

PRAYERS OF LOVE AND FAITH

Prayers of Love and Faith

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PRAYERS FOR A COVENANTED FRIENDSHIP

These prayers are commended by the House of Bishops as being suitable for use by ministers in exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5.

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 friends 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.

Notes

As with all use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith*, careful attention should be paid to the associated Pastoral Guidance.

1 Covenanted friendship

Friendship is an important category of relationship in Scripture and in Christian tradition. Christians belong to those whom Jesus Christ calls his friends, for whom he lays down his life. Christian friendship involves mutual love and harmony with one another, sharing one another's burdens and joys, in conformity to Christ.

These Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship are available for those who wish to express their mutual love and loyalty before God in a deeper way. The conditions needed are defined by these friends, as are the type of goods they commit to embody. The inclusion of covenanted friendships in the *Prayers of Love and Faith* reflects the importance of deep friendship, particularly in a world in which commitment is often associated only with sexual relationships. Covenanted friendships embody a type of relationship that is both committed and non-sexual, which is not exclusive, yet deeply meaningful, particular, and seeking to grow in holiness.

Covenanted friendships are relationships of an entirely different nature to marriage. Those who wish to seal a covenanted friendship may be of the same sex or opposite sexes. The friends may be married to other people, or unmarried. The friendship is by definition not sexually intimate. It will likely be expressed in practical forms of sharing aspects of life together. As with all friendships, care will need to be taken to identify the nature of the covenant and how the bonds of covenanted friendship will complement other friendships and (where relevant) the bonds of marriage.

2 Use in public worship

Prayers for a Covenanted Friendship may be used in different situations: in private prayer and pastoral conversation, privately in church before a minister, or in the context of public worship. When the latter option is appropriate, it will be helpful for all present to be able to read or hear an explanation of the nature of covenanted friendship, which may be drawn from Note 1 (above).

RESOURCE SECTION: PRAYERS, ACCLAMATIONS, PROMISES

These prayers are commended by the House of Bishops as being suitable for use by ministers, including, where applicable, in the exercise of their discretion under Canon B 5.

Introduction

The *Prayers of Love and Faith* are offered as resources in praying with and for a same-sex couple 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. Recognising and celebrating the goods in faithful, committed same-sex relationships and seeking God's help and blessing in growing in faith, love and holiness, these prayers seek to help couples grow in holiness. The *Prayers of Love and Faith* are not a form of marriage service, nor do they equate the relationships brought before God to Holy Matrimony. Nevertheless, they recognise all that is good, and holy, and faithful in these relationships and enable the people in these relationships to place themselves before God and ask for God's blessing for their journey of love and faith. The prayers are drawn from existing sources but also include newly commissioned material.

This Resource Section provides prayers, acclamations, and promises, together with passages from Scripture, which can be used in a variety of different contexts. These materials can be used in private prayer and conversation as well as in weekday or Sunday worship regularly offered

by a church, in the discretion of the minister under Canon B 5. Material from the Resource Section should not at present be used to offer special or 'standalone' services (hereafter, standalone services). These are services that do not fall within the normal, usual pattern of worship for a parish, and are designed primarily around the *Prayers of Love and Faith*.

As with all use of the *Prayers of Love and Faith*, careful attention should be paid to the associated Pastoral Guidance issued by the House of Bishops.

How to use these resources

A minister (who may be either ordained or a lay minister) who is asked by a couple to offer prayers 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 requirements relating to worship.

Some authorised forms of service make their own provision for the use of prayers and other material at the discretion of the minister: for example, the prayers of intercession at the Holy Communion where "other suitable words may be used", or at a Service of the Word where the Prayers may include "petitions of intercession, litanies, thanksgivings and other forms of extempore prayer", and there is a discretion, at certain times, to use scripture readings other than those prescribed in the lectionary. Under Canon B1, "it is the minister's responsibility to have a good understanding of the forms of service used and he shall endeavour to ensure that the worship offered glorifies God and edifies the people." It is on this basis that the House of Bishops offers the prayers contained within *Prayers of Love and Faith* for use by the minister where an authorised form of service makes provision for the use of prayers or other material at the discretion of the minister.

