

“The Niagara Rite”

‘Blessing and Celebration
After a Civil Marriage’

Introduction

This rite is intended for the voluntary use of priests who wish to offer a sacrament of blessing regardless of the gender of the civilly married persons who wish to receive the blessing of the church and wish to affirm their life commitment to each other before God in the community of the church. As such it does not imply nor is it intended to suggest that those who do or do not make use of this rite are excluded from the economy of God's salvation. The rite is a means for the church to extend affirmation, support, and commitment to those who present themselves seeking a sign of God's love in response to the love and commitment they express for each other and have already affirmed in a civil ceremony.

It is designed for the blessing of any couple who have been civilly married. It may also be used for the blessing or renewing of marriage vows for a couple celebrating a significant moment in their married life together.

The rite is innovative in that it does not provide a single set structure with content. Rather it has been designed to present a variety of options, drawing on a number of liturgical resources. Thus, a draft structure appears, divided into six sections, around which a service may be designed using the content on the following pages as the basis for a dialogue between a couple and their priest.

The liturgy of the word includes the option for a reading from a secular source and some appropriate suggestions are here offered. Where there is only one reading, that reading should be taken from the Hebrew or Greek scriptures.

The language in this rite has been edited to be as inclusive as possible and gender-balanced or gender-neutral in references to both the couple and to God. Words in parenthesis should be used and edited according to the circumstances of each couple. While two forms of prayer are offered, the priest or couple should feel free to produce their own. Similarly, while two options are provided for the Eucharistic Prayer, any prayer from the B.A.S. may be substituted.

It is intended that only one of the options presented in each section be used as a rite is produced. The options are in no particular order and should not be 'matched' in a correlating fashion. As this is a blessing upon a couple already civilly married, the renewal of vows and exchanging of a ring or another symbol of covenant love is entirely optional.

Further questions about the use of this rite should be directed to the Bishop's office or the Bishop's liturgical officer.

Protocol for Use:

- 1. This rite is authorized by the Bishop of Niagara for use in the Diocese of Niagara by licenced clergy, and clergy holding the Bishop's permission to officiate, to bless the civil marriages of same-sex couples, one of who must be baptized.*
- 2. Each cleric who wishes to officiate at such a blessing should contact the Bishop's office, so that a conversation can take place between the Bishop and the cleric involved.*
- 3. In the course of such a conversation, the cleric should be prepared to advise the Bishop details about the couple and should be prepared to have a conversation about the response of the parish to blessings. A date for such a blessing should not be confirmed with the couple until after this conversation with the Bishop has taken place.*
- 4. It is the Bishop's wish that each blessing being contemplated would involve such a conversation.*
- 5. Seeking an affirmative vote at a Parish Vestry is not required; the Bishop prefers that Vestry meetings not take place over these services.*
- 6. This process will be monitored and may be adapted as needed.*

The Structure of the Rite:

PART 1: The Gathering of the Community

Which includes one or more of these elements:

- a) A song, hymn or piece of music.
- b) A Gathering responsorial prayer or greeting.
- c) An introduction to the blessing of a relationship.
- d) A Collect

PART 2: The Proclamation of the Word

Which includes one or more of these elements:

- a) One or more readings from the Hebrew or Greek scriptures
- b) A reading from an appropriate secular source.
- c) A song, hymn or piece of music.
- d) A sermon, homily or meditation.

PART 3: The Blessing of the Union

Which may include one or more of these elements:

- a) The Renewal of Marriage vows.
- b) The blessing and exchanging of a symbol of unity.
- c) The blessing of the couple in relationship.

PART 4: The Prayers of the People

Which may include one or more of these elements:

- a) Prayers for the couple
- b) Open / responsorial prayers
- c) The laying on of hands by friends and relatives.
- d) The Peace.
- e) A song, hymn or piece of music.

PART 5: The Celebration of the Eucharist (*optional*)

PART 6: Blessing and Dismissal

Which includes one or more of these elements:

- a) Blessing
- b) A final song, hymn or piece of music.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

PART 1: The Gathering of the Community

- An opening song, hymn or piece of music may be played.

