

GENERAL SYNOD

Update to General Synod of the Implementation Work for Living in Love and Faith

Summary

This paper outlines the update presented to General Synod in July 2023 following the publication of GS 2289 *Living in Love and Faith: A Response from the Bishops of the Church of England* and the vote to accept the amended Living in Love and Faith motion at the February 2023 group of sessions of General Synod.

Introduction

1. Since 2017 the Living in Love and Faith (LLF) story has been one of rich learning and inclusive participation across the Church that needs to remain a hallmark of the Church's life, along with the Pastoral Principles for living well together. The motion, agreed by Synod, recognised '...the commitment to learning and deep listening to God and to each other of the Living in Love and Faith process, and desiring with God's help to journey together while acknowledging the different deeply held convictions within the Church.' The motion in full is given in Annex A.
2. The bishops recognise the disagreement that exists across the Church of England and within the House and college of Bishops. This is not just about the prayers of love and faith but about theology and ecclesiology. Despite or maybe even because of this disagreement there is a strong desire within the college and the house of bishops to inhabit a generous theological, ecclesial and pastoral space that holds the Church together in different interpretations of the answers to these questions.
3. The vote on the motion at the February General Synod marked an important moment in the work of LLF, which after a long and passionately argued debate, mandated further work to be conducted in the same spirit of generosity and integrity that had preceded it. In response to this debate and other comments that the bishops have received they have recognised that further work needs to be undertaken to reassure people as we move on from the motion. The current phase of work seeks to implement the actions agreed in the motion, including refining the *Prayers of Love and Faith* (PLF) and developing Pastoral Guidance, together with setting up a Pastoral Consultative Group to take these elements forward beyond this phase of work.
4. The first point in the motion affirms the action taken by the bishops in their joint letter, where they are united in expressing their grief and apologise for the way that many LGBTQI+ people have been treated by the Church, and the pain and harm caused by this. In the letter they also commit to welcoming, accepting and affirming every person in Christ, while acknowledging their continued disagreement about how same-sex relationships may be expressed within a Christian context. Since the motion was passed, ongoing conversations at the House and College of Bishops have continued to acknowledge where the Church has failed in its welcome to LGBTQI+ people and to express the desire of the bishops to walk together with a radical Christian vision of inclusion.
5. The call for additional theological input has also been recognised, and members of the Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) have been invited to link with the ongoing work as well as to form a FAOC working group to consider theological questions arising from the implementation work.

6. The LLF Next Steps Group initiated three working groups to take forward the implementation of the motion in three workstreams: Prayers of Love and Faith, Pastoral Guidance and Pastoral Reassurance. It was ensured that each of the working groups had a membership that could input from a range of perspectives, including from members of the LGBTQI+ community. It was noted that there was not many lay members of groups.
7. The LLF Next Steps Group then came to an end and the work of coordinating the new working groups is being taken forward by a Steering Group, supported by a core staff team. The Steering Group is holding the process for this implementation phase, managing the timetable and enabling the three groups to collaborate well. The complete Terms of Reference of these groups and their membership can be found on the [LLF web pages](#).
8. This paper is reporting back work of the three groups and the work conducted by the House and College of Bishops based on papers from the groups. The final proposals on Living in Love and Faith will be brought forward following decisions made by the House of Bishops.

Prayers of Love and Faith

9. As part of the continuing process of listening and discernment, at the February Synod there was the opportunity to submit written comments on the Prayers of Love and Faith. 226 responses were received, of which 148 were classified as generally positive and 78 generally negative. Overall the most significant critical comments were that the PLF were too much like marriage (60 responses); they don't go far enough (44 responses); and that more pastoral guidance would be required for their use (42 responses). Other ideas were also presented, ranging from specific textual suggestions to more general observations.
10. Based on feedback from Synod and from members of the Prayers of Love and Faith Working Group, a revised version of the prayers was shared with the House of Bishops in May and with the College of Bishops in June. This is substantially the version presented here, with some additional changes made by the working group in light of feedback from the Bishops' meetings (Annex B). As the work on Pastoral Guidance and Pastoral Reassurance comes together with the Prayers, it will be necessary to make further changes and to provide further background, instructions for use, and additional notes.
11. There are general principles which stand behind the *Prayers of Love and Faith*.
 - a) Like many provisions in Common Worship, PLF is a suite of resources, and ministers may wish to use some or all of the contents in different ways within the conditions set down for their use. Framing the PLF as versatile, varied, and customisable to pastoral context seems essential to their successful use and positive reception.
 - b) Whether or not the PLF are used in the context of a service, prayers for God's blessing need not be used.
 - c) It will be clear in the final version of the PLF that we want to provide a joyful opportunity to celebrate what is good and holy in a relationship. The rubrics guiding the use of the prayers in context will make clear their distinction from the liturgies for Holy Matrimony.

