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

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

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

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

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

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

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:1-10

He answered, “Have you not read
that the one who made them at the beginning
‘made them male and female,’ and said,
‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh’?
So they are no longer two, but one flesh.
Therefore what God has joined together,
let no one separate.”

Matthew 19:4-6

And one of them, a lawyer,
asked him a question to test him.

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”
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.’
This is the greatest and first commandment.
And a second is like it:
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:35-40

On the third day
there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there.
Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.
When the wine gave out,
the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”
And Jesus said to her,
“Woman, what concern is that to you and to me?
My hour has not yet come.”
His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”
Now standing there were six stone water jars
for the Jewish rites of purification,
each holding twenty or thirty gallons.
Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.”
And they filled them up to the brim.
He said to them, “Now draw some out,
and take it to the chief steward.”
So they took it.
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 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.”
Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee,
and revealed his glory;
and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

As the Father has loved me,
so I have loved you;
abide in my love.
If you keep my commandments,

you will abide in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and abide in his love.
I have said these things to you
so that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete.
This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.

John 15:9-14

SERMON

After Scripture is read, a brief sermon shall be preached. A hymn, psalm, or other appropriate music may follow.

THE MARRIAGE

VOWS

The minister addresses the couple:

*N_____ and N_____,
join hands,
and in faith make your promises to each other.*

The bride and groom face each other, join hands, and say their vows to each other.

*I, N_____, take you, N_____, to be my wife/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
as long as we both shall live.
To this covenant I pledge myself,
truly, with all my heart.*

Or

I, *N*_____, take you, *N*_____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise,
before God and these witnesses,
to be your loving and faithful husband/wife,
in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
in sickness and in health,
as long as we both shall live.

Or

Before God and these witnesses
I, *N*_____, take you, *N*_____, to be my wife/husband.
I promise to love you,
and to be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Or

I take you, *N*_____,
to be my wife/husband from this day forward,
to join with you and share all that is to come.
I promise to be faithful to you
until death parts us.

GIVING AND RECEIVING OF RINGS

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

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?

The minister shall receive the ring for the bride from its bearer and may pray:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring,
that he who gives it and she who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the groom places the ring on the bride's finger, he says:

*N*_____, I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant

we have made today,
in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

Or

*N*_____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am
and all that I have
I honor you.

Or

This ring I give you
in token and pledge
of my constant faith and abiding love.

Or

I give you this ring in God's name
as a symbol of all we have promised
and all that we shall share.

Then the minister may say to the bride:

What do you bring as a sign of your promise?

**The minister shall receive the ring for the groom from its bearer and
may pray:**

Bless, O Lord, the giving of this ring,
that she who gives it and he who wears it
may live in love and faithfulness all their days,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

As the bride places the ring on the groom's finger, she says:

*N*_____, I give you this ring
as a sign of the covenant
we have made today,
in the name of the Father and the Son
and the Holy Spirit.

Or

N_____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of our marriage.
With all that I am
and all that I have
I honor you.

Or

This ring I give you
in token and pledge
of my constant faith and abiding love.

Or

I give you this ring in God's name
as a symbol of all we have promised
and all that we shall share.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

The minister addresses the congregation:

N_____ and N_____ (Christian names)
have made their covenant of marriage together
before God and all here present,
by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands
and the giving and receiving of rings.
Therefore, I declare that they are husband and wife;
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Following the nuptial kiss/brace, the minister continues:

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

Or

Those whom God has joined together,
let no one separate.

Matthew 19:6

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

The couple may kneel or remain standing and face the minister.

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
creator and preserver of all life,
author of salvation, and giver of all grace:
look with favor upon the world you have made and redeemed,
and especially upon *N_____* and *N_____*.

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

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 to them, if it is your will,
the gift of children,
and the wisdom to bring them up
to know you,
to love you,
and to serve you.

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 your Spirit to unite all your children
so that your peace and justice may fill the earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

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

Gracious God,
you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that *N*_____ and *N*_____,
their families, 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.

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,
hastening the coming of peace, love, and justice on earth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Or

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 *N*_____ and *N*_____ as they begin their married life.

We thank you for the love and care of their parents, which has guided them to maturity and prepared them for this day.

Give them strength
to keep the vows they have made,
and to be loyal and faithful to each other.
May they support each other always,
bearing each other's burdens
and sharing each other's joys.
Help them to be honest and patient with each other;
may they be wise and loving parents,
and welcome both friend and stranger.

In 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.

Or

Eternal God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
bless *N*_____ and *N*_____,
that they may live together in marriage
according to the vows they have made before you.

Bless them with your love,
that their love for each other
may grow ever deeper,
and their love for you may shine forth
before the world.

Bless them with your mercy,
that they may be patient and caring,
willing to share each other's joys and sorrows,
to forgive and to be forgiven,
in their life together and in the world.

Bless them with your peace,
that they may be calm and sure,
trusting in you with confident hearts.
May they live in harmony and concord
within their family and among all people.

Bless them with your presence,
that within their hearts and home
Christ may reign as head.
May they confess Christ
with praise and thanksgiving,
now and through all their life together,
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

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 forever. Amen.

A hymn or other appropriate music may follow.

BENEDICTION

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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

Numbers 6:24-26, adapted

Or

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.

And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14