

The order for a Prayer Service following a civil marriage ceremony

Authorised by General Synod in 2017

Participation of various kinds may be introduced into the ceremony. Wedding guests may participate in the liturgy, and additions to the ceremony may be made in the form of music or readings, and if so desired, combined with the lighting of candles. The ethnic background of the couple may be mirrored in the inclusion of cultural additions to the service. If one party has another denominational background than the Church of Norway, provision may be made for participation from this denomination, after approval from the Bishop.

Participation from other denominations as well as the inclusion of cultural elements should be incorporated according to the liturgical nature of the wedding ceremony, and should not be contrary to the theological basis of the Church of Norway.

Elements added to the liturgy may be placed after part 9 **Intercessions**.

Where the names are mentioned, one may use the full name or the first name, depending on what is natural in the individual case. Full names should be used for the questions during part 7 **The marriage vows**.

The readings are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible (1989, 1998).

1 Prelude/Entrance

Organ music or other suitable music may be performed as a prelude or processional.

The married couple may walk up the nave together in procession towards the chancel and may thereafter sit together. If desired, the married couple (one or both), maid/man of honour and/or the best man/woman, representatives of the families, liturgist and others may also walk in procession into the church.

Additional vocal or instrumental music may then be performed.

2 Introduction

either A

L | In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ✠.

or B

L | Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

or C

L | In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ✠: Our creator, redeemer and sanctifier.

L | Dear *(NN)* and *(NN)*, on *(date)* you were married in *(location)* in order to be married. You have come here to this church in *(church's locality)* to ask for the blessing and prayers of the church for your marriage. We are gathered here to rejoice with you both, and pray for God's blessing upon you and your home.

The liturgist may then say some words about the occasion and the service to follow, and may conclude with:

either A

L | O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;

his steadfast love endures forever!

This is the day that the Lord has made;

let us rejoice and be glad in it. *Psalm 118. 1,23*

or B

L | God is love, and those who abide in love

abide in God, and God abides in them. *1 John 4.16b*

3 Hymn

4 Bible readings

L | We are created in the image of God to live in fellowship with the Divine and with one another. Marriage is God's gift; to live together as spouses is to live in trust and love, to share joys and sorrows, and to stand faithfully by one another's sides as long as you both may live.

The Book of Psalms states:

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

They feast on the abundance of your house,

and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

For with you is the fountain of life;

in your light we see light. *Psalm 36, 7-9*

Let us hear what the Word of God says about love and faithfulness:

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. *Col 3, 12-14*

L | Let us hear more from the Word of God.

Two to four additional Bible reading may be read here, either from those suggested in the concluding section of this document, or other suitable readings. Both the Old and New Testaments must be represented.

The readings may be read by wedding guests.

Those who read walk up to the lectern together.

The couple who are to be married and the assembly remain seated during the readings.

The final reading ends with:

This is the Word of the Lord.

Here may follow

5 Hymn

The hymn may be replaced with appropriate vocal or instrumental music.

6 Sermon

The liturgist gives a homily based on one of the lessons read during part 4, or on another appropriate text.

7 Presentation of the married couple

The married couple stands before the altar rail. The liturgist first addresses the person at his/her left.

either A

L | You have both vowed to live together in marriage before a public registrar. This promise means that you will remain together as a couple, and be faithful in both good and bad times until the separation of death.

At your request, we will pray for you both and place your marriage and home under the blessing of God.

or B

L | (*The full names of the couple are stated*), you have promised each other, before a public registrar, to live together in marriage. Will you love and honour each other and remain faithful, for better or for worse, until death do you part?

The married couple responds, consecutively or together:

Yes.

L | At your request, we will pray for you and place your marriage and home under the blessing of God.

8 Intercessions

L | Let us pray.

The married couple kneel at the altar rail. While laying his/her hands on the couple, the liturgist recites one of following prayers for the couple, concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

If desired, guests may also participate in the laying on of hands during the intercessions.

I

either A

L | Merciful God, you instituted marriage and blessed both man and woman. We pray: Send your blessings upon (Name) and (Name) who kneel before you. Fill them with your love and build their home in peace. Grant them your grace, and strengthen them with your Spirit, so that they may always trust you, remain faithful to each other, and help each other towards life eternal.

or B

L | Dear God, we thank you for (Name) and (Name) and for their love for each other. Bless their life as a married couple. Help them to keep their vows that they have made to one another, so that their marriage may be filled with trust, care, and joy.

