

GENERAL SYNOD

Living in Love and Faith

A RESPONSE FROM THE BISHOPS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Summary

This paper gives an overview of the response from the Bishops of the Church of England to the *Living in Love and Faith* process. The response is provided in full in Annexes A and B.

Living in Love and Faith: A Response from the Bishops of the Church of England

Since 2018, bishops have been actively involved in the production of the *Living in Love and Faith* materials, in encouraging church communities to engage, in listening to church-wide responses, and in discussing the matters raised by *Living in Love and Faith* in their meetings together.

The production of the *Living in Love and Faith* resources, and the invitation to the whole of the Church of England to engage in learning, listening and praying together, is a way of seeking wisdom as a Church that the bishops wish to commend for future deliberations in the Church's life together locally and nationally. The *Living in Love and Faith* story is one of rich learning and inclusive participation that needs to be a hallmark of the Church's life, together with the *Pastoral Principles* that emerged from the work of the Pastoral Advisory Group.

Discerning in Love and Faith (Annex A) describes in detail the decisions and actions that the bishops have made. Key elements are summarised here.

1. Letter from the Bishops of the Church of England

In this letter bishops describe their shared commitment to welcoming, accepting and affirming every person in Christ, while acknowledging their continued disagreement about same-sex relationships. They express their shared desire to find a way of walking together in Christ, and are united in expressing their grief and apologising for the way that many LGBTQI+ people have been treated by the Church, causing pain and harm.

2. Prayers for couples

Bishops recognise the diversity of committed relationships that exist both in the Church and in wider society today. Bishops joyfully affirm, and want to acknowledge in church, stable, committed relationships between two people – including same-sex relationships. To enable this to happen bishops plan to commend a resource under the heading *Prayers of Love and Faith*. A draft version can be found in Annex B.

As with all commended material, the use of *Prayers of Love and Faith* will be at the discretion of the minister. These prayers could be used in a variety of ways: to dedicate and give thanks for a couple, to dedicate and pray for God's blessing on a couple, or to celebrate a covenanted friendship. They might be used for two people who have marked a significant stage in the development of their relationship, formed a covenanted friendship, registered a civil partnership, or entered into a civil marriage.

The draft *Prayers of Love and Faith* bring together existing authorised and commended *Common Worship* material, together with newly commissioned material. When they have been developed into their final form and agreed by the House of Bishops, they will be commended to the Church under what is permitted by Canon B5, and will not contradict the Church's doctrine of Holy Matrimony, as articulated in Canon B30.

It is envisaged that these resources can be used flexibly, thus anticipating not just the varied pastoral situations a parish priest may encounter, but also the different convictions clergy may have. Some clergy might choose to use all the resources to dedicate, give thanks for, and pray God's blessing on two people in an exclusive committed relationship. Others might only wish to use some of the resources, for example, to celebrate a covenanted friendship or to give thanks for a same-sex relationship. Still others might not want to use any of the resources on the basis of conscience. When the prayers are commended, bishops will respect all clergy regardless of the position they take regarding the use of these resources.

The variety within the prayers, and the freedom for clergy to decide whether and how to use them, reflects the bishops' desire to walk together, while being real and honest about the disagreements that persist within the Church of England regarding these matters.

3. The Church's doctrine of Holy Matrimony

The Church of England continues to hold the received understanding of Holy Matrimony as between one man and one woman, as set forth in its canons and authorised liturgies. There is a range of positions held among the bishops and there is not sufficient consensus to propose a change to this. Bishops have also agreed that the conversations about these, and related matters, need to continue in a spirit of love and grace.

4. New Pastoral Guidance to replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*

Bishops have agreed to establish a new Pastoral Consultative Group. This group will develop new Pastoral Guidance which will replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

5. Future work

Recognising the breadth of subject matters raised in the LLF resources, and listening to feedback from churchwide engagement, bishops have identified some areas which the Church of England needs to attend to and develop further. These areas are described in Annex A. It is work that the Church needs to do both locally and nationally, in a context of rich learning, inclusive participation, and attending to the Pastoral Principles.

ANNEX A

Living in Love and Faith: A Response from the Bishops of the Church of England about Identity, Sexuality, Relationships and Marriage.

ANNEX B

DRAFT *Prayers of Love and Faith*.



LIVING IN LOVE & FAITH

A response from the Bishops of the Church of England
about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage

The *Living in Love and Faith* teaching and learning resources were commissioned by the bishops of the Church of England in 2017 and produced in 2020. They explore human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage in the contexts of the Christian faith, changes in society, and disagreements in the church.

During 2021 and 2022 the bishops encouraged church communities around the country to use the resources to learn together, to listen to one another and to God. The responses of the thousands of people who took part were gathered in a report, *Listening with Love and Faith*.

The bishops have been studying the Scriptures, reflecting on the Church's tradition, engaging with the resources, and listening to the churchwide responses. Their task has been to discern God's voice about what this learning means for the Church of England. The outcomes of their discernment are described here.

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A pastoral letter from the Bishops of the Church of England

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you

During the past six years many of you have contributed to *Living in Love and Faith* by engaging with questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage, together with others across the Church. You have borne this period of learning, listening and discerning with great patience and courage. We are sincerely grateful – thank you.

Your engagement with the *Living in Love and Faith* process has helped us to listen more attentively to the diverse beliefs, experiences and hopes that are found among those who call the Church of England their spiritual home. We have taken to heart your responses gathered in *Listening with Love and Faith*, including conversations within our dioceses, and have been moved and supported by your words, prayers and creative contributions.

Apology

We want to apologise for the ways in which the Church of England has treated LGBTQI+ people – both those who worship in our churches and those who do not. For the times we have rejected or excluded you, and those you love, we are deeply sorry. The occasions on which you have received a hostile and homophobic response in our churches are shameful and for this we repent. As we have listened, we have been told time and time again how we have failed LGBTQI+ people. We have not loved you as God loves you, and that is profoundly wrong.

We affirm, publicly and unequivocally, that LGBTQI+ people are welcome and valued: we are all children of God.

Difference and discernment

We are deeply conscious of our call to serve both church and nation. We have studied the Scriptures, paid attention to the Church's tradition and listened to wider society, as well as to the voices of our sister churches in the Anglican Communion and ecumenical partners. Above all, we have sought the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in prayer and worship.

The differences among you are also present among us, the College of Bishops. We are partnered, single, celibate, married, divorced, widowed, bereaved; heterosexual, gay, bisexual and same-sex attracted. We have diverse convictions about sexuality and marriage.

Engaging with the *Living in Love and Faith* process has enabled us to become more open and honest with each other – an important part of what it means to be members together of the Body of Christ. Being honest has not erased our disagreements, but it has deepened our relationships and our desire to continue to walk together, seeking the deeper unity for which Christ prayed.

The Pastoral Principles are one way in which we are learning how to avoid the evils that so easily seep into our relationships with one another, into the lives of our church communities and into wider society. Whenever we encounter diversity, difference and disagreement, we, as bishops, must remind ourselves of the need to address ignorance, to cast out fear, to acknowledge prejudice, to speak appropriately into oppressive silence, to admit hypocrisy and to pay attention to power. We continue to commend these Pastoral Principles to the whole church so that together we can grow more clearly into the likeness of Christ and make his love known to this generation.

Future work

Living in Love and Faith was an invitation to the Church to attend to a whole range of matters about being human and in relationship with God and one another. We have therefore identified a number of areas to which we believe the Church should now give further attention, both nationally and locally. These are described in more detail elsewhere and relate to being embodied people; to singleness, celibacy, friendship and the church's community life; to human identity and to everyday faithful relationships. Yet within all this there is one specific question to which a response is eagerly awaited: that of same-sex relationships and marriage. It is to this we now turn.

Same-sex relationships

We are united in our desire for a church where everyone is welcome, accepted and affirmed in Christ. With joy we cherish and value the LGBTQI+ members of our churches and celebrate the gifts that each brings as a fellow Christian. We are united in our condemnation of homophobia. We commit ourselves – and urge the churches in our care – to welcome same-sex couples unreservedly and joyfully.

We continue to seek to be a church that embodies 'the radical new Christian inclusion' to which the *Living in Love and Faith* project was called by the Archbishops in 2017: an inclusion that is 'founded in scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it – based on good, healthy, flourishing relationships, and in a proper 21st century understanding of being human and of being sexual.'

