

1 The Celebration of a Covenant

2
3 *Adapted from A Rite for the Celebration of Gay and Lesbian Covenants, commonly referred to as*
4 *The New Westminster Rite, from the Diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of*
5 *Canada*

6 7 8 **The Gathering of the Community**

9
10 *As the community gathers, a hymn, anthem, or canticle may be sung. Instrumental music may*
11 *also be played.*

12
13 *The Presider welcomes the community, saying*

14
15 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the
16 Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

17 *People* Amen.

18
19 *After the greeting the Presider may continue as follows:*

20
21 Holy and Eternal God, in the quiet night you have called us each by our own name.
22 *In our very heart you have named us beloved.*

23
24 You surprise us with your grace.

25 *We are the expressions of your boundless love.*

26
27 On our exodus way you nourish and free us.

28 *You give us companions for our journey.*

29
30 You set us apart, shaped by our love, yet call us into the midst of your people,
31 *Where we will be your word of blessing.*

32
33 *The Presider says*

34 Let us pray,

35
36 Almighty and eternal God, you are pleased to dwell among us and to fill our lives
37 with your presence: May *N.* and *N.* who seek your blessing upon their union be
38 filled with your love and may their life together be to us a sign of your promised
39 reign of justice and peace; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and
40 the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

1
2 *or this*

3
4 Searching and saving God, whose unfailing love alone can satisfy our longing: In
5 your mercy you befriend those who wander in loneliness and shame, those
6 oppressed because of difference, those who do not know the value of their unique
7 and sacred gift; and by you Holy Spirit you awaken in them the dignity of
8 humankind and the responsibility of embodied love, as perfected by Jesus Christ,
9 who loved and gave himself for us, showing us the way to intimacy with you and
10 with one another; we offer praise and thanks to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and
11 Life-giver, for your love endures for ever. *Amen.*

12
13

14 The Word of God

15
16 *Then one or more passage from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage*
17 *from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.*

18
19 *A homily or other response to the Readings may follow.*

20
21

22 The Covenant

23
24 *The Presider invites the couple to stand in the full view of the gathered community and*
25 *addresses the couple in these or similar words.*

26
27 A covenant is an ancient form of promise, a public declaration of commitment that
28 binds people in an enduring relationship. The Bible tells the story of God's
29 covenant with humankind.

30
31 The Hebrew Scriptures teach us that God's covenant with Israel was the basis of
32 the people's liberation from slavery and exile. Paul teaches us of God's covenant
33 with the followers of Jesus bringing us into a new community where there is no
34 longer male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, but one people united in
35 Christ.

36
37 All our covenants with family and friends are signs of God's faithfulness and love.
38 They are living expressions of God's promises to us and sources of hope to others.

39

1 Today we gather to witness and to bless the public commitment of *N.* and *N.* to
2 such a covenant.

3
4 *The Presider then addresses the couple, and they respond as follows*

5
6 *N.* and *N.*, do you believe God has called you into a life-long covenant of love and
7 fidelity?

8 *We do.*

9

10 Will you live together in love?

11 *We will, with God's help [or in God].*

12

13 Will you be faithful to one another?

14 *We will, with God's help [or in God].*

15

16 Will you support one another in love so that you may both grow into maturity of
17 faith in Jesus Christ?

18 *We will, with God's help [or in God].*

19

20 Will you do all in your power to make your life together a witness to the love of
21 God in the world?

22 *We will, with God's help [or in God].*

23

24 *The Presider invites the couple to stand in full view of the congregation and to face each other.*
25 *Taking each other by the hand(s), each says to the other in turn.*

26

27 *N.*, I give myself to you. I love you, trust you, and delight in you. I will share your
28 burdens and your joys. I will go with you wherever God calls us. This is my
29 solemn promise.

30

31

32 **The Prayers**

33

34 *All standing, the Presider says*

35 Let us pray together in the words our Savior taught us.

36

37 *People and Presider*

38

39 Our Father, who art in heaven,
40 hallowed be thy Name,

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,

1 thy kingdom come, your kingdom come,
2 thy will be done, your will be done,
3 on earth as it is in heaven. on earth as in heaven.
4 Give us this day our daily bread. Give us today our daily bread.
5 And forgive us our trespasses, Forgive us our sins
6 as we forgive those as we forgive those
7 who trespass against us. who sin against us.
8 And lead us not into temptation, Save us from the time of trial,
9 but deliver us from evil. and deliver us from evil.
10 For thine is the kingdom, For the kingdom, the power,
11 and the power, and the glory, and the glory are yours,
12 for ever and ever. Amen. now and for ever. Amen.