Followed by OPENING RESPONSES:

- i. The Lord be with you
And also with you
- Before the God of Love
We gather to give thanks
- With Christ in our midst
We celebrate His love
- Bound by the Holy Spirit
We seek a new creation¹

or

- ii. Praise to God our Creator
From whom all blessings flow
- Praise to the eternal Word
Who lived and loved as one of us
- Praise to the Holy Spirit
Who binds us together as one body.
Amen.²

or

- iii. May the grace and joy and love of God be with you all
May our hearts be filled with thanksgiving³

¹ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

² By Mike Deed

³ From 'Blessing of a covenant of intimacy' by Gertrude Lebens pg 62 'Out of the Fire' 1992

or

iv. In the joining of hands
We feel the compassion of Christ

In the joining of lives
We glimpse the service of Christ

In the joining of hearts
We find the love of Christ

And so in this gathering today
We find Christ among us.⁴

or

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

You surprise us with your grace.
We are the expressions of your boundless love.

On our exodus way you nourish and free us.
You give us companions for our journey.

You set us apart, shaped by our love, yet call us into the midst of your people,
Where we will be your word of blessing⁵

Followed by an INTRODUCTION:

i. Beloved people of God: We have come together in the presence of God to bless the covenant of love and fidelity which N and N have made with each other. The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and that their love may be a blessing to all whom they encounter. This solemn covenant is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and with the commitment to seek God's will for their lives.⁶

⁴ By Mike Deed

⁵ From 'The New Westminster Rite'

⁶ From 'Same Sex Blessing Liturgy' Diocese of Los Angeles ECUSA
<http://www.mindspring.com/~bcglm1/samesexblessing.html>

or

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

The Hebrew Scriptures teach us that God's covenant with Israel was the basis of the people's liberation from slavery and exile. Paul teaches us of God's covenant with the followers of Jesus that brings us into a new community where there is no longer male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, but one people united in Christ. All our covenants with family and friends are signs of God's faithfulness and love. They are living expressions of God's promises to us and source of hope to others.

Today we gather to witness and to bless the public commitment of *N.* and *N.* to such a covenant.⁷

or

iii. We gather today, in the presence of our passionate and joyful God to celebrate with *N* and *N*, the love, companionship, hope and unity, which they have found in one another. We gather to hear vows renewed in holy love and to see symbols of that unending love, exchanged and embraced. We are here not merely as bystanders but to pledge ourselves to support *N* and *N* as they undertake to continue their life-long journey together and to share in their joy. We will pray for them, we will encourage them and we will rejoice as they are bound to each other.⁸

Or

iv. We have come together
to ask God's blessing on *N.* and *N.*,
to witness their union
and to offer them our love and support.

I ask you now to pray for them;
and not just to pray today
or only in this place
but to pray in your hearts continually
and over the years.

It is praying, their prayers and ours,
which will fulfill God's purposes for *N.* and *N.*
Praying is an outlook, a sustained energy,
which creates a union
and makes love and forgiveness life-long.

Eternal love never fails;
our love needs to forgive and be forgiven.
as we pray and forgive we minister reconciliation.
Those who join together in holy union
are God's ministers to each other

⁷ From 'The New Westminster Rite'

⁸ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

of reconciliation and change.
As they grow together,
these two *men/women* foster one another's strengths,
they provide each other with the reassurance and love
needed to overcome their weaknesses.
From the beginning
God draws them now to a completely new life.
They become awake to each other,
aware of each other,
sensitive to each other's needs.

N. and *N.*, you are welcome.
Pray that God will uphold and cheer your life together,
that your promises be honored,
your words true, now and in time to come.⁹

Followed by a COLLECT

i. Let us pray,
Almighty and eternal God, you are pleased to dwell among us and to fill our lives
with your presence: May *N.* and *N.* who seek your blessing upon their union be filled
with your love and may their life together be to us a sign of your promised reign of
justice and peace; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy
Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. ***Amen.***¹⁰

or

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

⁹ Adapted from Marriage Liturgy, Second Form, in A New Zealand Prayer Book,
Commission on Marriage and Blessing Episcopal Diocese of California

¹⁰ from 'The New Westminster Rite'

¹¹ From 'The New Westminster Rite'

or

iii. Let us Pray.

