

**The Celebration & Affirmation of the Covenanted Relationship  
between  
and**

Dear Friends in Christ: we have come together in the presence of God to celebrate and affirm the covenant of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in a life-long commitment of love. The calling to live in a bond and covenant of love is a gift from God, in whose image we are created and by whom we are called to love and to live in harmony -- with God and one another. In celebrating this covenant we are reminded of our highest vocation: to love God and to love our neighbor.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are here to bear witness to their love for each other, and to their intention to embody Christ's love in their life together. We are called to share in their happiness, and to witness this exchange of vows believing that God, who is love and truth, sees into their hearts and accepts the offering they are making.

The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity, and for the overflowing of their love into the lives of all whom they encounter. Therefore, this commitment is to be undertaken and affirmed reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with God's intention for us.

**The Declaration of Consent**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have come here so that God may confirm and strengthen your love in the presence of this company. Therefore, I ask you to declare and affirm the intention of your covenant. Do you believe God has called you to live together in love?

We do.

Will you remain faithful to each other, affirming this relationship above all others?

We will.

Will you nurture each other's ability to grow in maturity and wisdom within this relationship?

We will.

Will you do all in your power to make your life together a witness to the love of God in the world?

We will.

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Archives of the Episcopal Church**

, will you take to live together in a covenant reflecting God's love as long as you both shall live?

I will.

, will you take to live together in a covenant reflecting God's love as long as you both shall live?

I will.

Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their commitment?

We will.

O gracious and ever-loving God, you have created us in your image. Hear our prayers for Geoffrey and John who now celebrate before you their covenant relationship; increase their faith in you and in each other; give them grace to keep the promises that they make to each other and to you; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

### The Word of God

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

I John 4:7-17

The Homily - The Rev.

### The Vows and Exchange of Rings

In the Name of God, I take you, , to be my beloved companion in life; and I solemnly promise to stand beside you and with you always; in times of distress and in times of well-being, in times of adversity and in times of prosperity, in times of joy and in times of sorrow; I will live with you and love you as long as we both shall live.

Bless, Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by which and have joined themselves to each other in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow; receive and treasure it as a pledge of my love for you.

Now that and have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, I declare that they are united to one another in a covenant reflecting God's love, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May we all uphold them in this covenant. Amen.

## **The Prayers**

**Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation and give of all grace: look with favor upon the world you have made and for which you Son gave his life, and especially upon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, whom you have united in love.**

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

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

**Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours.**

**Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair.**

**Enhance their relationship with joy and beauty, that their family and friends may rejoice with them.**

**Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others.**

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

## **The Blessing**

**May God, who at creation made all persons in the image of God and looked on all that was made and saw that it was very good, keep you one.**

**May our Savior Jesus Christ, who prayed that we all may be one, be present with you always.**

**May the Holy Spirit, who has given you the will to persevere in your love and in your covenant with each other, strengthen your bond.**

**The blessing of the Holy Trinity, of all that is God, be upon you and be with you, now and forever. Amen.**

## **The Candle of Unity**

As the light from the unity candle is spread amongst us, let us remember that one of God's intentions in blessing the love of            and            is that their love for each other will be so great that it will overflow, enriching all who surround them -- that we will all be enriched by their light.

"Ave Maria"      sung by

## **The Eucharist**

### **THE GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Let us pray:

We give thanks to you, O God,  
for all you have given to us in your creation  
for the beauty which surrounds us  
and for the opportunities you give us to work with you  
in building all of humankind into one family.

We thank you for showing yourself to us so clearly in the life of Jesus, your Son,  
who calls us continually to join in his kingdom.  
We thank you for blessing the lives of            and            with love for each other  
and for calling them into a covenant of commitment to one another.

And so, dear God, we bring you these gifts.  
Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people  
the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ our Lord.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread,  
said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends and said,  
"Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper, he took the cup of wine, gave thanks, and said,  
"Drink this, all of you.  
This is my Blood of the new Covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Dear God our Creator, we now celebrate the memorial of your Son.  
By means of this holy bread and cup, we show forth the sacrifice of his death,  
and proclaim his resurrection, until he comes again.

