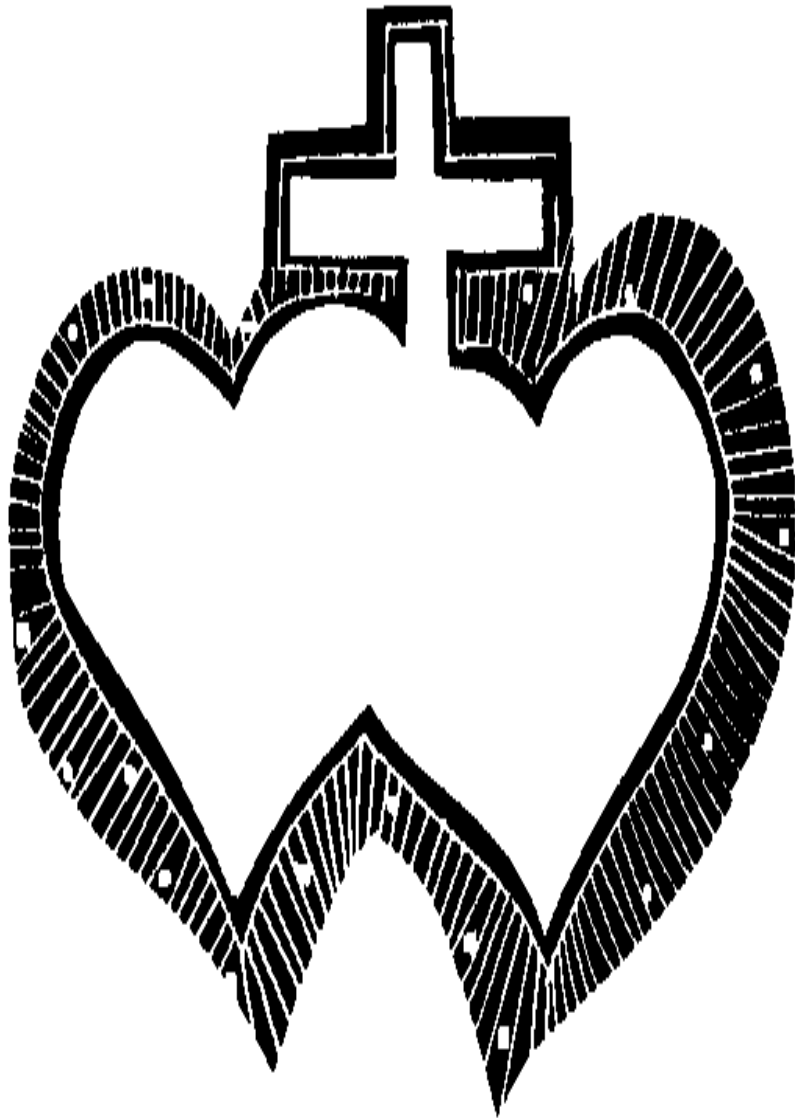


# The Parish of Felixstowe

St John the Baptist with St Edmund



Celebrating a Civil  
Partnership



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The church has an audio amplification system, and an induction loop is fitted for hearing aid users. Please switch to position 'T'.



Please turn your mobile phone **off** while you are in the church. Phones set to ring silently will still interfere with the sound system.

In case of Fire please follow the directions of the person leading the service.

# Introduction

God is love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them.  
(1 John 4.16)

(or)

For love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.  
(Song of Solomon 8.6-7)

Welcome to this special day of N and N. They have gathered us here as one company of family and friends because *yesterday* they were legally joined in a Civil Partnership and now they seek God's blessing on their life together. We are here to witness and rejoice in the joining of N and N who trust the love that they have found and wish to remain travelling side by side as the road winds on before them.

This is a sacred day. They are making promises in the presence of God, to commit to one another's good for the rest of their lives. We share with them the conviction that love is the foundation for all life, and to find a journey partner is a gift from God, bestowing joy and blessing, security and peace.

We are gathered here to support them as we sing songs together, listen to readings, offer prayers and blessings and consecrate their union with thanksgiving and delight.

## Gathering Prayer

O Spirit of God, present with us now,  
source of all life and love,  
we come in stillness and trust.

We thank you for going before *N* and *N* on their paths  
and for bringing them with joy to the threshold of this day.

We rejoice that they have found a home in each other  
and a shelter in this world.

Strengthen the foundations of their journey together  
Deepen their trust in the mystery of the spiritual life with you.  
so that as they grow in giving to each other  
they may be called more fully into your love  
where there is grace and mercy and peace  
for their own healing and delight and that of all the earth.

**Amen.**

## Song or Hymn

## The Declarations

*N*, will you take *N* to be your life partner?  
Will you love, honour and cherish *her/him* and be faithful to  
*her/him* so long as you both shall live?

**I will.**

*N*, will you take *N* to be your life partner?  
Will you love, honour and cherish *her/him* and be faithful  
to *her/him* so long as you both shall live?

**I will.**

(or)

N, have you come here freely and wholeheartedly to give yourself to N and be joined to *her/him* as your life partner?

**I have.**

Will you love, honour and cherish *her/him* and be faithful to *her/him* all the days of your life?

**I will.**

N, have you come here freely and wholeheartedly to give yourself to N and be joined to *her/him* as your life partner?

**I have.**

Will you love, honour and cherish *her/him* and be faithful to *her/him* all the days of your life?

**I will.**

*The minister addresses their families and friends.*

N and N have gathered us here to witness their union today and they will need our love and friendship in the years ahead.

