

14. Services of Marriage

Contact name and details	The Revd Mark Rowland Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee rowlandm@methodistchurch.org.uk
Action required	Approval
Resolutions	<p>14/1. The Conference receives the Report.</p> <p>14/2. The Conference authorises the service for <i>The Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p> <p>14/3. The Conference authorises the service for <i>The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p> <p>14/4. The Conference authorises the selection of <i>Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church.</p>

Summary of Content

Subject and aims	To authorise the services for <i>The Marriage of any Two Persons</i> , <i>The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized</i> and the selection of <i>Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons</i> for use in the Methodist Church.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These services were commended for experimental use by the Conference of 2021. • Feedback has been received and final versions are now presented for authorisation.
Background context and relevant documents (with function)	<i>God in Love Unites Us</i> The response of the Faith and Order Committee to the <i>God in Love Unites Us</i> Report

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Following its decisions regarding marriage, the Conference of 2021 adopted the recommendation that there should be two services of marriage in the *Methodist Worship Book* (MWB), reflecting the two ways in which marriage is understood in the Methodist Church. It therefore renamed the existing services in MWB as 'The Marriage of a Man and a Woman' and 'The Blessing of a Marriage of a Man and a Woman previously solemnized.' It also commended for experimental use services for *The Marriage of any Two Persons* and *The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized*, directing that feedback be sent to the Secretary of the Faith and Order Committee to enable the 2023 Conference to make a decision about their formal authorisation.
- 1.2 The Conference amended the introduction to the relevant section of MWB which now reads as follows:

A marriage ceremony is a formal occasion when a solemn, legal contract is made between two persons. Since the decisions of the Conference of 2021, within the Methodist Church this is understood in two ways, namely that marriage can only be between a man and a woman and that marriage can be between any two persons. Accordingly, liturgies for marriage and the blessing of a marriage according to both understandings are provided. Whatever our understanding, in a Christian context, the service is always an act of worship in which marriage is celebrated as a gift of God and the joy of the couple is shared and their commitment to each other is witnessed by family and friends. *The Marriage Service's* themes of love, hope, faithfulness, sacrifice and trust are at the heart of the Christian gospel.

2 Feedback and amendments

- 2.1 Very limited feedback has been received on the services commended for experimental use. The substantive issues that have been raised relate to the need for two services, the passage regarding the nurturing of children in the declaration of purpose, the omission of Mark 10:6-9 from the suggested passages of scripture and the phrase 'binding themselves to each other' in the declaration of the marriage.
- 2.2 It is important to recognise that the decision to have two services (ie 'for a Man and a Woman' and 'for any Two Persons') has already been made and it is not suggested that be reviewed at this stage. The Faith and Order Committee

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continues to believe that it is appropriate that liturgical resources are provided in accordance with both understandings of marriage affirmed by the Methodist Church. Couples marrying and those leading marriage services will use the resources appropriate to their situation and convictions.

- 2.3 A suggested amendment proposed rewording the fourth paragraph of the declaration of purpose (no. 4 in the marriage service; no. 3 in the blessing service) to remove the references to children and family life. The Faith and Order Committee aimed in the drafting of these services that there be should be in each case one service in two forms, rather than two entirely different services. The elements of this section are reordered to change the emphasis compared to the services for One Man and One Woman in the light of the greater diversity of couples who may use it, but the Faith and Order Committee recognises that there are, for example, same-sex couples for whom nurturing children is an important part of their relationship and, equally, mixed-sex couples who do not have children. It believes it is important to retain a commonality between the two services on this point and therefore has not accepted the proposed amendment.
- 2.4 As reported to the 2021 Conference, the principle in drafting the services 'for any Two Persons' was that every option in these services should be potentially suitable for any couple who might use it. Mark 10:6-9 was not included as it is a gendered text and therefore does not meet that criterion. It continues to be part of the service for One Man and One Woman and in any service a couple can use whichever biblical texts they feel, in consultation with the person leading the service, are appropriate.
- 2.5 A further suggestion proposed restoring the phrase 'binding themselves to each other' in the declaration of the marriage (no. 15). The Faith and Order Committee was happy to accept this suggestion.
- 2.6 By inadvertent error, the headings on the additional scripture readings referred to 'any Two People' and in some places pronouns were not given correctly and these have now been corrected. The Faith and Order Committee also identified that note 3 on the Blessing Service had been retained as it exists in the service for The Blessing of a Marriage of One Man and One Woman suggesting that the service should be conducted by the minister with pastoral charge. There is no parallel note for the marriage service itself and it may be that the minister with pastoral charge is not able in conscience to conduct this service. This part of the note has therefore been omitted. There are other minor amendments to correct typographical matters and to clarify rubrics.