O gracious and ever living God, you have created us in your image; look mercifully upon this couple who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honour and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**¹²

or

iv. Let us pray,

Sister (Brother) God, you call us into relationship with you and with each other. In the beginning, you saw that we needed comfort, help and partnership. As N. and N. come today to name their relationship, bless them and us that we may all walk together in your garden of potential and new life. **Amen.**¹³

¹² From 'Same Sex Blessing Liturgy' Diocese of Los Angeles ECUSA
<http://www.mindspring.com/~bcglm1/samesexblessing.html>

¹³ From 'Blessing of a Covenant of Intimacy' by Gertrude Lebens pg 62-64 'Out of the Fire' 1992

PART 2: The Proclamation of the Word

Some suggested Secular Readings:

Title	Author
"The Bargain"	Philip Sydney
"Of Marriage"	Khalil Gibran
"The Confirmation"	Edwin Muir
"We two boys together clinging"	Walt Whitman
"She Walks in Beauty"	Lord Byron
"Roads Go Ever Ever On"	J.R.R Tolkien
"A White Rose"	JB O'Reilly
"The Strength To Love"	Martin Luther King Jr.
"Love Is A Great Thing"	Thomas à Kempis
"He Wishes For Cloths of Heaven"	W B Yeats
Sonnet 116	William Shakespeare
Sonnet 18	William Shakespeare

- A song or hymn may be sung or a piece of music played.

Suggested Readings from Scripture:

Hebrew Scriptures

Ruth 1.16-17
1 Samuel 18.1-4, 20.14-17
Ecclesiastes 4.9-12
Song of Solomon 2.1-18
Song of Solomon 8.6-7
Isaiah 43.1-7
Psalm 67
Psalm 95
Psalm 98
Psalm 100

Greek Scriptures

St John 2.1-12
St. John 15.12-17
Romans 8.31-39
1 Corinthians 13.1-13
Ephesians 3.14-21
1 John 4.7-16

At the end of the reading the appropriate responsorial may be used:

Holy Word, Holy Wisdom,
Thanks be to God

The Gospel of Christ,
Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ

- A Sermon, Homily or meditation may be given here.

PART 3: The Blessing of the Union

- The couple is invited to stand together before the congregation.

Followed by THE RENEWAL OF VOWS

i. N. and N. , you stand in the presence of God and of your friends and families to renew your covenant with each other. This covenant must be grounded in mutual respect, in shared power, in compassion and trust.

Do you believe that you share a compatible understanding of partnership and that you know each other intimately enough to trust the promises you each have made?

I do (*responding in turn*)

Will you each love one another with integrity and gentleness?

I will

Will you speak openly and listen patiently?

I will

Will you protect, comfort and challenge each other?

I will

Will you cherish the holiness in each other?

I will

I N. promise you N.

That I will love you as my own soul.

I will go where you go.

I will laugh when you laugh and weep when you mourn.

I will be your helper and partner

As long as we journey together.

In token of this I offer you this (ring or other gift)

So that we may never forget the covenant we entered into today.¹⁴

(Please note that this form of vows includes the exchanging of a ring or other gift)

¹⁴ From 'Blessing of a covenant of intimacy' by Gertrude Lebars pg 63-64 'Out of the Fire' 1992

or

ii. *N*, I place my hand in yours
And with it I place my life:
Mind, body and soul before you.
Where you go, I will go
And where you live I will live,
All that is mine is yours
And, all that God has made me to be;
I share with you.
I bind myself to you
From this day, forever more,
In the name of God,
Creator, Word and Spirit.¹⁵

or

iii. *N*, I commit myself to you,
And embrace all that God has made you to be.
From this day forward we will grow together,
In our being and in our becoming.
I honour you with all that I am and all that I have,
My companion, my lover and my friend,
Until death parts us.
In the name of God, our Creator, our Friend and our Sustainer.¹⁶

or

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

Will you live together in love?
We will, with God's help [or in God].

Will you be faithful to one another?
We will, with God's help [or in God].

Will you support one another in love so that you may both grow into maturity of faith in Jesus Christ?
We will, with God's help [or in God].

Will you do all in your power to make your life together a witness to the love of God in the world?
We will, with God's help [or in God].

¹⁵ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' By Mike Deed

¹⁶ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' By Mike Deed

The Presider invites the couple to stand in full view of the congregation and to face each other.

