



Diocese of Toronto  
Anglican Church of Canada

# Policy on Marriage

PENTECOST 2020 (MAY 31, 2020)



though I speak with the tongue  
of angels, and have not  
I am become as sounding brass,  
or like cymbal. And though I have  
understand all  
and though

61

# Table of Contents

A LETTER FROM BISHOP ANDREW ASBIL	3
HOW DID WE GET HERE?	5
MARRIAGE: AN HONOURABLE ESTATE	8
<i>POLICY ON MARRIAGE IN THE DIOCESE OF TORONTO</i>	<i>11</i>
Q AND A	12
APPENDIX:	13
<hr/>	
THE WITNESSING AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE	14
THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE (2)	24

## A LETTER FROM BISHOP ANDREW ASBIL

# Dear Friends in Christ,

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)*

These words from 1 Corinthians 13 are amongst the most memorable in scripture. They have been the source of inspiration for poetry, hymnody and Christian teaching for centuries. The love that Paul speaks of is agape, the highest form of charity, a selfless love that describes the affection that God has for humanity and humanity for God. Though agape is an ideal expressed in Christian marriage, I am sure that Paul could not have imagined how his words would be used over and over at wedding ceremonies since then.

*And the greatest of these is love.* . . . One of the delights of ordained ministry is to welcome, to witness and to support the love that comes to rest between two people. What an honour it is for the Church to receive a couple that desires to have their union blessed by God. Preparing for the day of the wedding, navigating family traditions and expectations, supporting the dream of a lifelong relationship, and helping a couple to see that their union bears the resemblance of the bond of love between Christ and the Church (BAS 541) is a great privilege and responsibility.

Couples who seek Christian marriage in the Diocese of Toronto include couples who are not of the opposite gender. While General Synod 2019 did not approve changing the marriage canon to include same-sex<sup>1</sup> marriage, the [House of Bishops statement at GS2019](#)<sup>2</sup> sanctioned dioceses that wished to proceed with a local option to do so. In my [charge to Synod](#)<sup>3</sup> in November 2019, I expressed my intent, on Pentecost 2020, to proceed with marriage for all couples in “equal measure.” All couples seeking marriage in the Diocese will be treated with the same dignity, honour and care.

Marriage in equal measure means that our Diocese chooses to hold in creative tension two views of Holy Matrimony that are, at once, contradictory and yet legitimately supported and honoured by our bishops, clergy and laity. This place of creative tension follows a long season of study, reflection, conflict, revelation and struggle. Clergy and laity in this Diocese will be supported in holding and teaching a theology of marriage as being between a man and a woman or a theology of marriage that does not require the couple to be of opposite gender. While we are not of one mind on this matter, we are inhabiting a time of living alongside one another with mutual love, respect and affection, in spite of our differences (like every good marriage). Fostering and upholding this affection in the Diocese takes trust, discipline and mutual affection in the way we treat each other in person, on-line and in the councils of the Church.

In the service of institution (BCP 1962), the bishop says to the priest, *accept this charge, which is mine and thine, In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* Ministry is a shared proposition with the bishop, cleric and laity. Clergy will be supported and protected by their bishop in upholding and teaching either of these interpretations of Christian marriage.



Clergy are compelled to minister with integrity in the context to which they are called. Not all parishes are of one mind on the issue of Holy Matrimony. Balancing the pastoral needs of the parish and the integrity of the cleric is critical for the mission of the Church. It will be crucial for a pastoral strategy to be put into place to support the needs of a couple, the clergy and the parish when a cleric does not feel called to perform a wedding or the pastoral context of the parish makes this difficult.

*It is now a time for us as community, living under a huge canopy, to create that space for diversity where all may love one another as Christ has loved us.* The canopy that I described in my 2019 Charge is not one made of cloth or material, but rather a living cover like that of a tree. For the canopy to thrive and grow, each branch needs space, sunlight and room to reach toward heaven. Making this room and celebrating diversity is not simply a matter of inclusion: it is the Gospel in action.

This policy articulates where we are presently as a Diocese and offers a way for us to respond to the pastoral, covenantal and sacramental needs of the Church today. It is a work in progress, just as we are.

*Yours in Christ,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Andrew Toronto". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt. Rev. Andrew J. Asbil  
Bishop of Toronto

## NOTES

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- 1 When referring to historical documents, the writers have retained the original terms used to designate couples and forms of marriage. We are aware that civil definitions of gender have evolved and continue to evolve, and we have tried to use inclusive language to reflect this reality.
- 2 Available at <https://gs2019.anglican.ca/atsynod/a-message-from-hob/>
- 3 Available at <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/2019/11/08/watch-the-bishops-charge-to-synod/>

# How did we get here?

*Above, in and through all of this, and despite all our differences, we are passionately committed to walking together, protecting our common life.* General Synod 2010<sup>1</sup>

The consideration of marriage in equal measure began over 50 years ago in the Anglican Church of Canada (the Church) and in Canada. Homosexual acts between consenting adults were decriminalized in Canada in 1969.<sup>2</sup> In 1976, the House of Bishops commissioned the first task force on human sexuality.<sup>3</sup> The conversation was widely engaged at the parish level with the introduction of Hearing Diverse Voices – Seeking Common Ground, a video and study guide released in 1994.<sup>4</sup> In 2001, the first wedding ceremony for same-sex couples was performed in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

