

Celebrating a Relationship

Words of Gathering

Chris and Pat, you have done us the honour of gathering us together this morning to celebrate with you your love for each other and to rejoice with you that you want to make a commitment of love to each other. We are happy to be here and, believing that there is rejoicing in heaven whenever people love each other, we will ask for God's blessing upon your lives.

In this place, surrounded by hills and trees, colour and movement, it is easy to believe in the goodness and love of God. In other places, faced with indifference and hatred, poverty and disease, it can be hard to sense the presence of God.

Today we want to affirm the goodness of God and of God's creation, the worth of life and love.

Today we remind ourselves that every human person finds true fulfilment in life by loving God and loving their neighbour. God has created us that we might grow in love.

From the earliest times women and men have made solemn vows before God and before witnesses. The stories of David and Jonathan and Ruth and Naomi remind us of two such vows, made before God, and calling upon God to bless the love they professed for each other.

Prayer

God of love and creator of life,
we are here today so that Pat and Chris may speak of their love for each other
and that we may share in their happiness and joy.
We are thankful for all that has brought them to this stage in their life;
for the grace which has led them over obstacles,
the strength which has made them persevere
and the courage to accept themselves and each other as they are.
Gracious God, you are an exacting and faithful friend who stands with us in life,
helping us to find joy and peace, to create justice and freedom.
So may we all live as your friends and as trusted companions to each other. Amen.

Vows and the exchange of rings

Now you are going to make promises to each other. Please respond to this question by saying 'I do.'

*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]

You have chosen to exchange rings with each other.

Prayer

O God, bless these rings which we bless in your name:
grant that they who wear them may always have a deep faith in each other.
May they do your will and live together in peace and love, sharing their joys and fears,
and each with patience giving the other room to grow in freedom and in truth;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The couple say to each other, as the rings are exchanged:

*This ring is a sign of all that I am and all that I have.
Receive and treasure it as a token and pledge of the love that I have for you,
and wear it as a protection whenever we are separated.*

A Reading (perhaps read by a friend)

Apache Prayer

Now you will feel no rain.
For each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold.
For each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there will be no more loneliness,
For each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two bodies
But there is only one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place
To enter into the days of your togetherness
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

Finally, as you have pledged your love to and for each other, so we, as your friends, pledge to you our love and support, knowing that living in love is never easy and cannot be done in isolation, but requires people around who are loyal and generous. We want to be those people for you and may God help us to be so.

Blessing

On your hearts and on your homes – the blessing of God
On your loving and on your laughter – the blessing of God
On your hopes and on your fears – the blessing of God
On your lives – the blessing of the God of life and of life eternal.
Amen.