

The Celebration and Blessing of a Covenant Relationship

A hymn or anthem may be sung as the liturgical ministers enter, either here or after the opening acclamation, in place of the opening dialogue.

The following acclamation, or another acclamation from the Book of Common Prayer or Enriching Our Worship, begins the rite.

Presider Blessed be the One, Holy, and Living God:
People Glory to God for ever and ever.

The following dialogue may be added

Presider Beloved, let us love one another,
People For love is of God.
Presider Whoever does not love does not know God;
People For God is love.
Presider Since God loved us so much;
People We ought also to love one another.

The Collect of the Day

Presider God be with you. *or* The Lord be with you.
People And also with you.
Presider 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.N.* and *N.N.* who come before you, and 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, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Word of God

Then at least two of the following passages from Holy Scripture are read, the final reading being chosen from the Gospel passages. Between the readings a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said.

At the end of the readings is said

	The Word of the Lord.	Or	Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's People [to the Churches].
People	Thanks be to God.		

When the Gospel is read, all stand, and the reading is introduced by the Deacon or a Priest, saying

	The Holy Gospel of Our Savior Jesus Christ according to N.		
People	Glory to you, O Christ.	or	Glory to you, Lord Christ.

After the Gospel, the Reader says

	The Gospel of Christ.	or	The Gospel of the Lord.
People	Praise to you, O Christ.	or	Praise to you, Lord Christ.

From the Hebrew Scripture:

I Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a. *or* I Samuel 18:1-4
Ruth 1:16-17
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (*New English Bible*)

Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7
Micah 4:1-4
Zephaniah 3:14-20
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 17:1-3, 6-13

Psalms: 65, 67, 85:7-13, 11, 127, 133, 149, 8, 148

From the New Testament:

Romans 12:9-21
I Corinthians 12:31-13:13
II Corinthians 5:17-20
Galatians 5:13-14, 22-26
Philippians 2:1-4

Ephesians 3:14-19
Ephesians 4:25-32
Colossians 3:12-17
I John 4:7-16, 21
I John 3:18-24

From the Gospels:

Matthew 5:1-16
Mark 12:28-34
Luke 6:32-38
Luke 10:21-24

John 2:1-11
John 15:9-17
John 17:1, 18-26

The Sermon

The Prayers of the People

It is recommended that either of these forms of the Prayers of the People be used, or any of the forms found in the Book of Common Prayer, or any conforming to the outline for the Prayers of the People found in the Holy Eucharist.

Form I

Leader

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.

Abundant God, Lover of all creation, pour out your blessing upon us and upon the covenant we celebrate.

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In solitude and companionship,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In tenderness and intimacy,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In knowing and in being known,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In self-sacrifice and self-offering,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In comfort and consolation,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In doing justice and making peace,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

In generosity and hospitality,

Be among us, Spirit of God.

Presider

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.**

Form II

Leader

Let us remember before God *N.* and *N.*, this community of faith and the whole world, saying,
“Receive our prayer.”

For *N.* and *N.*, that they may be filled with God’s blessing and grow in love and faithfulness throughout their life together. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For God’s creation. May we have the wisdom and will to honor and protect all God’s creatures. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For our nation and the world and for all in authority. May justice and wisdom, peace and respect flourish among men and woman everywhere. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For this community, for the people of (this town or city) and for the welfare of all. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For those who suffer any need or trouble. We pray for the sick and the poor, the lonely and the bereaved, those who perpetrate hatred and intolerance and for their victims. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For Christ’s Church throughout the world. For our bishop(s) *N. and N.*, and for all Christians everywhere in their life and ministry. May we be the living presence of Christ in the world. O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

For all those who have gone before us in the faith. [We remember and celebrate especially, *N.*] O God, source of all life,
Receive our prayer.

Presider

O God, Ruler of all, you make us in your image and likeness and bestow upon us life and blessing. You command your followers to be united by the new commandment of love. Receive the prayers of your people and grant to *N.* and *N.* grace to love each other all the days of their lives; for you are a compassionate God and a lover to all creatures, and we glorify you now and forever. **Amen.**

A hymn or anthem may be sung.

The Making of the Covenant

The Presider invites the couple and their sponsors to stand in view of all and addresses them and the congregation with these words

Today we gather to witness and to bless the public commitment of *N.* and *N.* to a lifelong covenant of fidelity and mutuality.

A covenant is a public declaration of commitment that binds people in an enduring relationship. The Bible is the story of God's covenant with humankind which God has declared shall not be broken. 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. These relationships, a source of comfort and joy, are gifts given by God that the whole world might be blessed through them.

The Presider then addresses the sponsors directly.

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

Sponsors We do. We believe their life together to be a blessing from God for themselves and for the world.

Presider Will you [continue to] support them as companions on their journey?

Sponsors We will, with God's help.

The Presider then addresses the couple

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.

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, as a companion in faith, hope, and love for the glory of God and the life of the world.

The Presider then says to the congregation

Will you who have witnessed these vows support *N.* and *N.* in their covenant, standing by them in encouragement and prayer in times of joy and in times of sorrow?

People We will.

The Blessing of the Rings or Other Symbols

The Presider 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 Presider.

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 maybe 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 Blessing of the Covenant

Presider God be with you. *or* The Lord be with you.

People And also with you.

Presider 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

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

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 together 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.