In the intervening years, the conversation has continued in parishes, dioceses and at General Synod, and is documented in [A Word to the Church](#) and [Same-Sex Unions – A Brief Survey of the Conversations](#).<sup>6</sup> It has been at times divisive and painful, both for those who held the view that marriage is between a man and a woman, and those who advocated for marriage in equal measure. The record of these conversations reveals, however, that “there has been the desire to hear all voices, and to remain integrally a Church which respects the dignity of each person and remains faithful to our calling to love one another.”<sup>7</sup>

At General Synod 2004, a resolution “affirming the integrity of committed, adult same sex relationships” was passed.<sup>8</sup> The matter of offering blessings was referred to the Primate’s Theological Commission, which produced the St. Michael Report in 2005, stating that the blessing of same-sex unions is a matter of doctrine “but not core doctrine.”<sup>9</sup>

## A generous pastoral response

In 2010, Archbishop Colin Johnson issued Pastoral Guidelines for the [Blessing of Same-Gender Commitments](#)<sup>10</sup> in the Diocese of Toronto. These guidelines acknowledged the diversity among parishes and observed that “we are called to witness to the faith in a variety of ways, and though such witness is rooted in differing interpretations and understanding of holy scripture and the tradition, they are recognizably Anglican.”

## A proposed amendment to Canon XXI – On Marriage in the Church

In 2013, General Synod passed a resolution directing the drafting of a motion to change [Canon XXI](#)<sup>11</sup> to allow for the marriage of same-sex couples in the same way as different-sex couples, and that this motion should contain a conscience clause so that “no member of the clergy, bishop, congregation or diocese should be constrained to participate in or authorize such marriage against the dictates of their conscience.”<sup>12</sup>

## Preparing for General Synod 2016

In the years leading up to General Synod 2016, our Church was called to theological reflection and conversation, which was reflected chiefly in [This Holy Estate: The Report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon to the Anglican Church of Canada](#).<sup>13</sup> The diversity of views on the question of marriage in equal measure, in light of Anglican tradition and interpretation of scripture, is evident. Faithful Anglicans expressed a diversity of views. Within our Church there are those who uphold the view that scripture is unambiguous in defining marriage as between a man and a woman.<sup>14</sup> For example, the Rev. Dr. Ronald Kydd wrote,

“There can be no question but that Jesus is, and will always be, profoundly loving and receptive. However, he does make statements which are directly relevant to the marriage of persons of the same sex, and what he says is unambiguous.”

In contrast, Chris Ambidge wrote in the submission of Integrity Canada,

“Section 1 of the preamble to Canon XXI speaks of marriage as a lifelong union in faithful love, and that the purposes of such a union are mutual fellowship, support, and comfort, the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children, and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love. That description is equally applicable to same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples, and we urge you to provide draft legislation that makes such marriages available to all couples. Then the church will have moved closer to providing all the sacraments for all the baptised.”<sup>15</sup>

When the [motion](#)<sup>16</sup> to amend the Marriage Canon XXI received first reading at General Synod 2016, it was initially announced that the motion had been narrowly defeated. The next day an audit of the recorded vote determined that the required two-thirds majority had been reached in the three orders of laity, clergy and bishops, and the motion was carried.

In two statements during General Synod, Archbishop Colin Johnson [stated](#)<sup>17</sup> that the time had come to begin working toward the provision of pastoral guidelines for same-sex marriage, and that while not all agreed with the outcome of the vote, “we continue to be united in the most central aspect of our faith – our baptism in Jesus Christ and our commitment to serve His people. Because we are united at this level, we can continue to work through these important issues together.”

With respect to the decision to exercise local option in solemnizing same-sex marriages, Chancellor of the General Synod, David Jones QC, had written in a memo of June 2016 that there is no specific prohibition of same-sex marriage in the existing Canon XXI, and that not passing the resolution was not the same as passing the opposite resolution. In the absence of prohibition, provincial synods and bishops had the authority and jurisdiction to authorize special forms of prayers, services and ceremonies for use within the province. This meant that some diocesan bishops and synods could authorize liturgies between two persons of the same sex.<sup>18</sup>

### “We are called to witness to our faith in a variety of ways”

In November of that year, Archbishop Johnson provided [guidelines](#)<sup>19</sup> to our Diocese for same-sex marriages. He said, “We are called to witness to our faith in a variety of ways, and though such witness is rooted in differing interpretations and understanding of Holy Scripture and the tradition, they are recognizably Anglican.”

At General Synod 2019, the [motion](#)<sup>20</sup> received its second reading. It passed with substantial margins in the Houses of laity and clergy but failed in the House of Bishops. The result was devastation on the floor of General Synod, and across our Church, on all sides of the issue.

What brought hope in this moment was the adoption of *A Word to the Church*, which acknowledged the possibility of holding diverse views within the unity of the Church across the Anglican Communion, and the recognition of the cost “to those people whose lives are implicated in the consequences of an ongoing discernment process.” The statement made several important affirmations, including the need for spiritual self-determination among Indigenous Anglicans: “That whatever the actions of General Synod, we affirm the right of Indigenous persons and communities to spiritual self-determination in their discernment and decisions regarding same-sex marriage.”

### Local option affirmed

*A Word to the Church* also affirmed that faithful Anglicans may hold, teach, and exercise different views of marriage which include same-sex couples. In a statement subsequent to the vote, the House of Bishops [affirmed](#)<sup>21</sup> the need for local option in the Anglican Church of Canada.

This is where we are now.