12. The group has been reviewing the routes by which the prayers may be authorised (or commended), in concert with the Pastoral Guidance and Pastoral Reassurance groups. They are also considering, with the other working groups, in which situations the PLF will be recommended for use and what conditions may be imposed on them, such as that they may only be used with those whose relationship is demonstrably faithful, exclusive, and permanent.
13. The House and College have considered the range of routes presented by the Group including Canon B5 commendation of the *Prayers*, B4 approval by the Convocations, Archbishops or Ordinary and B2 approval by General Synod. They are particularly weighing up the option of approval by the Archbishops (under Canon B4.2), as an approach that may provide more legal protection for those ministers who choose to use the Prayers. No final decision has been made by the House as to the route by which the prayers will be made available for use.

Pastoral Guidance

14. The Pastoral Guidance group has been working to translate the mind of the House and College of Bishops into more detailed, practical outworking. Much of the *Pastoral Guidance* will relate directly to clergy and lay leaders, and those involved in vocational discernment processes. However, it will also offer a pastoral framework for the ministry of clergy and lay leaders in the wider church.
15. The task of this group has been:
- a) To identify what the *Pastoral Guidance* needs to contain in the light of the College of Bishops' work and the feedback from the General Synod;
 - b) To structure and present the *Guidance* in an appropriately accessible way;
 - c) To identify in which order the different elements of the *Guidance* need to be developed – taking account of the urgency of some aspects in relation to the ordained and lay ministerial vocations discernment cycles;
 - d) To develop the different components, taking into account stakeholder feedback;
 - e) To identify past statements and guidance produced by the Church and consider their status once the new *Pastoral Guidance* has been approved.
16. The work of the Pastoral Guidance group has been to identify and sharpen the answers of the bishops to key questions, so that the guidance that is produced reflects the mind of the House and College and meets the need that has been identified. 'Answers' do not presuppose agreement, or a univocal statement: answers can be an agreement on the shape of the 'space' we agree to inhabit together, and how far that space may stretch to include different perspectives, and what boundaries there may be.
17. Work with the bishops highlighted a number of questions where clear guidance and direction is needed from the bishops. These included:
- whether it is possible to disagree and make a generous space within which to keep walking together;
 - what view the bishops would now take on sexual intimacy for couples who have entered into civil same-sex marriages;
 - the status and application of the guidance across dioceses;
 - and whether clergy should be allowed to enter same-sex civil marriages.

The bishops discussed these matters at length seeking to discern the appropriate way forward. The bishops also considered questions that came from a meeting of the House of Clergy on 4th May.

18. In responding to the questions from the Pastoral Guidance group the bishops were asked to give informal steers acknowledging that only once they were able to consider the progress of all three working groups more comprehensively could formal decisions be made.
19. From the steers given there was a majority desire by the bishops at both meetings that it should be possible to disagree and inhabit a generous theological, ecclesial and pastoral space that holds the Church together in different interpretations of the answers to these questions. The bishops also expressed a desire that their application of the Prayers and Pastoral Guidance should not create a disparate and unpredictable approach across the country.
20. The bishops are upholding the Doctrine of Marriage and their intention remains that the final version of the *Prayers of Love and Faith* should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England. There was also a commitment to provide a generous pastoral response which is loving and celebratory to those who are in life-long monogamous same-sex committed relationships.

Pastoral Reassurance

21. The purpose of this group has been to provide options for the House and College of Bishops for pastoral reassurance relating specifically to the use of *Prayers of Love and Faith*, and to the wider ecclesiological issues their use raises.
22. The work of this group is focused on:
 - a) what will be required in order to ensure freedom of conscience for clergy;
 - b) considering the implications of freedom of conscience for bishops;
 - c) considering the implications for licensed lay ministers or other lay ministers in positions of authority;
 - d) considering the implications for congregations and PCCs;
 - e) guidance for deaneries, multi parish benefices, cathedrals and churches about a) how to determine their approach to the Prayers of Love and Faith and b) how best to implement their decisions;
 - f) transparency regarding offering couples the *Prayers of Love and Faith*;
 - g) guidance for TEIs, DDOs, people in the discernment process and ordinands
 - h) considering a variety of approaches to pastoral reassurance (including informal and more formal options) and articulating a range of possibilities for the bishops.
23. As it needs to be responsive to the work of the other groups, the Pastoral Reassurance Group has been open to a number of scenarios. Where possible, though, the group has tried to hold to the principle of living well as a church, generously, with integrity and with respect even across difference, reassuring both those who decide to use the *Prayers of Love and Faith* and those who do not.
24. The letter from the Bishops in GS2289 states: 'The use of these prayers will be entirely discretionary; clergy may choose to use some combination of these prayers, or not at all.' In some contexts, clergy, LLMs and PCCs may be aligned in their desire to offer or not offer the *Prayers*. In others, there will be a variety of views, and in teams, multi-

parish benefices, mission communities, chaplaincies, and fresh expressions of church, it is highly likely that individuals will vary in their decision about the Prayers.

25. It is hoped that within such settings, those in leadership will enable prayerful discussions and come to an agreed way forward. Where such agreement is proving difficult some support may be needed e.g. a process facilitated by an archdeacon or consultant. The *Pastoral Guidance* will provide significant support in this process but further work may also be needed (perhaps shared between dioceses) to support decision making, such as considering:
- a) Clarity about decision making regarding the prayers – who is to decide?
 - b) A suggested process to enable discussion in a ministry team and with PCCs
 - c) Further support in each diocese, e.g. facilitators
26. Bishops will have their own views about the use or otherwise of PLF in the context of same sex relationships, and these may be widely known. But bishops are also by their consecration the focus of unity for their dioceses. In this it is essential that bishops take seriously their collective responsibility to honour a mixed ecology of practices. It is also essential that every bishop have their own freedom of conscience. The House of Bishops at its May meeting asked that further work be done on a proposed statement from the bishops that sets out this collective episcopacy and unity in practice.
27. The Pastoral Reassurance group have considered how best we can move forward, acknowledging divisions within the Church with options that provide the reassurance necessary given different scenarios with the *Prayers* and the *Pastoral Guidance*. These options include considering structural approaches where they are congruent with the Pastoral Principles, where they maximise mutual working together and seek the Gospel imperative for the Church to be one. In addition the bishops recognise that the debate they are having is not just about the *Prayers* and the *Pastoral Guidance* but one also about theology.

Future Work

28. The immediate work following this report to General Synod will be to develop the *Pastoral Guidance* to inform the work on the PLF and of Pastoral Reassurance, in setting out clear proposals for the House and College of Bishops to consider, both for the authorisation and/or commendation of the prayers and for providing effective reassurance. It is intended for this work to return to General Synod in November.
29. In addition there will be proposals for work following on from the implementation phase, including the formation of the Pastoral Consultative Group to review and refine the *Pastoral Guidance*, further theological work by FAOC and the additional areas of wider work named in Annex A of the original paper GS2289.

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Annex A

Living in Love and Faith General Synod Motion February 2023 (as amended)

'That this Synod, recognising the commitment to learning and deep listening to God and to each other of the Living in Love and Faith process, and desiring with God's help to journey together while acknowledging the different deeply held convictions within the Church:

- a) lament and repent of the failure of the Church to be welcoming to LGBTQI+ people and the harm that LGBTQI+ people have experienced and continue to experience in the life of the Church;
- b) recommit to our shared witness to God's love for and acceptance of every person by continuing to embed the Pastoral Principles in our life together locally and nationally;
- c) commend the continued learning together enabled by the Living in Love and Faith process and resources in relation to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage;
- d) welcome the decision of the House of Bishops to replace Issues in Human Sexuality with new pastoral guidance;
- e) welcome the response from the College of Bishops and look forward to the House of Bishops further refining, commending and issuing the Prayers of Love and Faith described in GS 2289 and its Annexes;
- f) invite the House of Bishops to monitor the Church's use of and response to the Prayers of Love and Faith, once they have been commended and published, and to report back to Synod in five years' time.'
- g) endorse the decision of the College and House of Bishops not to propose any change to the doctrine of marriage, and their intention that the final version of the Prayers of Love and Faith should not be contrary to or indicative of a departure from the doctrine of the Church of England.