There may also be particular circumstances where an authorised form of service does not make provision for the use of prayers at the

discretion of the minister: for example, Evening Prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer. It is nevertheless a widely accepted practice to include, for example, intercessory prayers after the third collect or after the anthem. This can be justified on the basis that it represents the use of “variations which are not of substantial importance” under the authority of Canon B 5.1. Where the minister considers it appropriate to include prayers or other material for a same-sex couple at a service which does not make its own provision for prayers at the discretion of the minister, the House of Bishops commends the resources contained for use by the minister in the discretion to make and use variations under Canon B 5.1.

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 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.

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

In addition to these prayers, the Blessing of a Home (pages 22–34) may also be used.

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.

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.**

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.

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.'

THE BLESSING OF A HOME

Notes

1 The home

Homes vary in size and configuration. The officiating minister should make an appropriate selection from the prayers provided here, and is free to compose prayers in similar form for the blessing of rooms for which no specific provision is made. The minister will need to adapt the provision to each house or flat.

2 The use of the water of baptism

It is a long-standing practice to sprinkle the water of baptism on the people, and on the home, during the blessing of a home. Such use is optional. Where it is not possible to take water directly from the font, the following or another suitable prayer may be used over the water, either before the service, or at the beginning of it.

Blessed are you, sovereign God of all,
to you be glory and praise for ever.
You are our light and our salvation.
From the deep waters of death
you have raised your Son to life in triumph.
Grant that all who have been born anew by water and the Spirit
may daily be renewed in your image,
walk by the light of faith,
and serve you in newness of life;
through your anointed Son, Jesus Christ,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
we lift our voices of praise.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All Blessed be God for ever.

Common Worship: Christian Initiation p.125

3 Oil

Oil has since ancient times been used as symbol of the protecting power of Christ on the progress of a Christian through life, and the use of the oil of chrism, over which the bishop has prayed, has much to commend it, evoking the 'oil of gladness' (Psalm 45.7). Such use is entirely optional.

4 Vesture

It is customary for the minister to wear a surplice and white stole, but local custom may also be observed.

5 The Entrance

The place where the occupants meet the minister(s) will vary depending on the type and shape of the dwelling and whether or not it has land or a garden. The important thing is that the opening prayers are said at the entrance to the home. This might be the front door of a house, but could equally be in the corridor outside the door of a flat or of a workplace. In such cases, particular consideration should be given to other residents who share the corridor.

6 Sign of the Cross

It is a long-standing practice of the church to make the sign of the cross over people and places during services of this kind.

7 Holy Communion

If Holy Communion is celebrated during the Blessing of a Home, the Structure on the following page may be followed.

Structure

The Gathering

At the Entrance
On the Land

Entry

At the Main Door

In the Home

Prayers of Penitence
The Collect
In Bedrooms
In a Study or Workroom
In the Kitchen
At a Table
In the Living Room

The Liturgy of the Word

Reading(s)
Gospel Reading
[Sermon]

Prayers

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

The Conclusion

The Blessing of a Home

The minister(s) approach the home. Those who live or work in the place in which prayers will be said meet the minister(s) at the entrance to the home.

The Gathering

At the entrance

The minister says

Dear friends in Christ,
we enter this home in the name of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Lord is here.

All His Spirit is with us.

[Alleluia. Christ is risen.

All He is risen indeed. Alleluia]

The minister, standing outside the entrance to the home, may sign the lintel of the main door or the gate to the house with the sign of the cross, saying

Enter the gates with thanksgiving in your heart;
and come into God's presence with praise.

On the land

Where appropriate, standing on the land on which the home stands, the minister may say

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,
the world and all who dwell therein.
The Lord your God cares for the land.

All God watches over it season by season.

God of earth and sky,
you visit the land and bless it,
you greatly enrich it,
you water it abundantly and bless its growth with your goodness.
You form us from the dust of the ground.

All You breathe into us the breath of life.

Entry

At the main door

Crossing the threshold of the home, the minister says

Peace be to this home

All and to all who dwell here.

The householders then say

Welcome to our home.

The minister says

God is love, and those who live in God live in love,
and God lives in them.

The householders respond

Blessed be God who gives peace and shelter.

The minister says either or both of the following prayers

May the door of this home be wide enough
to welcome all who need love and friendship.
May the door of this home be narrow enough
to shut out pettiness and pride, envy and enmity.
May its threshold be no stumbling block
to young or aged feet.
May it be too high to admit complacency or selfishness.
May this home be, for all who enter,
the doorway to your eternal kingdom
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

God of hearth and home,
be present in this home, and drive from it all that is evil.
Defend from harm all who pass through this door,
and bless them in their going out and coming in;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

In the Home

If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the Prayers of Penitence and Collect may be said here.