The Bishop of Toronto is exercising local option to allow marriage in equal measure. Local option “recognizes the diversity of understanding and teachings of marriage in the Anglican Church of Canada, and the need for bishops and dioceses to proceed with same-sex marriage according to their contexts and convictions.”<sup>22</sup>

Following General Synod 2019, Bishop Andrew Asbil [stated](#) on October 17, 2019, that existing pastoral guidelines for same-sex marriage would remain in effect until Pentecost 2020, when new procedures would be in place: “We are working toward the day when all may be welcomed to be married in the Church. Every couple who desires Christian marriage in the Diocese of Toronto will have that opportunity. And every priest who wants to officiate at same-sex weddings will receive permission.”<sup>23</sup>

## NOTES

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- 1 General Synod 2010 adopted a sexuality discernment statement, which acknowledged diverse pastoral practice with respect to the blessing of same-sex relationships. The full statement is available at <https://archive.anglican.ca/gc2010/atsynod/sdr-june-9-2010/index.html>.
- 2 Homosexual acts between consenting adults were decriminalized with the passing of Bill C-150, An Act to amend the Criminal Code. 1st Session, 28th Parliament. June 1969.
- 3 Various statements on human sexuality made between 1976 and 2007 are gathered at <https://www.anglican.ca/faith/focus/hs/ssbh/hsrh/>.
- 4 *Hearing Diverse Voices, Seeking Common Ground*. ABC, 1994. A collection of video clips, papers, outlines for sessions, guided discussion questions and reflections presented speakers from a range of positions. The original biblical material was revised and expanded by Professor Terry Donaldson in "Seeking to be faithful in the uneasy middle" which is available at <https://www.anglican.ca/faith/focus/hs/ssbh/hsrg/02-resources/dbre/>.
- 5 In 2001, the Rev. Brent Hawkes performed a wedding ceremony for two same-sex couples at the Metropolitan Community Church of Canada. Biographical information is available at [https://www.mcctoronto.com/team\\_member/rev-dr-brent-hawkes-c-m/](https://www.mcctoronto.com/team_member/rev-dr-brent-hawkes-c-m/).
- 6 *A Word to the Church: Considering the proposed amendment to Marriage Canon XXI*. Passed by consensus by the Council of General Synod on March 16, 2019. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/news/a-word-to-the-church-considering-the-proposed-amendment-of-marriage-canon-xxi/30023889/>. See also "Marriage Canon Dialogue" on the website of The Diocese of Toronto for relevant documentation. Available at <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/about-the-diocese/corporate-information/synod/2018-regular-synod/marriage-canon-dialogue/>.
- 7 *A Word to the Church*. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/news/a-word-to-the-church-considering-the-proposed-amendment-of-marriage-canon-xxi/30023889/>.
- 8 *General Synod 2004 Resolution A134*. Available at <http://gs2004.anglican.ca/atsynod/resolutions/A134.htm>.
- 9 *St. Michael Report. The Report of the Primate's Theological Commission of the Anglican Church of Canada on the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions*. The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, June 2005. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/StMichaelReport.pdf>.
- 10 Available at <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/uploads.php?id=4d83da6cc1ad3>.
- 11 Available at [https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/221\\_canon\\_XXI.pdf](https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/221_canon_XXI.pdf).
- 12 From the Preamble to *This Holy Estate: The Report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon to the Anglican Church of Canada* available at <https://www.anglican.ca/resources/this-holy-estate-the-report-of-the-commission-on-the-marriage-canon/>.
- 13 *This Holy Estate: The Report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon to the Anglican Church of Canada*, a summary, and other study resources are available at <https://www.anglican.ca/resources/this-holy-estate-the-report-of-the-commission-on-the-marriage-canon/>.
- 14 *This Holy Estate*, p.37.
- 15 Letter from Integrity Canada: Gay and Lesbian Anglicans & Friends to Commission on the Marriage Canon, Anglican Church of Canada. September 29, 2014. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/9-30-2014-Integrity-Canada.pdf>.
- 16 For the Minutes of General Synod 2016, see the *Convening Circular for General Synod 2019*. Available at <https://gs2019.anglican.ca/cc/>.
- 17 Archbishop Colin Johnson made two statements with respect to the Marriage Canon decision. In *July 11, 2016*, (available at <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/2016/07/11/archbishop-colin-johnson-issues-statement-on-the-marriage-canon/>) and *July 12, 2016* (available at <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/2016/07/12/archbishop-colin-johnson-releases-further-statement-on-marriage-canon-vote/>).
- 18 See *A Word to the Church*. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/news/a-word-to-the-church-considering-the-proposed-amendment-of-marriage-canon-xxi/30023889/>.
- 19 Available at [https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pastoral\\_guidelines\\_marriage\\_2016.pdf](https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/pastoral_guidelines_marriage_2016.pdf)
- 20 Available at <https://gs2019.anglican.ca/cc/resolutions/>.
- 21 Available at <https://www.vancouver.anglican.ca/news/statement-from-the-house-of-bishops>.
- 22 The Local Option, legislative procedure, and pastoral generosity in the Anglican Church of Canada, by The Rev. Dr. Jesse Zink. July 29, 2019. Available at <https://cep.anglican.ca/the-local-option-legislative-procedure-and-pastoral-generosity-in-the-anglican-church-of-canada/>.
- 23 Bishop Andrew Asbil. *Bishop Gives Update on Same-sex Marriage*. Available <https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/2019/10/17/bishop-gives-update-on-same-sex-marriage/>.