13
14 *If Communion is to follow, the Lord's Prayer may be omitted here.*

15
16 *The Deacon or other person appointed reads the following prayers, to which the People respond,*
17 *saying, Amen.*

18
19 Blessed are you, O God, for you awaken our desire for companionship and our
20 hope for community with you and with one another. *Amen.*

21
22 In your mercy you call us out of solitary darkness and redeem us to love you with
23 our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. *Amen.*

24
25 Renew in us a sense of true belonging and call us to love our neighbor as
26 ourselves. Amen.

27
28 We pray the covenant of faithfulness and love we celebrate today will reflect your
29 unending faithfulness and great love for the world. *Amen.*

30
31 May N. and N. so love one another that they may be a blessing to you and all
32 whom they encounter. *Amen.*

33
34 We ask these things in thanksgiving and praise to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and
35 Sustainer, one God now and for ever. *Amen.*

36
37

38 The Blessing of the Covenant

39
40 *The Presider then addresses the community, the People responding as follows*

1
2 You, friends and members of the families of *N.* and *N.*, are witnesses to this
3 covenant. Will you support these two *women/men* in the promises they have made?
4 *We will.*

5
6 Will you celebrate the goodness of God's grace evident in their lives?
7 *We will.*

8
9 Will you stand by them, encourage, guide, and pray for them in times of trouble
10 and distress?
11 *We will.*

12
13 Do you give them your blessing?
14 *We do.*

15
16 *The Presider may ask God's blessing upon rings, which the couple may then exchange. (A form*
17 *is provided in The Celebration and Blessing of a Holy Union.)*

18
19 *The Presider then says one of the following blessings.*

20
21 Let us pray.

22
23 We give thanks and praise to you, O gracious God, for your unfailing love and
24 wonderful deeds among us: for the splendor of creation, the beauty of this world,
25 the mystery of our lives and the surprises of human love. We give you thanks and
26 praise for *N.* and *N.*, because you create in them the desire for intimacy and
27 companionship, calling them out of isolation and exile, strengthening them against
28 prejudice and fear, and embracing them in a family of friends and loved ones.

29
30 *or this*

31
32 Pour out your abundant blessing upon *N.* and *N.* May they grow in love for one
33 another and for all your creation. Lead them into accomplishments that satisfy and
34 delight. Grant that in the years ahead they may be faithful to the promises they
35 make this day, and that in the strength of the Holy Spirit they may grow together in
36 the love, joy, and peace of our Savior Jesus Christ.

37
38 *The People conclude the Blessing, saying*
39 Blessed are you, O gracious God, source of all love, now and for ever. Amen.

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The Peace

The Presider says

The peace of the Lord [*or* Christ] be always with you.

People And also with you.

The newly joined couple then greet each other, after which greetings may be exchanged throughout the congregation.

When Communion is not to follow, the couple and their attendants leave the church.

A hymn, psalm, or anthem may be sung, or instrumental music may be played.

The Holy Communion

This rite may be used with any authorized liturgy for the Holy Eucharist. The Preface for Marriage may be adapted, or this Preface may be used

Blessed are you, gracious God, creator of heaven and earth; you are the source of light and life for all your creation, you made us in your own image, and call us to new life in Jesus Christ our Savior.

The Commissioning of the Community

Following the postcommunion prayer, this litany may be used, the People responding as indicated. Additional petitions may be included if so desired.

Dear friends, *N.* and *N.* have been drawn by God into a covenant of mind and body, heart and will. We have celebrated this covenant and pray that the life they share will reflect the love of God for the whole world. Let us join in prayer asking God's blessing upon us as we go forth with *N.* and *N.* to proclaim with our lives the reconciling and renewing love of God made known in Jesus Christ.

Abundant God, Lover of all creation, pour out your blessing on us and the covenant we have celebrated.

Bless us, O God.

1
2 In our solitude and our companionship,
3 *Bless us, O God.*
4
5 In our acts of tenderness and intimacy,
6 *Bless us, O God.*
7
8 In our delight at knowing and being known,
9 *Bless us, O God.*
10
11 In our acts of self-sacrifice to build up one another,
12 *Bless us, O God.*
13
14 In our being comfort to each other,
15 *Bless us, O God.*
16
17 In our passion for justice,
18 *Bless us, O God.*
19
20 In our generosity and tenacity,
21 *Bless us, O God.*
22
23 In all our expressions of faith,
24 *Bless us, O God.*

25
26
27 **The Dismissal**

28
29 *A hymn or anthem may be sung before the dismissal or instrumental music played. The Deacon*
30 *gives a suitable dismissal.*