Prayers are used in individual rooms as appropriate. Rooms for which no provision is made here, as well as corridors, may be sprinkled with the water of baptism if desired.

In bedrooms

All In peace I will lie down and sleep
for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

O Lord, our heavenly Father,
you neither slumber nor sleep:
Guard with your unfailing love all who take their rest here,
that, refreshed by the gift of sleep,
they may serve you joyfully day by day;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

In a child's room

Almighty God,
whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth
the life of an earthly home:
bless with your protection the *children* of this household
and grant wisdom and understanding
to those who care for them,
that they may grow up in security and love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

In a study or workroom

Seek your God and he will be found.
All **Search for God with all your heart, and with all your mind.**

O God, the source of all wisdom,
may this be a place of reflection,
knowledge and understanding.

Lead us in paths of truth and integrity,
lest we go about in ignorance;
reveal yourself to us,
for in you we know the incarnate Word.

All **Amen.**

In the kitchen

Jesus said: Which is the greater, the one who sits at table
or the one who serves?

All **but I am among you as one who serves.**

Lord, by your blessing grant to all who work here
that they may serve you in serving others,
and share in your perfect service,
and that, in the noise and clutter of the kitchen,
they may possess you in peace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

At a table

God, you give good things liberally and grudge not:
may all who eat and drink together at this table
be joined in true fellowship,
praise you with thankful hearts,
and be ever mindful of the needs of others;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

In the living room

Jesus entered a certain village;
All **and a woman named Martha received him into her home.**

Lord, you have said,

'I have called you friends'.

May this be a place where true fellowship is known,
and bless all who sit or talk or work together here;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and for ever.
Amen.**

(or)

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All **Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Conclusion

Lord, abide with your servants who dwell here.
Be their shelter when they are at home,
their companion when they are away,
and their welcome guest when they return;
and let your blessing come down upon them,
now and for ever.

All **Amen.**

The Blessing of a Home within a celebration of Holy Communion

Notes to the Blessing of a Home

1 Structure

The rite for 'The Blessing of a Home' is followed, up to the point at which all the rooms have been prayed in. The Liturgy of the Eucharist then follows.

2 Vesture

It is customary to wear a white stole (over surplice or alb), but local custom may also be observed. Note should be taken of Canon B 8(3), which addresses vesture at the Eucharist. A small selection of prayers and information on liturgical colours for different "intentions" may be found in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer* (pp.535-6).

3 Preparation for Holy Communion

The service will flow more smoothly if all is prepared for the celebration of Holy Communion before the House Blessing begins. This will include establishing which of those attending wish to receive communion, and who might wish or prefer to receive a blessing.

4 Proper texts

The following texts may be used at the appropriate points in the service:

The grace of God has dawned upon the world
with healing for all.

Let us come to him, in sorrow for our sins,
seeking healing and salvation.

Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labour in vain.
Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of ungodliness.

Christ, have mercy.

All Christ, have mercy.

The Lord will defend your going out and your coming in
from this time forward for evermore.

Lord, have mercy.

All Lord, have mercy.

Collect

Be present, be present,
Lord Jesus Christ,
our risen high priest,
and make yourself known in the breaking of the bread.

All Amen.

Readings

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying,
Thus you shall bless the Israelites: You shall say to them,
The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.
So they shall put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them.

Numbers 6.22–27

Therefore, brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling, consider that Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses also 'was faithful in all God's house.' Yet Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken later. Christ, however, was faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house if we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope.

Hebrews 3.1–6

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

John 20.19–23

Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer

And now we give you thanks
that all our help comes from you,
that you watch over us by day and by night,
in our going out and in our coming in.

Post Communion

Eternal Spirit,
enfold this home with love,
fill this home with joy,
and build this home in peace,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

Blessing

God, who has prepared for us a city with eternal foundations, bring you to the triumphant joy of the city of the great King; and the blessing ...

AUTHORIZATION

The material in *Prayers of Love and Faith* (including the rite for the Blessing of a Home as well as material drawn from *Common Worship and New Patterns for Worship*) has been commended by the House of Bishops of the General Synod for use by the minister in exercise of his or her discretion under Canon B 5 of the Canons of the Church of England.

In using this material, careful attention should be paid to the Notes and to the associated Pastoral Guidance.