

The Blessing of a Lifelong Union

Preface

This liturgy is intended for use with couples who have already entered into a civil union or marriage, who now wish for the blessing of God on their relationship. Thus the expectation is that any couple using this service will meet the legal requirements for civil union or marriage.

This liturgy offers the Church a way to address the pastoral needs of couples who have made a life-long commitment to one another beyond the Church, who now wish to express that commitment in an Anglican context. It enables the Church to express the love of God in Christ for all people, and to offer welcome and support for couples seeking to honour the Christian values of mutual and life-long fidelity and respect, love and joy in their life together.

It is expected that this liturgy will be led by a Priest or Bishop. This liturgy was created by members of the Diocese of Auckland at Vaughan Park in December 2013.

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The Word of God

Gathering

The Priest says the following, the people standing

Grace and peace to you from God.

God fill you with truth and joy.

Beloved, let us love one another,

For love is of God.

The Priest may address the congregation in these words

Dear friends in Christ,

we have gathered together today in the presence of God to witness

N. and N. recommit themselves to one another,

and to pray for God's blessing on their union:

a relationship of faithfulness and steadfast love,

forsaking all others,

supporting one another with tenderness and respect,

strength and courage,

for the rest of their lives.

Therefore, in the name of Christ, let us pray for N. and N.

that they may be strengthened in the promises they make this day,

and that we will have the generosity to support them in their journey

and the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

Silence may follow

The Priest prays

Gracious and everliving God:
assist with your grace *N. and N.*,
whose lifelong commitment of love and faithfulness
we witness this day.

Grant them your blessing, that with firm resolve they may honour
and keep the promises they make:
through Jesus Christ our Saviour,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Amen

or

Everliving God:
look tenderly upon *N. and N.*,
who stand before you in the company of your people.
Lift them up in joy in their life together.
Guide them in their love,
that they may be a witness and a sign of your eternal care
to one another and to the world;
through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

and/or

For those who bring children

God in Holy Trinity,
draw together with bonds of love and affection
N. and N., who with *their families*
seek to live in harmony and understanding all their days,
that their joining together will be to us
a reflection of your very essence and life:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Readings

A suitable reading or readings shall be read here.

Non-Scriptural lessons approved by the priest may be read provided there is at least one New Testament reading.

After the reading a minister may speak to the people.

The Affirmation

Priest:

N. and N., you have entered into a committed relationship with each other in love and trust. Do you offer your lives together for God's blessing?

Couple:

We do.

Priest:

Will you be to each other a companion in joy and a comfort in times of trouble;
and will you give each other opportunity for your love to deepen?

Couple:

We will with God's help.¹

¹ Geoffrey Duncan, *Courage to Love: An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material*, Darton Longman and Todd, London, 2002, p 288

The congregation stands. The couple faces their family and friends, and the Priest addresses them

Will all of you gathered here uphold and honour this couple and respect the promises they make?

We will.

Will you pray for them in times of trouble and celebrate with them in times of joy?

We will.

The Promises

The people sit. The couple stands, facing the Priest

N. and N., I invite you now
to make your promises before God and the Church.

Each member of the couple, in turn, takes the hand of the other and says in these, or other authorised words

In the name of God,
I, N., reaffirm the promises I have made to you, N.
I will support, cherish and care for you:
in all that life may bring.
I will honour and love you:
forsaking all others,
as long as we both shall live.
This is my promise.

or

The couple say together

We, N. and N., witness before God and this gathering
that we have pledged ourselves to each other.
We offer to you, God, our souls and bodies,
our thoughts and deeds,
our love for each other
and our wish to serve you.
Take us as we are,
and make us all that we can become,
through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**²

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

Eternal God,
bless these rings
as signs of the promises
N. and N. have made to each other. **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 constant love.

*If the two have previously given and worn rings as a symbol of their
commitment, the rings may be blessed on the hands of the couple,
the Priest saying*

By these rings N. and N. have shown to one another
and the world their faithfulness and love.
Bless these rings, Holy God,
that they may now be signs of the promises
N. and N. have made. **Amen.**

² Ibid. p 288

Pronouncement

N. and N. have exchanged promises of faithfulness and love in the presence of God and the Church.

I now pronounce that they are joined together in holy union.

Amen.

Blessing of the Couple

As the couple stands or kneels, the Priest invokes God's blessing upon them, saying one of the following

Most gracious God,
we praise you for the gift of human love.
We give you thanks for N. and N.,
and the promises of faithfulness they have made.
Pour out the fullness of your Holy Spirit upon them.
Keep them in your steadfast love;
protect them from all danger;
fill them with your wisdom and peace;
and lead them in service to each other and the world.

May the blessing of God the Creator,
Jesus the Christ, and the Holy Spirit,
be with you and remain with you,
that you may always be a blessing to each other
and to all whom you meet.

Amen.

or

Spirit of God,
you teach us through the example of Jesus
that love is the fulfilment of the law:
help N. and N. to persevere in love,
to grow in mutual understanding
and deepen their trust in each other;
that in wisdom, patience and courage,
their life together may be a source of happiness to all:

The blessing of God: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer
be upon you, guide and protect you,
and all those you love, today and always.
Amen³

The Prayers

Prayers offered by the community and are concluded with

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

³ Geoffrey Duncan, *Courage to Love: An Anthology of Inclusive Worship Material*, Darton Longman and Todd, London, 2002, p 290-291

or

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever.
Amen.⁴**

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

The Blessing

The Priest offers a blessing for those gathered

The Dismissal

The service may be concluded with the following or other appropriate words

Grace be with you.

Thanks be to God.

Go in peace.

Amen. We go in the name of Christ.⁵

⁴ A New Zealand Prayer Book/He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa, The Church of the Province of New Zealand, Collins Liturgical Publications, 1989, p 181

⁵ Ibid. p 473