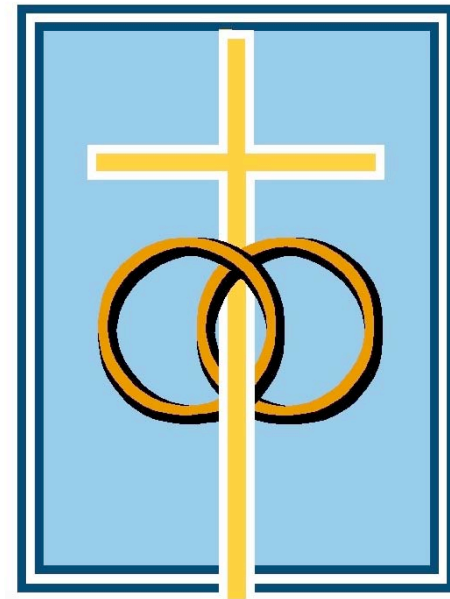


YOUR WEDDING

AT

THE HOUSE OF HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



797 SUMMIT AVENUE
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA

What Presbyterians Believe About Marriage and the Wedding Service

—from *The Book of Order*
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

THE CHRISTIAN SERVICE OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

In preparation for the service, the minister asked to lead the service shall provide for a discussion with the man and the woman concerning

- the nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian,
- the legal requirements of the state,
- the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
- the nature and form of the marriage service,
- the vows and commitments they will be asked to make,
- the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
- the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally as important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

If the minister is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the minister shall assure the couple of the Church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony. In making this decision the minister may seek the counsel of the session.

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister and the supervision of the session. The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present. The marriage service may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day upon authorization by the session. It should be placed in the order as a response to the proclamation of the Word. It may then be followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The service begins with the scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The man and the woman shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation.

Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the minister shall declare publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. A charge may be given. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction.

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the Church. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer. Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life.

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of the vows by the husband and wife, and the public declaration by the minister reflect the fact that the woman and man are already married to one another according to the laws of the state.

OUTLINE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Prelude Music

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Entrance

Opening Words to Gathered Community

Prayer

Declarations of Intent

Affirmation of Family / Families (optional)

Affirmation of Gathered Community (optional)

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Scripture Readings

Meditation (optional)

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Vows

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Exchange of Rings (or other symbols)

Prayer (and Lord's Prayer - optional)

Announcement of Marriage

Benediction

Recessional

** Places appropriate for vocal or instrumental music.

OPENING WORDS

1. Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God to join _____ and _____ in holy marriage; which is instituted of God, regulated by God's commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all people. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage, for the welfare and happiness of humanity. Our Savior, by his apostles, has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other's infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow; in honestly and industry to provide for each other, and for their household, in temporal things; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as the heirs of the grace of life.

2. Let us worship God. There was a marriage in Cana in Galilee; Jesus was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. Friends: Marriage is established by God. In marriage a man and a woman willingly bind themselves together in love, and become one even as Christ is one with the Church, his body. Let marriage therefore be held in honor among all.

3. We have gathered in the presence of God to give thanks for the gift of marriage, to witness the joining together of _____ and _____, to surround them with our prayers, and to ask God's blessing upon them, so that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in their love for God.

God created us male and female, and gave us marriage so that husband and wife may help and comfort each other, living faithfully together in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, throughout all their days.

God gave us marriage for the full expression of the love between a man and a woman. In marriage a woman and a man belong to each other, and with affection and tenderness freely give themselves to each other.

God gave us marriage as a holy mystery in which a man and a woman are joined together, and become one, just as Christ is one with the Church.

In marriage, husband and wife are called to a new way of life, created, ordered, and blessed by God. This way of life must not be entered into carelessly, or from selfish motives, but responsibly, and prayerfully.

We rejoice that marriage is given by God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and sustained by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let marriage be held in honor among all people.

4. Beloved, we have come to the house of God to celebrate the marriage of _____ and _____ in the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ, whose power was revealed at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, is present with us here in all his power and love.

Marriage is provided as part of God's loving purpose for humanity since the beginning of creation. Jesus said, "The Creator made them from the beginning male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be made one with his wife: and the two shall become one flesh."

Marriage is enriched by God for all who have faith in the gospel, for through the saving grace of Christ and the renewal of the Holy Spirit husband and wife can love one another as Christ loves them.