Grant them the ability and will to build their home in peace, so that it will be a place where [children may grow up in safety and] family and friends may find fellowship.

You are the way, the truth, and the life; let them walk in your truth. You forgive and heal; help them to forgive each other. You are the source of love; help them and all married couples to grow and mature in love.

II

Additional prayers may be included here and, if desired, combined with the lighting of candles.

The assembly may also sing a hymn of prayer (while the married couple are kneeling). The following suggestions are from Norsk salmebok 2013: 431, 624, 638, 652, 653, 678, 680; correspondingly, Hymns in English (a selection of hymns from the Norwegian Hymn Book 2013) may also be used to source English language hymns. Appropriate hymns from this publication include 1, 21, 22, 25, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38, 43, 44, 48, 52, 58, 59, 69, 70, 74, 77, 80 and 87.

III

The Intercessions always end with the Lord's Prayer

L | Let us together say the Lord's Prayer:

A | **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.

Other recognised translations of the Lord's Prayer may be used instead.

The married couple is seated.

Here may follow

9 Music / Symbolic practices

Guests and others may participate with music, readings or other cultural elements.

10 Hymn

11 The blessing

either A (facing the congregation)

L | Let us praise the Lord.

The congregation (C) stands.

C | God be praised. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

L | The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. ✠

C | Amen. Amen. Amen.

or B (facing the congregation):

L | Receive the blessing.

The congregation (C) stands.

L | The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. ✠

C | Amen.

A bell may be rung nine times in groups of three.

Appropriate vocal or instrumental music may also be performed.

12 Recessional

Organ music or other appropriate music may be performed. The married couple leave the church together.

Suggested Bible readings:

The order for a Wedding (2017) and The order for a Prayer Service following a civil marriage ceremony (2017)

L | Let us hear more from the Word of God.

Two to four additional Bible readings may be read here, either from those suggested in the concluding section of this document, or other suitable readings. Both the Old and New Testaments must be represented. The readings may be read by wedding guests. The readers walk up to the lectern together. The couple who are to be married and the assembly remain seated during the readings.

A. A reading from the book of Genesis:

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” [Gen 1.27-28a](#)

B. A reading from the book of Genesis:

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” [Gen 2.18](#)

C. A reading from the book of Ruth:

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. [Ruth 1.16b-17a](#)

D. A reading of The Book of Psalms:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me. Your rod and your staff - they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You

anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long. **Psalm 23**

E. A reading from The Book of Psalms:

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.' He will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. The Lord [is] your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place. **Psalm 91.1-2, 4&9**

F. A reading from The Book of Psalms:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. **Psalm 100**

G. A reading from The Book of Psalms:

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits - who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. **Psalm 103.1-5**

H. A reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. **Eccles 4.9-10a,12**

I. A reading from the Song of Solomon:

My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me, “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.” Sol 2.9-10, 14

J. A reading from the Song of Solomon:

This reading may be read by one or two persons (I, II).

I | The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows, looking through the lattice. My beloved speaks and says to me:

II | Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away. O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.

I | My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Until the day breathes and the shadows flee, turn, my beloved, be like a gazelle or a young stag on the cleft mountains.

I/II | Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. Sol 2.8-14,16-17 + 8.6-7a

K. A reading from the Song of Solomon:

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. Sol 8.6-7a

L. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the

world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. [Matt 5.13-16](#)

M. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you - you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today. [Matt 6.25-34](#)

N. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. [Matt 7.7-8,12](#)

O. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. [Matt 7.24-25](#)

P. A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” [Matt 19.4-6](#)

Q. A reading from the Gospel of John:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. [John 13. 34-35](#)

R. A reading from the Gospel of John:

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.]
[John 15.9-12\[13-17\]](#)

S. A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Rom 8.38-39](#)

T. A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians:

The whole chapter, or excerpts, may be read.

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. **1 Cor 13**

U. A reading from the letter of Paul to the Galatians:

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. **Gal 3.26-28**

V. A reading from the letter to the Ephesians:

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. 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, forever and ever. Amen. [Eph 3.14-21](#)

W. A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians:

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. [Phil 2.1-5](#)

X. A reading from the letter of Paul to the Philippians:

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. [Phil 4.4-8](#)

Y. A reading from John's first letter:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. [1 John 4.7-12](#)

The readings are taken from the [New Revised Standard Version of the Bible \(1989, 1998\)](#).