## Marriage: An Honourable Estate

The scriptures bear witness to the vital importance of marriage throughout the Judeo-Christian tradition. All of us, together, inherit a view of marriage as a “gift of God,”<sup>1</sup> a “means of grace,”<sup>2</sup> “a way of life that all should reverence,”<sup>3</sup> and a “holy estate.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time, it is clear that the way we understand marriage, and the goods that we see embodied in marriage, are shaped by views in the broader culture. This does not mean that Christian marriage is reducible to those wider cultural views. Christians have always brought their own faith to bear on the question of marriage. The relationship between faith, and the culture within which faith is lived and expressed, is a two-way street. We are citizens of our time and place. We are also citizens of the reign of God, and for us marriage is an important expression of what it means to show the loving purposes of God in our lives. As a result, we are continually receiving and reshaping understandings derived from the wider culture in the light of the Gospel. Our understanding of marriage is one example of how we witness to the transforming power of the Gospel in our time and place.

Our liturgies, our canons, and reports produced by the General Synod focus attention on how Canadian Anglicans give expression to our understanding of marriage.

The marriage canon of the Anglican Church of Canada defines marriage as:

A lifelong union in faithful love, and that marriage vows are a commitment to this union, for better or for worse, to the exclusion of all others on either side. This union is established by God’s grace when two duly qualified persons enter into a covenant of marriage in which they declare their intention of fulfilling its purposes and exchange vows to be faithful to one another until they are separated by death.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly the Church holds to a very high view of marriage. This does not mean that we do not have a similarly high view of other states of life, including singleness and celibacy. The key point being made here is that we have always understood Christian marriage to be something that goes well beyond the narrowly contractual and statutory obligations of civil marriage. Theologically, marriage has been described using two key images: as a covenant and as a sacrament.

To describe marriage as a covenant is to see it as a reflection of the covenants that God has made and continues to make with God’s people. Throughout the history of salvation, we see God committing himself in faithful love (covenanting himself) to the people of God. Marriage understood in this way is a lived commitment to, and expression of, the faithfulness of God.

The word sacrament comes from the Latin word for mystery. Most often Anglicans use the word sacrament to refer to the two sacraments that go back to the commands of Jesus – Baptism and Eucharist. These are described as outward and visible signs of the inward and invisible work of God in our lives. They are signs of the mystery of grace at work within us. To describe marriage as a sacrament is to claim that it



reflects, in a very concrete way, something of the mystery of God's grace. In particular, it reflects the relationship of Christ to us in the life of the Church. Historically, all Anglicans have used the image of covenant to describe marriage; many but not all have used the language of sacrament.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the terms we use to describe this new relationship, Christian thought has understood the loving commitment of the couple, begun and lived within the promises of Christ, as giving rise to a new unity of heart, mind, soul, and body that is so complete that the two are understood to become "one flesh".

It needs to be acknowledged that within this framework the Church has changed its views of marriage from time to time. This is reflected, for example, in the changes to the way in which the "purposes for marriage" are articulated in our marriage liturgies. Through the history of the Anglican Church of Canada, there have been four marriage rites that have had wide usage. Until 1918, the 1662 Prayer Book from the Church of England was used in Canada. In 1918, the Anglican Church of Canada (then the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada) adopted its own Prayer Book. This was revised in 1962<sup>7</sup>. In 1985, this was supplemented by the Book of Alternative Services<sup>8</sup>. The shifts in the way these liturgies describe and order the purposes of marriage illustrates the evolving views within the life of the Church.

The 1662 rite could reasonably be seen as embodying a sceptical approach to the value of human sexual intimacy.

[Marriage is] not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God; duly considering the causes for which Matrimony was ordained.

First, It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy Name.

Secondly, It was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication; that such persons as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body.

Thirdly, It was ordained for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity<sup>9</sup>.

The 1918 and 1962 Books of Common Prayer represent a significant shift in perspective and are broadly similar in their marriage rites. The most obvious difference is the removal of the negative references to human sexuality. Sexual desire needs less to be curbed, and more to be hallowed. According to this liturgy:

Matrimony was ordained for the hallowing of the union betwixt man and woman; for the procreation of children to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord; and for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, in both prosperity and adversity<sup>10</sup>.

The BCP remains normative for Anglican thought. Still, the most widely used rite today is the marriage liturgy from the BAS. This rite continues the developments that were already taking place in the earlier Prayer Book. In particular, it offers for the first time in an Anglican liturgy an explicitly positive evaluation of sexual intimacy and also has a more celebratory tone.

The union of man and woman in heart, body and mind is intended for their mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love [and that they may be blessed in the procreation, care, and upbringing of children]<sup>11</sup>.

It is important to note also that the purposes have been reordered. While the three purposes offered are broadly similar – companionship, sexuality, and procreation – they are presented in a different order and the tone is markedly different. This change in ordering would suggest that the purposes are not being offered as simply coequal. In the BAS, companionship is offered as the first purpose. Yet even here our understandings have evolved. The changing status and role of women has been reflected in the decision to remove the language of obedience from the vows, and in the decision to remove the practice of "giving the bride away". The assumptions that have marked gender roles in the past are shifting, and the understanding of marital relationships is changing with them.

Regarding sexuality, the BAS statement of the purposes of marriage is a marked departure from earlier formulations in its affirmation of the positive value of sexual pleasure in the context of stable relationships of equality and mutuality.

The bracketing of the language of procreation is particularly striking. In 1662, procreation was offered as the primary reason for marriage. In the BAS, it is bracketed. While some would still see procreation as a central characteristic of marriage, there is a growing recognition that some marriages, even as they are entered into, will not, and in some cases cannot, be characterized by procreation. Given this, some would argue that the procreative purpose of marriage is perhaps best described as one of the gifts and graces of marriage rather than one of its defining purposes. Marriages without procreative potential are still valid marriages.