New Prayers of Love and Faith

We value and want to celebrate faithfulness in relationships. That is why we have drafted and asked the House of Bishops to further refine and commend a new resource to be used in churches, called *Prayers of Love and Faith*. This resource will offer clergy a variety of flexible ways to affirm and celebrate same-sex couples in church, and will include prayers of dedication, thanksgiving and for God's blessing. It could be used for a couple who have marked a significant stage in the development of their relationship, sealed a covenanted friendship, registered a civil partnership, or entered a civil marriage. This resource will represent a significant move that is intended as a loving and celebratory response to same-sex couples who are cherished and deeply valued by the Church. We are not all agreed on the extent of these prayers, but nevertheless have agreed to offer them to the Church. The use of these prayers will be entirely discretionary: clergy may choose to use some combination of these prayers or not to use them at all.

These *Prayers of Love and Faith* will not be the same as conducting a marriage in church. They will not alter the Church of England's celebration of Holy Matrimony, which remains the lifelong union of one man and one woman, as set forth in its canons and authorised liturgies. While there is a range of convictions held by the bishops about this important matter, we have not found sufficient consensus to propose a change in doctrine at the present time.

We realise this will be disappointing for those who long for 'equal marriage' for same-sex couples. We also realise that for others among us, there will be deep concern that the *Prayers of Love and Faith* will go too far: your consciences and theological convictions will not allow you to use them.

We respect and share these differences, maintaining that within the theological diversity we represent, everyone has a secure and respected place within the Church of England. It is *from* this diversity that we, your bishops, reaffirm our commitment to serve and care for the flock of Christ. We offer these draft *Prayers of Love and Faith* with joy and in the belief that they will strengthen the mission of the Church and uphold its unity.

For these changes to be embedded in the life of the Church, we will work to produce new 'Pastoral Guidance' that will explain the practical implications of this way forward, including for the discernment of vocations within the Church of England. This new guidance will replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

Journeying together

There are some among us who will be perturbed because they believe that these developments do not reflect the way of Christ as they understand it. Some will see these developments as steps along a continuing journey. Some will feel we have gone too far. Some will feel we have not gone far enough.

For all of us, the Bible is central to our understanding and living out of the Christian faith: as Anglicans, we believe that Scripture witnesses to God's saving work brought to fulfilment in Jesus Christ and contains within it all that is necessary for salvation. Despite being united in this belief, we interpret the Bible differently and have come to different conclusions about numerous matters, including what it has to say about gender, relationships and marriage.

Amid our differences as bishops, we know of many committed same-sex relationships between followers of Christ. We see their faithfulness to one another and the fruit of their discipleship and service. We want to find ways of affirming same-sex couples – inside and outside the church – while committing ourselves to respecting the disagreement, in conscience, of those who believe this compromises the Church's inherited tradition and teaching.

Living in Love and Faith has been about learning and listening together: to God, one another and the world around us. In these final stages of our discernment, we want to pay special tribute to the 'Reference Group': the twelve deeply faithful Christians who accompanied us in our deliberations in the last few months of 2022. Representing a diversity of lived experiences and convictions, they kindly held us to account, reminding us of the need for clarity, care and compassion.

We live in a society in which we are often pressured towards adversarial behaviour. As God's church, we are called to a different way – a theme we discerned in many of your responses to *Living in Love and Faith*. We agree with you and want to continue walking together, bearing with one another in love. By being honest about our own disagreements and through a gracious interpretation of doctrine, we will honour the reality of our differences within the Church of England, across the Anglican Communion, and among ecumenical partners. We hope to model this by providing prayers that bear a nuanced variety of understandings.

This is not about enforcing unity but pursuing it, by the grace of God. What we must do is create a generous space for the Holy Spirit to fill as we stay faithful to Jesus Christ, rooted and grounded in the love of God.

Our conversations, learning and prayer continue. We have reached one milestone, but there is further to go as we seek God's coming kingdom together.

May God bless you with peace and love with faith from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Background

The *Living in Love and Faith* process has called the Church of England to reflect on the diversity of relationships that we recognise in our worshipping communities and among our friends and families. This has revealed a need for the Church to find ways of responding to the goodness of relationships between two people who are committed to one another in love and faith. The *Living in Love and Faith* resources set out the different conclusions that people across the Church have drawn about this diversity. These include theologians, biblical scholars, bishops, other clergy and lay people. The *Living in Love and Faith* book explores the roots of these differences in relation to different understandings of the authority of Scripture, different interpretations of particular Bible passages and of the biblical narratives as a whole. The book also explores different understandings of what it means to be the church – the Body of Christ, and how our

Reflections on the Church's understanding of marriage

Church of England teaching on marriage is encapsulated in the liturgy for Holy Matrimony and its description of marriage as a union permanent and lifelong, 'for better for worse', 'till death them do part', 'of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others'³, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the hallowing and right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for 'mutual society, help and comfort', 'in prosperity and adversity'. The marriage liturgies available (in the BCP, the Alternative Services: Series 1, and Common Worship) draw deeply on the Scriptural analogy for marriage of the relationship between God and the people of God in the Old and New Testaments, and on other biblical material – such as the wedding at Cana and the parables of the wedding feast – as an illustration of the kingdom.

The liturgy also refers to marriage as rooted 'in creation', referring back to God's original blessing of Adam and Eve in Genesis. This links marriage to the idea of sexual differentiation and the possibility of procreation. The positive aspects of marriage – stability, faithfulness and fruitfulness – mean that it is identified as a special, specific way of life which brings together the 'goods' needed for flourishing, or blessing. It does not mean that no other way of life can do so, but that this particular configuration of life is recognised as a source of blessing. The preface to the BCP takes this further by hinting at a sacramental quality in marriage.

Questions about the nature of marriage today ask whether sexual differentiation is central or incidental: we already make pastoral provisions for couples who cannot have biological children, so is procreation a core aspect of the nature of marriage? Or would it be better to speak of 'fruitfulness' in a much wider sense? How far does the biblical metaphor of Christ and the church control our theology of marriage, and does the difference between Christ and church map out against sex difference between bride and groom? Would moving away from sexual differentiation as essential constitute a fundamental change, or would it be an extension of the present doctrine, to include a wider category of people? These are questions about which we have not yet reached a consensus.

calling to live holy lives as followers of Jesus Christ relates to 'being church' and to same-sex relationships.

The *Living in Love and Faith* book also examines the place of marriage in the Christian faith, both in its inherited form as a lifelong relationship between one man and one woman, and within an understanding that some believe could be extended to include a lifelong relationship between two people of the same sex.

The *Living in Love and Faith* resources have also presented the Church with a diversity of lived experiences among faithful Christians who find their spiritual home in the Church of England. Many of them are powerfully portrayed in the *Encounters* in the *Living in Love and Faith* book and in the story films, some of which are included in the *Living in Love and Faith* course. Even more significantly, we find this diversity among our friends, family members and colleagues: people of God we have learned to cherish and love and whose stories we take to heart.

The *Living in Love and Faith* resources do not direct the reader to one conclusion or another –

which has been a source of frustration and even disappointment for some. It has been our work as bishops and teachers of the faith to draw on Scripture alongside tradition, reason and prayer to discern the direction we believe God is calling the Church to take regarding same-sex relationships.

New prayers to celebrate committed relationships between two people

It is with this backdrop that we have agreed to develop and commend a suite of resources called *Prayers of Love and Faith* by means of which relationships between two people can be joyfully affirmed and celebrated in church. These prayers will give thanks and praise to God for the gift of two people who love one another; they will mark the couple's commitment to one another and offer prayers with and for them. By selecting appropriate prayers and readings, it is envisaged that the service may be adapted to offer different ways for couples to publicly confirm, give thanks for, and celebrate their love and commitment. Some may wish to use the service for dedication and thanksgiving, and others for dedication and blessing. They may be used by a couple who have marked a significant stage in the development of their relationship, sealed a covenanted friendship, registered a civil partnership, or entered a civil marriage.

The aim is for this liturgical resource to be further refined and then commended by the House of Bishops for use by clergy at their discretion. Whatever our convictions as bishops, all of us are committed to serving all the churches and clergy in our dioceses, and to respecting and supporting those who want to use these resources in their church community and those who do not.

One of the ways in which we have been helped to agree to work towards commending these resources is our deeper understanding of the theology of blessing. We recommend the reflections offered here – and a more detailed exploration available on the *Living in Love and Faith* website.

Reflections on blessing

What does it mean to bless? We often ask for God's blessing on people and situations, as we make decisions, as we seek the way forward. To ask for God's blessing is to express an intention to walk with God and put God at the centre of what we do and how we relate. Our prayers ask for *God's* blessing - they are prayers, not pronouncements. God will answer as God chooses.

In contrast, in popular culture, to give someone our blessing means to approve of what they want to do and to encourage them on the way. Our culture narrows and restricts the meaning of blessing, making it conditional.