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3 Authorisation

- 3.1 In accordance with the direction of the 2021 Conference, the Faith and Order Committee therefore presents these services with amendments as discussed above for authorisation by the Conference. As with any Methodist liturgy, they can and should be personalised according to the situation and context. However, in the context of a marriage, careful attention must be given to ensure that the legal requirements are satisfied.

4 The Liturgies:

THE MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS

NOTES

1. At the time of publication, it is required by law in England and Wales that the words of declaration at no. 5 and the words of contract at no. 13 (or the permitted alternative forms, set out in the Appendix) should be said in the presence of the Authorized Person (or the Registrar) and two witnesses. The full names of the parties should be used.
 2. When this service is used in Scotland, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, or any other jurisdiction whose marriage legislation is different from that of England and Wales, the minister or other person conducting the service should ensure that the service complies with the legal requirements of that jurisdiction. Appropriate substitutions should be made at nos. 5 and 13 if necessary.
 3. In the case of same-sex marriages, there may be legal requirements additional to those for mixed-sex marriages. In England and Wales these include that the registration of the building and the appointment of the Authorized Person need to be extended to cover same-sex marriages. The minister, Authorized Person, or (in some jurisdictions) other person conducting the service, should ensure compliance with all relevant requirements.
 4. This service includes the suggestions of pronouns her/him/them for those being married. Some being married may prefer the use of other pronouns and the preference of the person should always be followed. However, at the time of writing, in England and Wales the use of the word husband or wife (according to the legally recognized gender of the person) is required by law at no. 13.
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THE PREPARATION

- 1 The people may stand as the marriage party enters the church. The persons to be married stand together before the minister.

The minister may welcome the congregation.

The minister says:

We meet together in the presence of God
to witness the marriage of A and C,
to ask God's blessing upon them,
to support them with our prayers
and to share their joy.

- 2 Hymn

- 3 The people remain standing. The minister says:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, your generous love surrounds us,
and everything we enjoy comes from you.
We confess our ingratitude for your goodness
and our selfishness in using your gifts.
Forgive and renew us,
and fill us with your Spirit
that in true thankfulness
we may bear witness to your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 4 The minister says:

A and C, with your families and friends,
we thank God on this day
for the gift of marriage.

It is the will of God that, in marriage,
a couple should experience
a life-long unity of heart, body and mind;
comfort and companionship;
enrichment and encouragement;
tenderness and trust.

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It is the will of God that marriage
should be honoured as a way of life,
in which we may know the security of love and care,
and grow towards maturity.
Through such marriage,
human society may be enriched,
family life strengthened,
and children nurtured.

No one should enter into this lightly or selfishly,
for marriage involves the giving
of two persons
wholeheartedly to each other.
Christ in his self-giving comes to our help,
for he loves us and gave himself for us.

A and C, you are now to share this way of life
which God has created
and, in Christ, has blessed.
Today we pray that the Holy Spirit
will guide and strengthen you
that you may fulfil God's purposes
for the rest of your lives.

5 The Legal Declarations

The minister says to the people:

A and C are now to make the declarations which the law requires.

The minister says to AB:

Are you, AB, free lawfully to marry CD?

AB answers: I am.