DRAFT

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH

amended 26 May 2023



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Pastoral Introduction

[To be written once further work on the Pastoral Guidance and Pastoral Reassurance can be incorporated into the text.]

Resources: Prayers, Acclamations and Promises

Prayers of Gathering

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.

All **Amen.**

An introductory bidding

Dear friends in Christ,
we gather with *N* and *N* to celebrate with them
their love, faithfulness, and commitment.
We come to hear God's holy word,
and to surround *N* and *N* with our love and prayer
as they seek the blessings of God's kingdom
in their life together.

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 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.**

Prayers of Dedication and Thanksgiving

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 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 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.**

An Acclamation

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 for a Covenanted Friendship

At the 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.

The couple may say to one another:

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 blessing
and walk with you wherever God calls us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The minister may say the following prayer:

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.**

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,
and gladden their hearts with your joy,
that their journey through life
may become 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,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

(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.
In your Son, Jesus Christ,
you call us no longer servants, but friends.
Pour out, we pray, the abundance of your grace
upon *N and N* in their life together.
By your blessing,
may they share in the joy 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.**

(or)

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace;
this day and for ever.

All **Amen.**

This prayer may alternatively be used at the end of the service.

Prayers which may be said with or by a couple

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.

All **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.

All **Amen.**

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.**

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.

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.

All **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.

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 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 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 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

For a home

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.**

(or)

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.**

The Blessing of a Home

The Prayers of Love and Faith will include here the rite for the Blessing of a Home in the form which will come before the House of Bishops for commendation in July.

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/children* 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.**

For a new family brought together

God of all grace and goodness,
we thank you for this new family,
and for everything parents and children have to share;
by your Spirit of peace draw them together
and help them to be true friends to one another.
Let your love surround them
and your care protect them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.**

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 all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

Ruth 1.15-22

So she 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.

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 Structures

Prayers of Love and Faith may be used in a variety of contexts, including in church or at home. Where it is desired to pray for a couple in the context of a service, these Structures offer a suggested order, which may be adapted as pastoral circumstances dictate. The Pastoral Introduction and the Notes offer specific guidance which should be read alongside the Structures.

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. Structures

These structures correspond respectively with the structure of A Service of the Word, or the structure 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. The minister and the minister's discretion

Ordained ministers and lay ministers alike may take services which draw on these resources (except services including Holy Communion where the president must be a priest).

[TBC: Note on local decision to use PLF based on Pastoral Guidance]

[TBC: Note on modifications to these prayers and forms of service based on route for approval]

3. 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.

4. 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. At other times, they may be taken from the Resource Section or from other provision. A sermon will normally be preached, even if this is not the principal service on Sunday.

5. The Creed

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

6. The Dedication

The prayers in the Resource Section may be used as pastoral circumstances dictate and in accordance with the Pastoral Guidance [TBC], and at the discretion of the minister. If a prayer for God's blessing is to be included, a choice of three texts 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*.

7. Symbolism

After The Dedication, the minister may pray over rings worn by the couple, or at the lighting of a candle, or over other objects which have symbolic value to the couple. A prayer from the Resource Section, or one of the following, may be used:

A prayer when rings are worn

God of faithfulness and joy,
whose love is revealed in Jesus Christ
and poured out in the Holy Spirit:
may these rings worn by your servants N and N
be signs of their hope-filled covenant
and of your everlasting love
revealed in Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

A prayer at the lighting of a candle

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.**

8. Acclamation

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

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. The Dismissal

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

Legal Note

A Legal Note appropriate to the form of final approval, consonant with any relevant provisions in the Pastoral Guidance, will be supplied.

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 these or other appropriate words:

Dear friends in Christ,
we gather with *N* and *N* to celebrate with them
their love, faithfulness, and commitment.
We come to hear God's holy word,
and to surround *N* and *N* with our love and prayer
as they seek the blessings of God's kingdom
in their life together.

The introduction may conclude 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

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 or more of the prayers from the Resource Section may be used here.

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.

Merciful Father,
All **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.
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 may be 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.**

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.

All Merciful Father,
**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 **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.**

The Dismissal

A hymn may be sung.

The president may use the following, or some other suitable blessing:

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.**

A minister says

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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