

Order of Worship
The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage
(Adapted from the U.C.C. Book of Worship for same sex couples)

Greetings to the Congregation

Including a statement to this effect:

Same sex marriages are not yet recognized by the State of Connecticut, but we anticipate, with much hope, the day when this recognition will be granted. The General Synod of the United Church of Christ, this congregation, and many other communities of faith support and are working to establish equal marriage rights and responsibilities for all couples. Whereas the State of Connecticut uses the term "civil union", in this service we will refer to the covenant between _____ and _____ as a marriage.

Processional

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn

Responsive Reading (psalm, litany, responsive prayer)

Musical Selection

(Indicate by circling above those parts of the service you want to include. Of the parts listed above, most services include only the Greeting and the Processional.)

Address to the Congregation

Dearly beloved (or Dear Friends, or Friends in Christ), we are gathered here as the people of God to witness the marriage of _____ and _____. We come to share their joy and to ask God to bless their life together.

Marriage is a gift of God, sealed by a sacred covenant. God gives human love. Through that love, life partners come to know each other with mutual care and companionship. God gives joy. Through that joy, partners may share their new life with others as Jesus shared new wine at the wedding in Cana.

Without love and our prayers, we support _____ and _____ as they now freely give themselves to each other.

Prayer (in unison; printed in bulletin)

O God, we celebrate your gift of love and your presence among us. We rejoice that two people have chosen to commit themselves to a life of faithfulness to one another. We praise you, God, for all the loving relationships that touch our lives. You bless us through the self-giving love of Jesus Christ, and through all the ways that Christ's love is embodied in the world.

At the same time, we confess that we often fail to be loving. We take for granted the people we care about most. We neglect and strain the bonds that

unite us. We hurt those who love us and withdraw from the community around us. Forgive us, God. Renew us with your Holy Spirit, so that we may embrace others with the love that you have shown toward us. May this celebration give us a deeper joy and thankfulness for all the people who bless our lives. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance (minister)

Through the great depth and strength of God's love for us, God reaches out to forgive our sins and to restore us to life. Be assured that God's love enfolds us and empowers us to love one another as God has loved us.

The Reading of Scripture (Select one or more. You might honor a friend or relative by asking one to read)

John 2:1-11 (The Wedding Feast in Cana)
 Colossians 3:12-17 ("Put on love, which binds everything together in harmony.")
 Romans 12:1-2 and 9-18 ("Let love be genuine ...")
 Genesis 2:18-24 (Creation of Eve to be Adam's partner)
 Genesis 1:26-31 (may omit vs. 29-30) (God created human kind in his own image.)
 Ephesians 3:14-21 ("that Christ may dwell in your hearts... being rooted in love")
 Ephesians 5:1-2 and 21-33 ("be imitators of God; walk in love")
 Revelation 21:1-4 ("I saw the holy city ... prepared as a bride ...")
 Song of Solomon 2:8-13 and 8:6-7 ("Set me as a seal upon your heart")
 Ruth 1:6-18 ("Wherever you go, I will go")
 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 ("Love bears all things") This text tends to be overused.
 Psalm 139:1-18 "O Lord, you have searched me and known me ...")

Homily or Charge to the Couple

(This is a brief statement which leads up to the wedding vows. Using the Scripture lesson(s) as a basis, the purpose is to provide an opportunity for the congregation to reflect upon their own relationships, to draw attention to the vows themselves and their Christian meaning, and to encourage the couple and the congregation in their commitment to each other in times of joy and in times of challenge.)

The Declaration of Intention

Before God and this congregation, I ask you to affirm your willingness to enter this covenant of marriage and to share all the joys and sorrows of this new relationship, whatever the future may hold.

_____, will you have _____ to be your life partner, and will you love him/her faithfully as long as you both shall live?

Response: "I will, with the help of God."

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The Pledge of Support

(When there are children from previous relationships who will share in the new family, they may participate in the service through the following words:)

_____, you are entering a new family. Will you take part in this home (or family) and give it your love and trust?

Each child responds: "I will." (continued next page)

To the partners:

_____ and _____, will you be faithful and loving parents to _____?
Couple responds: "We will."

Pledge of Support from families of the partners:

Will the families of _____ and _____ please stand in support of this couple. Do you offer your prayerful blessing and loving support to this marriage? If so, say "I do."
Family members: "I do" (They are seated)

To the congregation:

Do all of you gathered here, as people of God, pledge your support and encouragement to the covenant that _____ and _____ are making together? If so, please answer by saying "We do."

Intercessory Prayer

God of our mothers and fathers, hear our promises to support and encourage this union of _____ and _____. Bless us as we pray for their marriage. Bless them as they pledge their lives to each other. With faith in you, may their life together bear witness to the love that surrounds us all, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Vows of the Marriage Covenant

_____ and _____, now is the time for you to speak the covenant promises that you have come to offer before God.

1st Partner

_____, I give myself to you to be your life partner.
I promise to love and sustain you
in the covenant of marriage.
from this day forward,
in sickness and in health,
in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
as long as we both shall live.

2nd Partner

_____, I give myself to you to be your life partner.
I promise to love and sustain you
in the covenant of marriage,
from this day forward,
in sickness and in health,

in plenty and in want,
in joy and in sorrow,
as long as we both shall live.

The Exchange of Rings:

God, by these rings, as symbols of their promises, remind _____ and _____ always of your encircling love and unending faithfulness, so that they may know joy and peace in one another throughout their life together.

Ring Vow(s):

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

The Announcement of the Marriage

_____ and _____, you are a married couple with the blessing of Christ's church. Be merciful in all ways, kind in heart, humble in mind. Accept life, and be most patient and tolerant with one another. Forgive as freely as God has forgiven you, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

To the congregation:

Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate.
(The couple may kiss.)

The Passing of the Peace (*optional)

Minister: May the Peace of Christ be with you.

CONGREGATION: AND ALSO WITH YOU

(The congregation exchanges the sign of peace)

Holy Communication (optional)

The Lighting of the Unity Candle (optional)

The Blessing

May the God who watches over all the families of the earth, bless your new family and establish your home in peace and enduring love. Let us pray.

The Prayers for the Marriage

Merciful God, we thank you for the breath of life and all its blessings. Especially we thank you for the love which calls us out of our loneliness into companionship with one another.

We thank you for this sacred moment, for the friends and families gathered here, who care so much for _____ and _____ and who pray for their fulfillment and joy during their life's journey.

God, by the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon this couple who have made their sacred promises today in your sight. Defend them from all evil and lead them into deeper peace and trust with each other and with you.

Nourish _____ and _____ in their affection for each other, so that they might reach out with love and concern for all people. Teach them patience and forgiveness, and give them the grace to keep the promises they have made.

God, may this special day be an occasion for all our marriages and friendships to be renewed and strengthened, so that we will never take each other for granted.

We pray, using the words which Jesus himself taught us...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 *(debts) as we forgive (our debtors). And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

(the Lord's prayer may also use "trespasses".)*

Song, Anthem, or Hymn

The Benediction

_____ and _____, go out into the world in peace. Have courage, hold on to what is good. Return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak, help the suffering, honor all persons. Love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the light of the Lord's countenance be lifted upon you and bring you peace, now and forever. Amen.

The Recessional