Taking each other by the hand(s), each says to the other in turn.

N., I give myself to you. I love you, trust you, and delight in you. I will share your burdens and your joys. I will go with you wherever God calls us. This is my solemn promise.¹⁷

or

*v. Jesus, do for N. and N.
as you did in Cana of Galilee.
Take the old water, their busy individual lives,
and turn them into gospel wine.*

The partners face each other, joining hands.

One says

*N, I take you to be my spouse (or partner, or some equivalent term).
All that I have I offer you;
what you have to give I gladly receive;
wherever you go I will go.
You are my love.
God keep me true to you always
and you to me.*

The other says the same vow.¹⁸

¹⁷ From "The New Westminster Rite"

¹⁸ Adapted from Marriage Liturgy, Second Form, in A New Zealand Prayer Book, by Commission on Marriage and Blessing Episcopal Diocese of California

Followed by EXCHANGING SYMBOLS OF UNITY (Optional)

At the exchanging of rings:

i. Christ our light, encircle these rings with your blessing,
to show the love of *N.* and *N.*
Bind them together and keep them in your love eternally.

The giver places the ring on the other's finger and says
N., this ring I give to you,
with my body I honor you.
God make me your true spouse (or partner, or some equivalent term)
in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Priest joins their hands together and says
God so joined you together that nothing shall ever part you.

Blessed are you, heavenly God:
You give joy to this couple.
Blessed are you, Jesus our Redeemer:
You have brought new life to us all.
Blessed are you, Holy Spirit of God:
You bring us together in love.
Blessed are you, Creator, Savior, and Giver of life:
One God to be praised for ever. *Amen.*
Blessed are you, Creator, Savior, and Giver of life:
One God to be praised for ever. *Amen.*

The Priest continues
N. and N.,
May Christ's love purify your love for each other,
Christ's humanity keep you sensitive and practical.

May the Light of the world illuminate your way ahead,
the Bread of heaven nourish you, the true Vine enliven you.

May Christ be both the beginning and the end of your new life, fulfilled and blessed.¹⁹

¹⁹ Adapted from Marriage Liturgy, Second Form, in A New Zealand Prayer Book, Commission on Marriage and Blessing Episcopal Diocese of California

or

ii. *The clergy or priest may bless the rings or gifts saying:*

Almighty God,
Whose love is eternal and whose blessings are unending,
Make these *rings/gifts* to be to *N* and *N* a holy symbol
Of their unity and love, so that even when apart,
They will remember the covenant they have made this day
And rejoice in each other's love.
In the name of the +Creator and the Eternal Word and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Couple exchanges rings or gifts saying:

N, take this *ring*, my gift to you:
May it be between us a symbol of unending love and faithfulness.
May it recall for us each day that love,
which binds us to one another
and remind us that, from this day forward,
We shall let nothing come between us.²⁰

and / or

iii. *(The Couple approaches the Altar and from two candles light a third)*
Then they may say together:

We light this one light
From two flames,
And our two lives we pledge now as one.
May God's light shine through us,
To bathe us in faith, hope and love
And to reveal the glory of the divine to the world.

Or the Priest may say:

Christ Jesus, the Light of the World,
Make his light and love to shine in your lives;
steadfast and unflickering.
From these two flames, one has been kindled;
So may it be with you.²¹

²⁰ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

²¹ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

Followed by BLESSINGS Upon the Couple

i. You, friends and members of the families of *N.* and *N.*, are witnesses to this covenant. Will you support *these two women/ men/ this couple* in the promises they have made?

We will.

Will you celebrate the goodness of God's grace evident in their lives?

We will.

Will you stand by them, encourage, guide, and pray for them in times of trouble and distress?

We will.

Do you give them your blessing?

We do.

The Presider then says one of the following blessings.

Let us pray.

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

or

ii. Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.

Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now, there is no more loneliness.

Now you are two persons, but there is one life ahead of you.

Go now to your dwelling to enter into the days of your life together

And may your days be good and long upon the earth

And we, your family and your friends rejoice with you this day.

(adapted from a Native American prayer)

AMEN!

Let us share in this joy!

