

A SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE I

This service of Christian marriage is found in UMH. It is provided for couples who wish to solemnize their marriage in a service of Christian worship, parallel in its structure to the Sunday service, which includes the proclamation of the Word with prayer and praise. Christian marriage is proclaimed as a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant. Everything about the service is designed to witness that this is a Christian marriage.

Both words and actions consistently reflect the belief that husband and wife are equal partners in Christian marriage and that they are entering into the marriage of their own volition.

Those present are understood to be an active congregation rather than simply passive witnesses. They give their blessing to the couple and to the marriage, and they join in prayer and praise. It is highly appropriate that the congregation sing hymns and other acts of worship. See the wedding hymns in UMH 642–47, those listed under Weddings in UMH, and others listed in the service below.

Holy Communion may or may not be celebrated. If it is, it is most important that its significance be made clear. Specifically: (1) The marriage rite is included in a Service of Word and Table. (2) Not only the husband and wife but the whole congregation are to be invited to receive communion. It is our tradition to invite all Christians to the Lord's table. (3) There should be no pressure that would embarrass those who for whatever reason do not choose to receive communion.

The decision to perform the ceremony is the right and responsibility of the pastor, in accordance with the laws of the state and The United Methodist Church. All plans should be approved by the pastor. The pastor's "due counsel with the parties involved" prior to marriage, mandated by The Book of Discipline, should include, in addition to premarital counseling, discussing and planning the service with them and informing them of policies or guidelines established by the congregation on such matters as decorations, photography, and audio or video recording. Any leadership roles taken by other clergy should be at the invitation of the pastor of the church where the service is held. The organist or person in charge of the music should be consulted and work with the couple in all decisions on music selection.

Ethnic and cultural traditions are encouraged and may be incorporated into the service at the discretion of the pastor.

Any children of the man or the woman, other family, and friends may take a variety of roles in the service, depending on their ages and abilities. They may, for example, be members of the wedding party, participate in the Response of the Families and People, read scripture lessons, sing or play instrumental music, or make a witness in their own words.

In the case of couples who are not church members or are not prepared to make the Christian commitment expressed in our services, adaptations may be made at the discretion of the

pastor.

ENTRANCE

The congregation may participate by using A Service of Christian Marriage.

GATHERING

While the people gather, instrumental or vocal music may be offered.

Here and throughout the service, the use of music appropriate for Christian worship is strongly encouraged.

During the entrance of the wedding party, there may be instrumental music or a hymn, a psalm, a canticle, or an anthem. The congregation may be invited to stand. The following processional hymns in UMH are suggested:

166 All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine
559 Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation
475 Come Down, O Love Divine
61 Come, Thou Almighty King
732 Come, We That Love the Lord
111 How Can We Name a Love
644 Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring
89 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
93 Let All the World in Every Corner Sing
117 O God, Our Help in Ages Past
66 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
96 Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above
139 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
126 Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
90 Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones

The woman and the man, entering separately or together, now come forward with members of the wedding party. The woman and the man may be escorted by representatives of their families until they have reached the front of the church, or through the Response of the Families, at which time their escorts are seated.

GREETING

Pastor to people:

Friends, we are gathered together in the sight of God
to witness and bless the joining together of *Name* and *Name*
in Christian marriage.

The covenant of marriage was established by God,
who created us male and female for each other.

With his presence and power

Jesus graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee,
and in his sacrificial love
gave us the example for the love of husband and wife.

Name and *Name* come to give themselves to one another
in this holy covenant.

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

DECLARATION BY THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

Pastor to the persons who are to marry:

I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people,
to declare your intention
to enter into union with each other
through the grace of Jesus Christ,
who calls you into union with himself
as acknowledged in your baptism.

Pastor to the woman:

Name, will you have *Name* to be your husband,
to live together in holy marriage?
Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him,
in sickness and in health,
and forsaking all others, be faithful to him
as long as you both shall live?

Woman: I will.

