7.1 **DIRECTIONS FOR CONDUCTING A MARRIAGE** (2023)

**Rules**

Every Minister who marries couples needs to be thoroughly familiar with Chapter 5, “Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage”, of the *Manual of Faith and Order*, especially para 5.1-16,24-42, and to observe the rules there prescribed.

**Engagement and Banns**

It is appropriate for an engagement to be accompanied or followed by a short liturgical ceremony, if the couple so desire. This can include:

* a short prayer of praise;
* a Scripture lection, e.g. Ps. 144:17f., Hos 2:21-16, I Thess. 3:12f.; and
* a prayer of thanksgiving and of intercession such as:

O God, our Creator,

thank you for the love and trust

that (*name*) and (*name*) have come to have for each other.

Deepen that love and trust.

May all that is best in their hopes and dreams

come true for them through their faith in you

and commitment to each other.

Teach them the joy that comes from unselfish sharing,

and lead them in peace to the day of their wedding

and beyond that in their life together.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

In time past Ministers were legally required to announce banns (public notice of an intended marriage in church) on three successive Sundays, in order to give anyone who knew of any impediment the opportunity of lodging an objection. Although this requirement has fallen away, it is still appropriate for Ministers to make a practice of announcing such banns to inform the congregation of forthcoming marriages. Couples can be asked or encouraged to attend church on the Sunday(s) on which the banns are announced. They can also be asked to stand for, or after, the announcement.

It is also appropriate to pray for newly engaged couples in the Prayers of Intercession at Sunday worship.

**Counselling**

The Minister is responsible for seeing that every couple coming for marriage receives proper marriage counselling. Ministers can help one another with this or train suitable lay people to help them. FAMSA offers very good training courses for marriage counsellors and material for counselling. The 5-week Alpha Marriage Preparation Course and the 7-week Alpha Marriage Course (available from Scripture Union or the Alpha website) also provide valuable preparation for couples getting married. The video *Laugh your way to a better marriage* by Mark Gungor (available from CUM bookshops) is very helpful too. The minister should inform the couple when the counselling course is likely to end, so that they can plan their wedding date for after that.

At some point towards the end of the marriage counselling the minister should separately ask each party whether he/she is still sure about wanting to marry the other.

The couple should provide all necessary legal information in time, so that the register can be filled out before the ceremony.

**Locale**

For the marriage to be valid the ceremony has to be conducted in a place designated by the law:

***In South Africa***

A building regularly used for public worship, such as a church or synagogue, a Home Affairs office, or a “domicile” (a place of permanent residence). If the ceremony is conduc­ted anywhere else (including a restaurant, beach, open air venue etc.), the vows must be repeated and the marriage register properly signed with the witnesses present in a legally approved place. Access to it must be provided for any objector.

***In Zimbabwe***

***In Zambia***

**Impediments, Vows and Rehearsal**

The Minister should ensure beforehand that no legal impediment stands in the way of the marriage and enquire whether anyone may want to raise an objection to the marriage so that, if possible, this can be resolved before the wedding.

The Marriage Officer has in any case to call for any objections from the congregation and the couple during the ceremony and must do so in the wording laid down in the *Manual for Marriage Officers* or wording approved by the denomination and the Department of Home Affairs. The Marri­age Officer has to ask the question of each of the couple in turn.

The couple should be given an outline of the Order of the service, with the full marriage vows, well before the wedding. The vows normally conform to the officially approved vows of a denomination. If a couple insist on drafting their own vows, the minister must ensure well before the wedding that they include the brief legal formula required by the State (see the *Manual for Marriage Officers*) and are otherwise suitable. Without this inclusion the legality of the marriage can be in question.

The couple can be asked to learn the vows so as to internalize them and be able to say them by heart at the rehearsal and at the wed­ding. In that case they should be assured that the Minister will be standing by to prompt immediately, should either of them hesitate with any of the wording. Alternatively, they can repeat the vows line by line after the Minister.

Either way, the Minister should ensure at the rehearsal that both par­ties practise saying the vows loudly enough for everyone in the congregation to hear every word. At the rehearsal the couple should be told where they are to stand. Anyone else who will be participating in the service should also attend the rehearsal.

**Photographers and Videographers**

The Minister needs to make clear to the bridal couple that no photographers or videographers will be allowed to intrude on the service in any way. They must be as invisible as possible and film either from the body of the congregation or standing right against the walls on the side(s). No special floodlights or camera flashes should be allowed. It may also be necessary to request the members of the congregation before or at the beginning of the service to switch off/mute their cell-phones and not to disturb the service by standing in their pews to take photographs. One official photographer may be allowed to step forward to take a photograph during the signing of the register in church. The bride’s bouquet may then be placed on the Table for the photograph(s).

**Entry and Other Matters**

The couple should decide beforehand with the Minister how they wish to enter the church and whether they want their families involved in the service, and if so how. Options are:

* The bridegroom and bride meet with the Minister in the vestry before the service. After prayer together the couple enters the church through the main door (either together or else down separate aisles), to meet at the front. (This emphasizes that the wedding is for the couple and not just “the bride’s day”.) It then needs to be decided whether and how the parents, the bridesmaids, the flower girls and the groomsmen take part in the entry.
* The bridegroom and groomsmen meet with the Minister in the vestry beforehand and after prayer enter the church with the Minister and sit to one side in the front pew, while the Minister goes to meet the bride at the main door. The Minister greets the bridal party at the main door, prays briefly with them in the vestibule and returns to the Holy Table. The organ strikes up the tune for a wedding march or a processional hymn, and the bride enters the nave on her father's arm (or the arm of a family member/ representative), with the bridesmaid(s) and flower girls (preceding or) following her. At the front of the church the father may lift the bride’s veil and kiss her. The bridegroom meets the bride at the end of the aisle. She takes his arm, and they move to where they will stand.

The couple, or the bridegroom, should arrive early enough to check the details of the (unsigned) marriage register in the vestry before the service.

If any responses are set for the congregation to say, the versicles and responses need to be distributed in print beforehand or else be projected onto a screen in front at the right time.

*If* Holy Communion is celebrated, this follows the rite of marriage. Not only the bridal couple but all believers present should then be invited to receive the elements.

**Remarriage of Divorcees**

In the remarriage of any divorcee(s) a Minister is required pastorally to observe the rules in Chapter 5 of the *Manual* concerning such marriages, particularly para 5.6-42and to ensure that the person(s) desiring to remarry:

* sincerely repent(s) for all of his/her/their responsibility for the break-up;
* has/have received or receive(s) whatever psychological or spiritual counselling he/she/they need(s) to help him/her/them avoid the mistakes of the past; and
* has fulfilled, and will continue to fulfil, all his/her/their legal and moral obligations to his/her/their previous spouse(s) and any children they have.

The Minister also needs to ascertain whether any other Minister has declined to solemnise the proposed marriage, and if so why. It may well be advisable for the minister to contact the denomination or minister concerned for further information on this.

The remarriage of any divorcee whose former spouse is still living requires an additional section to be inserted into the Order, as indicated in it.

**Anniversaries**

A year, or every year, after the wedding a special invitation can be sent to the couple to attend church to mark the anniversary of their wedding. If they do attend, they should be specially welcomed and the anniversary mentioned during the service.

1. 7.1 ORDER FOR MARRIAGE (2018)
2. **GOD’S CALL**

Entry

Scripture Sentences

Greeting, Statement of Intent and Welcome

(Recognising absent or deceased close family members)

**THE PEOPLE’S APPROACH**

Charge concerning Lawfulness

Hymn of Praise

Prayer of Praise

(Statement concerning Divorce and Remarriage)

(Recognising any deceased spouse of either partner)

Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Grace

**GOD’S WORD**

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Lections

Sermon

**ORDINANCE OF MARRIAGE**

## [Hymn of Petition]

Prologue on Christian Marriage

[Question concerning Intent of Christian Marriage]

[Parents’ Blessing or Declaration of Support]

Prayer of Thanks and Petition

Vows

Giving of the Rings

[Lighting of Candles]

[Binding of the Hands]

Solemn Declaration of Marriage

Blessing

[Presentation of Bible]

Prayer of Petition

Signing of the Marriage Register

Introduction of the Couple and first married kiss

Hymn

**GOD’S SENDING**

Commission and Benediction

Exit

The Bible to be read from must be on the lectern or in the pulpit.

The Minister stands behind the Holy Table.

1. The bridal party stand facing the Holy Table with their backs to the congregation or, if there is enough space, in the sanctuary half-facing the congregation and half-facing the Minister. They either stand throughout the service or sit during the sermon, except that anyone who feels faint should sit. If the bride or the bridegroom finds it necessary to sit, the rest of the bridal party sits as well.
2. Some parts of the Order are optional.

# GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP

## Scripture Sentences

*The congregation is called to worship with suitable Scripture sentences.*

Unless the Lord builds the house

its builders labour in vain. *Ps.127:1 REB*

### And one of the following:

O come, let us sing to the Lord;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! *Ps.95:1f. NRSV*

*Or*

Sing to the Lord a new song;

sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, praise his name...

For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise. *Ps.96:1f.,4*

### Or

Let all the earth acclaim the Lord!

Worship the Lord in gladness;

come into his presence with singing.

Know that the Lord is God.

he made us, and we are his. *Ps.100:1-3 REB alt.*

## Greeting

Good morning/afternoon.

**Good morning/afternoon.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you**.

## Statement of Intent and Welcome

We have come together to worship God and in that context

to witness Christian marriage between (*full name*) and (*full name*),

to give thanks to God,

and to pray for God to bless their marriage and life together.

Welcome then to all who have come to worship God and

to celebrate and rejoice with (*first* n*ames).*

*The minister may invite all in the congregation briefly to greet their immediate neighbours in the pews.*

## Charge concerning Lawfulness

*The congregation is seated.*

First I am required to ask anyone present

who knows any legal reason

why *(names)* may not be joined in marriage,

to declare it now. *Pause*

I also charge you both, in the sight of God,

who knows the secrets of our hearts and is Judge of us all,

that if either of you knows any legal reason

why you may not be joined in marriage

you now confess it. *Pause*

*If any impediment is alleged, the service may not proceed unless and until it is shown to be without legal substance. The service may in that case have to be adjourned with a brief prayer.*

*Otherwise the service continues.*

# WE DRAW NEAR TO GOD

## Hymn of Praise

# Since no legal impediment has been confessed or alleged,

1. let us draw near to God by singing together…

#### Some suitable hymns are:

##### As wedding music

##### For the beauty of the earth

*Morning is broken (omit v.3)*

*My God, how wonderful you are*

*O God our help in ages past*

*O God of Jacob*

*Praise my soul the King of heaven (omit v.4)*

*Tell out, my soul*

## Prayer of Praise

*The congregation remains standing*.

We praise you, O Lord our God,

for you have created all things to your great glory.

We worship you for you made man and woman

in your own image, after your likeness,

and prepared for them an eternal destiny in your Kingdom.

We glorify you for you created gladness and joy,

celebration and feasting, pleasure and laughter,

love, peace and fellowship.

We adore you for you created courtship and marriage,

so that bride and bridegroom might delight in each other.

We bless you because you sent your only Son, Jesus Christ,

to save us from sin and redeem our love from selfishness;

and you have given us your Holy Spirit

to make us one with you and with one another,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Or*

O God, you are great beyond what we can understand or imagine.

Before the mountains were brought forth or the sea was formed,

before the sun and all the stars were fashioned,

you were God, everlasting and most high.

In wisdom you have created all things and reign over them.

In mercy you redeem us,

and in the mystery of this life you attend us.

Our thoughts may wander far from you,

and our intentions grow cold;

yet we cannot forget that our strength is in you.

Exalt your name upon our lips,

and let us praise you with gladness in our hearts

now and always,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Or*

Holy are you, great and almighty Father,

making the heavens and the earth to serve our humble needs;

Holy are you, eternal Word,

fashioning men and women in space and time

that they may become the sons and daughters of God;

Holy are you, gracious Spirit of God,

ministering to our little lives in uncountable ways

and luring us patiently by a thousand paths

to a more abundant life.

We praise you, holy and eternal God,

the Alpha and Omega of all things,

for you stand always near us, ready to help,

lest we stumble and fall.

We bless you, for seeking us yourself, by an infinite grace,

and setting us in community that we may not be alone,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**[Statement concerning Divorce and Remarriage**

Marriage is a social, civil and spiritual contract

in which a man and a woman solemnly vow

before God and human witnesses

to be joined together and remain faithful to each other for life.

Scripture makes clear, and Jesus emphasizes,

that to break such vows is a very serious matter,

and that the breakup of any marriage is a tragic failure in God’s eyes.

 When either or both of the parties to be married has/have been divorced, the congregation sits and the Minister reads the following:

The breakup of (name’s/names’) former marriage(s)

has/have therefore been addressed as a serious matter in pastoral counselling,

and (name/names) has/have given solemn assurance that he/she/they

* sincerely repent(s) the failure of his/her/their previous marriage(s),
* look(s) to God for mercy and forgiveness for that failure and
* seek(s) God’s help to forgive the past as God forgives us.**]**

**Call to Repentance**

St John declares:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,

and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just,

will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 Jn. 1:8f.

We all need God’s forgiveness because of our sins

and God’s healing for hurts in the past.

So let us now confess our sins,

in order that in the joy of God’s forgiveness

we can ask God to bless this marriage.

**Prayer of Confession**

O Lord, our lives are full of good beginnings and poor endings.

We mean well, but our good intentions too often peter out,

and the good deeds we start to do

are so often bogged down by our half-heartedness,

leaving a burden of guilt that we cannot shake off.

Deepen our sorrow that we have failed you so much, O God,

and teach us how to repent.

Open our hearts and minds to the great vision of your Kingdom,

and by your Spirit heal our hearts, so that we may be born anew.

Assure us of your grace and forgiveness,

and free us from the burdens of the past,

so that we may tread into the future lightly.

Renew our strength in your Spirit,

so that we may persevere in doing your will, even to the end;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Adapted from S.H. Miller:* Prayers for Daily Use*, p.29f., 34f., 62, 24*

*Or*

We acknowledge and confess to you,

O God, that for us love is not always easy.

We so often fail to live up to your vision and hopes for us.

We confess that we have often fallen short in our love for others,

and that we take for granted the people for whom we care most.

Forgive us, O loving God.

Open our hearts to the gift of your grace,

transform our lives by your Holy Spirit,

and teach us to love one another as you love us.

May this celebration of love and commitment give us new openness and joy in the relationships we cherish;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Or*

O Lord our God, how shall we stand before you?

In so many places and at so many times

we have turned our eyes away, lest we catch a vision of you.

We have been busy with so many things,

all without listening for your voice

or truly listening to one another’s needs.

How shall we lift up our hearts to you now?

How little we have deepened them in your truth;

how shallow they are to receive your blessing.

How shall we kneel and await your benediction?

We have run here and there, driven by haste,

hungry for reward, and all without profit or peace.

Take us again into the shelter of your loving-kindness, O Lord;

save us from ourselves, and forgive us for all our sins;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**Assurance of Grace**

Christ himself bore our sins in his body on the Cross,

so that, free from sin, we might live for righteousness;

by his wounds you have been healed. *I Pet. 2:24*

May the God of mercy, who alone can forgive us,

forgive us all our sins and set us free from them

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

Together with (*names*), therefore, we now turn from the past to make a new beginning in the grace and forgiveness of God.