(A time for general greetings and congratulations!)²³

²² From 'The New Westminster Rite'

²³ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

Or

iii. All praise and blessing to you, God of love,
Creator of the universe, maker of humankind in your likeness,
Source of blessing for covenanted life [*or* all of life).
All praise to you for you have created the love between two people,
joy and gladness, feasting and laughter, pleasure and delight.
May the fullness of your blessing come upon *N.* and *N.*
May they know your presence in their joys and in their sorrows.
May they reach old age in the company of friends,
and come at last into your eternity. ***Amen.***

And the blessing of the eternal God:
Source of all being, precious Friend, and life-giving Spirit,
be with you and remain with you forever. ***Amen.***²⁴

²⁴ Adapted from Marriage Liturgy, Second Form, in A New Zealand Prayer Book,
Commission on Marriage and Blessing Episcopal Diocese of California

PART 4: The Prayers of the People

(One of the following forms may be used. Alternatively, the priest, the couple or their friends and family may create their own forms of intercession)

FORM 1

Some or all of these petitions may be used, the people responding as indicated
Gracious God we pray for *N.* and *N.* and give thanks that you have brought them together in love.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

We thank you for the love and care which[, through their parents,] has guided *N.* and *N.* to maturity, and prepared them for this commitment.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

Help them [to be wise and loving parents and] to grow together in faithfulness and honesty, in mutual support and patience.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

Make their life together a sign of your love in this broken world; may forgiveness heal injury and joy triumph over sorrow.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

Be with them in their work and renew them in their leisure.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

May they welcome into their home both friends and strangers and so reflect Christ's love for all people.

Spirit of God, bless this Union.

In all their future together may they enjoy each other's lives and grow through the love they share. ***Amen.***

One or more of these prayers may be said

Mother and Father of all: We thank you for this family,
and for everything these parents
and their children have to share.

By your Spirit of peace draw them together
and help them to be true friends to one another.

Let your love surround them and your care protect them;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. ***Amen.***

Dear God: You are merciful and forgiving.

Grant that *N.* and *N.*,
their families, and all who care for them,
may accept your generous love.

Heal their memories, comfort them
and send them all from here,
renewed and hopeful. ***Amen.***

Life-giving Spirit:
We thank you for your gift of sexual love,
by which this couple
may express their delight in each other,
and find refreshment,
[and share with you the joy of creating new life.]
By your grace may *N.* and *N.* remain lovers,
rejoicing in your goodness. **Amen.**

God, the source (*or* author) of love:
We pray now for all who are committed to each other in that love.
In their devotion to one another may they know your care for them,
and so be renewed for your service in the world. **Amen.**²⁵

Form 2

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

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

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

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

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

We ask these things in thanksgiving and praise to you, our Creator, Redeemer, and
Sustainer, one God now and forever. **Amen.**²⁶

*The Prayers of the people may conclude with the Lord's Prayer if communion is not
to be celebrated.*

Followed by THE PEACE

The Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all

And also with you

All are invited to share a sign of God's peace

²⁵ Adapted from Marriage Liturgy, Second Form, in A New Zealand Prayer Book,
Commission on Marriage and Blessing Episcopal Diocese of California

²⁶ From 'The New Westminster Rite'

PART 5: The Celebration of the Eucharist (optional)

Option 1

The Lord is here.

God's Spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

To you, God of joy, we lift our hearts
with thanksgiving for your unending love towards us:
For, to reveal that love,
You draw us into relationship with you
and with one another
So that your love may be more fully realised in the world you made
And your purpose for us brought to fruition,
As we live in the beauty of faithfulness,
Commitment, tenderness, and the bonds of covenant love
Glory to you for ever and ever

Therefore we raise our voices with all who have served you in every age,
to proclaim the glory of your name

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of empowering might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord,
Hosanna in the highest.**

We give you thanks and praise, loving God,
because in sending Jesus, your Son to us
you showed us how much you love us.
He cares for the poor and the hungry.
He suffers with the sick and the rejected.
Betrayed and forsaken, he did not strike back
but overcame hatred with love.
On the cross, he defeated the power of sin and death.
By raising him from the dead you show us the power of your love
to bring new life to all your people.
Glory to you for ever and ever.

On the night before he gave up his life for us,
Jesus, at supper with his friends, took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
"Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body which is given for you."