The minister says to CD:

Are you, CD, free lawfully to marry AB?

CD answers: I am.

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6 The minister says to the couple:

You have made the declarations required by law. I ask you now to affirm, in the presence of us all, your intention to marry each other.

The minister says to AB:

A, are you willing to give yourself in marriage to C?

AB answers: I am.

The minister says to AB:

Will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*, be *her/his/their* companion through all the joys and sorrows of life, and be faithful to *her/him/them* as long as you both shall live?

AB answers: With God's help, I will.

The minister says to CD:

C, are you willing to give yourself in marriage to A?

CD answers: I am.

The minister says to CD:

Will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*, be *her/his/their* companion through all the joys and sorrows of life, and be faithful to *her/him/them* as long as you both shall live?

CD answers: With God's help, I will.

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

The whole of the Ministry of the Word may occur here or at no. 18, or the scripture readings may be read here and the sermon may be preached at no. 18.

7 All sit. At least one passage of scripture is read. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the readings.

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Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Solomon 8:7

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.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

For this reason 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.

Ephesians 3:14-19

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.

Colossians 3:12-17

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They

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have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

Jesus said: '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.'

John 15:9-12

Additional scripture readings are listed below.

- 8 Sermon
- 9 Hymn

THE MARRIAGE

- 10 All stand. The minister may say to the people:

I ask you, the families and friends of A and C:

Will you do all in your power to support and encourage them in their marriage?

The people answer:

With God's help, we will.

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- 11 If *AB* has a relative or friend presenting *her/him/them* for marriage, the minister says:

Who presents *A* to be married to *C*?

AB's relative or friend answers: I do.

If *CD* has a relative or friend presenting *her/him/them* for marriage, the minister says:

Who presents *C* to be married to *A*?

CD's relative or friend answers: I do.

- 12 The minister says:

Gracious God,
as you have brought *A* and *C* together in love and trust,
enable them through the power of your Holy Spirit
to make and keep their vows;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

- 13 The Vows

AB takes *CD*'s right hand and says:

I, *AB*, take you, *CD*, to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands.

CD takes *AB*'s right hand and says:

I, *CD*, take you, *AB*, to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

They loose hands.

14 The Giving of the Rings

The minister receives the rings on the book, and says:

Eternal God,
bless these rings
that they may be
symbols of the love and trust
between A and C. **Amen.**

EITHER

AB places a ring on *CD*'s ring finger, and says:

I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

CD places a ring on *AB*'s ring finger, and says:

I give you this ring
as a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

OR

After the rings have been given and received, the couple say together:

With these rings
we pledge ourselves
to each other,
in the Name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

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- 15 The minister joins the right hands of the couple. The minister may wrap *her/his/their* stole around, and/or place *her/his/their hand* on the couple's joined hands.

The minister says to the couple:

A and C, God so join you together
that none shall ever part you.

The minister says to the people:

Before God and in the presence of us all,
A and C have exchanged vows,
joined their hands,
and given and received rings,
binding themselves to each other.
I therefore proclaim that they are now
united in the covenant of marriage.

- 16 A hymn may be sung here or after no. 17.
- 17 The people remain standing. The couple may kneel and the minister may lay hands upon their heads.

The minister says:

A and C,
the blessing of God the Father,
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
May God be your protection and your wisdom,
your guide and your peace,
your joy, your comfort, and your eternal rest. **Amen.**

- 18 The whole of the Ministry of the Word follows, if it has not occurred earlier. If the sermon has been deferred, it is preached here.

THE PRAYERS

19 These or some other prayers of intercession:

Let us pray.

God of grace, source of all love,
we pray for A and C
that they may live together in love and faithfulness
to the end of their lives.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enrich their friendship,
that each may be for the other
a companion in joy and a comforter in sorrow.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Help A and C to be patient, gentle and forgiving,
that their marriage may reflect Christ's love for all people.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enable them to make their home
a place of welcome and friendship,
that their life together
may be a source of strength to others.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Other intercessions may be included.