Pastor to the man:

Name, will you have *Name* to be your wife,
to live together in holy marriage?
Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her,
in sickness and in health,
and forsaking all others, be faithful to her
as long as you both shall live?

Man: I will

RESPONSE OF THE FAMILIES AND THE PEOPLE

Pastor to people:

The marriage of *Name* and *Name* unites their families
and creates a new one.

They ask for your blessing.

Parents and other representatives of the families may respond in one of the following ways:

**We rejoice in your union,
and pray God's blessing upon you.**

or, in reply to the pastor's question:

Do you who represent their families
rejoice in their union
and pray God's blessing upon them?

We do.

*or, children of the couple may repeat these or similar words, prompted line by line, by the
pastor:*

**We love both of you.
We bless your marriage.
Together we will be a family.**

*If the woman and the man have been escorted by representatives of their families, their escorts,
having blessed the marriage in the name of their families, may be seated.*

Pastor to people:

Will all of you, by God's grace,
do everything in your power
to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will.

PRAYER *

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

God of all peoples,

you are the true light illumining everyone.
 You show us the way, the truth, and the life.
 You love us even when we are disobedient.
 You sustain us with your Holy Spirit.
 We rejoice in your life in the midst of our lives.
 We praise you for your presence with us,
 and especially in this act of solemn covenant;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

A hymn, psalm, canticle, anthem, or other music may be offered before or after the readings. The congregation may be invited to stand.

Suggested Scripture Lessons

Genesis 1:26 –28,31a	The creation of man and woman
Song of Solomon 2:10 –14, 16a ; 8:6–7	Love is strong as death.
Isaiah 43:1 –7	You are precious in God's eyes.
Isaiah 55:10 –13	You shall go out in joy.
Isaiah 61:10 –62:3	Rejoice in the Lord.
Isaiah 63:7 –9	The steadfast love of the Lord
Romans 12:1 –2, 9–18	The life of a Christian
1 Corinthians 13	The greatest of these is love.
2 Corinthians 5:14 –17	In Christ we are a new creation.
Ephesians 2:4 –10	God's love for us
Ephesians 4:1 –6	Called to the one hope
Ephesians 4:25 –5:2	Members one of another
Philippians 2:1 –2	The Christlike spirit
Philippians 4:4 –9	Rejoice in the Lord.
Colossians 3:12 –17	Live in love and thanksgiving.

1 John 3:18 –24	Love one another.
1 John 4:7 –16	God is love.
Revelation 19:1, 5–9a	The wedding feast of the Lamb
Matthew 5:1 –10	The Beatitudes
Matthew 7:21, 24–27	A house built upon a rock
Matthew 22:35 –40	Love, the greatest commandment
Mark 2:18 –22	Joy in Christ as at a wedding
Mark 10:42 –45	True greatness
John 2:1 –11	The marriage feast of Cana
John 15:9 –17	Remain in Christ's love.

Suggested Hymns from UMH

642	As Man and Woman We Were Made
451	Be Thou My Vision
158	Come, Christians, Join to Sing
164	Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life
695	O Lord, May Church and Home Combine
645	O Perfect Love
408	The Gift of Love
138	The King of Love My Shepherd Is
643	When Love Is Found
549	Where Charity and Love Prevail
647	Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here

Suggested Psalms and Canticles

23 (UMH 128, 136–38, 518, 754)	The Lord is my shepherd.
33 (UMH 767)	Rejoice in the Lord.
34 (UMH 769)	I will bless the Lord.
37 (UMH 772)	Trust in the Lord and do good.
67 (UMH 791)	May God be gracious to us.
100 (UMH 74, 75, 821)	Make a joyful noise to the Lord.
103 (UMH 139, 824)	Bless the Lord, O my soul.
112 (UMH 833)	Happy are those who fear the Lord.
145 (UMH 857)	The Lord is gracious.
148 (UMH 861)	Praise the Lord from the heavens.
150 (UMH 96, 139, 862)	Praise the Lord.
Canticle of Love (UMH 646)	Two shall become one in love.