In Scripture, we see a generous attitude to blessing. God blesses all living things in Genesis 1. God blesses many people in Scripture – not all of whom live good lives or make good choices. But the initial blessing, God's desire to see people flourish, is always present and unconditional. The people of God are encouraged to do the same and pray for the blessing of all – including enemies and persecutors, whose actions we definitely do not approve of!

In Scripture, blessing is given to *people* rather than things, actions or ways of life. There are, two exceptions: the Sabbath is blessed and in the New Testament, bread is blessed before eating. The example of the Sabbath shows that certain actions and ways of life can be sources of blessing, creating the conditions that bring about human flourishing. We read in the Psalms and the Beatitudes: blessed (or happy) are those who... These are not prayers for God to bless but statements about ways that enable blessing.

To pray for the blessing of people is therefore to reflect the blessing of God in all creation. To declare certain ways of life as blessed is to recognise that for the blessing of creation to be fully realised, human beings need to walk in God's ways. The prayers we are offering here do not all contain blessing. Where they do, we ask for God's blessing – recognising that it is not our blessing or approval that is conferred, but a prayer for God to bring about flourishing and growth in the ways of God.

Prayers of Love and Faith and marriage

The fact that the liturgical resource that we plan to commend does not constitute a service of marriage in church – Holy Matrimony – will be a source of deep disappointment for some, including some among us bishops. Nevertheless, we have agreed at this time to maintain the doctrine of Holy Matrimony which the Church has received, and which is set out in its Canons and authorised liturgies, namely that Holy Matrimony is between one man and one woman for life. We have also agreed to continue to listen, learn, reflect and pray together regarding this matter.

Some may question whether offering a service of dedication, thanksgiving and/or blessing for same-sex couples implicitly contravenes the Church’s understanding of Holy Matrimony especially if the couple concerned has entered a civil marriage. This is an understandable question and its answer – that this service and prayers will not contradict the Church’s doctrine of Holy Matrimony – lies in the complexities that sets the Church of England apart from any of the other churches in the Anglican Communion because of its status as the Established Church, as explained below.

Marriage, the State and the Church of England

Until 2013 civil marriages and marriages in Church were conducted with the same understanding of marriage as being between one man and one woman. Couples who married in church were civilly married according to the law and entered Holy Matrimony by means of the solemnisation of the marriage in the marriage service.

In 2013, the Government redefined marriage under the general law as being between two people who could be of the same or opposite sex, while leaving unchanged the Church’s definition of Holy Matrimony contained in ecclesiastical law as being the union of one man and one woman. Consistently with that, no provision was made in the 2013 Act for marriages of same-sex couples to take place according to the rites of the Church of England. This exposed a distinction between civil marriage and Holy Matrimony that existed before but was not so apparent because civil and religious understandings of marriage did not previously contradict each other. It can therefore be argued that the 2013 Act resulted in there being two institutions in the law of England, both of which for legal purposes amount to “marriage” and have the same consequences in civil law, but which have distinct definitions: civil marriage which is gender neutral and Holy Matrimony which requires the couple to be respectively male and female.

This distinction between Holy Matrimony and civil marriage now means that all couples who enter a civil marriage are obtaining a civil status (which has always been the case); but they are not necessarily entering a marriage as understood by the Church of England (i.e. Holy Matrimony). It can be argued that a same-sex couple entering into a civil status which does not claim to be Holy Matrimony should not of itself be regarded as challenging or rejecting the Church’s doctrine of marriage as expressed in Canon B30 (Of Holy Matrimony) and that those who do so should not, therefore, be regarded as acting in disobedience to that doctrine. On that basis it would be possible for same-sex couples who are in a civil marriage – like those who are in a civil partnership – to have a service of dedication, thanksgiving and/or blessing without contradicting the Church’s doctrine of marriage.

Prayers of Love and Faith and sexual intimacy

Another question arises regarding sexual intimacy in relationships. The *Prayers of Love and Faith* do not explicitly refer to sexual intimacy. They leave open the possibility that some may wish to enter into a covenanted friendship that does not involve sexual intimacy, while for others – as in the case of most (but not all) opposite-sex couples coming to be married in the church today – their relationship has been sexually active before they come to take part in a service of dedication, thanksgiving or blessing. How the Church responds to this reality in a way that continues to encourage holiness in holding faithfulness and commitment together with sexual intimacy is another area where convictions among us differ, and where it

is important to create a generous space for one another's consciences. Some further reflections on these matters can be found below.

Reflections about sexual intimacy and marriage

Tremendous social change has reconfigured the ways in which human beings grow up and inhabit the world of adulthood. In England, for example, people stay in education longer, form long-lasting relationships later in life, and live for much longer. Access to contraception and new means of procreation have changed attitudes to sexual activity, family and the meaning of relationships. It is now increasingly rare for those who choose to marry in church to be living apart before the wedding, and many couples already have children before they are married.

While not explicitly stated in the Church's Canons, for many years the church has taught that the only rightful place for sexual activity is marriage. There is disagreement in the Church about how this applies in our culture today. The reality within which the Church now lives is that couples inhabit their relationships differently. Many would say that when two people aspire to be faithful to one another and fruitful in their service of others and of God, these 'goods' of relationships are worth recognising and celebrating. The prayers offered here are an attempt to respond by celebrating what is good and asking God to fill these relationships so they can grow in holiness. Others may question such an approach and would wish to reinforce what they understand to be the Church's teaching about sexual intimacy and marriage for all cultures and contexts.

Prayers of Love and Faith: a joyful offering

The plan to develop and commend *Prayers of Love and Faith* is a sign of joy and thanksgiving for couples who have entered a civil partnership or marriage, a new stage in their relationship, or wish to form a covenanted friendship. They will be a celebration of God's faithfulness and of the gift of human love.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

1 John 4.16

The full text of the DRAFT *Prayers of Love and Faith* is appended as a separate booklet.

Towards new pastoral resources

Formation of a new Pastoral Consultative Group

Background

During the first phase of the *Living in Love and Faith* process, when the resources were being produced, the episcopal members of the Pastoral Advisory Group offered pastoral responses to bishops concerning LGBTQI+ clergy and lay people. The Pastoral Advisory Group reached the end of its life when the *Living in Love and Faith* resources were published in November 2020.

In the meantime, bishops continue to be asked to respond to pastoral situations for which there is currently no clear guidance in the Church of England. Often circumstances are complex, involving not just questions of sexuality, relationships and marriage, but gender identity, transition and childbearing. Sometimes these questions arise in the context of vocational discernment regarding ordination or various forms of lay ministry.

The need

Bishops need to be able to respond to ongoing questions in a way that reflects the Church's teaching, promotes consistent good pastoral practice across the Church, and enables churches to become places which are as safe as possible. While the guidance for some circumstances will become clearer once the *Living in Love and Faith* outcomes are embedded in the Church's practice, there are likely to be other areas, such as questions of gender identity, transition and reproduction, for which the Church has not yet done the necessary theological, ethical or ecclesiological groundwork to underpin practice. That means that the need for such a group will be required beyond the lifetime of *Living in Love and Faith*.

Aim

The aim of the Pastoral Consultative Group is to support and advise bishops and dioceses on pastoral responses to circumstances that arise concerning identity, relationships, sexuality and marriage among clergy, ordinands, lay leaders and the lay people in their care.

- The advice will reflect the Church's responsibility to offer pastoral care in the pattern of Christ to all people, modelling "*radical Christian inclusion founded in scripture, in reason, in tradition, in theology and the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it*".
- The advice will seek to be consistent across dioceses and reflect the doctrine and ecclesiastical law of the Church of England.
- As cases accrue, the group may begin to articulate and disseminate additional good pastoral practice in the areas of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage, as well as draw the Church's attention to emerging questions for which theological, ethical and ecclesiological foundations may need to be laid.

In addition, the Pastoral Consultative Group will lead – together with others – the production of the new pastoral guidance described below and present it to the House of Bishops.

Responsibilities

1. The group will respond to requests for advice from bishops regarding specific situations relating to questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage. The situations are likely to involve:
 - the pastoral care and discipline of clergy;
 - offering pastoral advice to clergy responding to lay people;

- other cases which may arise in the course of bishops' ministries.
2. The group will promote an appropriate level of national consistency in approach by collating the material arising from these cases.
 3. From time to time, the group will reflect on the situations that have arisen:
 - to consider whether there are opportunities to disseminate good pastoral practice across the Church, and to incorporate this in a review of the pastoral guidance described below;
 - to consider whether there are situations that raise theological, ethical and ecclesiological questions which the Church may need to attend to and address.
 - to commission further research, consultation or policy development.