# GOD SPEAKS TO US

## Prayer for Illumination

1. Let us now ask God to bless the reading and preaching
2. of God’s Word.

O Eternal God, our ears remain closed to the truth of your Word,

unless your Holy Spirit changes our hearts.

Therefore as your Word is now read and proclaimed to us,

pour out your Spirit on us, we pray,

so that we may listen with ears that are open

and hearts that are ready to hear it;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**.

*Or*

O God,

let us not be people who hear and hear but fail to understand.

But through the gift of your Holy Spirit

reveal to us the inner meaning and truth of your Word,

so that we may indeed understand and turn to you,

and learn to walk in your way and your will;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Scripture Lections

## *Suitable lections are as follows:*

## Old Testament

*Gen.1:24-28,31a*

*Gen.2:15,18-25*

*Gen.24:1f.,4,10-12,14-20,53f.*

*Prov.3:3-6*

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

*Song of Songs 2:1-13,16*

*Song of Songs 8:6f*.

## Psalm

*Ps. 128*

## Epistle

*Eph.5:1f., 21-33*

*Phil.1:9-11*

*Col.3:12-17*

1 Jn.4:7-12

## Gospel

*The congregation stands for the reading of the Gospel.*

*Matt. 7:1-5,12,21,24-27*

*Mk.10:1-9*

*Jn.2:1-11*

*Jn.15:9-14*

*The congregation sits*.

## Sermon

*The bridal parties may continue standing or may sit in the front pew.*

*A sermon of 12-15 minutes is preached.*

# THE ORDINANCE OF MARRIAGE

## Hymn of Petition

Suggested hymns are:

*Lead us, heavenly Father*

*Lord of all hopefulness*

*Brother/Sister, let me be your servant*

*Bind us together, Lord*

*Now thank we all our God.*

After the hymn the congregation sits, and the minister moves to the Table.

## Prologue on Christian Marriage

 *[If the statement on divorce and remarriage has not been used, then the following statement is read here:*

Marriage is a social, civil and spiritual contract

in which a man and a woman solemnly vow

before God and human witnesses

to be joined together and remain faithful to each other for life.

Scripture makes clear, and Jesus emphasizes,

that to break such vows is a very serious matter.

Because of this, marriage is not to be entered into lightly or thoughtlessly, but reverently and in the fear of God.]

Marriage was ordained by God for the life-long companionship, help and comfort that husband and wife ought to give each other.

The ancient story, in its symbolism, tells us that God said,

 “It is not good for the man to be alone”

and created Eve, not out of the ground like Adam,

but from a rib in his side,

so that husband and wife should be equal partners and closer and dearer to each other than anyone or anything else.

Christ blessed the wedding in Cana of Galilee by his presence;

and through the prophets and apostles the Holy Spirit declared marriage to be a likeness of God’s own covenant and union with his Bride, the People of God.

Thus God intends husband and wife

to love and remain faithful to each other always,

as God loves and remains faithful to us

despite all our sins and imperfections.

God also intends that within marriage children, who are a gift from God, should receive the necessary care, nurture, and training in what it means to know and serve God and to live a godly life.

In Christian marriage the Holy Spirit seals the covenant between a man and woman that they may live out the love, joy and peace of God.

*Or*

We have come together before God

for the solemn ceremony of Christian marriage,

and to support (*first name*)and (*first name*)

with our presence and our prayers.

This is an opportunity for all married couples here today

to renew their ownvows,

and for single people

to commit themselves to love and care for others.

God made us for one another,

and in Scripture marriage is meant to be patterned

after God’s covenant and union with the Church.

Thus at a wedding God binds two people together,

calling them to be always faithful to each other,

always sensitive to each other's needs,

always forgiving each other for Christ’s sake,

and always loving and patient with each other.

Through the help of the Holy Spirit

a married couple is able to live together in mutual love and support.

*Or*

We have come together in the sight of God and in this church

to join together this man and this woman in holy marriage.

Marriage is a sacred institution that God gave to us, and that

Christ blessed with his presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

It is also in Scripture a symbol of God’s own mystical covenant

and union with his Bride, the Church.