May we, who have witnessed these vows today,
be signs of your love in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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20 The Lord's Prayer

EITHER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

OR

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**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.**

21 If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the service continues from no. 25.

If Holy Communion is not celebrated, the service continues as follows:

22 All stand.

The minister says this prayer, or gives thanks in *her/his/their* own words:

Praise God,
who is the source of joy and celebration,
pleasure and delight, love and friendship.

Praise God,
who, in the life and victory of Jesus Christ,
reveals to us the glory of self-giving love.

Praise God,
who sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper
and to guide us into the way of perfect love.

Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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23 Hymn

24 The minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and be
gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

25 The Peace

All stand.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

26 Bread and wine are brought to the table by the couple or other members of the congregation (or if already on the table are uncovered). The presiding minister takes the bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

27 All stand.

The presiding minister leads the great prayer of thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

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Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, gracious God,
creator and sustainer of all things.

From the beginning
you made us for yourself and for each other,
and you call us to reflect your faithfulness
in lives of love and service.

You gave yourself to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
the Lord of heaven and earth,
and entrusted him to the care of a human family.
In his life, death and resurrection,
you revealed the power of self-giving love,
rescued us from sin and selfishness,
and made us a new family through your grace.

You give yourself to us today,
and by your Holy Spirit
you promise to be with us always
as our companion and our guide.

And so, with all your people on earth and in heaven,
we give you thanks and praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we praise you
that on the night in which he was betrayed
our Saviour Christ took bread
and gave you thanks.
He broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

'Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,
'Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

And so, gracious God, we remember and celebrate
all that Christ has done for us.
We offer ourselves to you in humble thanksgiving.

Send your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Together with all your people,
may we have life in all its fullness,
live in the power of love,
and fill creation with a song of endless praise.

**Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

28 The presiding minister breaks the bread in the sight of the people in silence, or saying:

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The presiding minister may lift the cup in silence, or saying:

The cup we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

29 Silence, all seated or kneeling

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THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

30 The presiding minister receives, then, beginning with the couple and their families, the people, according to local custom.

31 Words such as the following are said during the distribution:

The body of Christ. **Amen.**

The blood of Christ. **Amen.**

32 During the distribution there may be appropriate music.

33 The elements that remain are covered with a white cloth.

PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL

34 Let us pray.

**We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people. Amen.**

35 Hymn

36 The presiding minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

APPENDIX

- 1 As an alternative to the questions and answers in no. 5, the persons contracting the marriage may make the declaration required by law by saying:

EITHER

**A I do solemnly declare
that I know not
of any lawful impediment
why I, AB/CD,*
may not be joined in matrimony
to CD/AB.***

OR

**B I declare that I know of no legal reason why I,
AB/CD,* may not be joined in marriage to CD/AB.***

- 2 As an alternative to the words of contract set out in no. 13,

EITHER

A the persons to be married may say:

**I call upon these persons here present
to witness that I, AB/CD,*
do take thee, CD/AB,*
to be my lawful wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.**

OR

B the persons to be married may say to each other:

**I, AB/CD,* take thee, CD/AB,*
to be my wedded wife/husband,
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,**

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in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
from this day forward,
until we are parted by death;
and this is my solemn vow.

(* The full names of the parties must be used.)

THE BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS PREVIOUSLY SOLEMNIZED

NOTES

- 1 This form of service must not be used for the solemnization of a marriage.
- 2 This form of service is not suitable for those who wish to reaffirm or renew marriage vows.
- 3 This service can be used either as a private ceremony or with a congregation of family and friends.
- 4 This service includes the suggestions of pronouns her/him/them for those whose marriage is being blessed. Some may prefer the use of other pronouns and the preference of the person should always be followed.

THE PREPARATION

- 1 The persons whose marriage is to be blessed stand together before the minister. The minister may welcome the congregation.

The minister says:

We meet together in the presence of God
to join with A and C,
in asking God's blessing upon their marriage.

