

CHOICES FOR THE SERVICE OF WORSHIP CELEBRATING YOUR MARRIAGE

January, 2013

Greeting *(please choose 1, or a combination)*

1. May God who gives life to all creation and hears all our prayers be with us as we gather now to celebrate this happy occasion of the marriage of _____ and _____.
2. On behalf of the people of _____ United Church, I welcome you to this joyous celebration: the marriage of _____ and _____.
3. Welcome to all of you, and especially to _____ and _____ on this joyful occasion. This is a holy time; this place is sacred; God is here. We know this because God is love, and wherever true love is, God is present. Let's come together now in joy and in hope.
4. Welcome. A wedding is a wonderful occasion, filled with hopes and dreams and excitement. Today we gather here to celebrate the love that _____ and _____ have for each other; and to recognize and witness their decision to journey forward as marriage partners. May God bless each of us in this celebration.

Statement of Purpose *(please choose 1)*

1. We are gathered here in God's presence to witness the covenant of marriage of _____ and _____, and to ask God to bless them. By our presence we accept responsibility for supporting them in this new relationship they are about to enter. In the coming years, we are called to rejoice in their happiness, to be patient when they make mistakes, to help them in times of trouble, and to remember them in our prayers. Let's enter into this celebration, confident that through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us now, and always.

2. A covenant is a whole-hearted commitment to the other, whatever the future may bring. The Bible teaches us that God makes a covenant with the people and never abandons them. God seals and renews that covenant with us in Jesus the Christ, whose love is our model of love. Making a covenant is the highest expression of loving commitment, not to be undertaken carelessly, but reverently and with joy. Let us then enter into this celebration, confident that through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us now and always.

3. The scriptures teach us that a relationship of committed love is a gift of God's grace; an image of God's love; and a sign of God's new community in Christ.
 _____ and _____: your covenant in marriage joins you for life in a relationship so intimate that it profoundly affects your whole being. It offers you the promise of a love that is true and mature. Such love requires that you commit your lives to one another freely and without reserve, for the sake of a deeper and wider life together. Seek to become one in mind and heart as well as one in body. Trust in the living Spirit, who will guide and support you on your way.

4. We have gathered here to celebrate the holy union of _____ and _____. A covenant of life-long fidelity is the promise of hope between two people who love each other, who trust that love, and who wish to share the future together. Such a covenant enables two people to share their desires, longings, dreams, and memories, and help each other through their uncertainties. It provides the encouragement to commit more and more deeply to one another. [United as one, the two may provide the love and support in which children grow and flourish.] Here in the presence of God we affirm _____ and _____ in their relationship as they begin their covenanted union with each other [accompanied by their children.]

5. We are gathered here to celebrate the love of _____ and _____ and to ask God to bless their vows to each other.

6. One partner says: We stand here today in the presence of people from many places on our journey. You are the people who have been family for us. We rejoice that you have come to witness this beginning of a new family.

The other partner says: We have invited this community of friends and family together to celebrate the beginning of a new stage in our journey. We are here to make a covenant together.

The congregation responds: **We rejoice with you in this celebration. We have loved and valued you separately. We will continue to love and value you in your marriage.**

7. Friends, we are gathered here in the presence of God to witness the exchange of vows between _____ and _____, and to ask God to bless them. God created us to be in relationship with one another and with all of creation. Today we celebrate the love between these two people. We affirm the joy and freedom of lifelong union. We rejoice in the healing and new life we know even in the midst of our frailties and failures.
Trusting God's promise to be with us, may our hearts be open to God, and to one another, in faithfulness and in hope.

8. Marriage is a gift of God, a sign of God's grace--a means by which we live in partnership and covenant with one another.
In marriage two people give themselves to each other to care for each other in good times and bad. They are linked to each other's families, and they begin a new life together in community. It is a way of life that all should respect and none should lightly undertake. Marriage holds out for us all the vision and the hope of a relationship founded on commitment and mutual support, fidelity and love, justice and compassion.

Opening Prayer *(please include at least one prayer in this service, chosen from here or later in the service)*

1. O God, creator and lover of the world, we offer you our lives, our words and deeds, our hopes and fears, and our love for each other. Accept us as we are. Make us all that we can be. And by the power of your Spirit, enable us to be a sign of your love in the world. Amen.

Remembrances and Acknowledgements *(remembrances of those who are unable to attend, or who have died may be included here)*

Question of Impediment *(please choose one)*

1. _____ and _____ have you come here freely and without reservation to join together lawfully in marriage? **I have.**
2. _____ and _____ if either of you knows of any lawful impediment why you may not be married, I charge you before God, the Searcher of all hearts, to declare it.
3. These two persons are here to become one in a holy union of mind and heart, body and soul. _____ and _____, have you come here freely, and without reservation, to join together in this covenant? **I have.**

Declaration of Intent (*please choose one*)

1. _____, will you have _____ to be your husband/wife, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honour, and keep him/her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others be faithful to him/her as long as you both shall live? **I will.**
2. _____, will you take _____ to be your wife/husband? Will you share her/his joys and burdens? Will you be honest with her/him and be faithful to her/him always, as long as you both lie? **I will.**
3. _____, will you be _____'s husband/wife for life? Will you stand by her/him no matter what happens; will you respect her/him, seek to understand her/his needs, and welcome her/his love all the days of your life? **I will.**
4. _____, will you have _____ to be your husband/wife, and will you love him/her faithfully as long as you both shall live? **I will.**

Promises and Blessings by Family and Friends (*optional*)

1. *to the families*

Do you, the families of _____ and _____ give your love and blessing to this new family? **We do.**

to the children of the couple

Will you honour your parent in this marriage, and will you welcome _____ as a new member of your family? **I/We will.**

to the congregation

Will all of you, by God's grace, do everything in your power to uphold and care for these two persons in their life together. **We will.**

2. *to the families*

Do you, the families of _____ and _____ give them your blessing and promise to uphold and care for them in their marriage? **We do.**

to the congregation

Do you the friends of _____ and _____, give them your blessing and promise to support and honour them in their marriage? **We do.**

3. *to the parents of the couple*

Will you bless your children in this new relationship? **We will. May you be blessed with a rich and full life together.**

4. *each parent says to his/her child(ren)*

_____, I promise that my love and care for you will continue unchanged, as strong as ever.

each parent says to the other's child(ren)

_____, I promise to welcome you into my life, to respect you and honour who you are, to support _____ as your mother/father, to care for you, and allow you to care for me.

the other's child(ren) respond

_____, I/we promise to welcome you into my/our life, to respect you and honour who you are, to support you as my/our mother's/father's partner, to care for you, and allow you to care for me/us

The couple and children may say together

We make these promises, trusting not only in our own strength, but also in the strength of God's love.

5. *to the congregation*

You have been invited here to witness this covenant: will you support _____ and _____ and their child(ren) with you love, care, and friendship in the years to come. **We will.**

A TOKEN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE PROMISES (EG. RING, NECKLACE, ETC.) MAY BE GIVEN

6. *to the children*

_____, you are entering a new family. Will you give to the members of this family your trust, love and affection? **I will.**

to the couple

_____ and _____, will you be faithful and loving parents to _____?

We will.

to the families of the couple

The covenant between _____ and _____ unites their families, and creates a new one. Do you who represent their families rejoice in their union, and pray God's blessing upon them. **We do.**

to the congregation

Will you honour the vows of commitment _____ and _____ make today? **We will.**

Prayer Before the Exchange of Vows (*please include at least one prayer in this service*)

1. Loving God, we acknowledge that only your love, grace, and blessing can give us peace and serenity in our marriage. Standing here today, these two people entrust to your care their will, their lives, and their marriage. Bless them and fill them with your Spirit as they now make their promises. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
2. Eternal God, Creator and Sustainer of us all, give your grace to _____ and _____ as now they make their vows to each other. Grant that in the years ahead they may be faithful to these vows, and that in the strength of your Spirit, they may grow together in love, joy and peace. Amen.
3. Let us pray for _____ and _____ as they make their vows. Gracious God, from the beginning you made us to live in a loving relationship with each other. Fill _____ and _____ with your Spirit, as in your name they pledge themselves to one another in vows of love and faithfulness. Let your love be in them, as their hope is in you. Amen.
4. Loving and beloved God, we pray for the presence of your Spirit with _____ and _____. Fill their hearts with sincerity and truth as they enter this solemn covenant. Amen.

Vows (*please choose one*)

1. _____ I choose you to be my husband/wife, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

2. In the presence of God and before these witnesses, I _____ take you _____ to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse; for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health; in joy and in sorrow; to love and to cherish, and to be faithful to you alone, as long as we both shall live.
3. _____ I choose you to be my wife/husband: to laugh with you in joy; to grieve with you in sorrow; to grow with you in love, [to love your child(ren) as you do,] serving one another and our world in peace and hope, as long as we both shall live.
4. _____ I choose you to be my wife/husband. All that I have, I offer you; what you have to give, I gladly receive; wherever you go, I will go. You are my love. God keep me true to you always.
5. I take you, _____, to be my partner and I promise you these things: I will be faithful to you and honest with you. I will respect you, trust you, help you, listen to you, and care for you. I will share my life with you in plenty and in want. I will forgive you as we have been forgiven, and I will try with you to better understand ourselves, the world, and God--so that together we may serve God and others forever.
6. _____ I commit myself, body and soul, to you. I promise to share my life with you whatever the future brings. I promise to be honest with you; to listen to you attentively; and to honour you in my heart and before the world. I promise to cherish you; to seek your welfare in all things, and to pray for you. I offer myself to be your husband/wife, as God is my witness.
7. I _____ take you _____ to be my husband/wife, knowing in my heart that you will be my constant friend and my one true love. On this special day, I give to you in the presence of God and our family and friends, my sacred promise to stay by your side as your faithful wife/husband: in sickness and in health; in joy and in sorrow; through the good times and the bad. I promise to love you unconditionally, honour and respect you, to always put our family first and to be yours and yours alone. I promise to comfort you in times of distress; encourage you to achieve all of your goals; laugh with you and