Marriage is thus a gift and calling of God and is not to be undertaken lightly or from selfish motives but with reverence and dedication, with faith in the enabling power of Christ, and with due awareness of the purpose for which it is appointed by God.

Marriage is appointed that there may be lifelong companionship, comfort and joy between husband and wife. It is appointed as the right and proper setting for the full expression of physical love between man and woman.

It is appointed for the ordering of family life, where children, who are also God's gift to us, may enjoy the security of love and the heritage of faith.

It is appointed for the well-being of human society, which can be stable and happy only where the marriage bond is honored and upheld.

5. Friends: Out of affection for _____ and _____ we have gathered together to witness and bless their mutual vow which will unite them in marriage. To this moment they bring the fullness of their hearts as a treasure to share with one another. They bring the dreams which bind them together. They bring that particular personality and spirit that is uniquely their own, and out of which will grow the reality of their life together. We rejoice with them as the outward symbol of an inward union of hearts—a union created by friendship, respect and love.

No person should attend a wedding without giving thanks to God for the institution of marriage, and renewing in their heart the vows that are being taken by _____ and _____.

No person should leave without doing that for which you came—praying that God's blessing may truly rest upon this man and this woman all the days of their life together. As you pray, so may you also receive a blessing.

6. We have come to celebrate Christ in our midst, to share joyfully with _____ and _____, to witness God's great love given through Christ and through us, Christ's Church. Let us begin by reminding ourselves that love must be our life, and confess that we have not loved enough.

7. You have been invited to share in a happy and holy occasion—the wedding service. Friends, this is a service of worship in which a covenant is established between husband and wife in the presence of God. You are present to join in this act of worship. Perhaps you are already married. For you this may be a time of remembrance and renewal of vows. Perhaps you are contemplating marriage. Then let us unite in this place of prayer, where we shall all be reminded that marriage is divinely ordained and is to be kept sacred through joy and adversity. This is a time of worship, dedicated to God. The presence of God's spirit during this service depends in part upon our preparation and participation. As you wait you are invited to meditate and pray, letting these words call you to worship:

*Know that the Lord is God;
It is God that made us, and not ourselves;
We are God's people, and the sheep of God's pasture.
Enter into God's gates with thanksgiving,
And into God's courts with praise.
Be thankful to God, and bless God's name.
For the Lord is good; God's mercy is everlasting;
And God's truth endures forever.*

8. We are gathered here in God's presence, but in the midst of a divided and broken world, to witness the marriage of these two people who stand before us in love, in trust, and in hope.

They ask God to bless their coming together and to sustain them through the years to come. And they ask us to be present with them, to rejoice in their oneness and share in their joy.

They hope that we will sustain them and participate with them in daily celebrations of the healing and renewing power of love to which God calls all God's children.

By our presence, we undertake the responsibility for supporting _____ and _____ in this deeper relationship into which they are about to enter. We will rejoice in their happiness, support them in times of testing, offer them our patience and forgiveness when they make mistakes, and remember them in our prayers, seeking God's blessing on them and the continued grace of God's presence with them.

9. We are gathered together to witness the uniting of _____ and _____ in marriage—an institution which the state may regulate and the Church may sanction; but which can become real only in the lives of two people. This celebration is but the outward sign of an inward union of hearts and as such, marriage is the most tender of all relationships in life.

10. We have come together today into a community of faith, to witness and support the marriage of _____ and _____ before God. We celebrate this occasion through worship, which is both solemn and joyful. It is solemn because it is established in prayerful obedience to the will of God, which is that man and woman become a union of two persons.

This worship is also solemn because it involves a covenant between these two that is made in the presence of God and the gathered community. This is a joyful time, however, for now a love will have taken a great step toward fulfillment, and a pattern of living will be developed between these two whereby their response to God's love in Christ may be worked out to please God in all the new and creative ways that marriage can bring.

Therefore, this adventure must begin with the utmost honesty existing between these two and among you who witness this event. Be it known to you all that the responsibility for the integrity with which _____ and _____ make this covenant finally rests upon their hearts and the members of this community, both friends and relatives who have ministered to them in time preparing for this service.

If you desire this new estate to be permanent, then cherish the vision of this love. Let it not be tarnished by the common events. Believe in this ideal you both share. It is binding; it is inviolate, and in all human relations, it is the final truth.