Marriage was ordained for three purposes:

firstly that husband and wife might become one flesh

and in the joy of their bodily union

honour the natural instincts God has implanted in us;

secondly that husband and wife might love, help and comfort

each other,

in good times and in bad, in joy and in sorrow; and

thirdly, that children might be born, nurtured with loving care

and taught to know and love God.

God, then, calls those who enter into marriage to begin

and continue in it with constant love and mutual faithfulness.

## [Question concerning Intent of Christian Marriage

*If the bridal couple are Christians the Minister may put the following question to them:*

I now ask you both:

do you wish to be joined together in Christian marriage,

to build your home upon the rock that is Jesus Christ

and together be faithful members of the Christian community?

*Bridal couple:* **With God’s help we do**.

Remember the words of St Paul:

No one can lay a foundation

other than the one that has been laid,

which is Jesus Christ. *I Cor.3:11***]**

## [Parents' Blessing or Declaration of Support

The minister may ask the parents or the families of the bridegroom and the bride to stand.

*Minister*: I now address the parents/families of (*first names*):

 do you give your blessing to this marriage?

Parents: **We do**.

Or

The bridegroom may turn to the bride’s parents (standing near the front) and thank them for bringing her up to be what she is and for being willing to accept him into their family.

The bride may then turn to the bridegroom’s parents and thank them for bringing him up to be what he is and for being willing to accept her into their family.

The minister may then ask the parents:

*Minister*: Do you, the parents of (groom *name*),pledge your loving support for his marriage to (*name*)?

*Parents*: **We do**.

*Minister*: And do you, the parents of (bride *name*),pledge your loving support for her marriage to (*name*)?

*Parents*: **We do**.

###### Or

###### The congregation being seated, the minister may say:

(*Groom name*)*’s* parents, do you pledge

that you will accept (*name*)into your family,

[pray for her] and love her as a daughter?

And (Bride *name*)*’s* parents, do you pledge

that you will accept (*name*)into your family,

[pray for him] and love him as a son?

If so, signify this by standing now. *Pause*

To signify that they too support this marriage

and want God to bless it,

will the other members of the families of the bride and bridegroom as well as their friends and all the rest of the congregation

please stand now. *Pause***]**

## Prayer of Thanks and of Petition for the Taking of the Vows

Please stand as we ask God to bless this union.

O God, we thank you for every good way

by which you have led *(name)* and *(name)*

and brought them to this day and this place.

We thank you for the love and trust they have found in each other.

We know that the bond with which they are about to be tied is much more than any mere romance;

for in your sight it should never be broken.

Therefore we pray that as they clasp their hands,

you will bind their hearts and merge their lives together.

We pray that you will teach them to trust in your grace and to abide in you.

Because without you nothing is good and nothing is lasting,

we pray that your Holy Spirit

will write on their hearts for all the years to come what they will promise now.

So may their joy be full and may they live to your glory for ever;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Or*

O God, in your providence love has drawn these two people together.

Now as they take their vows and pledge themselves to each other, grant that they may do so with their whole hearts

and that the covenant they make

may be imprinted on their minds and spirits.

And grant that your Holy Spirit may so strengthen

the bond made between them today,

that they may remain faithful and loyal to each other always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Vows

The congregation remains standing for the vows.

The bride hands her bouquet and her gloves, if she is wearing any, to her bridesmaid.

Her veil, if not lifted already earlier, is lifted now.

(*Name*) and (*name*), please now face each other,

and in solemn pledge of the vows you are about to make,

give each other your right hand.

Either the bridegroom or the bride may vow first.

And now make your vows to each other.

