

The Blessing of a Civil Partnership

Gathering

We stand in this circle for we are, and we represent, that circle of family and friends who have shared Pat and Chris's journey for the last thirteen years. They have entered into a Civil Partnership which is recognized by law and now they wish to seek God's blessing on their love and their life together.

But they are already blessed: they are blessed by the joy they find in each other; they are blessed those who have kept faith with them in friendship and love. They are blessed because God is love and those who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them. We love because God first loved us.

Prayer of Invocation

We gather in the name of God our creator,
who called us into life and made us for love.

We gather in commitment to Christ Jesus,
who calls us to follow and commanded us to love one another.

We gather in the presence of the Holy Spirit,
who calls us into community and strengthens us for living and for loving.

God of grace, you have bound yourself to us in the covenant of the word made flesh; come among us, we pray, that our celebration of life and love may lead each of us further into fullness of life. For the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're perhaps more used to vows being taken near the beginning of a relationship and not after a number of years. But perhaps it's appropriate for vows to be made when the dimensions - the shape and the character and the implications - of a relationship are known. So, to make vows is, for Chris and Pat, to say yes to what has been and to commit themselves to what is yet to be in their life together. They're going to make the same vows to each other, in words they have written for themselves:

The Vows

(The Vows may be composed by the couple for the occasion or these or similar may be used. They can be adapted into statements said by each to the other.)

Will you, Chris / Pat, take Pat / Chris,

to be your life-long companion, lover and friend?

Will you spend your lives together, seeking to fulfil each other's needs, growing together that you may share your strengths and bear each other's weaknesses?

Do you promise to love, honour and cherish her / him,

to dwell together in harmony and love as long as you both shall live?

[I do]

Exchange of Rings

As a symbol of these promises rings are given and received, signs of the unbroken and unending love to which Pat and Chris are committed and also of the trustworthy and eternal love of God.

As a symbol of this covenant and our life together

I give you this ring.

Friends, Chris and Pat have called us here to witness this act of commitment and to celebrate with them. We have shared their journey to this day. Please join with me as we commit ourselves to support and love them in the future:

Congregational Response

Together, and in the sight of God, we will support Chris and Pat in their life together and in their love for each other.

With them, and by God's grace,

we will live by faith, journey in hope,

nurture and share love with each other and serve God's world.

For all that has been, we are grateful.

For all that is yet to be, we say yes. Amen.

When we ask God to bless, what is it we are doing?

“That God blesses us is to say that God accepts us, affirms us, encourages us, is generous towards us. Those who seek God’s blessing are saying, “We believe that God wants us to be together, that God delights in us, wills us to make love, and so be ‘images’, pictures as it were, of the abundant divine love which overflows in generosity to others.”

(Jim Cotter, Pleasure, Pain and Passion.)

In essence, God blessing us is God saying ‘yes to us.’

So we ask God’s blessing on Pat and Chris and the vows that they have made. We shall embody this blessing by our action now: please move forward so that you are able to lay hands on them as a sign of blessing.

The Blessing

(The Congregation is invited to encircle Chris and Pat and lay hands on them as a sign of blessing.)

Chris and Pat, Pat and Chris:

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord be kind and gracious to you

The Lord look upon you with favour and give you peace. Amen.

We are blessed that we may be a blessing to each other and to the world. God says yes to us that we might say yes to God and to God’s world. So I give each of you a charge:

Charge

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)

Prayers of Celebration and Concern

Living, loving God, we believe that there is rejoicing in heaven when two people fall in love and commit themselves to each other. May our joy, laughter and prayers now reach up to heaven.

We pray for Chris and Pat,
giving thanks with them for all that has brought them to this day:
for those who gave them life and taught them how to love;
for those who have affirmed and challenged them over the years,
for those who are not here today yet whose love and memory lives on.

We pray for Pat and Chris
that their love may overflow into the communities in which they live and work and be a sign of your presence; for this world needs sure signs of a loving, merciful God.

We pray for ourselves,
that we might each be strengthened by today to live lives that are more receptive to the mysterious presence of each other, in which the divine presence waits to be found; that our love for each other might find renewal and hope for the future.

O God, by your Spirit take our prayers
and those inward yearnings of our hearts,
and weave them into that covenant which embraces us all;
for the sake of Jesus Christ, the word made flesh.

Benediction

On your hearts and on your homes, the blessing of God
On your tears and on your laughter, the blessing of God,
On your lives and on your loves,
the blessing of the God of eternal life and love. Amen.

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