11. Friends, we are gathered as the Church to celebrate and praise God for the union of _____ and _____ in marriage. The bond of marriage was ordained by God, who created us male and female for each other. The Apostle Paul announced that where Christ is present, there is surely equality as well as unity. With his presence and power, Jesus graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee. _____ and _____ have come here to join in marriage.

DECLARATIONS OF INTENT

1. _____ will you have _____ to be your wife/husband, and will you pledge yourself to her/him, in all love and honor, in all duty and service, in all faith and tenderness, to live with her/him, and cherish her/him, according to the ordinance of God, in the holy bond of marriage?
2. _____, having heard how God has created, ordered, and blessed the covenant of marriage, do you affirm your desire and intention to enter into this covenant?
3. _____, in your baptism you have been called to union with Christ and the Church. Do you intend to honor this calling through the covenant of marriage? (Note: Appropriate only if both husband and wife are baptized.)

AFFIRMATION OF FAMILY/FAMILIES (optional)

1. Who gives this woman to be married to this man?
2. Who presents this woman to be married to this man?
3. Who comes today to bless this marriage? (Could be addressed to families of both bride and groom.)
4. _____, do you give your blessing to _____ and _____ and promise to do everything in your power to uphold them in their marriage? (Addressed to families of the bride and groom.)

AFFIRMATION OF GATHERED COMMUNITY (optional)

Will all of you who witness these vows do everything in your power to uphold _____ and _____ in their marriage?

VOWS

1. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband; and I promise; before God and these witnesses; to be your loving and faithful husband/wife; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

2. _____, I promise with God's help to be your faithful husband/wife, to love and serve you as Christ commands, as long as we both shall live.

3. Before God and these witnesses, I _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, and I promise to love you, and to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live.

4. I take you _____ to be my wife/husband, loving you now and in your growing and becoming. I will love you when we are together and when we are apart; when life is peaceful and when it is in disorder; when I am proud of you and when I am disappointed in you; in times of leisure and in times of work. I will honor your goals and dreams and help you fulfill them. From the depth of my being I will seek to be open and honest with you. I say these things believing that God is in the midst of them all.

5. _____, I take you for my wife/husband. I promise to be with you in all that is to come; to love and to respect; to care and to console; to share the sorrows and the joys that lie ahead. I promise to share my thoughts and my life with you and pledge myself and all I am in love.

6. I, _____, take you _____, to be my wife/husband in doing so commit my life to you, encompassing all sorrows and joys, all hardships and triumphs, all the experiences of life; a commitment made in love, kept in faith, lived in hope, and eternally made new.

7. _____, I take you to be my wife/husband 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 circumstances of our life together, to be loyal to you with my whole life and my whole being.

8. I, _____, offer myself completely to you _____, to be your husband/wife in marriage; I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

9. In the name of God, 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, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

1. This ring I give you, in token and in pledge, of our constant faith and abiding love.
2. I give you this ring as a sign of my promise.
3. _____, I give you this ring as a sign of our covenant, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
4. This ring I give you, as a sign of our constant faith and abiding love, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
5. I offer you this ring, a symbol of my enduring love. I ask that you take it and wear it so all may know you are touched by my love.
6. Accept this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.
7. Wear this ring as a sign of our marriage vows and our faithful love for each other. With this ring, I wed you.
8. I give you this sign of my love, knowing that love is precious and fragile, yet strong. I give you this sign of our love, an ever-present symbol of the vows we have made here this day. I give you this ring as I give you my love.
9. _____, I give you this ring as a symbol of our vows which have made us husband and wife.

POSSIBLE SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament Lessons

Genesis 1:26-31	Psalm 95:1-7
Genesis 2:18-24	Psalm 100
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	Psalm 117
Proverbs 3:3-6	Psalm 121
Isaiah 54:5-8	Psalm 128
Jeremiah 31:31-34	Psalm 136:1-9, 26
Psalm 8	Psalm 145
Psalm 67	

New Testament Lessons

Matthew 5:1-10	John 15:1-17
Matthew 5:13-16	Romans 12:1-2, 9-18
Matthew 22: 35-40	I Corinthians 13:1-13
Mark 10:6-9	Ephesians 5:21-33

POSSIBLE CONGREGATIONAL HYMNS

Be Thou My Vision	#339
For the Beauty of the Earth	#473
God of Our Live, Through the Years	#275
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	#464
O Perfect Love	#533
The Grace of Life Is Theirs	#534
Now Thank We All Our God	#555
Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven	#479
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	#376
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	#482

