

The Celebration and Blessing of a Covenant Relationship
Option 2

This rite was adopted from the Diocese of Vermont Rites, the St. Thomas Washington D.C. Rite, the Diocese of Washington D.C. Rite and the Scottish Marriage Liturgy, and then created as above by the Diocese of Northern California. I am indebted to Bishop Barry Beisner and his diocese for their work.

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Bishop of Olympia

Celebrant

We have come together in the presence of God to witness this covenant between N. and N., to celebrate their love for each other, and to ask God's blessing upon them.

A covenant is a public declaration of commitment that binds people in an enduring relationship. The Bible is the story of God's unbroken covenant with humankind. In Baptism, God calls us into a covenant which is sealed eternally by the power of the Holy Spirit. By it we are bound not only to God, but to one another in a new community we call the Church, a community in which God shows no partiality.

Each one of us is called to live out the Covenant of Baptism in our daily life and work. For some this includes a special relationship of fidelity and mutuality with another person that becomes a sign of God's steadfast love. This relationship, a source of comfort and joy, is a gift given by God through which the whole world may be blessed through them.

N. and N.'s relationship is a great gift and a journey that, in different ways, we have travelled and will continue to travel with them. Today we gather at this decisive and important moment in the journey of N. and N., to share in the blessing of this covenant relationship.

The Celebrant may then address the sponsors:

Do you who present this couple believe that they are called to live in such a covenant?

Sponsors: We do. We believe their life together is a gift from God for themselves and for the world.

Celebrant: Will you (continue to) support them as companions on their journey?

Sponsors: We will, with God's help.

Celebrant: N. and N., do you enter freely into this relationship, and do you believe it to be the relationship to which God has called you?

Couple: We do.

Celebrant says to each in turn:

N., now that you enter into this covenant with N., will you love him/her, respect him/her, and be forever faithful to him/her?

I will.

The Celebrant addresses the families

Will you, the families of N. and N., uphold and care for them in their life together?

We will.

The Celebrant addresses the congregation

Will all of you support and encourage N. and N. in this covenant relationship?

We will.

Celebrant: May God, who gives you the will to declare these intentions, give you also the grace to fulfill them.

People: Amen.

The Word of God

The Collect

Celebrant: God be with you.

Or

The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Holy and loving God, in our baptism you call us into relationship with you and the whole creation. We thank you for giving us signs of your steadfast love in the covenant of fidelity two people make with one another, and we pray that, in your mercy, you will give your blessing to N and N who come before you. Strengthen them day by day with the love of your Holy Spirit that they may be a blessing to one another and to the world; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. *Amen.*

Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the readings.

Gen 1:1-8

Ruth 1:16-17

Exodus 2:1-10

Isaiah 11:1-9

Isaiah 12:2-6

Isaiah 41: 17-20

Isaiah 43:16-21

Micah 6:6-8

Joel 2: 23-24; 26-29

Romans 12:9-21

Galatians 5:13-14, 22-26

1Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Colossians 3:12-17

2Corinthians 5:17-20

1 John 4:7-16

Philippians 2:1-4

Between the readings, a psalm, hymn or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate psalms are 8, 65, 67, 85:7-13, 127, 149

When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.
People Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Matthew 5:1-16

Mark 12:28-34

Luke 6:32-38

A Homily or other response to the Readings may follow.

The Binding of the Covenant

Taking each other by the hand(s), each says to the other in turn

N., I make this covenant with you before God and the Church that I will love you in all the circumstances of our lives. With God's help, I will be faithful to you as long as we both shall live, a companion in faith, hope, and love for the glory of God and the life of the world.

The Blessing of the Rings and/or other symbols

The Celebrant may ask God's blessing on rings or other symbols of the covenant the couple have made as follows. If the rings have been previously given, the couple may extend their hands toward the Celebrant.

Bless, O God, these rings as enduring signs of the covenant N. and N. have made, and keep them in the bond of love, through Christ our Savior. Amen.

The giver presents the ring or other symbols with these words. This action may be omitted if rings or other symbols have been previously given.

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of the covenant we have made with God and with one another. Amen.

The Prayers

Celebrant: Dear Friends, *N.* and *N.* have been called by God into a covenant of grace and mutual care. Let us join in prayer, asking God's blessing upon them and upon us as we proclaim with our lives the love of God revealed in Christ Jesus.

Gracious God we pray for *N.* and *N.* and give thanks that you have brought them together in love. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

We thank you for the love and care which [through their parents] has guided *N.* and *N.* to maturity, and prepared them for this commitment. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

Help them [to be wise and loving parents and] to grow together in faithfulness and honesty, in mutual support and patience. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

We pray the covenant of faithfulness and love we celebrate with *N.* and *N.* today will reflect your unending faithfulness and great love for the world. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

Make their life together be a sign of your love in this broken world; may forgiveness heal injury and joy triumph over sorrow. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

Be with them in their work and renew them in their leisure. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

May *N.* and *N.* so love one another that they may be a blessing to you and all whom they encounter. *Spirit of God, bless this Union.*

In all their future together may they enjoy each other's lives and grow through the love they share. *Amen.*

Celebrant:

Gracious and everliving God, look joyfully upon *N* and *N* and upon this assembled community; grant us your blessing and assist us with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love we may honor and keep the covenants we make with you and one another; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

The Blessing of the Covenant

Celebrant: God be with you. Or The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

It is right to give you thanks, most gracious God, and to praise you for the unfailing love and care and for the great joy and comfort you have bestowed upon us in the gift of human love. We give you praise and thanks for *N.* and *N.*, and the covenant of love and faithfulness they have made. Pour out the abundance of your grace upon them. Keep them in your steadfast love; protect them from all danger; fill them with your wisdom and peace; lead them in holy service to each other and the world; and, finally, bring them to that table where all your saints feast for ever.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit

or

God the Source of Life, God the Word of Love and God the Spirit of Truth

...bless, preserve, and keep you; God mercifully look upon you with favor and fill you with all blessing and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life and be a light to the world until you come into the age of life everlasting. Amen.

The Peace

The Holy Communion

If for special reason the Holy Communion is not to follow, the Service concludes with the Peace, the Lord's Prayer being first said by the People following the blessing of the couple.

Otherwise, the liturgy continues with the Offertory. Any of the Great Thanksgivings from the Book of Common Prayer or Enriching Our Worship may be used. If a Proper Preface is required, it is that of Baptism or of the Season.

In place of the usual post-communion prayer, one of the following may be used.

Gracious God, we thank you for the love made known to us in the Body and Blood of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. May this sacrament be to us a reminder of the love through which we are called; may it continue to sustain us on the journey and strengthen us in ministry; in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Or

Gracious God, we thank you for the gift you have given us in the Body and Blood of your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ: for love and companionship; forgiveness and reconciliation; mercy and joy. Grant that *N* and *N*, having professed their love and commitment one to the other, may grow together, secure in your love, nurtured by your church and sustained by your sacrament; in the Name of Jesus Christ. *Amen.*