Way of working

The group will comprise a number of bishops who take responsibility for the advice offered in each case. They will be supported by consultants regarding ethical, legal, pastoral and theological matters as appropriate. The group will strive to be as diverse and inclusive as possible.

Developing new pastoral guidance

Introduction

Jesus calls us into relationship with him and into different kinds of relationships with each other. Following the February 2023 sessions of the General Synod, the bishops commit to working on the development of new pastoral guidance for the whole Church about the qualities of godly relationships. These will be set out in the context of social, relational and ministerial vocations for lay and ordained people.¹

This guidance will replace *Issues in Human Sexuality*.

How will the guidance be produced?

Bishops recognise that the process of producing this guidance is as important as its content. In producing the guidance, bishops commit to:

- engaging with a wide diversity of people

It will be vital for the widest range of voices to be heard to ensure the new guidance is as informed and pastorally sensitive as possible.

- reviewing past guidance and delineating necessary areas for future guidance

This will involve gathering and reviewing all the existing guidance, pastoral statements and teaching documents relating to questions of sexuality, civil partnerships and marriage. It will also involve identifying and addressing areas where there is little or no guidance – for example, regarding singleness and celibacy. This work will gather the relevant revised material into a single new pastoral guidance resource.

¹ As set out in more detail in *Kingdom Calling: The Vocation, Ministry and Discipleship of the Whole People of God* p26 ff accessed here <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/GS%20Misc%201254%20Kingdom%20Calling%20Web%20Version.pdf>.

- reviewing the guidance regularly

The guidance needs to be responsive to new situations, developments and questions, including the insights which are likely to emerge when the Church attends to the areas described on pages 14 - 17.

- continuing to reflect on the Church's tradition and teaching as the Church of England has received it
- learning from work done elsewhere in the Anglican Communion and in other denominations

While the proposed pastoral guidance will be for the Church of England, there is wisdom to be found in exploring resources that sister provinces and denominations have produced in recent years.

- continued collaborative and prayerful discernment across differences and disagreements

The guidance is likely to address matters about which there will continue to be disagreement in the wider Church as well as among bishops. Bishops commit to the values of GRACE – gratitude, relationship, attentiveness, compassion and encouragement – as part of a collegiate and collaborative way of working that seeks to follow Christ together in these matters.

What will the guidance contain?

We are suggesting that the content of the guidance should include:

- A pastoral emphasis on the **need for the church to welcome and demonstrate love and respect to all people**, whatever their identity, sexuality, marital status and pattern of relationships, and to respect the dignity of all people as made in God's image.
- A **restatement of the Pastoral Principles** as offering a basis for how the church should live well together, welcoming and supporting all and being a place of listening and growth.
- Agreement and affirmation of **the necessary qualities for a relationship to be considered faithful and holy**. This will need to make explicit reference to the legal forms of relationship in existence, namely civil marriage and civil partnerships, as well as other less formal expressions of relationship and singleness across the Church and society.
- Clear guidance about the **discernment and expectations of all who are exploring, training or serving in a ministerial vocation**. The guidance will relate both to expectations of the personal relationships of those in ministerial vocations and to the ministry they offer to others. The new guidance will replace the role for which *Issues in Human Sexuality* has come to be used in this regard.
- Principles **for living well together as a Church with diversity and difference**. The *Living in Love and Faith* journey has already shown the broad range of deeply held convictions across the Church regarding human identity, relationships, gender and sexuality. It will be important that the new guidance holds all of us to account in the way we respect each other as being made in the image of God as we continue to walk together in love and faith.

Guidance for good practice in praying with others

Why is the guidance being written?

The purpose of this guidance is to offer the Church good and wise practice in pastoral prayer in a range of contexts. It will be especially relevant for those in the Church who oversee and provide pastoral care.

The impetus for embarking on this work was the Government's consultation on banning so-called Conversion Therapy and the concerns arising from it about coercion in the practice of prayer. In the context of the Church's rejection of Conversion Therapy, the purpose of the guidance is to give bishops confidence about the Church's commitment to ensuring awareness of the issues at the heart of the debate.

It soon became clear that while the material would need to reference questions of coercion, this would not be its main focus. Rather, the guidance needs to have a broad remit about the practice of prayer in a pastoral context. In addition, it became clear that the resource would need to be for the whole Church, especially for all who are involved in pastoral care and prayer. That is why, in addition to the guidance, there will be a companion booklet for use as an assessment and study tool for churches.

What is the guidance about?

Christians gather regularly to pray, sometimes daily, sometimes weekly, in formal services, in small groups, and in informal settings. Prayer also happens in the context of pastoral care, whether with an ordained person, or with members of pastoral or prayer teams. Pastoral prayer implies a degree of vulnerability for the person being prayed for. Praying well with another person who may be distressed, anxious or seeking guidance, is something we learn and keep learning about. The Church has a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to offer on the practice of praying with others, and this guidance seeks to draw on this.

The guidance also recognises that prayer has not always been perceived as a blessing, and that in some contexts it has been mishandled and even, occasionally, abused. As a church, we need to listen to these negative experiences so that we can continue to learn how to pray.

This booklet will be a resource for churches and local ministry teams, to reflect on their practice of pastoral prayer or prayer ministry, to think about how those who pray with others can grow and develop in this, and to put guidelines for good practice in place which reflect the learning of the church over centuries of prayer for one another.

What will the guidance contain?

The guidance will begin with a biblical and theological reflection on the gift of prayer, focusing especially on Jesus' response to the disciples' request to Jesus to 'teach us to pray'.

The second part of the guidance will encourage readers to reflect on the practice of prayer from a variety of perspectives, including how prayer relates to community, self-awareness, learning, listening, disagreement, power and vulnerability, and transformation. It will reflect on prayer as 'saying the unsayable' and the experience of fear in prayer. The guidance will offer biblical precedents for the guidance given and practical ways to embed good practice in church communities.

When will the guidance be available?

The guidance has been jointly commissioned by the *Living in Love and Faith* Next Steps Group and the Faith and Order Commission. It will be completed by mid-2023.

Guidance for Church of England schools

The Church of England's vision for education includes the following aim:

Educating for dignity and respect: the basic principle of respect for the value and preciousness of each person, treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth.

As a key part of their work following the February 2023 sessions of Synod, the bishops commit to working with the National Society to consider the following:

1. How to strengthen the relationship between a school and its parish church, even where there are significant differences of approach among clergy, congregations, and the school leadership in relation to issues of identity, sexuality and relationships.

2. How to help with navigating different views held within the Church on questions of sexuality especially in delivering relationships and sex education.
3. Provision of guidance on how best to support young people in school who are exploring their gender identity and sexuality.
4. How collective worship can be used well in exploring questions of identity and relationships.
5. How to create a safe school environment for staff, pupils and family members who identify as LGBTQI+, together with those who hold to the traditional teaching of that church.

This work will lead to the production of an updated version of the Guidance for Church of England schools, *Valuing All God's Children*.

Areas for the Church to attend to and develop

Introduction

In exploring the *Living in Love and Faith* resources and in listening to churchwide engagement with them, bishops have identified a number of areas to which we hope the Church will attend and so assist the Church's continued engagement with wider society and its commitment to pastoral care. The following topics will need to be addressed locally and nationally as part of future conversations within our church communities in the years ahead. It is our hope that they will support the wider church and be part of the Church's contribution to national debate. They will also need to be addressed in the light of the outcomes of the *Archbishop's Commission on Families and Households*, some themes of which intersect with the ones described below.

Human Embodiment

The *Living in Love and Faith* process has underlined the extent to which social mores and beliefs about what constitutes good, flourishing and hopeful human relationships have shifted in the past fifty years. At the same time, these shifts towards inclusion and the celebration of human variety and diversity do not remove the many barriers to the fullness of human flourishing which continue to exist. The *Living in Love and Faith* process has highlighted wider questions about the gift and cost of embodiment in an often unjust and exploitative world.

Why does this matter?

Christianity is a deeply corporeal and embodied faith. We are created by God and, as humans made in the likeness of God, the Christian faith takes bodies very seriously.

At the heart of Christianity is the incarnation: Christ's life as a human being, his bodily resurrection and his ascension to God the Father, reveal that embodiment is a place of dignity and promise in both earthly and risen life. The ministry of Jesus shows consistent attention to bodies, to their needs and vulnerabilities.