- 2 Hymn

3 The minister says:

A and C, with your families and friends,
we thank God on this day
for the gift of marriage.

It is the will of God that, in marriage,
a couple should experience
a life-long unity of heart, body and mind;
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No one should enter into this lightly or selfishly,
for marriage involves the giving
of two persons
wholeheartedly to each other.
Christ in his self-giving comes to our help,
for he loves us and gave himself for us.

A and C,
you have already entered this way of life
which God has created
and, in Christ, has blessed.
Today we pray that the Holy Spirit
will guide and strengthen you
that you may fulfil God's purposes
for the rest of your lives.

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The whole of the Ministry of the Word may occur here or at no. 13, or the scripture readings may be read here and the sermon may be preached at no. 13.

- 4 All sit. At least one passage of scripture is read. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, a passage from the Gospels always concludes the readings.

Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.
Song of Solomon 8:7

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.

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1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13

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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.

Ephesians 3:14-19

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

14. Services of Marriage

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.

Colossians 3:12-17

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:1-11

Jesus said: '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.'

John 15:9-12

Additional scripture readings are listed below.

- 5 Sermon
- 6 Hymn

14. Services of Marriage

THE BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

7 All stand. The minister says:

Gracious God,
you have brought A and C together in love and trust.

By the power of your Holy Spirit,
may they receive your blessing upon their marriage;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

8 The minister says to AB:

A, you have come here as C's *husband/wife/spouse*
seeking God's blessing upon your marriage,
and desiring to live according to God's will.

I ask you, therefore:
will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*,
be *her/his/their* companion
through all the joys and sorrows of life,
and be faithful to *her/him/them*
as long as you both shall live?

AB answers:

With God's help, I will.

The minister says to CD:

C, you have come here as A's *husband/wife/spouse*
seeking God's blessing upon your marriage,
and desiring to live according to God's will.

I ask you, therefore:
will you love *her/him/them*, comfort and honour *her/him/them*,
be *her/his/their* companion
through all the joys and sorrows of life,
and be faithful to *her/him/them*
as long as you both shall live?

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CD answers:

With God's help, I will.

- 9 The couple join their ring hands. The minister places a hand on their joined hands, and says:

Eternal God,
bless *these rings/this ring*,
symbols/a symbol of the love and trust
between A and C. **Amen.**

- 10 The minister may wrap *her/his/their* stole around the couple's joined hands. The couple say together:

Within the love of God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
I am bound to you in marriage
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
until we are parted by death.

- 11 The people remain standing. The couple may kneel, and the minister may lay hands upon their heads.

The minister says:

A and C,
the blessing of God the Father,
God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always.
May God be your protection and your wisdom,
your guide and your peace,
your joy, your comfort, and your eternal rest. **Amen.**

- 12 Hymn

- 13 The whole of the Ministry of the Word follows, if it has not occurred earlier. If the sermon has been deferred, it is preached here.

14. Services of Marriage

THE PRAYERS

14 All sit.

These or some other prayers of intercession:

Let us pray.

God of grace, source of all love,
we pray for A and C
that they may live together in love and faithfulness
to the end of their lives.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enrich their friendship,
that each may be for the other
a companion in joy and a comforter in sorrow.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Help A and C to be patient, gentle, and forgiving,
that their marriage may reflect Christ's love for all people.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Enable them to make their home
a place of welcome and friendship,
that their life together
may be a source of strength to others.

Lord of life,
hear us in your love.

Other intercessions may be included.

May we, who have witnessed their promises today,
be signs of your love in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

15 The Lord's Prayer

EITHER

We say together the prayer that Jesus gave us:

**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.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

OR

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

**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.**

16 If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the service continues from no. 20.

If Holy Communion is not celebrated, the service continues as follows:

17 All stand.

The minister says this prayer, or gives thanks in *her/his/their* own words:

Praise God,
who is the source of joy and celebration,
pleasure and delight, love and friendship.

Praise God,
who, in the life and victory of Jesus Christ,
reveals to us the glory of self-giving love.

