The Service of Christian Marriage

This service of Christian marriage is found in the hymn book, pp. 864-69. It is provided for couples who wish to solemnize their marriage in a service of Christian worship, parallel in its structure to the Sunday service, which includes the proclamation of the Word with prayer and praise. Christian marriage is proclaimed as a sacred covenant reflecting the Baptismal Covenant. Everything about the service is designed to witness that this is a Christian marriage.

Both words and actions consistently reflect the belief that husband and wife are equal partners in Christian marriage and that they are entering into the marriage of their own volition.

Those present are understood to be an active congregation rather than simply passive witnesses. They give their blessing to the couple and to the marriage, and they join in prayer and praise. It is highly appropriate that the congregation sing hymns and other acts of worship. See the wedding hymns in The hymn book, pp. 642-47, those listed under Weddings in The hymn book, pp. 953-54, and others listed in the service below.

Holy Communion may or may not be celebrated. If it is, it is most important that its significance be made clear. Specifically: (1) The marriage rite is included in a Service of Word and Table. (2) Not only the husband and wife but the whole congregation are to be invited to receive communion. It is our tradition to invite all Christians to the Lord’s table. (3) There should be no pressure that would embarrass those who for whatever reason do not choose to receive communion.

The decision to perform the ceremony is the right and responsibility of the pastor, in accordance with the laws of the state and The United Methodist Church. All plans should be approved by the pastor. The pastor’s “due counsel with the parties involved” prior to marriage, mandated by The Book of Discipline, should include, in addition to premarital counseling, discussing and planning the service with them and informing them of policies or guidelines established by the congregation on such matters as decorations, photography, and audio or video recording. Any leadership roles taken by other clergy should be at the invitation of the pastor of the church where the service is held. The organist or person in charge of the music should be consulted and work with the couple in all decisions on music selection.

Ethnic and cultural traditions are encouraged and may be incorporated into the service at the discretion of the pastor.

Any children of the man or the woman, other family, and friends may take a variety of roles in the service, depending on their ages and abilities. They may, for example, be members of the wedding party, participate in the Response of the Families and People, read scripture lessons, sing or play instrumental music, or make a witness in their own words.

In the case of couples who are not church members or are not prepared to make the Christian commitment expressed in our services, adaptations may be made at the discretion of the pastor.

The congregation may participate by using A Service of Christian Marriage in the hymn book, p. 864

Structure of a typical Wedding Ceremony

ENTRANCE

GREETING

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

DECLARATION BY THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

RESPONSE OF THE FAMILIES AND PEOPLE (PRESENTATION)

PRAYER

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

READING OF SCRIPTURE

THE MESSAGE

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

THE MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE (SOLO OR INSTRUMENTAL)

BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

SENDING FORTH

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING

PRESENTATION

GOING FORTH

The Contemporary Service Options begin on the following page. The Traditional Vows begin at the bottom of page 9.
A SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (Contemporary Vows)

ENTRANCE

GATHERING

While the people gather, instrumental or vocal music may be offered. Here and throughout the service, the use of music appropriate for Christian worship is strongly encouraged.

During the entrance of the wedding party, there may be instrumental music or a hymn, a psalm, a canticle, or an anthem. The congregation may be invited to stand. The following processional hymns in the hymn book are suggested:

- 166  All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine
- 475  Come Down, O Love Divine
- 732  Come, We That Love the Lord
- 644  Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring
- 93  Let All the World in Every Corner Sing
- 66  Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
- 111  How Can We Name a Love
- 61  Come, Thou Almighty King
- 117  O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- 96  Praise the Lord Who Reigns Above
- 139  Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
- 126  Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above
- 664  Jesus, Joy of Our Desiring

The woman and the man, entering separately or together, now come forward with members of the wedding party. The woman and the man may be escorted by representatives of their families until they have reached the front of the church, or through the Response of the Families, at which time their escorts are seated.

GREETING

Pastor to people:

Friends, we are gathered together in the sight of God to witness and bless the joining together of Name and Name in Christian marriage. The covenant of marriage was established by God, who created us male and female for each other. With his presence and power Jesus graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee, and in his sacrificial love gave us the example for the love of husband and wife. Name and Name come to give themselves to one another in this holy covenant.

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

DECLARATION BY THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

Pastor to the persons who are to marry:

I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people, to declare your intention to enter into union with each other through the grace of Jesus Christ, who calls you into union with himself as acknowledged in your baptism.

Pastor to the woman:

Name, will you have Name to be your husband, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Woman: I will.

Pastor to the man:

Name, will you have Name to be your wife, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

Man: I will.

RESPONSE OF THE FAMILIES AND PEOPLE

Pastor to people:

The marriage of Name and Name unites their families and creates a new one. They ask for your blessing.

Parents and other representatives of the families may respond in one of the following ways:

We rejoice in your union, and pray God’s blessing upon you.

or, in reply to the pastor’s question:

Do you who represent their families rejoice in their union and pray God’s blessing upon them?

We do.

or, children of the couple may repeat these or similar words, prompted line by line, by the pastor:

We love both of you. We bless your marriage. Together we will be a family.
If the woman and the man have been escorted by representatives of their families, their escorts, having blessed the marriage in the name of their families, may be seated (see page 10 for traditional presentation).

Pastor to people:
Will all of you, by God's grace, do everything in your power to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will.

PRAYER *
Pastor to people: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.