**Gather us by this Holy Communion into one body in your Son Jesus Christ.  
Make us a living sacrifice of praise.  
By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honor and glory is yours, Almighty God, now and forever. AMEN**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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 and the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

#### **THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

**The gifts of God for the people of God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**and            serve as chalice bearers, communicating family first, and then guests.**

#### **POSTCOMMUNION PRAYER**

**O God, the giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious; we give you thanks for binding us together in these holy mysteries of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that by your Holy Spirit,            and            , now joined in a solemn covenant, may become one in heart and soul, live in fidelity and peace, and obtain those eternal joys prepared for all who love you; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.**

#### **Blessing Of The Congregation**

**The peace of God which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his Son, Jesus Christ.  
And the blessing of God: Creator, Redeemer and Life-Giving Spirit  
be among you and remain with you for ever. Amen.**

#### **The Recessional**

**ADDRESSING            AND            :**

**The peace of the Lord be with you.**

**Let us applaud            and            with our hearts and with our hands.**

For            and  
July 23, 1994

As I have been thinking about tonight  
two stories have stayed with me. . .  
and I think that's because they each have a lot to tell us  
about the deeper meanings of what we do tonight.

The first has to do with two young boys and a Buddhist priest.  
The boys, for whatever reasons, wanted to shame and hurt the old priest.  
So one said to the priest,  
"My brother has a young bird in his hands --  
tell us, old man, whether the bird is alive. . . or dead."

The priest knew from their eyes that if he were to say "alive,"  
they would squash and kill the bird and tell him that he had guessed wrong.  
And that if he were to say, "The bird is dead,"  
they would kill the bird and say, "Your words have made it so."

Again, the question came, "Tell us, old man, whether the bird is alive. . . or dead?"  
The old priest, with sadness in his eyes, looked at the boys and said,  
"You ask me whether the bird is alive. . . or dead.  
All I can tell you. . . is that the answer is in your hands."

The answer is in our hands.  
How careful we must be  
with the gifts we have been given.  
It is so important to acknowledge them  
And even more important to cherish . . .  
the gifts that have been put into our hands.

The love of            for  
and the love of        for  
that love is a gift. . .and it is a gift from God.

That which we affirm as love in its most complete sense:  
that love which not only . . . draws us to one another,  
but also binds us to one another  
and which is also gentleness and kindness and acceptance and forgiveness  
and faithfulness and self-sacrificing regard for the other. . .  
that love has but one source. . .  
and that is God.

God is love. . . and all love comes from God.  
And it comes as gift:  
it is not something we manufacture or generate.  
It is something that we receive . . . through another.  
and are each gifts of God. .  
placed in the other's hands.

What a thought -- that a human heart/soul. . being entrusted into the hands of another.  
One of the ironies of tonight is that we are gathered  
in the midst of all these symbols of security. . . .  
linen, black ties, the Federal Reserve  
we are gathered in the midst of all these symbols of security  
to celebrate something so delicate.

But the wise men brought their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh,  
and peasants and the rich throughout the centuries  
have joined in the building of great cathedrals  
and beautiful churches and the writing of glorious music. . .  
all to honor the Christ child. . whom we honor tonight  
in the blessing of Christ's love given to through  
and to , through

It's good to be here. . .  
it is important to offer our best and most splendid  
to our God who has so transformed the lives  
of and through this gift of love. . .

Which brings me to the second story, an old Hassidic story. .from the Jews.  
Rabbi Zuzya was on his deathbed, surrounded by his disciples  
and he was crying.  
His disciples asked him, "Why do you cry, Rabbi Zuzya?"  
And he said, "When I die and appear before God,  
God will not say, 'Why were you not more like Moses?' because I am not Moses.  
And God will not say, 'Why were you not more like Isaiah?' because I am not Isaiah."  
"Why then do you cry?" they asked.  
"Because," said the rabbi, "When I die what God will ask is,  
'Why were you not more like Zuzya?'"

, that is why God has given you  
In loving him and being loved by him,  
you will continue to grow into just who you have been created to be --  
and that happens in mutual acceptance and caring,  
through tenderness and support, through forgiveness and reconciliation. .  
that constant presence of God in your lives.  
is God's gift to you -- as a way of honoring just who you are.

And , that is the very reason God has given you  
Neither of you is called to be Moses or Isaiah or Tom .or Zuzya.  
Who each of you is –  
in all of your beauty and with all the rough spots – that is so important.  
So in joining your hands and exchanging your vows  
you acknowledge that gift of each other and of yourselves.  
You are more than enough.

This is holy time. . .  
with your joining of hands,  
your exchanging of your vows and our celebration of the Lord's Supper.  
This is holy time and God is present right here in the midst of us.

This is holy time.  
There will be wonderful times ahead for the two of you.  
And there will be difficult, gut wrenching times ahead, as well.  
You can't do it alone – you were not created to do it alone.  
God has given you one another. . .  
and this lovely company of friends and family who stand with you. .  
and that constant giving and forgiving and strengthening presence  
of God, himself, who, I assure you, is present. . right here  
and will be present in all that you do.

"A three-fold cord," says Ecclesiastes, "is not quickly broken."