



DRAFT

The Witnessing and Blessing of a Lifelong Covenant

The Word of God

A hymn may be sung

The Presider says the following, the people standing

Dear friends in Christ, we have gathered together today to witness *N. N.* and *N. N.* publically committing themselves to one another and, in the name of the Church, to bless their union. Let us pray, then, that they may be strengthened for the promises they make this day, and that we will have the generosity to support them in what they undertake and the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

The Collect of the Day

Presider The Lord be with You
People And Also With You.

Almighty and everliving God:
look tenderly upon *N.* and *N.*,
who stand before you in the company of your Church.
Lift them up in joy in their life together.
Grant them so to love selflessly and live humbly,
that they may be to one another and to the world
a witness and a sign of your never-failing care;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

The Lessons

The people sit. Then one or more of the following passages of Scripture is read. If the Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the Readings. When the blessing is celebrated in the context of the Sunday liturgy, the Readings of the Sunday are used, except with the permission of the Bishop.

Ruth 1:16-17
1 Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a;
 or 1 Samuel 18:1-4
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7
Micah 4:1-4

DRAFT

Romans 12:9-18
1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13 2
Corinthians 5:17-20
Galatians 5:14, 22-26
Ephesians 3:14-21
Colossians 3:12-17
1 John 3:18-24
1 John 4:7-16, 21

When a biblical passage other than one from the Gospels is to be read, the Reader announces it with these words

Reader A Reading from _____.

After the Reading, the Reader may say

The Word of the Lord.

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are:

Psalm 65
Psalm 67
Psalm 85:7-13
Psalm 98
Psalm 100
Psalm 126
Psalm 127
Psalm 133
Psalm 148
Psalm 149:1-5

All standing, the Deacon or Priest reads the Gospel, first saying

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to _____.

After the Gospel, the Reader says

The Gospel of the Lord.

People Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Appropriate passages from the Gospels are:

Matthew 5:1-16
Mark 12:28-34
Luke 6:32-38
John 15:9-17
John 17:1-2, 18-26

The Sermon

Committment

The people stand and the couple stands, facing the Presider.

Presider N. and N., I invite you now, illumined by the Word of God and strengthened by the prayer of this community, to make your covenant before God and the Church.

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says

DRAFT

In the name of God,
I, *N.*, give myself to you, *N.*
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:
enduring all things, bearing all things.
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you with the Spirit's help: forsaking all others,
as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

The assembly stands, the couple faces the people, and the Presider addresses them, saying Presider

Will all of you here gathered support and uphold this couple in the covenant they make?

People We will.

If rings are to be exchanged, they are brought before the Presider, who prays using the following words

Let us pray.

Bless, O God, these rings
as signs of the enduring covenant
N. and *N.* have made with each other,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The two people place the rings on the fingers of one another, first the one, then the other, saying

N., receive this ring as a symbol of my abiding love.

Pronouncement

The Presider says

Inasmuch as *N.* and *N.* have exchanged
vows of love and fidelity
in the presence of God and the Church,
I now pronounce that they are bound to one another
in a holy covenant, as long as they both shall live. *Amen.*

The Prayers

Presider Now, let us pray for *N.* and *N.* in their life
together and for the concerns of this community.

A Deacon or another leader bids prayers for the couple.

Prayers for the Church and for the world, for the concerns of the local community, for those who suffer or face trouble, and for the departed are also appropriate. If the rite takes place in the principal Sunday worship of the congregation, the rubric concerning the Prayers of the People on page 359 of the Book of Common Prayer is followed.

A bar in the margin indicates a bidding that may be omitted.

Leader For *N.* and *N.*, seeking your blessing and the blessing of your holy people; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For a spirit of loving-kindness to shelter them all their days; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

DRAFT

Leader For friends to support them and communities to enfold them; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For peace in their home and love in their family; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault,
and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the outpouring of your love through their work and witness; Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the wisdom to care and nurture the children you may entrust (*have entrusted*) to them;
Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer.

Leader For the strength to keep our vows and commitments: Lord, in your mercy
People Hear our prayer

The Presider concludes the Prayers with the following or another appropriate Collect

Giver of every gift, source of all goodness,
hear the prayers we bring before you
for *N.* and *N.*, who seek your blessing this day.
Give them a share in the saving work of Jesus, who gave himself for us,
and bring about the fullness of life he promised,
who now lives and reigns forever and ever. *Amen.*

If the Eucharist is to follow, the Lord's Prayer is omitted here.

Leader
And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People and Leader

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, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. *Amen.*

Blessing of the Couple

As the couple stands or kneels, the Presider invokes God's blessing upon them, saying

Let us pray.

Most gracious God,
we praise you for the tender mercy and
unfailing care revealed to us in Jesus the Christ
and for the great joy and comfort bestowed upon us
in the gift of human love.

DRAFT

We give you thanks for *N.* and *N.*,
and the covenant of faithfulness they have made.
Pour out the abundance of your Holy Spirit 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.

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

The Peace

The Presider bids the Peace.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People And also with you.

The service ends here unless Holy Eucharist follows.

At the Eucharist

The liturgy continues with the Offertory, at which the couple may present the offerings of bread and wine.

The following proper preface may be used.

Because in the giving of two people to each other in faithful love
you reveal the joy and abundant life you share with your
Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The following post communion prayer may be used.

God of our strength and joy,
we thank you for the communion of our life together,
and for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.
Grant that in witness to the covenant made today by *N.* and *N.*,
it may renew our hope and nourish us for the work you set before us,
to witness to the presence of Christ in the world,
through the power of your Spirit,
and to the glory of your Name. Amen.

DRAFT

Blessing of Same Gender Couple Within Regular Sunday Worship

If the liturgy is celebrated within an ordinary Sunday liturgy. Service of the Word of God proceeds up to the homily and then the following is added

Dear friends in Christ,
N. N. and N. N. have come here today to publically
commit themselves to one another and, in the name of the Church,
to seek the blessing of God on their union:
Let us pray, then, that they may be strengthened for the promises
they make this day, and that we will have the generosity to support
them in what they undertake and the wisdom to see God at work in
their life together.

Almighty and everliving God:
look tenderly upon N. and N.,
who stand before you in the company of your Church.
Lift them up in joy in their life together.
Grant them so to love selflessly and live humbly,
that they may be to one another and to the world
a witness and a sign of your never-failing care;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

Commitment

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and strengthened by the prayer of this community,
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Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says

In the name of God,
I, N., give myself to you, N.
I will support and care for you by the grace of God:
enduring all things, bearing all things.
I will hold and cherish you in the love of Christ:
in times of plenty, in times of want.
I will honor and love you with the Spirit's help: forsaking all others,
as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

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through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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we praise you for the tender mercy and
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and for the great joy and comfort bestowed upon us
in the gift of human love.
We give you thanks for *N.* and *N.*,
and the covenant of faithfulness they have made.
Pour out the abundance of your Holy Spirit 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.

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

The Peace

The Presider bids the Peace.

Presider The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People And also with you.

The service continues with the Holy Eucharist