This cherishing of human embodiment as a gift within God's ecology of faith, hope and love is a live issue in a rapidly moving society. In a world increasingly technologically-driven and globalised, there are many challenges and opportunities in thinking about human identity and embodiment, which the church needs to think about theologically and pastorally. These include:

- The emergence of complex forms of artificial intelligence
- The impact of the online world and disembodied communication on body image, mental health and human relationships
- The continued reality of the exploitation and commodification of human bodies, for instance, through pornography
- The reality of human bodies as limited, fragile and mortal, and complex societal responses to the valuing of human life in its different configurations, including shifting attitudes around assisted dying

These are only some of the areas in which the Church needs to be resourced to speak constructively and confidently.

By seeking to attend more fully to these pressures and opportunities, we wish to better understand the pastoral implications of these emerging ideas about what it means to be embodied in a changing world. The Church needs to be better equipped to speak in the public square from its historic and biblical wisdom about incarnation, embodiment and resurrection, commending richer visions of what it means to be embodied people seeking to live virtuous, hopeful lives in a pluralist society and speaking out against abuse of the body.

We acknowledge that many questions have been raised about the Church's own ability to cherish actual bodies in their rich diversity. The Church has historically promoted the care of the individual through its involvement in health care, social care and the hospice movement. But the Church has also been a place for the exploitation of children and other vulnerable people. All our work in this area will require careful attention, tender prayer, and discerning reflection, as we strive for the Church to be a place where there is great confidence in our shared vocation to be Christ's Body as well as a place where everyone's vulnerable, holy body is cherished and brought to fullness in Christ.

Singleness, celibacy, friendship, community, family and household

The LLF process has increased our awareness of the experiences of people who, for a range of reasons, do not have sexual partners. While the catalyst for the LLF process was disagreement within the Church of England on what kind of sexual relationships the Church should be able to affirm, we have sought to emphasize that questions of sexuality and relationships arise for all of us, whatever our circumstances. The Church's response to particular disagreements needs to be based on a rich theology and understanding of sexuality and relationships that speaks of Christ's grace and truth to every person.

Why does this matter?

In this context, five interwoven themes have come into focus as important areas for continued learning together as we seek to foster communities of faith in which all can flourish.

One is **singleness**. We have heard a widespread concern that while single people make up about a third of UK households, church life can sometimes appear dominated by couples and families and their celebrations, leaving single people feeling marginalised. There is a need to find appropriate ways to celebrate, value, care for and include those who are single for whatever reason and of affirming and valuing the gifts single people are in our church communities as well as in wider society.

Another theme relates to **celibacy and chastity**. Historically in the Church of England celibacy has been used to denote those living under religious vows, either as solitaries or in community: a calling that we continue to affirm and value. Chastity is the discipline of refraining from sexual activity, or, of refraining from immoral sexual activity. Today, celibacy refers to anyone who lives without sexual partnerships. The tradition of honouring those who embrace this way of life in the church goes back to New Testament times, but it can look like a puzzle or even a scandal in a contemporary society where freedom for sexual expression is readily aligned with personal fulfilment, though we recognise the negative effects of some aspects of this tradition. While the closure of many traditional religious communities has decreased the visibility of this way of following Christ, we know that there are other contexts in which it is being embraced, not least by some who live alone as single people. Some dioceses have developed liturgies for recognizing those called to the vocation of a single consecrated life within the Church of England – a provision we would want to encourage across the whole Church. We are also conscious that the theme of celibacy and the discipline of abstinence inevitably connects with the Church's teaching about sexual relationships. In whatever forms of relationship the Church judges it right to include sexual activity,

Christians who in conscience cannot enter them are bound to seek – and need to find – a compassionate and authentic acceptance of celibacy as their path of discipleship.

Other themes are **friendship, community, family and household**. The resources produced for the *Living in Love and Faith* process have repeatedly dwelt on the importance of friendship as a category of relationship: one that underpins so much else in our lives, shared by married people and single, sexually active and celibate. Intimate relationships of deep trust and shared vulnerability need not include sexual activity and the expectation that they should is damaging on many levels. Deeper attention to friendship in all its forms would enrich our lives as churches and as people from many different types of households.

We would like the Church to be at the heart of developing communities of friends that reflect the joy of all healthy relationships and that alleviate the loneliness that so many experience. The church is well placed to celebrate the intergenerational call of God and to offer to society new models for good family life, community cohesion and trust.

Finally, we recognize that there are people for whom a particular friendship becomes the foundational relationship for their adult lives. We would encourage local churches to consider offering as a resource an affirmation of covenanted companionship or covenanted friendship, where two people make a formal commitment to deep and lasting friendship with one another in a non-sexual relationship that profoundly shapes and marks their journey of discipleship.

Human identity

The *Living in Love and Faith* process has made us ever more aware of the riches and complexity of human identity. In recent decades, many in UK society have negotiated, wrestled with, and come to accept a range of understandings of gender identity, as well as come to a better appreciation of trans, asexual and bisexual identities. However, there remains disquiet, and debates in wider society, as well as in the church, are often damaging and bitter.

Why does this matter?

The Lambeth Call on Human Dignity reminds us that ‘within God’s good gift of creation (Gen. 1:31), humanity, male and female, is made in God’s image and blessed by God’s care and love (Gen. 1.26-28).’ This gives all human beings a dignity that cannot be taken away. The Lambeth Call concludes: ‘Whenever we face another, we see a reflection of God’s infinite love and glory.’

We continue to acknowledge that despite this God-given human dignity, too often the Church has treated LGBTQI+ people as a problem. The *Living in Love and Faith* process has, understandably and appropriately, given close attention to concrete proposals for the better cherishing of same-sex relationships. Although there is significant consideration of related questions in the *Living in Love and Faith* Book, we recognise that, on the whole, the worldwide church is at a very early stage in responding theologically to new perspectives on the riches and complexities of human identity. Therefore, much work of grace and love remains to be done, not least in a better and richer understanding of trans, bisexual and asexual people and their rightful cherished place within the Church and society.

We are aware that, in the UK and US especially, much political discourse around matters of gender and biological sex has become fraught, especially on social media. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that for many people, these are not just 'debates', but are issues that speak at the deepest and most personal level into their lives: trans, non-binary, bisexual, asexual and intersex people simply are beloved members of their families, communities and churches. Nonetheless, there are people, both religious and non-religious, representing a range of political views, who hold deep and often contradictory

views which have distressing impacts on people for whom these questions relate directly to their lived experience. We want to learn – and put into practice – how to respond pastorally to those for whom these issues are live and personally distressing, regardless of our convictions. At the same time, we want to find ways of listening attentively to the full range of views within the Church and wider society regarding gender identities and how human relationships and personal identity are to be understood. Such an approach reminds us that identity is something that we discover together – with and not about each other – and that these questions affect all of us in our sense of who we are and how we relate to others.

The Church seeks to be a community of character and grace in which the rich diversity of God-given humanity can flourish and grow ever more into the likeness and pattern of Christ. As those who exercise episcopal leadership and ministry, we wish the Church to be both attentive to, and better informed about, emergent expressions and conceptions of human identity. We wish to do so within the Church's vocation to be a community which models Christ's reconciling love and grace and within which we discover our own identity. At the heart of this reconciling love is the belief that Christians find their primary identity in Christ through baptism and are nurtured in and through the community of the baptised. Whilst we are very concerned by the bitterness of debates about gender identity we believe that paying close attention to our baptismal identities will encourage vibrant and theologically rich challenges for everyone, and may offer a prism through which the Church can encourage wider society to model a deeper and more loving understanding of human difference.

Everyday faithful relationships

The area of attention we have identified here is about what wisdom the Church may have to share about living well in everyday faithful relationships, whether same-sex or opposite sex, married or not married. We believe that our theology of the body, for instance, should inform our understanding of what makes sexual relationships healthy and good, as also of what leads them to be damaging to self and others. We affirm 'gospel values' that can orient growth in virtues for all who live in committed sexual relationships: virtues such as love, faithfulness, self-giving, mutual trust and truthfulness.

We also want to consider how the Church can communicate a compassionate and celebratory Christian vision for marriage that enables people to inhabit committed sexual relationships in a way that is hopeful and life-giving, and that provides a stable context for the flourishing of family life.

Why does this matter?

Many people spend much of their adult lives in relationships that combine sexual intimacy with a commitment to sharing everyday life and their hopes and plans for the future with their partner. Married couples only make up a certain proportion of such relationships, and one that has declined in recent decades.

Conscious that pain, pressure and struggle are likely to be part of every couple's experience at some point, we want to celebrate the transforming grace and joy that people find, day by day, in devoted love for one another – the source of which is ultimately found in Christ. We would want to affirm the important place of long-term stability as the best foundation for bringing up children, and the potential that the inter-generational nature of the church has in creating good relationships between people of different ages.

