

A SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE I

This service of Christian marriage is found in UMH 864-69. It is provided for couples who wish to solemnize their marriage in a service of Christian worship, parallel in its structure to the Sunday service, which includes the proclamation of the Word with prayer and praise. Christian marriage is proclaimed as a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant. Everything about the service is designed to witness that this is a Christian marriage.

Both words and actions consistently reflect the belief that husband and wife are equal partners in Christian marriage and that they are entering into the marriage of their own volition.

ENTRANCE

The congregation may participate by using A Service of Christian Marriage in UMH 864.

GATHERING

While the people gather, instrumental or vocal music may be offered.

Here and throughout the service, the use of music appropriate for Christian worship is strongly encouraged.

During the entrance of the wedding party, there may be instrumental music or a hymn, a psalm, a canticle, or an anthem. The congregation may be invited to stand. The following processional hymns in UMH are suggested:

- 166 All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King
Divine
- 559 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation
- 475 Come Down, O Love Divine
- 61 Come, Thou Almighty King
- 732 Come, We That Love the Lord
- 111 How Can We Name a Love
- 644 Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring
- 89 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- 93 Let All the World in Every Corner Sing
- 117 O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 66 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
- 96 Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above
- 139 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
- 126 Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
- 90 Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones

The woman and the man, entering separately or together, now come forward with members of the wedding party. The woman and the man may be escorted by representatives of their families until they have reached the front of the church, or through the Response of the Families, at which time their escorts are seated.

GREETING

Pastor to people:

Friends, we are gathered together in the sight of God
to witness and bless the joining together of Name and Name
in Christian marriage.

The covenant of marriage was established by God,
who created us male and female for each other.

With his presence and power

Jesus graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee,
and in his sacrificial love

gave us the example for the love of husband and wife.

Name and Name come to give themselves to one another
in this holy covenant.

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

DECLARATION BY THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

Pastor to the persons who are to marry:

I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people,
to declare your intention

to enter into union with each other

through the grace of Jesus Christ,

who calls you into union with himself

as acknowledged in your baptism.

Pastor to the woman:

Name, will you have Name to be your husband,
to live together in holy marriage?

Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him,
in sickness and in health,

and forsaking all others, be faithful to him
as long as you both shall live?

Woman: I will.

Pastor to the man:

Name, will you have Name to be your wife,
to live together in holy marriage?

Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her,
in sickness and in health,

and forsaking all others, be faithful to her
as long as you both shall live?

Man: I will.

RESPONSE OF THE FAMILIES AND PEOPLE

Pastor to people:

The marriage of Name and Name unites their families
and creates a new one.
They ask for your blessing.

Parents and other representatives of the families may respond in one of the following ways:

We rejoice in your union,
and pray God's blessing upon you.

or, in reply to the pastor's question:

Do you who represent their families
rejoice in their union
and pray God's blessing upon them?

We do.

or, children of the couple may repeat these or similar words, prompted line by line, by the pastor:

We love both of you.
We bless your marriage.
Together we will be a family.

If the woman and the man have been escorted by representatives of their families, their escorts, having blessed the marriage in the name of their families, may be seated.

Pastor to people:

Will all of you, by God's grace,
do everything in your power
to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will.

PRAYER *

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

God of all peoples,
you are the true light illumining everyone.
You show us the way, the truth, and the life.
You love us even when we are disobedient.
You sustain us with your Holy Spirit.
We rejoice in your life in the midst of our lives.
We praise you for your presence with us,
and especially in this act of solemn covenant;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

A hymn, psalm, canticle, anthem, or other music may be offered before or after the readings. The congregation may be invited to stand.

Suggested Scripture Lessons

Genesis 1:26-28,31a The creation of man and woman
Song of Solomon 2:10-14, 16a ; 8:6-7 Love is strong as death.
Isaiah 43:1-7 You are precious in God's eyes.
Isaiah 55:10-13 You shall go out in joy.
Isaiah 61:10-62:3 Rejoice in the Lord.
Isaiah 63:7-9 The steadfast love of the Lord
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 The life of a Christian
1 Corinthians 13 The greatest of these is love.
2 Corinthians 5:14-17 In Christ we are a new creation.
Ephesians 2:4-10 God's love for us
Ephesians 4:1-6 Called to the one hope
Ephesians 4:25-5:2 Members one of another
Philippians 2:1-2 The Christlike spirit
Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord.
Colossians 3:12-17 Live in love and thanksgiving.
1 John 3:18-24 Love one another.
1 John 4:7-16 God is love.
Revelation 19:1, 5-9a The wedding feast of the Lamb
Matthew 5:1-10 The Beatitudes
Matthew 7:21, 24-27 A house built upon a rock
Matthew 22:35-40 Love, the greatest commandment
Mark 2:18-22 Joy in Christ as at a wedding
Mark 10:42-45 True greatness
John 2:1-11 The marriage feast of Cana
John 15:9-17 Remain in Christ's love.

Suggested Hymns from UMH

642 As Man and Woman We Were Made
451 Be Thou My Vision
158 Come, Christians, Join to Sing
164 Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life
695 O Lord, My Church and Home
Combine
645 O Perfect Love
408 The Gift of Love
138 The King of Love My Shepherd Is
643 When Love Is Found
549 Where Charity and Love Prevail
647 Your Love, O God, Has Called
Us Here

Suggested Psalms and Canticle

23 (UMH 128, 136-38, 518, 754) The Lord is my shepherd.
33 (UMH 767) Rejoice in the Lord.
34 (UMH 769) I will bless the Lord.

37 (UMH 772) Trust in the Lord and do good.
67 (UMH 791) May God be gracious to us.
100 (UMH 74, 75, 821) Make a joyful noise to the Lord.
103 (UMH 139, 824) Bless the Lord, O my soul.
112 (UMH 833) Happy are those who fear the Lord.
145 (UMH 857) The Lord is gracious.
148 (UMH 861) Praise the Lord from the heavens.
150 (UMH 96, 139, 862) Praise the Lord.
Canticle of Love (UMH 646) Two shall become one in love.

SERMON OR OTHER WITNESS TO CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

INTERCESSORY PRAYER *

An extemporaneous prayer may be offered, or the following may be prayed by the pastor or by all:

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all life,
Author of salvation, Giver of all grace:
Bless and sanctify with your Holy Spirit
Name and Name, who come now to join in marriage.
Grant that they may give their vows to each other
in the strength of your steadfast love.
Enable them to grow in love and peace
with you and with one another all their days,
that they may reach out
in concern and service to the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS

The woman and man face each other, joining hands. The pastor may prompt them, line by line.

Man to woman:

In the name of God,
I, Name, take you, Name, to be my wife,
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.

Woman to man:

In the name of God,
I, Name, take you, Name, to be my husband,
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.

In place of the vows given above, one of the following may be used:

I take you, Name, to be my wife (husband),
and I promise before God and all who are present here
to be your loving and faithful husband (wife)
as long as we both shall live.
I will serve you with tenderness and respect,
and encourage you to develop God's gifts in you.

Name, in the name of God,
I take you to be my husband (wife) from this time onward,
to join with you and to share all that is to come,
to give and to receive,
to speak and to listen,
to inspire and to respond,
and in all our life together
to be loyal to you with my whole being,
as long as we both shall live.

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The exchange of rings is optional. Other tangible symbols may be given in addition to, or instead of, rings.

The pastor, taking the rings, may say one of the following:

These rings (symbols)
are the outward and visible sign
of an inward and spiritual grace,
signifying to us the union
between Jesus Christ and his Church.

These rings (symbols)
are the outward and visible sign
of an inward and spiritual grace,
signifying to all the uniting of Name and Name in holy marriage.

The pastor may bless the giving of rings or other symbols of the marriage:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings (symbols),
that they who wear them may live in your peace
and continue in your favor
all the days of their life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

While placing the ring on the third finger of the recipient's left hand, the giver may say (prompted, line by line, by the pastor):

Name, I give you this ring
as a sign 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.

If a unity candle is used, the two side candles representing the husband and wife are lighted first, and the center candle representing the marriage is lighted at this or some later point in the service. The side candles are not extinguished because both husband and wife retain their personal identities.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

The wife and husband join hands. The pastor may place a hand on their joined hands.

Pastor to husband and wife:

You have declared your consent and vows
before God and this congregation.
May God confirm your covenant
and fill you both with grace.

The couple may turn and face the congregation.

Pastor to people:

Now that Name and Name
have given themselves to each other by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands,
[and the giving and receiving of rings ,]

I announce to you that they are 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. Amen.

The congregation may be invited to stand, and a doxology or other hymn may be sung. The following hymns from UMH are suggested:

139 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
408 The Gift of Love
643 When Love Is Found

Intercessions may be offered for the Church and for the world.

BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE *

The husband and wife may kneel, as the pastor prays:

O God,
you have so consecrated
the covenant of Christian marriage
that in it is represented
the covenant between Christ and his Church.
Send therefore your blessing upon Name and Name,
that they may surely keep their marriage covenant,
and so grow in love and godliness together
that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the congregation turns to A Service of Word and Table III in UMH 15, or one of the musical settings (UMH 17-25), and the service continues with the Thanksgiving and Communion (124-27). If Holy Communion is not to be celebrated, the service continues with the following Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Most gracious God,
we give you thanks for your tender love
in making us a covenant people
through our Savior Jesus Christ
and for consecrating in his name
the marriage covenant of Name and Name .
Grant that their love for each other
may reflect the love of Christ for us
and grow from strength to strength
as they faithfully serve you in the world.
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 heads.
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 lives and in their deaths.
Finally, by your grace,
bring them and all of us 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.

The Lord's Prayer, prayed by all, using one of the forms in UMH 270-71, 894-96. The wife and husband may continue to kneel.

The Dismissal with Blessing. See 127.