SERMON OR OTHER WITNESS TO CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

INTERCESSORY PRAYER *

An extemporaneous prayer may be offered, or the following may be prayed by the pastor or by all:

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all life,
 Author of salvation, Giver of all grace:
 Bless and sanctify with your Holy Spirit
Name and *Name*, who come now to join in marriage.
 Grant that they may give their vows to each other
 in the strength of your steadfast love.
 Enable them to grow in love and peace
 with you and with one another all their days,
 that they may reach out
 in concern and service to the world;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS

The woman and man face each other, joining hands. The pastor may prompt them, line by line.

Man to woman:

In the name of God,
I, *Name*, take you, *Name*, to be my wife,
to have and to hold
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.

This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:

In the name of God,
I, *Name*, take you, *Name*, to be my husband,
to have and to hold
from this day forward,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.

This is my solemn vow.

In place of the vows given above, one of the following may be used:

I take you, *Name*, to be my wife (*husband*),
and I promise before God and all who are present here
to be your loving and faithful husband (*wife*)
as long as we both shall live.
I will serve you with tenderness and respect,
and encourage you to develop God's gifts in you.

Name, in the name of God,
I take you to be my husband (*wife*) from this time onward,
to join with you and to share all that is to come,
to give and to receive,

to speak and to listen,
to inspire and to respond,
and in all our life together
to be loyal to you with my whole being,
as long as we both shall live.

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The exchange of rings is optional. Other tangible symbols may be given in addition to, or instead of, rings.

The pastor, taking the rings, may say one of the following:

These rings (*symbols*)
are the outward and visible sign
of an inward and spiritual grace,
signifying to us the union
between Jesus Christ and his Church.

These rings (*symbols*)
are the outward and visible sign
of an inward and spiritual grace,
signifying to all the uniting of *Name* and *Name* in holy marriage.

The pastor may bless the giving of rings or other symbols of the marriage:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings (*symbols*),
that they who wear them may live in your peace
and continue in your favor
all the days of their life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

While placing the ring on the third finger of the recipient's left hand, the giver may say (prompted, line by line, by the pastor):

Name, I give you this ring
as a sign of my vow,
and with all that I am,
and all that I have,
I honor you;
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

If a unity candle is used, the two side candles representing the husband and wife are lighted first, and the center candle representing the marriage is lighted at this or some later point in the service. The side candles are not extinguished because both husband and wife retain their

personal identities.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

The wife and husband join hands. The pastor may place a hand on their joined hands.

Pastor to husband and wife:

You have declared your consent and vows
before God and this congregation.

May God confirm your covenant
and fill you both with grace.

The couple may turn and face the congregation.

Pastor to people:

Now that *Name* and *Name*
have given themselves to each other by solemn vows,
with the joining of hands,
[and the giving and receiving of *rings* ,]

I announce to you that they are husband and wife;
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Those whom God has joined together,
let no one put asunder. **Amen.**

The congregation may be invited to stand, and a doxology or other hymn may be sung. The following hymns from UMH are suggested:

139 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

408 The Gift of Love

643 When Love Is Found

Intercessions may be offered for the Church and for the world.

BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE *

The husband and wife may kneel, as the pastor prays:

O God,
you have so consecrated
the covenant of Christian marriage
that in it is represented

the covenant between Christ and his Church.
Send therefore your blessing upon *Name* and *Name*,
that they may surely keep their marriage covenant,
and so grow in love and godliness together
that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the congregation turns to A Service of Word and Table III, or one of the musical settings (UMH), and the service continues with the Thanksgiving and Communion. If Holy Communion is not to be celebrated, the service continues with the following Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Most gracious God,
we give you thanks for your tender love
in making us a covenant people
through our Savior Jesus Christ
and for consecrating in his name
the marriage covenant of *Name* and *Name* .
Grant that their love for each other
may reflect the love of Christ for us
and grow from strength to strength
as they faithfully serve you in the world.
Defend them from every enemy.
Lead them into all peace.
Let their love for each other
be a seal upon their hearts,
a mantle about their shoulders,
and a crown upon their heads.
Bless them
in their work and in their companionship;
in their sleeping and in their waking;
in their joys and in their sorrows;
in their lives and in their deaths.
Finally, by your grace,
bring them and all of us to that table
where your saints feast for ever
in your heavenly home;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns,
one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer, prayed by all, using one of the forms in UMH 270–71, 894–96.