After supper, Jesus took the cup of wine,
said the blessing, gave it to his friends, and said,
“Drink this, all of you: this is the cup of my blood,
the blood of the new and eternal covenant,
which is shed for you and for many,
so that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in memory of me.”

Glory to you for ever and ever.

Gracious God, with this bread and wine
we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus,
and we offer ourselves to you in him.
Send your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts,
that we may know the presence of Jesus in the breaking of bread,
and share in the life of the family of your children.

Glory to you for ever and ever.

Eternal God, you call us to be your servants;
fill us with the courage and love of Jesus,
that all the world may gather in joy at the table of your new creation.
We sing your praise, creator God, through Jesus, our Lord,
in the power of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever.

Glory to you for ever and ever. Amen.²⁷

The Lord’s Prayer and the Breaking of the Bread follow here (in either choice of Eucharistic prayer) as in the normal Eucharistic order.

²⁷ Adapted from Eucharistic prayer 5 ‘Book of Alternative Services’ Anglican Church of Canada.

or Option 2

The God of love is here.

Between us and within us.

Come with thanksgiving.

We offer our hearts and lives,

Our hopes and dreams,

Our joys and sorrows,

All we are and all we may be.

Praise and thanksgiving,

Blessing and glory,

Be to you God of life,

For you created us in love and placed us in a garden of freedom and delight.

We praise you God of life and love

Even when we turn from you, you do not leave us or abandon us,

But call us time and again into relationship with you and with one another

And call us into the freedom and commitment

Known most fully in love.

We praise you God of life and love.

To show us this love, you sent your Son, Jesus,

To touch this earth and to transform our hearts,

Loving us even to the point of death on the cross

He rose again, for your love has no end.

Praise to you God of life and love.

On the same night that he was handed over to death,

Gathered with those he loved in an upper room,

to share the intimacy of washing their feet

and the meal of freedom.

There among them, he took bread and gave you thanks.

He gave it to his friends saying

“Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, do this to remember me”

Praise to you God of life and love.

After the meal he took a cup of wine and gave it to them and said

“Take and drink, this is my blood of the new relationship with God,

which is shed for you and for many so that sins may be forgiven.

Do this to remember me”

Praise to you God of life and love.

So as we share this bread and wine, send your Spirit,

To fill us, renew us and inspire us,

Igniting in our hearts that most excellent gift of love

for you and for all people.

Praise to you God of life and love. Amen²⁸

²⁸ By Mike Deed

PART 6: Blessing and Dismissal

i. Lover of humanity and all creation, bless these persons and the promises they have renewed this day. May they be sanctified in all that they do together and apart, that they may be witnesses to your goodness and grace.

And now may the blessing of the One who gives, the One who loves justice, and the One who brings laughter, be with us all, now and always. Amen.²⁹

Or

ii. May God's arms be round about you;
May God's light go before you;
May God's love bind you to him and ever closer, one to the other.

And the blessing of God,
+Source of all Being,
Eternal Word and
Holy Spirit
Be upon you and remain with you,
From this time and forever more.³⁰

(Note: the first part of this blessing may be addressed to the couple, and the second part to the whole congregation)

Or

Spirit of God, you teach us through Jesus
that love is the fulfillment of your law.
Help N. and N. to persevere in love,
to grow in mutual understanding,
and to deepen their trust in each other,
that in wisdom, patience, and courage,
their love may be a source of happiness
and their home a place of peace for all.

Amen.

or

iv. 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.

In our solitude and our companionship,

²⁹ From 'Blessing of a covenant of intimacy' by Gertrude Lebars pg 65 'Out of the Fire' 1992

³⁰ From 'A Service of Blessing and Binding' by Mike Deed

Bless us, O God.

In our acts of tenderness and intimacy,
Bless us, O God.

In our delight at knowing and being known,
Bless us, O God.

In our acts of self-sacrifice to build up one another,
Bless us, O God.

In our being comfort to each other,
Bless us, O God.

In our passion for justice,
Bless us, O God.

In our generosity and tenacity,
Bless us, O God.

In all our expressions of faith,
*Bless us, O God.*³¹

- A Final song or hymn may be sung or a piece of music played

³¹ From 'The New Westminster Rite'