We stand here as a single community with N and N at its heart.

We stand with those who wanted to be here today and could not and with those who have gone before and are no longer with us.

But in this time and in this place, it is we who are fortunate to be sharing this moment with N and N and gathering around them now.

Will you, the families and friends of N and N surround them in love, offering them the joys of your friendship and supporting them in their partnership now and in the years to come?

**We will.**

## **Readings**

*The couple choose a selection of biblical and other readings and music.*

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## **The Sermon**

# The Vows

N and N, I now invite you to join hands and make your vows in the presence of God and in the company of your family and friends.

*The Couple may say their own vows or use one of these forms*

I A, ask you. B, to be my life-partner,

I B, ask you. A, to be my life-partner,

**the companion of my days.**

**I promise to make a home with you**

**where love can deepen**

**and each can grow freely.**

**I will bear your burdens**

**and share your joys and sorrows.**

**I will be family to you**

**through the weathers of time and change.**

**I will honour your work**

**and nourish our life together.**

**I will be tender with your wounds** *(or frailty)*

**and compassionate in failure,**

**for I, too, come in need of compassion.**

**In the presence of God I make this vow.**

A, will you take my hand

B will you take my hand

**and be joined to my heart**

**and stay with me while we grow older,**

**until death parts us?**

*Each says to the other:*

**I will.**

(or)

N and N have chosen to speak their commitment to each other using the words of Ruth to Naomi (Ruth 1.16-17):

*One says and then the other repeats:*

Wherever you go I will go,  
and wherever you stay I will stay.  
Your people shall be my people  
and your God my God.  
Where you die, I will also die,  
and there I will be buried with you.  
May nothing but death part us, by God's help.

## **Blessing of the Rings**

The ring is a symbol of eternity. The circle also symbolizes wholeness and the wheel of the year as the seasons of life move round. For this reason we bless rings.

God, who encircles us all,  
bless these rings,  
as a symbol of unending love and faithfulness.  
May they remind N and N of the vows they have made this day,  
a sign of the holy bond between them.

**Amen.**

*Each says to the other:*

N, I give you this ring as a sign of our union.  
I pledge to you all that I have and all that I am  
within the love of God, Creator, Christ and Comforter.

## **The Proclamation**

N and N,  
In the presence of God, the One Spirit,  
who joins every living thing,  
and before this community gathered here  
you have spoken your vows to each other, ,  
you have joined hands and given and received rings  
and set a seal on your love now and for the rest of your lives.

## **The Handfasting**

*The couples hands are joined together*

The covenant you have made this day is holy and not to be broken. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

## **Prayer for the Couple**

*The Couple may kneel if desired*

Blessed are you, God, source of all love;  
you created joy and gladness, pleasure and delight.  
Pour your generous blessings on N and N  
and may the light of your presence shine softly on their path.  
May they walk gently through the earth  
and trust the Spirit to guide their feet.  
Warm their hearth with stories and laughter  
and comfort them when dark shadows fall.  
As they pass through the doorway of this hallowed day,  
may you, O Christ, bless them with a love  
that deepens with giving and widens with sharing.  
And when the lights go down on the world,  
may they always find in each other a home to welcome them,  
and so dwell in your peace and plenty all the days of their life.  
**Amen.**



## Song or Hymn

## Prayers

*These or other prayers may be used.*

Encircling God, the sacred Three in One,  
in whom there is no beginning and no end,  
you dance within you the eternal circle of life  
and all love flows from you.

As N and N have exchanged rings  
give them the grace to keep the promises they have made  
so that their journeys may be caught up and transformed  
in the dance of your unending love.

Circle N and N.

**Circle them, God.**

**Keep love within and fear without.**

Christ who is our journey companion and our safe lodging,  
may the circle of N and N's home be your dwelling place.  
May you be the welcome in their greeting hands,  
the listening ear at their fireside the nourishment at their table,  
and may their life together be a sign of your love  
for friend and stranger alike.

Circle N and N.

**Circle them, God.**

**Keep love within and fear without..**

Maker of all, we are woven together in the same unbroken circle  
with all that is broken, and all that is unfinished and incomplete.  
In Christ you outstretch your arms,  
and draw us into becoming more fully ourselves.  
May N and N be merciful with one another,  
forgiving wrongs,

and seeking one another's well-being.  
May they be tender with one another's dreams,  
cherish one another's gifts  
and guard one another's solitude.  
N and N, as your union ripens with the years,  
may you know the sweetness of a love maturing together  
and the blessing of God who longs  
for the peace and harmony of all the earth.

Circle N and N.

**Circle them, God.**

**Keep love within and fear without.**

*All present are invited to stand and hold hands. The couple turn and face their families and friends and join hands with them.*

Gracious God, we thank you for the circle of N and N's  
family and friends gathered around them today.  
May they all grow in love as their story unfolds.  
May they surround and support them,  
rejoicing with them in good times  
and comforting them in sorrow.  
N and N, look outward and know yourselves  
to be held by the embrace of all whom you love

Circle N and N.

**Circle them, God.**

**Keep love within and fear without.**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

**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.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.**

## **The Peace**

*The minister introduces the Peace with these words*

God is love, and those who live in love live in God  
and God lives in them.

*(1 John 4.16)*

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

*The couple greet the congregation.*

## **Blessing**

*The minister blesses the couple and the congregation, saying*

God the Holy Trinity  
make you strong in faith and love,  
defend you on every side,  
and guide you in truth and peace;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always.  
**Amen.**

## **Final Song or Hymn**

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