There is, of course, a range of opinion as to whether marriage between persons who are not of the opposite gender can reflect the central goods and purposes of marriage so described. This is why we choose to accommodate a variety of different theologically grounded views and practices. In this context, some people will be unable to officiate at, or perhaps even participate in, liturgies for the solemnization of marriage between people who are not of the opposite gender. Others will seek to offer “marriage in equal measure”. What people on all sides need to continue to hold is the dignity and seriousness of the marriage bond and what it demands of us, and of the couples who present themselves for marriage. This will mean that where the Church does extend marriage to couples who are not of the opposite gender, both the preparation for, and the celebration of, the Christian marriage will continue to reflect the Church’s commitment to this ‘holy estate’<sup>12</sup>.

## NOTES

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- 1 Book of Alternative Services, ABC, 1985, 541.
- 2 Loc. cit.
- 3 Op. cit., 542.
- 4 Book of Common Prayer, ABC, 1962, 564.
- 5 Canon xxi. Available at [https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/221\\_canon\\_XXI.pdf](https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/221_canon_XXI.pdf).
- 6 Although the 39 Articles seems to exclude such language altogether (Article XXV) it is clearly now in fairly common use.
- 7 For clarity, the BCP received first reading in 1959 and received second reading and was published in 1962.
- 8 Despite the name Alternative, the BAS has become the primary worship text for Sunday services across the Anglican Church of Canada. Still, not all parishes use the book. Available at <https://www.anglican.ca/about/liturgicaltexts/>.
- 9 1662 Book of Common Prayer. The capitalization is as per the original text. Available <http://www.eskimo.com/~lhowell/bcp1662/occasion/marriage.html>.
- 10 BCP, 1962, 564.
- 11 BAS, 1985, 528 c.f. 541.
- 12 In keeping with the findings and recommendations of *This Holy Estate: Report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon*. ABC, 2015.

# Policy on Marriage in the Diocese of Toronto

EFFECTIVE PENTECOST 2020 (MAY 31, 2020)

1. Any priest licensed by the Bishop of Toronto and who feels called to perform marriages:
  - a. may marry any two persons who are permitted to marry pursuant to the secular laws of Ontario provided that:
    - i. the couple has a pastoral relationship with the priest; and
    - ii. at least one of the persons is baptized; and
    - iii. the couple has actively participated in preparation for Christian marriage as approved by the priest; and
    - iv. all the requirements of the civil law of Ontario for the making of a valid marriage are met;
  - b. shall not be compelled to marry any particular couple.
2. If a priest does not feel called to marry couples of the same gender but has been asked by such a couple about marriage, then that priest shall refer the couple to a priest licensed by the Bishop of Toronto who feels called to marry such couples, or shall refer them to the Diocesan Bishop of Toronto.
3. Any priest licensed by the Bishop of Toronto is permitted:
  - a. to teach and uphold a theology of marriage that requires the couple to be of opposite genders, or
  - b. to teach and uphold a theology of marriage that does not require the couple to be of opposite genders.
4. All members of the clergy and the laity shall treat with respect the diversity of views about the theology of marriage held within the Diocese of Toronto, as described in this document.

Approved:



The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil

We concur in this Policy:



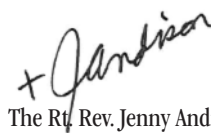
The Rt. Rev. Peter Fenty



The Rt. Rev. Riscylla Shaw



The Rt. Rev. Kevin Robertson



The Rt. Rev. Jenny Andison

## Q and A

### **Will clergy/ postulants for ministry who hold a view of marriage described above that differs from that of their bishop or that of a parish be given the same access to ministry opportunities?**

Answer: Yes. The placement of clergy to a particular charge or ministry opportunity takes careful discernment, prayer and reflection by the parish conducting the search, the cleric applying and the bishop. Most parishes in the Diocese of Toronto are a microcosm of the diversity of theology, culture and views on social issues. It is not unusual for a cleric to hold a view on matters, marriage included, that leans in the opposite direction than most of the parish in their charge.

### **Some Anglican dioceses provide alternative episcopal oversight for parishes/clergy that hold a view of marriage counter to that of their bishop/diocese. Will alternative episcopal oversight be offered in the Diocese of Toronto?**

Answer: No. The diocesan bishop will offer gracious pastoral oversight for all parishes in the Diocese of Toronto.

### **What if I am a cleric who does not feel called to marry couples who are not of the opposite gender? What am I to do when a such a couple comes to me seeking marriage?**

Answer: First, no cleric is compelled to marry any couple ([Canon XXI: I.11.d](#)) and no cleric is compelled to marry a couple that compromises their theological perspective on marriage. Second, it is critical that every couple be given access to marriage in equal measure. Therefore, a cleric who is only called to solemnize couples of opposite genders shall either refer the couple to another cleric who they know is prepared to conduct the marriage or consult with their Diocesan Bishop.

### **Under these new guidelines, will the parish have to take a vote at vestry/Advisory Committee to become a parish that endorses marriage of couples who are not of the opposite gender?**

Answer: No. The decision to marry a couple rests with the cleric, as it always has. Some parishes have been talking about the issues surrounding marriage for over 30 years, while other parishes have yet to begin the conversation. We have also learned that seeking to vote on or legislate a decision has caused deep hurt, sorrow and pain, in particular for our LGBTQ2S siblings in Christ. We encourage parishes to reflect, to pray and to support a diversity of theological approaches, including that of the cleric.

### **What Liturgies are we permitted to use?**

Answer: Because the motion to change the marriage canon (Canon XXI) did not pass second reading at GS2019, the Bishop of Toronto does not hold the authority to permit the use of the BCP or BAS marriage liturgies at weddings of couples who are not of the opposite gender. The liturgies authorized for such marriages are attached at the Appendix. These liturgies are those developed by The Episcopal Church (TEC) and amended to ensure that the marriages are legally enforceable in Ontario. We will also be developing a Toronto liturgy authorised for use.

# Appendix

# The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage

*This liturgy is copyright of the Office of the General Convention, The Episcopal Church (TEC), 2015, and amended only to ensure that the marriages are legal in Ontario.*

## Concerning the Service

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*This rite is appropriately celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist and may take place at the principal Sunday Liturgy. This rite then replaces the Ministry of the Word. A bishop or priest normally presides. Parallel texts from Enriching Our Worship 1 are included as options for elements of this rite.*

*At least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian, and the marriage shall conform to the laws of the state and canons of this church.*

*Two or more presenters, who may be friends, parents, family members, or drawn from the local assembly, may present the couple to the presider and the assembly.*

*As indicated in the opening address, the consent, and the blessing of the rings, the rite may be modified for use with a couple who have previously made a lifelong commitment to one another.*

# The Witnessing and Blessing of a Marriage

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and amended only to ensure that the marriages are legal in Ontario.*

## The Word of God

---

### GATHERING

*The couple joins the assembly.*

*A hymn of praise, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

*The Presider says the following, the People standing*

*Presider* Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*People* Blessed be God, now and forever. Amen.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider* Blessed be the one, holy, and living God.

*People* Glory to God for ever and ever.

*From Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost*

*Presider* Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*People* The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider* Alleluia. Christ is risen.

*People* Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

*Then may be said*

*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 so loves us,

*People* Let us love one another.

*The Presider shall address the assembly in these words*

Dear friends in Christ,                    *or*                    Dearly beloved, in the name of God and the Church  
we have come together today with N. N. and N. N.,  
to witness the vows they make, committing themselves to one another  
in marriage [according to the laws of the state [or civil jurisdiction of X],.  
Forsaking all others, they will bind themselves to one another  
in a covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,  
remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind, as long as they both shall live.

The lifelong commitment of marriage  
is not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly, but responsibly and with reverence.

If anyone present knows a reason why N. and N. may not lawfully marry, they must declare it now.  
N and N, if either of you knows a reason why you may not lawfully marry, you must declare it now.

Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.  
Let us also pray for the generosity  
to support them in the commitment they undertake  
and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

*Or this, for those who have previously made a lifelong commitment to one another*

Dear friends in Christ, *or* Dearly beloved, in the name of God and the Church  
we have come together today with N. N. and N. N.  
to witness the sacred vows they make this day as they are married  
[according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X], and reaffirm their commitment to one another.  
Forsaking all others, they will renew their covenant of mutual fidelity and steadfast love,  
remaining true to one another in heart, body, and mind,  
as long as they both shall live.

If anyone present knows a reason why N. and N. may not lawfully marry, they must declare it now.  
N and N, if either of you knows a reason why you may not lawfully marry, you must declare it now.

Let us pray, then, that God will give them the strength to remain steadfast in what they vow this day.  
Let us also pray for the generosity  
to support them in the commitment they undertake,  
and for the wisdom to see God at work in their life together.

## THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

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

*People* And also with you.

*Presider* Let us pray.

*The Presider says one of the following Collects*

God of abundance:  
assist by your grace N. and N.,  
whose covenant of love and fidelity we witness this day.  
Grant them your protection, that with firm resolve they may honor and keep the vows they make;  
through Jesus Christ our Savior,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*or this*

Almighty and everliving God: look tenderly upon N. and N.,  
who stand before you in the company of your Church. Let their life together bring them great joy.  
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 love and 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.

*or this*

O God, faithful and true,  
whose steadfast love endures for ever:  
we give you thanks for sustaining N. and N. in the life they share and for bringing them to this day.



Nurture them and fill them with joy in their life together, continuing the good work you have begun in them; and grant us, with them, a dwelling place eternal in the heavens where all your people will share the joy of perfect love, and where you, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, live and reign, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*or this, for those who bring children*

Holy Trinity, one God,  
three Persons perfect in unity and equal in majesty: Draw together with bonds of love and affection  
N. and N., who with their families  
seek to live in harmony and forbearance all their days, that their joining together will be to us  
a reflection of that perfect communion which is your very essence and life,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
who live and reign in glory everlasting. 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 Eucharist, the Readings of the Sunday are used, except with the permission of the Bishop.*

Ruth 1:16–17	Ecclesiastes 4:9–12
1 Samuel 18:1b, 3; 20:16–17; 42a; or 1 Samuel 18:1–4	Song of Solomon 2:10–13; 8:6–7
Romans 12:9–18	Micah 4:1–4
Corinthians 12:31b–13:13	Ephesians 3:14–21
Corinthians 5:17–20	Colossians 3:12–17
Galatians 5:14, 22–26	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.

*or* Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

*or* Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

*People* Thanks be to God.

*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, and Psalm 149:1–5.*

*Appropriate passages from the Gospels are*

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

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

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_.

*or* The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_.

*People* Glory to you, Lord Christ.

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

The Gospel of the Lord.

*People* Praise to you, Lord Christ.

## THE SERMON

### The Witnessing of the Vows and the Blessing of the Covenant

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*The couple comes before the assembly. If there is to be a presentation, the presenters stand with the couple, and the Presider says to them*

*Presider* Who presents N. and N., as they seek the blessing of God and the Church on their love and life together?

*Presenters* We do.

*Presider* Will you love, respect, and pray for N. and N., and do all in your power to stand with them in the life they will share?

*Presenters* We will.

*The Presider then addresses the couple, saying*

*Presider* N. and N., you have come before God and the Church  
to exchange and renew solemn vows with one another and to ask God's blessing.

*The Presider addresses one member of the couple, saying*

*Presider* N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

*Answer* I do.

*Presider* Will you continue to live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

*Answer* I will, with God's help.

*The Presider addresses the other member of the couple, saying*

*Presider* N., do you freely and unreservedly offer yourself to N.?

*Answer* I do.

*Presider* Will you continue to live together in faithfulness and holiness of life as long as you both shall live?

*Answer* I will, with God's help.

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

*Presider* Will all of you gathered to witness these vows do all in your power  
to uphold and honor this couple in the covenant they make?

*People* We will.

*Presider* Will you pray for them, especially in times of trouble, and celebrate with them in times of joy?

*People* We will.

## THE PRAYERS

*The Presider then introduces the prayers*

*Presider* Then 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.*

*Adaptations or insertions may be made to the form that follows. 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;  
Loving God,                      or                      Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For a spirit of loving-kindness to shelter them all their days;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For friends to support them and communities to enfold them;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For peace in their home and love in their family;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the grace and wisdom to care for the children you entrust to them [or may entrust to them];  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the honesty to acknowledge when they hurt each other, and the humility to seek each other's forgiveness and yours;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the outpouring of your love through their work and witness;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For the strength to keep the vows each of us has made;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*The leader may add one or more of the following biddings*

*Leader* For all who have been reborn and made new in the waters of Baptism;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who lead and serve in communities of faith;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who seek justice, peace, and concord among nations;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For those who are sick or suffering, homeless or poor;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For victims of violence and those who inflict it;  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

*Leader* For communion with all who have died [especially those whom we remember this day: ];  
Loving God,                    *or*                    Lord, in your mercy,

*People* Hear our prayer.

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

*Presider* 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.  
Strengthen them as they share in the saving work of Jesus, and bring about for them and for all you have created  
the fullness of life he promised,  
who now lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

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

*Leader* As our Savior Christ has taught us,  
we now pray,

*People and Leader*

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.

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

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,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## The Marriage

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*The People sit. 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*

In the name of God,  
I, N., give myself to you, N., and take you to myself.  
I will support and care for you by the grace of God: in times of sickness, in times of health.  
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: in times of anguish, in times of joy,  
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

*or this*

In the name of God,  
I, N., give myself to you, N., and take you to myself.  
I will support and care for you:  
in times of sickness, in times of health. I will hold and cherish you:  
in times of plenty, in times of want. I will honor and love you:  
in times of anguish, in times of joy,  
forsaking all others, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

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

*Presider* 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., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow,  
and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you,  
in the name of God.                      or                      in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*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 Presider saying*

*Presider* Let us pray.  
By the rings which they have worn, faithful God,  
N. and N. have shown to one another and the world their love and faithfulness.  
Bless now these rings, that from this day forward  
they may be signs of the vows N. and N. have exchanged in your presence and in the communion of your Church,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## PRONOUNCEMENT

*The Presider joins the right hands of the couple and says*

*Presider* Now that N. and N. have exchanged vows of love and fidelity in the presence of God and the Church,  
I pronounce that they are  
married [according to the laws of the state or civil jurisdiction of X].  
and bound to one another  
as long as they both shall live. Amen.

## BLESSING OF THE COUPLE

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

*Presider* 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.  
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.

*The Presider continues with one of the following*

*Presider* God the Father,  
God the Son,  
God the Holy Spirit,  
bless, preserve, and keep you,  
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace, that you may please God in body and soul.  
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,  
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

or this

*Presider* God, the holy and undivided Trinity, bless, preserve, and keep you,  
and mercifully grant you rich and boundless grace, that you may please God in body and soul.  
God make you a sign of the loving-kindness and steadfast fidelity manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior,  
and bring you at last to the delight of the heavenly banquet, where he lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

## THE PEACE

*The Presider bids the Peace.*

*Presider* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* And also with you.

*In place of the above may be said*

*Presider* The peace of Christ be always with you.

*People* And also with you.

*The liturgy continues with the Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is not celebrated, the Presider blesses the people. The Deacon, or in the absence of a Deacon, the Priest, dismisses them.*

## 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 said*

*Presider* 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 postcommunion prayer may be said*

*Presider* God our strength and joy,  
we thank you for the communion of our life together,  
for the example of holy love that you give us in N. and N.,  
and for the Sacrament of the Body and Blood  
of our Savior Jesus Christ.  
Grant that 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.



# The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (2)

*This liturgy is copyright of the Office of the General Convention, The Episcopal Church (TEC), 2015, and amended only to ensure that the marriages are legal in Ontario.*

*Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer 1979*

## Concerning the Service

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*At least one of the parties must be a baptized Christian; the ceremony must be attested by at least two witnesses; and the marriage must conform to the laws of the State.*

*A priest or a bishop normally presides at the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, because such ministers alone have the function of pronouncing the nuptial blessing, and of celebrating the Holy Eucharist.*

*When both a bishop and a priest are present and officiating, the bishop should pronounce the blessing and preside at the Eucharist.*

*A deacon, or an assisting priest, may deliver the charge, ask for the Declaration of Consent, read the Gospel, and perform other assisting functions at the Eucharist.*

*Where it is permitted by civil law that deacons may perform marriages, and no priest or bishop is available, a deacon may use the service which follows, omitting the nuptial blessing which follows The Prayers.*

*It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons.*

*In the opening exhortation (at the symbol of N. N.), the full names of the persons to be married are declared. Subsequently, only their Christian names are used.*



# The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (2)

*This liturgy is copyright of the Office of the General Convention, The Episcopal Church (TEC), 2015, and amended only to ensure that the marriages are legal in Ontario.*

*At the time appointed, the persons to be married, with their witnesses, assemble in the church or some other appropriate place.*

*During their entrance, a hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*

*Then the Celebrant, facing the people and the persons to be married, addresses the congregation and says*

*Celebrant* Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of N. and N. in Holy Matrimony. The joining of two people in a life of mutual fidelity signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and so it is worthy of being honored among all people.

The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the gift of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

Into this holy union N. N. and N. N. now come to be joined.

If any of you can show just cause why they may not lawfully be married, speak now; or else for ever hold your peace.

*Then the Celebrant says to the persons to be married*

*Celebrant* I require and charge you both, here in the presence of God, that if either of you knows any reason why you may not be united in marriage lawfully, and in accordance with God's Word, you do now confess it.

## THE DECLARATION OF CONSENT

*The Celebrant says to one member of the couple, then to the other*

*Celebrant* N., will you have this woman/man/person to be your wife/husband/spouse; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live?

*Answer* I will.

*The Celebrant then addresses the congregation, saying*

*Celebrant* Will all of you witnessing these promises do all in your power to uphold these two persons in their marriage?

*People* We will.

*If there is to be a presentation or a giving in marriage, it takes place at this time. See Additional Directions, p. 104.*

*A hymn, psalm, or anthem may follow.*

## The Ministry of the Word

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*The Celebrant then says to the people*

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you.

*People* And also with you.

*Celebrant* Let us pray.

O gracious and everliving God, you have created humankind in your image: Look mercifully upon N. and N. who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*Then one or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. Other readings from Scripture suitable for the occasion may be used. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.*

Genesis 1:26–28 (*Male and female be created them*)

Song of Solomon 2:10–13; 8:6–7 (*Many waters cannot quench love*)

Tobit 8:5b–8 (*New English Bible*) (*That she and I may grow old together*)

1 Corinthians 13:1–13 (*Love is patient and kind*)

Ephesians 3:14–19 (*The Father from whom every family is named*)

Ephesians 5:1–2 (*Walk in love, as Christ loved us*)

Colossians 3:12–17 (*Love which binds everything together in harmony*)

1 John 4:7–16 (*Let us love one another, for love is of God*)

*Between the Readings, a psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said.*

*Appropriate psalms are Psalm 67, Psalm 127, and Psalm 128.*

*When a passage from the Gospel is to be read, all stand, and the Deacon or Minister appointed says*

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to \_\_\_\_\_.

*People* Glory to you, Lord Christ.

Matthew 5:1–10 (*The Beatitudes*)

Matthew 5:13–16 (*You are the light ... Let your light so shine*)

Matthew 7:21, 24–29 (*Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock*)

John 15:9–12 (*Love one another as I have loved you*)

*After the Gospel, the Reader says*

*Reader* The Gospel of the Lord.

*People* Praise to you, Lord Christ.

*A homily or other response to the Readings may follow.*

## The Marriage

---

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

In the Name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my wife/husband/spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

*The Priest may ask God's blessing on rings as follows*

Bless, O Lord, these rings to be signs of the vows by which N. and N. have bound themselves to each other; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The giver places the ring on the ring finger of the other's hand and says*

N., I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit [or in the Name of God].

*Then the Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple and says*

*Celebrant* Now that N. and N. have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings, I pronounce that they are wed to one another, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder.

*People* Amen.

### THE PRAYERS

*All standing, the Celebrant says*

*Celebrant* Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

*People and Celebrant*

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.

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,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

*If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.*

*The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond, saying, Amen. If there is not to be a Communion, one or more of the prayers may be omitted.*

*Leader* Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon N. and N. whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. Amen.

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. Amen.

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. Amen.

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. Amen.

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. Amen.

Bestow on them, if it is your will, the gift and heritage of children, and the grace to bring them up to know you, to love you, and to serve you. Amen.

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. Amen.

Grant that all married persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. Amen.

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, O Father, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. Amen.

## THE BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

*The People remain standing. The couple kneel, and the Priest says one of the following prayers*

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to make the way of the cross to be the way of life. We thank you, also, for consecrating the union of two people in his Name. By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing upon N. and N. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*or this*

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of marriage that in it is represented the spiritual unity between Christ and his Church: Send therefore your blessing upon these your servants, that they may so love, honor, and cherish each other in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*The couple still kneeling, the Priest adds this blessing*

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace; that you may faithfully live together in this life, and in the age to come have life everlasting. Amen.

## THE PEACE

*The Celebrant may say to the People*

*Celebrant* The peace of the Lord be always with you.

*People* And also with you.

*The newly married couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.*

*When Communion is not to follow, the wedding party leaves the church. A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.*







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