Praise God,
who sends the Holy Spirit to be our helper
and to guide us into the way of perfect love.

Praise God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

14. Services of Marriage

18 Hymn

19 The minister says to all present:

God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

HOLY COMMUNION

20 The Peace

All stand.

The peace of the Lord be always with you.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another in the name of Christ.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

21 Bread and wine are brought to the table by the couple or other members of the congregation (or if already on the table are uncovered). The presiding minister takes the bread and wine and prepares them for use.

THE THANKSGIVING

22 All stand.

The presiding minister leads the great prayer of thanksgiving:

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, gracious God,
creator and sustainer of all things.

From the beginning
you made us for yourself and for each other,
and you call us to reflect your faithfulness
in lives of love and service.

You gave yourself to us in your Son, Jesus Christ,
the Lord of heaven and earth,
and entrusted him to the care of a human family.
In his life, death and resurrection,
you revealed the power of self-giving love,
rescued us from sin and selfishness
and made us a new family through your grace.

You give yourself to us today,
and by your Holy Spirit
you promise to be with us always
as our companion and our guide.

And so with all your people on earth and in heaven
we give you thanks and praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessèd is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy God, we praise you
that on the night in which he was betrayed
our Saviour Christ took bread
and gave you thanks.
He broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

14. Services of Marriage

'Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup of wine,
gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,
'Drink this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for all people for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

And so, gracious God, we remember and celebrate
all that Christ has done for us.
We offer ourselves to you in humble thanksgiving.

Send your Holy Spirit
that these gifts of bread and wine
may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Together with all your people,
may we have life in all its fullness,
live in the power of love,
and fill creation with a song of endless praise.

**Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

- 23 The presiding minister breaks the bread in the sight of the people in silence, or saying:

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

The presiding minister may lift the cup in silence, or saying:

The cup we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

- 24 Silence, all seated or kneeling

THE SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

- 25 The presiding minister receives, then, beginning with the couple and their families, the people, according to local custom.
- 26 Words such as the following are said during the distribution:
- The body of Christ. **Amen.**
The blood of Christ. **Amen.**
- 27 During the distribution there may be appropriate music.
- 28 The elements that remain are covered with a white cloth.

PRAYERS AND DISMISSAL

- 29 Let us pray.
- We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all people. Amen.**
- 30 Hymn
- 31 The presiding minister says to all present:
- God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit,
make *you/us* strong in faith
and guide *you/us* in truth and love.

EITHER

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine on you and
be gracious to you;
the Lord look on you with kindness
and give you peace. **Amen.**

OR

May God be gracious to us
and bless us,
and make his face to shine
upon us. **Amen.**

14. Services of Marriage

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE MARRIAGE OF ANY TWO PERSONS

Old Testament

Ruth 1:16-17	Do not press me to leave you
Ecclesiastes 4:7-12	Two support each other
Song of Songs 2:10-15	A love song

Psalms

Psalms 23	The Lord our shepherd
Psalms 121	The Lord's blessing and protection
Psalms 138	Thanks and praise to the Lord

Epistle

Romans 12:1-2, 9-13	Love in practice
Galatians 3:25-29	Heirs of the promise
Philippians 1:9-11	Growing into a rich love
Philippians 2:1-11	The example of Jesus
1 John 3:18-24	Love in practice
1 John 4:7-12, 15-17	Love one another

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-10	The Beatitudes
Matthew 7:21, 24-27	Hearing and doing
Matthew 22:35-40	The greatest commandment

***RESOLUTIONS

- 14/1. **The Conference receives the Report.**
- 14/2. **The Conference authorises the service for *The Marriage of any Two Persons* for use in the Methodist Church.**
- 14/3. **The Conference authorises the service for *The Blessing of a Marriage of any Two Persons previously solemnized* for use in the Methodist Church.**
- 14/4. **The Conference authorises the selection of *Additional Scripture Readings for the Marriage of any Two Persons* for use in the Methodist Church.**