 **I call on God and all here present**

**to witness that I, (***forenames***), take you, (***forenames***),**

**to be my lawful wedded wife/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, cherish and honour** [*or* **protect**]**.**

**And I give you my solemn pledge before God**

**to forsake all others**

**and be joined to** [*or* **cleave to** *or* **united with**] **you only,**

**according to his holy Law,**

**until death parts us**.

Alternatively they each say the following vow:

**I call on God and all here present**

**to witness that I, (***forenames***), take you, (***forenames***),**

**whose right hand I hold,**

**to be my lawful wedded wife/husband.**

**As we stand here before God,**

**I give myself to you,**

**and I** **promise,**

**to forsake all others and be faithful to you,**

**to share my life with you,**

**to honour and cherish you,**

**to love and care for you,**

**in all the joys and the difficulties we may face,**

**as long as we both shall live.**

Or

**I call on God and all here present**

**to witness that I, (***forenames***), take you, (***forenames***),**

**whose right hand I hold,**

**to be my lawful wedded wife/husband.**

**In the presence of God, who knows our hearts,**

**I covenant to forsake all others**

**and be faithful to you always,**

**for better, for worse,**

**in wealth and in poverty,**

**in good health and in bad.**

**I will honour and respect you,**

**be open and honest with you,**

**comfort you in distress**

**and love and cherish you always,**

**as long as we both shall live.**

Note: In South Africa it is legally mandatory that wedding vows include the first four lines in the above vows.

## Giving of the Rings

The couple turn to face the minister.

As a seal and a sign of the covenant into which you have entered,

let the rings be given and received.

*The best man or ring-bearer hands the rings to the minister with both hands.*

*The following prayer may be said:*

O God, whose love toward us has always been faithful,

even when we have been faithless,

grant, we pray,

that these rings may always remind (*name*) and (*name*)

of the vows they have made to each other today

and so help to keep them faithful to each other;

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Immediately before, or while, placing the ring on each other’s fingers (the fourth finger of the left hand), the bridegroom and bride may each say:*

(*Name*), **I give you this ring as a sign and seal**

**of all that I have pledged to you today.**

*Alternatively, after both rings have been placed, the minister declares:*

The rings you now wear are symbols of the solemn covenant you have made to love each other with unbroken faithfulness.

## [Lighting the Wedding Candle

The minister may say:

These two candles on the Holy Table, burning separately, represent your two distinct lives. As you now join in marriage, these two lights merge into one light. This symbolises what the Lord meant when He said, "On this account a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall be one flesh." As you each take a candle and together light the central one, so the central candle will represent the union of your lives into one flesh. As this one light cannot be divided, let your lives be a testimony of a united Christian home. May the radiance of this one light represent your unity in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*The couple take the two lit candles, together light the central candle and then extinguish their individual candles.***]**

* 1. **[Binding of the Hands**

To symbolise the binding nature of these your vows

I wrap this stole around your clasped hands.**]**

## Solemn Declaration of Marriage

*If the binding of the hands does not take place, the couple now take each other’s right hands for the solemnisation.*

As *(name)* and (*name*) have solemnly covenanted

in the presence of God and of us as witnesses

to live together in holy wedlock,

and God has heard their vows,

I now pronounce them husband and wife,

in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**.

Therefore what God has joined together,

let no one divide or separate.

## Blessing

*The bride and bridegroom kneel [if possible], and the minister lays hands on them.*

The Lord bless you and protect you;

the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you;

the Lord look kindly upon you and give you peace. **Amen**.

*Num. 6:24-26 REB alt*

*Or*

The Lord bless you and take care of you;

the Lord be kind and gracious to you;

the Lord look on you with favour and give you peace.**Amen.**

*Num. 6:24-26 GNB*

*Or*

God guard you on every side.

God guide you in truth and peace.

God gird you with faith and love.

*The congregation may sit.*

## [Presentation of a Bible

*If a Bible is presented, the following words are used:*

*(Name)* and *(name)*, this Bible is a gift to you

from the congregation of this church.

Here is wisdom; this is the royal Law;

these are the living oracles of God.

Take it, and

on the sure foundation of its truth build your home together.**]**

## Prayer of Petition

Let us pray.

Almighty God,

by whose love the whole world was created,

and is upheld and redeemed,

we thank you now for the parents whose love and care

guided these two people to maturity

and prepared them for each other.