We want to consider how church communities can be places where people are able to share the challenges and joys of their everyday relationships and find help when they need it. We hope that we can articulate wisdom from our Scriptures, tradition and long experience of pastoral care to come alongside those whose relationships are thriving, those who struggle, those who are weary, and those who need support in any way, so that our churches can be safe, hospitable and transformative places for all who come into contact with them.

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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Pastoral Introduction

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour.

Romans 12.9-10

These *Prayers of Love and Faith* are commended by the House of Bishops as resources in praying with and for two people who love one another and who wish to give thanks for and mark that love in faith before God. To celebrate in God's presence the commitment two people have made to each other is an occasion for rejoicing. The texts are offered to express thanksgiving and hope, with prayer that those who are dedicating their life together to God may grow in faith, love and service as God's blessing rests upon them.

This suite of resources is one of the fruits of the Church of England's project *Living in Love and Faith*. It brings together a variety of liturgical resources in a desire to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of a loving relationship between two people, to mark their commitment to one another, and to pray with and for them. The prayers are drawn from existing sources but also include newly commissioned material. At the discretion of the minister, they may be woven into a form of service for a couple who have marked a significant stage in the development of their relationship, sealed a covenanted friendship, registered a civil partnership, or entered into a civil marriage.

How to use these resources

A minister who is asked by a couple to offer prayers or a service with and for them will want to consider the full range of materials offered here. Couples' situations, hopes and expectations will vary greatly, and ministers are encouraged to engage in conversation with them at an early stage to discuss how, where and when prayers might best be shaped, and which resources would be most appropriately used. There is considerable scope for creativity and flexibility available here, provided ministers remain within the discretion set out by Canon B 5 (*see below*).

The resources presented here can be used in several ways – for example:

- in private prayer with a couple,
- in their home,
- within weekday or Sunday worship regularly offered by a church, or
- to shape an occasional service marking a special event or significant stage in a couple's relationship.

In this document, the **Resource Section** provides passages of Scripture for study and public proclamation, together with prayers grouped in a variety of categories. An outline **Structure** for worship is presented, whether in the context of a Service of the Word or of Holy Communion. Two **sample services** are also provided as different examples of ways in which the Structures can be filled by drawing on the Resources.

A note on the status of these resources

Prayers of Love and Faith has been commended by the House of Bishops for use by ministers in the exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5 of the Canons of the Church of England.

The prayers and forms of service commended here are 'neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter' (including, but not limited to, the definition of Holy Matrimony in Canon B 30). Any adaptation of these resources must meet the requirement of Canon B 5. See the **Legal Note** (p. 22) for more detail.

Resources: Prayers, Acclamations and Promises

Prayers of Dedication and Thanksgiving for a Couple

A Prayer of Dedication

God of grace,
whose beauty, ever ancient, ever new,
sings through all creation:
enfold your servants *N* and *N*
with your encouragement, hope, and love.
Fill them with the grace to rejoice always
in their love for one another,
and to follow the Way of holiness and hope
revealed in your Son Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God,
from love we are made
and to love we shall return.
May our love for one another
kindle flames of joy and hope.
May the light and warmth of your grace
inspire us to follow the Way of Jesus Christ,
and serve you in your Kingdom,
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

For the gift of love

God of wonder and of joy:
grace comes from you,
and you alone are the source of life and love.
Without you, we cannot please you;
without your love, our deeds are worth nothing.
Send your Holy Spirit,
and pour into our hearts
that most excellent gift of love,
that we may worship you now
with thankful hearts
and serve you always with willing minds;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For guidance

Father of all,
in Jesus Christ you open to us
the treasures of your kingdom;
guide us by your Holy Spirit
that we may receive your redeeming grace
and reflect the perfect unity of your love,
for you live and reign
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

For the fruit of the Spirit

Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of *N* and *N* to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For companionship

Gracious God,
who taught us through your Son
that love is the fulfilling of the law:
give grace to your servants *N* and *N*,
that they may be companions in joy
and comfort in times of trouble;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

For grace to live well

Faithful God,
giver of all good things,
give *N* and *N* wisdom and devotion
in the ordering of their life together.
May they dwell together in love and peace
all the days of their life,
seeking one another's welfare,
bearing one another's burdens
and sharing one another's joys;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For a covenanted friendship

Faithful God,
in whose love we are called to abide;
give *N* and *N* the grace
to dwell in the gift of devoted friendship.
In their life together,
may they be bound in your love and promise
all the days of their lives,
seeking each other's welfare,
bearing each other's burdens
and sharing each other's joys;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

An Acclamation

All For your goodness to us at all times
we praise you, O Lord.

All For the gift of life and love
we praise you, O Lord.

All For the means of grace and the hope of glory
we praise you, O Lord.

All May the blessing of our God be upon us, now and always.

All **Prosper the work of our hands, O Lord.**
Prosper the work of our hands.

Prayers for God's Blessing

God of generosity and joy,
with you is the well of life and in your light, we see light:
we give you thanks for *N* and *N*,
for the love and friendship they share,
and for their commitment to one another.
As they come before you this day,
trusting you as the giver of all good gifts,
strengthen their love by your love,
gladden their hearts with your joy,
and transform their journey through life
into a pilgrimage of grace.
By your blessing,
and with you as their companion and guide,
may they rejoice in hope and be sustained in love
all the days of their life and in the age to come.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

(or)

Blessed are you, sovereign God,
the author of all good things.
You have made us in your image
to reflect your truth and light.
You have come to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
who called us no longer servants, but friends.
Pour out, we pray, the abundance of your grace
upon *N* and *N* in their life together.
Bless them that, loving each other as you have loved them,
they may share in the blessings of your kingdom
where goodness and mercy abound;
and bring them to feast with your saints for ever
in your heavenly home,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Sealing of a Covenanted Friendship

The minister may say:

N and N, we delight in your desire to dwell more deeply in the grace of Jesus Christ by sealing a covenant of friendship with each other. We pray that, strengthened by the prayers of your family and friends, you may know God's help to live in love and faithfulness.

These words of promise may be used:

*N, I offer myself to you in love and friendship;
may these words be a seal
of my trust and delight in you.
Where you go, I shall go:
I will seek to share your burdens and your joys.
I will pray that you will know God's delight
and walk with you wherever God calls us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

*N, I offer myself to you in love and friendship;
may these words be a seal
of my trust and delight in you.
Where you go, I shall go:
I will seek to share your burdens and your joys.
I will pray that you will know God's delight
and walk with you wherever God calls us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

Prayers which may be said with or by a couple

A prayer of preparation

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A general thanksgiving

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants give you most humble and hearty thanks
for all your goodness and loving kindness.
We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.
And give us, we pray, such a sense of all your mercies
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,
and that we show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up ourselves to your service,
and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honour and glory, for ever and ever.
Amen.

A prayer to the Holy Spirit

O Holy Spirit, giver of light and life,
impart to us thoughts better than our own thoughts,
and prayers better than our own prayers,
and powers better than our own powers,
that we may spend and be spent
in the ways of love and goodness,
after the perfect image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

A prayer of commitment

The couple may say together

God of all good things,
we offer you our lives,
our hopes and hurts,
our praise and promise,
in a covenant of faith and hope.
Unite our wills in your will,
that we may support one another
and show forth your love
all the days of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The minister may say

May almighty God
give you grace to persevere with joy,
that he may complete
the work he has begun in you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

A prayer when rings are worn

God of faithfulness and joy,
source of everlasting love,
by your blessing, let these rings remind *N* and *N*
of the commitment they have made to each other,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

(or)

Almighty God,
whose love is revealed in Jesus Christ
and poured out in the Holy Spirit:
by your blessing, may these rings
worn by your servants *N* and *N*
be signs of their hope-filled covenant
and of your everlasting love,
in our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

Prayers at the lighting of a candle

*The couple may wish to exchange a candle or light a shared candle of dedication.
As a candle is given, this prayer may be said:*

N, I give you this candle
as a sign of my devotion and love for you.
Where you go, I shall go;
when you thrive, I shall thrive;

when you suffer, I suffer too;
for I am bound to you till the end of my days.

All **Amen.**

(or)

Gracious God,
from love we are made
and to love we shall return.
May our love for one another
kindle flames of joy and hope.
May the light and warmth of your grace
inspire us to follow the Way of Jesus Christ,
and serve you in your Kingdom,
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

(or)

The minister may pray:

Loving God,
your Son is the Light of the World
whose flame of love is kindled through the Holy Spirit:
may the light of this candle be for *N* and *N*
a sign of Jesus Christ's call to follow him,
that they may shine as lights in the world
to your glory.

