

Service of blessing for registered partnerships

Preliminary order of service

laid down by the Central Board

of the Church of Sweden

6 December 2006

General instructions

The blessing of a civil partnership is an offer to those who want to celebrate this occasion in a church service with the congregation, with prayers and a blessing for their life together.

As the service has no effect under civil law, there may be a certain amount of freedom regarding the form it takes. The service should be designed in consultation with the couple. Depending on the couple's wishes, the sections Confirmation of the vows and Prayer over the rings may either be used or omitted.

This blessing service primarily involves a thanksgiving to God and a prayer asking God's help and protection for the couple. The following elements must always be included:

- Introductory words about the gift and responsibility of love
- Bible reading
- Intercession
- The Lord's Prayer
- Blessing

The freedom and ability to write one's own prayers and introduce other elements, which characterises the current order of worship, also applies to this service.

Note

() Brackets around a heading in the order of service mean that the section may be omitted.

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The text on page 7 beginning "NN, I have (today) expressed my desire ...": Ninna Edgardh Beckman and Anna Karin Hammar.

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Introductory music

The service may be preceded by organ music,
other instrumental music and/or vocal music.

Hymn

Act of Praise

The Act of Praise begins with one of the following opening responses.

Minister In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

or

Minister Blessed are you God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
From whom, through whom and to whom are all things,
now and for ever more.

All Amen.

Then the Minister may say:

Minister Wonderful are your works, oh Lord our God
Wonderfully you have created us in your image.
We live in your love.
We praise you for this life which is unceasingly renewed.

Introductory words

The Minister speaks the following or similar words.

Minister We have come together in the presence of God
to pray for God's blessing on
the partnership which NN and NN
(or: these two women/men, NN and NN,)
have entered into together.
We are here to pray for you
and to share in your joy.

One of the following alternatives is used:

Minister Love is a gift from God.
Faithful love strengthens community,
is to mankind a help and a joy
providing mutual support and deep affinity
in good times and in bad.
You have chosen to live in partnership,
to live in trust and love,
to be responsible for each other (for a home and children)
and to steadfastly stand at one another's side.
May your union, with the help of God,
be lovingly and tenderly nurtured.

or

Minister Love originates from God.
The ability to love is God's gift to mankind.
Entering into partnership is a shared undertaking
to preserve and deepen your love for each other,
to share each other's lives in good times and in bad,
to create a warm and welcoming home together,
(where children receive the security they need).
It means being faithful to one another,
And living in trust and love.
May your union, with the help of God,
be lovingly and tenderly nurtured.
And may prayer and worship, God's word and sacrament
grant you the strength for your journey together.

Bible readings

(Minister) Let us listen to the words of the Bible on the gift and responsibility of love.

The Minister and/or the couple's friends and relatives read some of the following or other readings from the Bible.

Reading from St John's Gospel:

Jesus said "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father."

John 10:14-15a

Reading from St John's Gospel:

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.
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 15:9-17

Reading from St John's Gospel:

Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches.
Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit."

John 15:5a

St Paul wrote:

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil,
hold fast to what is good;
love one another with mutual affection;
outdo one another in showing honour.
Rejoice with those who rejoice,
weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:9-10, 15

St Paul wrote:

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

1 Corinthians 13:4-7,13

St Paul wrote:

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way
you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

St Paul wrote:

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.

Galatians 3:27-28

St Paul wrote:

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.

Philippians 2:1-4

St John wrote:

There is no fear in love,
but perfect love casts out fear;
for fear has to do with punishment,
and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.
We love because he first loved us.
Those who say, 'I love God',
and hate their brothers or sisters,
are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister
whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.
The commandment we have from him is this:
those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

1 John 4:18-21

Reading from the book of Ruth from the Old Testament:

Ruth said to Naomi:
"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.
May the Lord do thus and so to me,
and more as well,
if even death parts me from you!"

Ruth 1:16b-17

Reading from the Song of Songs:

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.

Song of Solomon 8:6b-7

Additional texts which can be read during the service:

Psalms 108:1-5, Psalms 139:14-18, Colossians 3:12-17.

(Hymn)

During the hymn the couple (and some of the couple's friends) go forward to the altar rail.

*(*Prayer over the rings)*

The couple may hold each other's hands wearing the rings while the Minister, with his or her hand in blessing over the couple's hands, says the following or a similar prayer. Alternatively the Minister may hold the rings during the prayer.

Minister God, from whom and to whom all things flow,
bless NN and NN in their lifelong union.
Let these rings be to them a symbol
of their promises of mutual love and faithfulness.
In the name of Jesus Christ.

All Amen.

*(*Confirmation of the vows)*

In the presence of the congregation the couple may confirm the vows they made when registering the partnership.
The vows may also be written by the couple together with the Minister.
The vows should express the desire of both parties to share their entire lives.

Minister Confirm now before God and before this congregation
the promises of faithfulness and love you have made to each other:

Facing each other, each says:

NN, I have (today) expressed my desire
to love you for better for worse.
I will share my life with you
in joy and sorrow,
in good times and bad.
I will share the gift of love with you
until death us do part.

or

NN, I will love you,
share joy and sorrow with you
and be faithful to you
until death us do part.

(Hymn/Song)

Intercession

The couple's friends or the Minister say one of the intercessory prayers.
The prayers may instead be freely worded.
The first prayer may be sung.

(Minister) Let us pray.

(Minister) Source of love, eternal God,
creator of heaven and earth,
who, when you created all things,
created mankind to live in love.
You gave us the grace to command
everything created by your love.
Our God, who in Christ gave us an example
of faithful love and friendship,
and who is with us all the days of our lives,
look mercifully upon this couple who stand before you
and ask your blessing.
Help them to live together in love and peace,
in faithfulness and companionship,
and with respect for each other.
Enfold them in your grace and power
(grant that their children may live in a secure and loving home)
and grant them eternal glory in the life to come.
Through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All Amen.

or

(Minister) Heavenly Father,
we thank you for this day,
for the joy and hope it brings.
We pray for NN's and NN's lifelong union.
Let their lives together be filled with trust
and respect for each other's unique qualities.
Help them to create a warm and welcoming home,
(a secure and loving home for their children,
in which friends and family find fellowship.
In times of adversity,
bring them closer to you and to each other.
Help them to forgive one another
and grant them day by day
joy and strength from your hand.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

(Hymn/song/music)

The Lord's Prayer

Minister Let us together pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

All 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.

or

All 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.

Sermon

The sermon may instead be given after the blessing or in conjunction with the Bible readings.

** Blessing*

Minister Receive this blessing

Minister The Lord bless you and watch over you,
 the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you,

the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace.
In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

All Amen.

Hymn

Concluding music

The service may finish with organ music,
other instrumental and/or vocal music.

Communion in conjunction with the blessing of a registered partnership

When the registered partnership blessing is celebrated with communion, the structure in the order of worship for Marriage with communion (Vigsel med mässa) is to be used. The suggested preface and thanksgiving below or one of the texts linked to the liturgical year may be used.

Act of Praise (Preface)

Minister You have sent him as a sign of your love
 that our joy be complete.
 Through the power of your love the world gains new life
 that we may live according to your will.

Thanksgiving

(Minister) God of life, we thank you.
 In this sacrament you share your love with us.
 Let us as guests at your table
 take your love out with us to those we meet.
 In the name of Christ.

All Amen.