May they at this time find happiness in their children's joy.

(*or* May those who have passed from this life rest in your grace

and those still living find happiness in their children's joy.)

We pray for (*name*) and (*name*),

whose destinies shall now be woven of one design.

and whose perils and joys shall now be known together.

As they set out on life’s journey together,

go with them as their unseen Companion

and uphold them along the way.

Strengthen and protect them,

so that when the winds blow and the storms come,

they may be faithful to each other,

firmly keeping the vows they have made.

As out of this world's multitude each has chosen the other

to love and be loyal to,

so let the days and years now veiled by the future

deepen the joy of that choice and make it sure and steady.

Teach them to bear each other's burdens

and to be always honest and patient with each other.

Help them to be there for each other

 in times of loneliness or distress.

Guard their marriage against all that seeks to damage it.

May they know your forgiveness every day

so that when they hurt each other,

they may recognize and confess their faults,

and seek each other’s forgiveness.

Let not their mutual love blind them

to all the brokenness in the world.

As they stand by each other and care for each other's hurts,

teach them also to do what they can

to tend the hurts and wounds of people outside their home,

and to uphold justice, tolerance and compassion in society.

May they always live according to your Word

as you have made it known in Scripture,

setting their eyes towards Christ’s Coming and life everlasting.

(O Loving Father, with the blessing of children,

help them to be loving and wise parents,

and to bring up their children in godliness,

so that they too may find their way to Jesus as Saviour and Lord.)

We pray

* for all who have made vows to each other in the past;

by your Holy Spirit strengthen their marriages;

* for all whose marriages are in trouble

that they may learn to be patient, understanding and forgiving

towards each other,

as you are patient, understanding and forgiving with us;

* for all wives, husbands and children

whose families are broken that you will support them;

* for all those who are single that they may find joy and fulfilment;
* for all those who are widowed

that they may find comfort and strength.

And to you, Father, Son and Spirit, one God, be all honour

and praise, now and for ever. Amen.

## Signing of the Marriage Register

*The register may be signed on the holy Table. Alternatively it may be signed in the vestry, in which case* the Minister says:

Please be seated and remain in your pews

while the bridal party goes to sign the register in the vestry.

*The couple and their witnesses (and a photographer) and the Minister leave for the vestry*

*In either case a solo may be sung or a special musical item be played.*

*If the register is signed in the church, the service continues as below.*

*If the register is signed in the vestry, the bridal party may return into the church for the rest of the service as below.*

*If the service is not done in a church, the registry may be signed after the service in a legally approved venue.*

**Introduction of the Couple**

*The minister may ask the couple to face the congregation and say:*

It gives me pleasure to introduce to you Mr and Mrs (*name*).

*Or,* *if the bride retains her surname,*

It gives me pleasure to introduce to you, (*first name*) and (*first name*), as newly married.

**Kiss**

*The minister may say:*

The bride and bridegroom may kiss each other.

##  (Hymn)

A final hymn may be sung. Suitable hymns are:

Vows have been spoken

Jesus the Lord of love and life

Eternal Father, Lord of life

Lord Jesus Christ, invited guest and Saviour

Happy the home that welcomes you

O perfect love

**GOD SENDS US**

The congregation stands for the Commission and Benediction.

**Commission**

Go out into the world in peace;

love and serve the Lord;

witness to the grace of God;

bear one another’s burdens;

stand up for what is right in the world

and do not forget to care for the poor and the afflicted.

**Benediction**

May the peace of God, which is beyond all understanding,

keep guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. *Phil.4:7*

**Amen**.

## Exit

*The organ strikes up/music plays and the couple, followed by the rest of the bridal party, including the parents, walk to stand at or outside the main entrance, for the congregation to congratulate and/or wish them well as they leave.*

*Or*

*The bridal party leads the congregation out to form an archway for the couple to leave through.*

*It is customary for the parents to exchange partners as they follow the bridal couple out, to symbolize the union of the two families.*

*The bridal party may return into the church, or else depart, for photographs.*