All **Amen.**

A prayer of Augustine of Hippo

Eternal God,
the light of the minds that know you,
the joy of the hearts that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you:
grant us so to know you
that we may truly love you,
so to love you that we may truly serve you,
whose service is perfect freedom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A prayer of Richard of Chichester

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you
for all the benefits that you have won for us,
for all the pains and insults that you have borne for us.
Most merciful redeemer,
friend and brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day. **Amen.**

Prayers for a relationship entering a new stage

For lifelong peace

God of all grace,
friend and companion,
look with favour on *N* and *N*
as they journey together through life.
Deepen their love
and strengthen their wills
to honour the commitment they have made,
that they may continue
in lifelong faithfulness and friendship to each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For faithfulness and peace

God of love and faithfulness,
look mercifully upon *N* and *N* in their life together.
Unite them evermore in your love.
Keep them faithful to the commitment they have made to one another;
strengthen them with every good gift;
and let your peace reign in their hearts,
now and always;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For discipleship

Eternal God,
without your grace nothing is strong, nothing is sure.
Strengthen *N* and *N* with patience, kindness, gentleness
and all other gifts of the Holy Spirit,
so that they may fulfil the commitment they have made.
Keep them faithful to each other and to you.
Fill them with such love and joy
that they may build a home of peace and welcome.
Make their life together a sign of Christ's love
in this broken world,
that unity may overcome estrangement,
forgiveness heal guilt,
and joy conquer despair;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For the healing of memory

Loving God,
you are merciful and forgiving.
Grant that those who are suffering the hurts of the past
may experience your generous love.
Heal their memories, comfort them,
and send them all from here
renewed and hopeful;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For the support of friends

Holy Spirit of God,
you know our strength
and have compassion on our frailty.
Be with *N* and *N*
in all they undertake.
And grant that we their friends,
with all who become their friends,
may love and support them in the years ahead;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Prayers for a Household and Family

These prayers may be used in the home itself, in church, or in another place.

God of love and mercy,
look with kindness on your servants *N* and *N*.
Give them wisdom and devotion in their life together,
that each may be to the other
a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity,
a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy.

May the hospitality of their home
bring refreshment and joy to all around them;
may their love overflow to neighbours in need
and embrace those in distress.

May those whose lives are brought together
be given wisdom, patience and courage
to serve one another.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

For a home

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home:
reign in the home of *N* and *N* as Lord and King;
give them grace to minister to others
as you have ministered to them,
and grant that by deed and word
they may be witnesses of your saving love
to those among whom they live;
for the sake of your holy name.

All **Amen.**

A Prayer for a Couple's Family

Holy and living God,
from whom every family
in heaven and earth is named;
with thanksgiving and gladness
we bring before you the family of *N* and *N*.
We thank you for the grace
they have received from you,
and for the love and support they give.
May they receive the blessing
of your love as they support and cherish
N and *N* now and in the years to come.

All **Amen.**

A Prayer as a Couple make a Home Together

God, our refuge and strength,
our hearts are restless
until they find their rest in you.
As *N* and *N* build their life together,
may your delight and love fill their home.
May their home be free
of the snares of the evil one,
and filled with the joys of self-giving.
May they be generous in hospitality and hope,
and reflect the grace of your love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

DRAFT

Resources: Psalms and Readings

Any suitable translation may be used.

Psalms

Psalm 67

Psalm 121

Psalm 133

Old Testament

1 Samuel 18.1-5

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armour, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

Ruth 1.15-end

Naomi said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.' But Ruth said,
'Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge;
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.
Where you die, I will die—
there will I be buried.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!'
When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.
So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, 'Is this Naomi?' She said to them,
'Call me no longer Naomi,
call me Mara,
for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.
I went away full,
but the Lord has brought me back empty;
why call me Naomi

when the Lord has dealt harshly with me,
and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?’
So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her
from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Song of Solomon 2.10-13

My beloved speaks and says to me:
‘Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away;
for now the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth;
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle-dove
is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vines are in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one,
and come away.’

Song of Solomon 8.6,7

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death,
passion fierce as the grave.
Its flashes are flashes of fire,
a raging flame.
Many waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
If one offered for love
all the wealth of one’s house,
it would be utterly scorned.

Jeremiah 31.31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord’, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Epistle

Romans 12.1,2,9-13

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 3.14-end

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4.4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything

worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 3.12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 3.18-end

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Gospel

Matthew 5.1-10

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

John 15.1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.'

John 15.9-17

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.'

Prayers of Love and Faith: Service Structure

An Outline Order for a Service of the Word

Preparation

The Welcome
The Collect

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings
Sermon

Prayers

The Dedication
Acclamation
Prayers of Intercession
The Lord's Prayer

Conclusion

The Dismissal

An Outline Order for a Service within a Celebration of Holy Communion

Preparation

The Welcome
Prayers of Penitence
The Collect

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings
Gospel Reading
Sermon
The Creed

Prayers

The Dedication
Acclamation
Prayers of Intercession

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace
Preparation of the Table
Taking of the Bread and Wine
The Eucharistic Prayer
The Lord's Prayer
Breaking of the Bread
Giving of Communion
Prayer after Communion

Conclusion

The Dismissal

Notes to the Service

1. Structure

This structure corresponds with that of A Service of the Word, or that of A Service of the Word with a Celebration of Holy Communion. The minister should have reference to the relevant Notes, including for the celebration of Holy Communion where appropriate (*Common Worship* main volume, pp.21-26 and 330-335).

2. Preparation

The minister should greet the congregation and the couple with a liturgical greeting and may introduce the service in his or her own words. Prayers of Penitence and an authorized Absolution are always used within a service of Holy Communion. The Preparation should conclude with a Collect from the Resource Section, such as:

Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of *N* and *N* to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

3. The Liturgy of the Word

There should preferably be at least two readings from the Bible. When this Service is combined with Holy Communion on Sundays and Principal Holy Days, the readings of the day are normally used. A sermon will normally be preached, even if this is not the principal service on Sunday.

4. The Creed

The Creed or authorized Affirmation of Faith may be omitted except at the principal service on Sundays and Principal Holy Days.

5. The Dedication

The Dedication may include prayers for God's blessing on the couple, which may be used as pastoral circumstances dictate, and at the discretion of the minister. A choice of two texts which pray for God's blessing is provided in the Resource Section. Alternatively, other prayers from the Resource Section may be chosen for The Dedication, including a prayer for the sealing of a covenanted friendship. Any adaptation or new texts added by the minister here or elsewhere in the service must not involve the incorporation of the blessings contained in the Marriage Service from the *Book of Common Prayer* or *Common Worship*. If the Prayer when Rings are Worn is used, the hands on which rings are being worn should be extended towards the minister.

6. Acclamation

The Acclamation provided in the Sample Services, or another suitable responsorial text, may be used, or a hymn or song sung instead.

7. Prayers of Intercession

Suitable prayers for the couple from the Resource Section may be used, or new prayers of intercession may be written. Care should be taken to ensure that they fall within the discretion of the minister under Canon B 5 (see Pastoral Introduction and Legal Note).

The couple may wish to pray together, either at the conclusion of the intercessions or, in a service of Holy Communion, as a Prayer after Communion before the Dismissal.

8. Preparation of the Table

At the Preparation of the Table in a service of Holy Communion, one or both of the couple, or their family and friends, may be invited to bring the elements of bread and wine to the holy table.

9. The Dismissal

The liturgical blessing which forms part of the Conclusion is offered for the whole congregation.

Legal Note

Prayers of Love and Faith has been commended by the House of Bishops for use by ministers in the exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5 of the Canons of the Church of England. Canon B 5 states, in its entirety:

1. The minister who is to conduct the service may in his¹ discretion make and use variations which are not of substantial importance in any form of service authorized by Canon B 1 according to particular circumstances.
2. The minister having the cure of souls may on occasions for which no provision is made in *The Book of Common Prayer* or by the General Synod under Canon B 2 or by the Convocations, archbishops, or Ordinary under Canon B 4 use forms of service considered suitable by him for those occasions and may permit another minister to use the said forms of service.
3. All variations in forms of service and all forms of service used under this Canon shall be reverent and seemly and shall be neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.
4. If any question is raised concerning the observance of the provisions of this Canon it may be referred to the bishop in order that he may give such pastoral guidance, advice or directions as he may think fit, but such reference shall be without prejudice to the matter in question being made the subject matter of proceedings under the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1963.
5. In this Canon the expression 'form of service' has the same meaning as in Canon B 1.

The prayers and forms of service commended here are 'neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter' (including, but not limited to, the definition of Holy Matrimony in Canon B 30).

As with all forms of service commended by the House of Bishops, any variations to the sample services or to the prayers in the Resource Section must be in conformity with §3 of Canon B 5.