The wife and husband may continue to kneel.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

TAKING THE BREAD AND CUP

Pastor to people:

Let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

Here the husband and wife, or children from previous marriages, or representatives of the congregation may bring bread and wine to the Lord's table.

The pastor, standing if possible behind the Lord's table, facing the people from this time through Breaking the Bread, takes the bread and cup; and the bread and wine are prepared for the meal.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

The pastor may lift hands and keep them raised.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
Father Almighty (*almighty God*), Creator of heaven and earth.
You formed us in your image, male and female you created us.
You gave us the gift of marriage, that we might fulfill each other.
And so,
with your people on earth and all the company of heaven
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

The pastor may lower hands.

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

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Hosanna in the highest.

The pastor may raise hands.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant
by water and the Spirit,
from which flows the covenant love of husband and wife.

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread, or touch the bread, or lift the bread.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the cup, or touch the cup, or lift the cup.

When the supper was over he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me."

The pastor may raise hands.

And so,
in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice,
in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

The pastor may hold hands, palms down, over the bread and cup.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and wine.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.

The pastor may extend hands over the husband and wife.

By the same Spirit bless *Name* and *Name*,
that their love for each other
 may reflect the love of Christ for us
 and grow from strength to strength
 as they faithfully serve you in the world.

Defend them from every enemy.

Lead them into all peace.

Let their love for each other
 be a seal upon their hearts,
a mantle about their shoulders,
 and a crown upon their heads.

Bless them
 in their work and in their companionship;
 in their sleeping and in their waking;
 in their joys and in their sorrows;
 in their lives and in their deaths.

Finally, by your grace,
bring them and all of us to that table
 where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home.

The pastor may raise hands.

Through your Son Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father (*God*),
now and for ever.

Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

The pastor's hands may be extended in open invitation.

And now, with the confidence of children of God, let us pray:

The pastor may raise hands.

All pray the Lord's Prayer, using one of the forms in UMH 270–71, 894–96.

BREAKING THE BREAD

The pastor, still standing behind the Lord's table facing the people, breaks the bread and then lifts the cup, in silence or with appropriate words.

GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

The bread and wine are given to the people, with these or other words being exchanged. The husband and wife may assist in the distribution.

The body of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ, given for you. **Amen.**

While the bread and cup are given, the congregation may sing hymns, or there may be vocal or instrumental music. See suggestions and under Weddings or Holy Communion in UMH.

When all have received, the Lord's table is put in order.

The pastor may then offer the following prayer:

Eternal God, we give you thanks
that you have brought *Name* and *Name* [and their families and friends]
together at the table of your family.
Help them them grow in love and unity,
that they may rejoice together all the days of their lives
and in the wedding feast of heaven.
Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

Here may be sung a hymn or psalm. See suggestions.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING *

Pastor to wife and husband:

God the Eternal keep you in love with each other,
so that the peace of Christ may abide in your home.
Go to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.

Pastor to people:

Bear witness to the love of God in this world,
so that those to whom love is a stranger
will find in you generous friends.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all. **Amen.**

THE PEACE *

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

The couple may greet each other with a kiss and be greeted by the pastor, after which greetings may be exchanged through the congregation.

GOING FORTH *

A hymn may be sung or instrumental music played as the couple, the wedding party, and the people leave. The following recessional hymns in UMH are suggested:

166 All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine

733 Come We That Love the Lord

100 God, Whose Love Is Reigning o'er Us

89 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

384 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

102 Now Thank We All Our God

90 Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones