

Affirmation

Parents, family and friends are invited to express their support for [name] and [name] by offering personal statements, prayers and good wishes. Symbols or gifts may also be offered.

Dismissal

For the couple

[Name] and [name], you have brought us together to witness and celebrate your love for each other.

Go now with God's blessing and the good wishes of us all.

May your partnership mature within God's grace and may

God's love surround and sustain you always.

For the people

Now may God the Creator, renew us all and give us peace, God the Redeemer renew us all and give us peace, God the Giver of Life renew us all and give us peace, this day and forever. Amen.

Further resources:

Prayer at Night by Jim Cotter (including the Covenant of Friendship p.87)

Women Church by Rosemary Radford Reuther

A New Zealand Prayer Book

March 1992

Liturgy for the Blessing of a Relationship

**A pastoral liturgy produced by
The Liturgical Commission of the
Anglican Church in Aotearoa,
New Zealand and Polynesia**

Preface

Most liturgies celebrate relationships with God and with one another. The liturgy for marriage expresses and celebrates a permanent legal and spiritual relationship between a "Man and a woman. This experimental liturgy is designed to enable two people to express and celebrate a special relationship before God and their friends and family. The relationship is defined by the couple in the course of the liturgy, after which we ask God's blessing and the community's recognition and support of this relationship.

The service may also be adapted for strengthening and building groups and communities. This material is offered as a resource for worship leaders who may not choose to distribute it as complete text. It can be rearranged and photocopied freely.

Welcome

One or more of the following is chosen, depending on the experience of the couple and the location of the ceremony.

Either.

Welcome to this place, hallowed by the presence and the prayers of many people. Couples have come here declaring their commitment and their love, seeking God's blessing and asking for God's guidance. *[Name] and [name]*, as you join all those who have stood here before you, claim their strength and stand in the company of friends and lovers everywhere.

presence and before us, so we pray that you will continue to be with them in the unfolding of their future. Give them strength and courage in times of difficulty, wisdom and love in times of opportunity and challenge, and the sharing of joy in times of happiness and success. May they continue to grow in your love; through the power of Jesus Christ.

A prayer for family and friends of the couple:

God of friends and families, we are linked with *[name] and [name]* in a community of friendship and support. We pray for one another, (particularly for). We remember those who cannot be with us today (especially). May we all continue to share in your gifts of love, strength, courage and wisdom, and to know your joy. Give us growing understanding, sympathy with each other's difficulties, patience with each other's faults, and grace to walk in your ways.

Invocation

Companion God, may *[name] and [name]* know your blessing so that in their relationship they are a source of blessing to each other and to all they meet.

or

God of all times and seasons, in your strength we make new beginnings. As you open the future to *[name] and [name]* may they know your blessing; go with them in all their living and loving; enable them to be a source of joy and blessing to each other and to all whom their lives touch.

Prayers

The couple may write their own prayers or choose any of the following to bring before God the journey they share.

A prayer of thanks for the couple:

Loving God, in your wisdom you have given us many gifts. Today, we thank you for *[name]* and *[name]* for all that they mean to each other and to their friends and families. We thank you for the love that has brought them to this time and place, and for the declarations they have been able to make before you and us. We pray that they will continue to grow in your love and in the use of the talents you have given them.

A prayer for forgiveness and healing of the ways in which we have failed to love:

God of love and understanding, we know that it is impossible for people to live together without sometimes causing pain or misunderstanding. Help us to recognise our part in this failure and to know your forgiveness and healing of the past. In particular, we ask that your love may heal any hurtful memories that *[name]* and *[name]* may bring to this day. May they know your forgiveness and the peace that comes from your presence, now and always.

A prayer for the couple:

God, your strength is sufficient for us all. *[Name]* and *[name]* have committed themselves one to the other in your

Or.

Welcome to this place, chosen by you to celebrate your love for each other and to ask God's blessing on your life together. By virtue of what happens here among us and before God, this becomes a special place for you, and for all of us who gather to offer our respect and support for what you have found together. In the new journey that goes on from here, may you find strength and joy in recalling this place and all that it comes to mean.

We gather to celebrate before God the bond of love that *[name]* and *[name]* have found in each other, to show our respect and offer our support, to affirm our faith in them and what they share together. May the words and symbols, the thoughts and prayers we offer here, serve to strengthen the commitment and trust that *[name]* and *[name]* now know. an may the experience of the love they share grow ever richer and deeper.

Introduction

Either.

We read in the Gospel of the risen Christ meeting his disciples on the road to Emmaeus and joining their journey a they walked uncertain and unaware. Later as that same Christ shared their bread, he met them in a moment of clarity and truth, which led them to get up and go out into the night.

Go with us now, companion God, walk with us again, help us to put aside anxiety and our impatience for clarity and certainty. Enable us to respect each other's freedom as we change and grow. You have taught us that your love is ever unfolding,- that

life in you is ever becoming and renewing. Let us trust who we are and what we have, celebrating each moment now, entrusting ourselves and the outcome of our journey to you.

or.

The Gospels give many pictures of Jesus offering new ways for us to live together. One is an image of new wine, which is not for putting in old wineskins, otherwise the skins burst, the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. New wine is put into fresh wineskins, so that both are preserved. Today [name] and [name] are committing themselves to a new way of holding and living out their love.

God who gives and refreshes all life you constantly offer opportunities to begin again in love, to mature in knowledge of ourselves and one another. Enable us to leave behind those constraints and memories that hinder us and help us to grow in trust and understanding. Give [name] and [name] we pray a sense of new possibilities unfolding. Let them delight in the mystery and beauty they find in each other. Keep us all open to your leading, confident in the presence of the Christ who goes before and beside us. Amen.

or.

Loving God, we commend [name] and [name] and the commitment they make to each other before you and before this gathering. Affirm we pray, the trust they have placed in each other and the hopes they share. Undergird with your love the confidence and strength they find in each other. In your grace, may they keep their covenant of trust.

Reflection

Readings, poems, symbols and music chosen by the couple may be shared to recollect, describe and affirm their partnership.

Declaration

The couple now make their own statement to each other and to the gathering about the relationship being celebrated. This statement may include any of the following intentions:

- to be honest and open with each other
- to match the intimacy of their love with their care and commitment to each other
- to work at deepening their trust in and understanding **of** each other
- to be loyal to each other
- to forgive the hurt given to and received from each other
- to allow the love they share to grow and change and deepen
- to share with others the strength and encouragement they gain from each other.