¹ With respect to the pronouns used in this citation, please see Canon I 1, which states:
In any Canon, unless the contrary intention appears, -
(a) words importing the masculine gender include the feminine;
(b) words importing the feminine gender include the masculine;
(c) words in the singular include the plural and words in the plural include the singular.

Sample Services

Sample Service 1: A Service of the Word

Preparation

The Welcome

The minister welcomes the congregation in these or other words:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you

All **and also with you.**

The minister may introduce the service in appropriate words, concluding with this or another suitable prayer:

Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of *N* and *N* to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

A hymn may be sung.

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Readings from the Resource Section, or other readings from the Bible, may be used here.

Sermon

Prayers

The Dedication and Blessing of the Couple

The couple stands before the minister, who says

N and *N*, you have come before God today,
having made your commitment to one another,
to seek God's blessing and guidance.
Supported by your friends and family,
we pray the blessings of God's kingdom on you.

One of the following prayers for God's blessing may be used, or other prayers from the Resource Section may be used.

God of generosity and joy,
with you is the well of life and in your light, we see light:
we give you thanks for *N* and *N*,
for the love and friendship they share,
and for their commitment to one another.
As they come before you this day,
trusting you as the giver of all good gifts,
strengthen their love by your love,
gladden their hearts with your joy,
and transform their journey through life
into a pilgrimage of grace.
By your blessing,
and with you as their companion and guide,
may they rejoice in hope and be sustained in love
all the days of their life and in the age to come.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

(or)

Blessed are you, sovereign God,
the author of all good things.
You have made us in your image
to reflect your truth and light.
You have come to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
who called us no longer servants, but friends.
Pour out, we pray, the abundance of your grace
upon *N* and *N* in their life together.
Bless them that, loving each other as you have loved them,
they may share in the blessings of your kingdom
where goodness and mercy abound;
and bring them to feast with your saints for ever
in your heavenly home,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

If rings are being worn, the minister may use the Prayer when Rings are Worn in the Resources section.

If a candle or candles are exchanged or lit, the prayer in the Resources section may be used.

The couple may pray together:

God of all good things,
we offer you our lives,
our hopes and hurts,
our praise and promise,
in a covenant of faith and hope.
Unite our wills in your will,
that we may support one another
and show forth your love
all the days of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The minister may say

May almighty God
give you grace to persevere with joy,
that he may complete
the work he has begun in you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

These or other prayers from the Resource Section may be used.

God of love and mercy,
look with kindness on your servants *N* and *N*.
Give them wisdom and devotion in their life together,
that each may be to the other
a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity,
a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy.
Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

May the hospitality of their home
bring refreshment and joy to all around them;
may their love overflow to neighbours in need
and embrace those in distress.
Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

We pray that those whose lives are brought together
be given wisdom, patience and courage
to serve one another in Christ's name.
Help them to desire all that is good,
that the offering of their lives may speak your praise.
Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

May the friends and family gathered here,
and those separated by distance,
be strengthened and blessed this day.
Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

Sustain *N* and *N* throughout their lives
and finally, in your mercy, bring them
to the joy of your heavenly city
where we will all see you face to face.

All Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven...**

(or)

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

All **Our Father, who art in heaven...**

Conclusion

A hymn may be sung.

The minister may say

God of grace,
whose beauty, ever ancient, ever new,
sings through all creation:
enfold your servants *N* and *N*
with your encouragement, hope, and love.
Fill them with the grace to rejoice always
in their love for one another,
and to follow the Way of holiness and hope
revealed in your Son Jesus Christ.

All **Amen.**

Dismissal

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,
defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

Sample Service 2: Holy Communion

Reference should be made to the Notes for Holy Communion (Common Worship main volume, pp.330-335) and the Notes for this service.

Preparation

The Welcome

The president may say

In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All **Amen.**

The president greets the people

The Lord be with you
All **and also with you.**

The president may introduce the service in appropriate words. One or more prayers from the Resource Section may be used.

Prayers of Penitence

These or other Prayers of Penitence are prayed.

God so loved the world
that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ
to save us from our sins,
to be our advocate in heaven,
and to bring us to eternal life.
Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments
and to live in love and peace with all.

All **Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.**

If another confession has already been used, the Kyrie eleison may be used without interpolation here or after the absolution.

The president says

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria in excelsis may be used.

The Collect

The president introduces a period of silent prayer with the words 'Let us pray' or a more specific bidding.

This Collect, or another prayer from the Resource Section, or the Collect of the Day is said.

Almighty God,
you send your Holy Spirit
to be the life and light of all your people.
Open the hearts of *N* and *N* to the riches of his grace,
that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit
in love and joy and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

Readings

Either one or two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading.

At the end of each the reader may say

This is the word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading

An acclamation may herald the Gospel reading.

When the Gospel is announced the reader says

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N*.

All Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

A sermon is preached.

The Creed

On Sundays and Principal Holy Days an authorized translation of the Nicene Creed is used, or on occasion the Apostles' Creed or an authorized Affirmation of Faith may be used.

Prayers

The Dedication

The Dedication may take this form, or another form as described in Note 5.

The couple stands before the minister, who says

*N and N,
we rejoice with you
as you stand before God today
cherished and supported
by your family and friends.
We join our prayers with yours,
asking God in his love to guide and support you
now and in the years to come.*

This prayer of dedication, or another prayer from the Resource Section, may be used.

*Faithful God,
giver of all good things,
give N and N wisdom and devotion
in the ordering of their life together.
May they dwell together in love and peace
all the days of their life,
seeking one another's welfare,
bearing one another's burdens
and sharing one another's joys;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

All **Amen.**

If rings are being worn, the minister may use the Prayer when Rings are Worn in the Resource Section.

If a candle or candles are exchanged or lit, the prayer in the Resource Section may be used.

The couple may pray together:

*God of all good things,
we offer you our lives,
our hopes and hurts,
our praise and promise,
in a covenant of faith and hope.
Unite our wills in your will,
that we may support one another
and show forth your love*

all the days of our lives;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The minister may say

May almighty God
give you grace to persevere with joy,
that he may complete
the work he has begun in you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Acclamation

The following Acclamation may be said, or a hymn or song may be sung.

For your goodness to us at all times

All **we praise you, O Lord.**

For the gift of life and love

All **we praise you, O Lord.**

For the means of grace and the hope of glory

All **we praise you, O Lord.**

May the blessing of our God be upon us, now and always.

All **Prosper the work of our hands, O Lord.**

Prosper the work of our hands.

Prayers of Intercession

These or other prayers from the Resource Section may be used.

God of love and mercy,
look with kindness on your servants *N* and *N*.
Give them wisdom and devotion in their life together,
that each may be to the other
a strength in need, a counsellor in perplexity,
a comfort in sorrow and a companion in joy.

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

May the hospitality of their home
bring refreshment and joy to all around them;
may their love overflow to neighbours in need
and embrace those in distress.

Lord, in your mercy

All **hear our prayer.**

We pray that those whose lives are brought together
be given wisdom, patience and courage
to serve one another in Christ's name.
Help them to desire all that is good,
that the offering of their lives may speak your praise.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

May the friends and family gathered here,
and those separated by distance,
be strengthened and blessed this day.

Lord, in your mercy
All **hear our prayer.**

Sustain *N* and *N* throughout their lives
and finally, in your mercy, bring them
to the joy of your heavenly city
where we will all see you face to face.

Merciful Father,
All **accept these prayers,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

The Peace

The president may introduce the Peace with a suitable sentence and then says

The peace of the Lord be always with you
All **and also with you.**

These words may be added

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All may exchange a sign of peace.

Preparation of the Table

Taking of the Bread and Wine

A hymn may be sung.

The gifts of the people may be gathered and presented.

The table is prepared and bread and wine are placed upon it.

One or more of the prayers at the preparation of the table may be said.

The president takes the bread and wine.

The Eucharistic Prayer

An authorized Eucharistic Prayer is used.

The Lord's Prayer

Breaking of the Bread

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

We break this bread
to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

Giving of Communion

The president says this or another invitation to communion:

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.
Eat and drink
in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

The president and people receive communion.

*Authorized words of distribution are used and the communicant replies **Amen.***

During the distribution hymns and anthems may be sung.

Prayer after Communion

Silence is kept.

The Post Communion or another suitable prayer, from the Resource Section or elsewhere, is said.

All may say

All **Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.**

Conclusion

The Dismissal

A hymn may be sung.

The president may use a suitable blessing, or the following blessing:

The peace of God,
which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds
in the knowledge and love of God,
and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All **Amen.**

A minister says

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

DRAFT