cry with you; grow with you in mind and spirit; and, always be open and honest with you and cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

8. *for the renewal of vows*

_____, I am blessed to be your husband/wife, and I promise anew to love and sustain you in the covenant of marriage; in sickness and in health; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

Prayer for Rings *(optional)*

1. Bless, O Lord, these rings; ;may those who wear them live in love and fidelity, and continue in your service all the days of their lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
2. Lord, bless the giving of these rings. Grant that those who wear them may have an abiding faith in each other. May they do your will and live together in peace and love, sharing in their joys and their fears, and each, with patience and trust, giving the other room to grow in freedom and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
3. The ring is a symbol of covenant love. It has no beginning and no end, like God's embrace of unending love.
Bless O God the giving of these rings, that _____ and _____ may know the presence and power of your love and their love for one another. Amen.

Exchange of Rings *(please choose one)*

1. _____ I give you this ring as a sign of the covenant we have made today.
2. I give you this ring that you may wear it as a symbol of the vows we have made this day.
3. May the circle of these rings remind you of the love which encircles you today and always. May God bless these rings and those who wear them. Amen.
I give you this ring as a sign of my love and the vows we made this day.
4. The circle of these rings is a symbol of God, of wholeness, perfection and peace. These rings are a symbol of the covenant in which your two

lies are now joined in an unbroken circle.

I give you this ring as a sign of my loving commitment, and a reminder of the vows we have made today.

5. This ring is a sign of all that I am and all that I have. Receive and treasure it as a token and pledge of the love that I have for you.
6. _____ I give you this ring as a symbol of the vows we have made this day. Wear it as a symbol of our covenant.

Declaration *(please choose one)*

1. Now that _____ and _____ have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands and the giving of rings, I announce to you that they are husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate.
2. Forasmuch as _____ and _____ have made this covenant of marriage before God and in this company, I declare them to be husband and wife, 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.
3. In the presence of God and before all of us here, _____ and _____ have made solemn vows of love and faithfulness. They have sealed their covenant with the giving of rings and a kiss. Therefore I declare them to be husband and wife.

Blessing of the Couple *(please choose one)*

1. _____ and _____ : the Lord bless and sustain you, that you may please God in body and spirit and grow together in love all the days of your life.
2. _____ and _____ : may God bless you. May you grow in love, always delighting in one another, and remaining faithful to life's end. May the grace of Christ attend you, the love of God surround you, and the HOly Spirit keep you, now and forever. Amen.
3. _____ and _____ : may there be truth and understanding between you. May you enjoy length of days, fulfillment of

hopes, and peace and contentment of mind. May God bless and keep you always. Amen.

4. _____ and _____ : may your commitment in love bring joy to your hearts, rejoicing to your community, and comfort to all. May God bless you and keep you. May God smile on you and give you peace. Amen.

Lighting the Unity Candle *(optional)*

1. _____ and _____, you are here today to unite your lives in loving commitment. You have come from separate backgrounds, with your own unique personalities, strengths, and needs. The two candles represent your separate lives. Together you light the centre candle, as a sign of unity and commitment. Our hope is that you will show human love at its fullest, and that your relationship will equip both of you to bring love and compassion to each other and the world.
2. In a true commitment, neither of the partners is diminished, but both continue to grow in the warmth of their love for one another, rejoicing in each other's strength and independence. Their union kindles a new light in the world, the light of their love. May God bless this love as long as you both shall live.
3. The candles burning here represent the families and the love that have nurtured _____ and _____ to this day. The candle they now light together represents their unique love and the union they now share.

Closing Prayer

1. Blessed are you, Creator of the universe. In your great love you created us in your image, and called us into relationships of love and faithfulness. You sent Jesus the Christ to us, making your love visible in him. Send your Holy Spirit to pour out the abundance of your blessing on _____ and _____. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and their sorrows. Make their home a haven of 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 today and everyday. Amen.

2. O God, Lord of life and love eternal, we thank you for the gift of loving faithfulness, and today we bless you for the joy which _____ and _____ have found in each other. Gracious God, grant that _____ and _____ may live together in unity and love all the days of their life. Strengthen them to face whatever struggles come their way, and give them compassion for each other and for the world. Look in favour upon all our homes, sheltering one, and defend them against any evil from within or without. May each one of us always look to the good of others in word and in deed, and grow in grace daily. Amen.
3. Gracious God, we pray for _____ and _____ and give thanks that you have brought them together in this holy union. We thank you for those whose love has led them to this day of commitment, especially for their parents and friends [and for their children _____]--those here today and those with us in spirit. Help _____ and _____ to grow together in faithfulness and honesty; in mutual support and patience; [and to be wise and loving parents]. Be with them in their work; renew them in their leisure. Make their life together a sign of your love in this broken world. May forgiveness heal injury and joy overcome sorrow. May they welcome into their home both friends and strangers, always reflecting Christ's love for all people. In all their future together may they know joy in each other, and grow always through the love they share. Amen.
4. Spirit of God, you have given us life and the grace of human love that draws us to each other. Today we pray for _____ and _____ in their life together. We are thankful for the joy they find in each other, and for the hope they have expressed today in their vows. May they always be strengthened to keep these vows; to cherish the life they share; and to honour each other in love. We pray that _____ and _____ will build a home together to withstand every storm, a place of warmth and welcome, where all may see the strength and beauty of their love. Bless, O God, all our homes and families; shield them from turmoil and threat, and make them places of mutual encouragement and support. We pray for all who struggle to maintain relationships in the midst of trouble, and in the face of indifference and hostility. O God, whose name is love, make us agents of love in a hurting world, that all may know your embrace. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

5. Blessed are you, Creator of the universe. In your great love you created us in your image, and called us to relationships of love and faithfulness. You sent Jesus Christ to us, making your love visible in him, to bring new life to the world. Send your HOly Spirit to pour out the abundance of your blessing on _____ and _____, who have this day given themselves to each other in a covenant of marriage. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in sleeping and in waking; in joy and in sorrow; in life and in death. Make their home a haven of 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 so that all may see in their lives together a vision of your kingdom to come. Through your son, Jesus the Christ, we pray these things. Amen.
6. Gracious God, we pray for _____ and _____ and give thanks that in your love, you have brought them together. We thank you for all whose love has led them to this day of commitment, especially for their parents and close friends, those here today, and those unable to be in our midst. Help them O God, to grow together in faithfulness and honesty, in mutual trust and patience. May their life together be a sign of your love in the broken world where forgiveness may heal injury; and joy triumph over sorrow. Be with them in their work, and renew them in their leisure. May they welcome into their home friends and strangers and so reflect Christ's love for all people. May those who have witnessed the covenant made this day find their own relationships strengthened, and faith in your love renewed. Give each and every one of us the strength to work with you and with each other in building a world where love can live and reign. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.
7. Faithful God, source of all love, pour out your blessing on _____ and _____, that they may faithfully live together to the end of their lives; that they may be patient and gentle, ready to trust each other; that they may face together the challenges of the future together. May they always give thanks for the gift of each other. Be with them in hardship or in happiness. Pour out your blessing on _____ and _____ that they may be strengthened in every time of trouble to bear each other's burdens, to recognize and acknowledge their faults, to ask each other's forgiveness, and to know your mercy and love. May

their home be a place of peace and welcome, and its happiness freely shared. We pray through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Blessings (*please choose one*)

1. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine on you and be gracious to you. May God look on you with favour and give you peace. Amen.
2. The grace of Christ attend you; the love of God surround you; and the Holy Spirit keep you. Amen.
3. Go forth in the love of God; go forth in hope and joy, knowing that God is with you. And the blessing of God: Creator, Christ and Spirit, be with you, and remain with you always. Amen.
4. As Sarah laughed; as David danced, so let us startle the world with the joy of hope and peace. Amen.
5. May God bless you and keep you; may God grant you joy and long life; go in peace; serve the world in love. Amen.

Presentation of the Couple (*please choose one*)

1. Greet _____ and _____ who now begin a new life together.
2. Will you join me in greeting _____ and _____ [and their children _____ and _____] as they begin a new life together.
3. The covenant has been made, and we are the witnesses. _____ and _____ are now united as husband and wife. Let's express our joy as we greet them with applause.

**ORDER OF
SERVICE OF MARRIAGE**

**(items in brackets are optional) and others are required
please choose at least 1 prayer and 1 Bible reading**

(Lighting of Family Candles)

Processional

Greeting

Statement of Purpose

Question of Impediment

Declaration of Intent

(Promises and Blessings by Family)

Bible Reading

Prayer

Exchange of Vows

Prayer for Rings

Exchange of Rings

Declaration of Marriage

Kiss

Blessing of the Couple

(Lighting of the Unity Candle)

Prayer

Blessings

Signing of Documents

Presentation of Couple

Recessional