Let us pray.
God of all peoples, you are the true light illumining everyone. You show us the way, the truth, and the life. You love us even when we are disobedient. You sustain us with your Holy Spirit. We rejoice in your life in the midst of our lives. We praise you for your presence with us, and especially in this act of solemn covenant; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE
A hymn, psalm, canticle, anthem, or other music may be offered before or after the readings. The congregation may be invited to stand.

Suggested Scripture Lessons

Genesis 1:26-28,31a

26 Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."
27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."
31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

Song of Solomon 2:10-14, 16a; 8:6-7

10 My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; 11 for now the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. 12 The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. 13 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. 14 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. 15 Catch us the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards -- for our vineyards are in blossom." 16 My beloved is mine and I am his...
6 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. 7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.

Isaiah 43:1-7

1 But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. 3 For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. 6 Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; 7 I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth -- everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

Isaiah 55:10-13

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. 12 For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.
Isaiah 61:10-62:3
10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the LORD God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations. 12 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch. 13 The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. 14 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Isaiah 63:7-9
7 I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. 8 For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely”; and he became their savior in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18
1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For love is patient; love is kind; love is not jealous or resentful; 4 it does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or rude. 5 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. 6 Love endures all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
7 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. 8 For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; 9 but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. 10 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. 11 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. 12 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. 13 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13
13 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. 14 And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

2 Corinthians 5:14-17
14 For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. 15 And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. 17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Ephesians 2:4-10
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved. 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; 9 not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Ephesians 4:1-6
1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.
Ephesians 4:25-5:2
25 So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not make room for the devil. 28 Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29 Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2 and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Philippians 2:1-2
1 If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Philippians 4:4-9
4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is anything excellent and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 3:12-17
12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 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. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 3:18-24
18 Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 19 And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20 whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22 and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24 All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

1 John 4:7-16
7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 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. 10 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. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in him and he is in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. 15 God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. 16 So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

Revelation 19:1, 5-9a
1 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God,
5 And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great." 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns." 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; 8 to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" -- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”
Matthew 5:1-10

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 7:21, 24-27

21 ‘Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.
22 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 23 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.
24 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 25 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew against that house, and it fell -- and great was its fall!"

Matthew 22:35-40

35 and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 37 This is the greatest and first commandment. 38 And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 39 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Mark 2:18-22

18 Now John’s disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, “Why do John’s disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?” 19 Jesus said to them, “The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day.
21 “No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak; otherwise, the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins.”

Mark 10:42-45

42 So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

John 2:1-11

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” 6 Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8 He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the steward.” So they took it. 9 When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” 11 Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 15:9-17

9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 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. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.
12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you. 15 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. 16 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. 17 I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.
Suggested Hymns:
642  As Man and Woman We Were Made
158  Come, Christians, Join to Sing
695  O Lord, May Church and Home Combine
408  The Gift of Love
643  When Love Is Found
647  Your Love, O God, Has Called Us Here

Suggested Psalms and Canticles
34 (The hymn book, pp. 769) I will bless the Lord.
37 (The hymn book, pp. 772) Trust in the Lord and do good.
67 (The hymn book, pp. 791) May God be gracious to us.
100 (The hymn book, pp. 74, 75, 821) Make a joyful noise to the Lord.
103 (The hymn book, pp. 139, 824) Bless the Lord, O my soul.
112 (The hymn book, pp. 833) Happy are those who fear the Lord.
148 (The hymn book, pp. 861) Praise the Lord from the heavens.
150 (The hymn book, pp. 96, 139, 862) Praise the Lord.
Canticle of Love (The hymn book, pp. 646) Two shall become one in love.

SERMON OR OTHER WITNESS TO CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

INTERCESSIONARY PRAYER *
An extemporaneous prayer may be offered, or the following may be prayed by the pastor or by all:

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all life, Author of salvation, Giver of all grace: Bless and sanctify with your Holy Spirit Name and Name, who come now to join in marriage. Grant that they may give their vows to each other in the strength of your steadfast love. Enable them to grow in love and peace with you and with one another all their days, that they may reach out in concern and service to the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS
The woman and man face each other, joining hands. The pastor may prompt them, line by line:

Man to woman:
In the name of God, I, Name, take you, Name, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:
In the name of God, I, Name, take you, Name, to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

In place of the vows given above, one of the following may be used:

I take you, Name, to be my wife (husband), and I promise before God and all who are present here to be your loving and faithful husband (wife) as long as we both shall live.
I will serve you with tenderness and respect, and encourage you to develop God's gifts in you.
BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS
The exchange of rings is optional. Other tangible symbols may be given in addition to, or instead of, rings.

The pastor, taking the rings, may say one of the following:
These rings (symbols) are the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying to us the union between Jesus Christ and his Church.

These rings (symbols) are the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying to all the uniting of Name and Name in holy marriage.

The pastor may bless the giving of rings or other symbols of the marriage:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings (symbols), that they who wear them may live in your peace and continue in your favor all the days of their life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

While placing the ring on the third finger of the recipient's left hand, the giver may say (prompted, line by line, by the pastor):

Name, I give you this ring
as a sign of my vow,
and with all that I am,
and all that I have,
I honor you;
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

If a unity candle is used, the two side candles representing the husband and wife are lighted first, and the center candle representing the marriage is lighted at this or some later point in the service. The side candles are not extinguished because both husband and wife retain their personal identities.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE
The wife and husband join hands. The pastor may place a hand on their joined hands.

Pastor to husband and wife:
You have declared your consent and vows before God and this congregation.
May God confirm your covenant and fill you both with grace.

The couple may turn and face the congregation.

Pastor to people:

Now that Name and Name have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands, [and the giving and receiving of rings],
I announce to you that they are husband and wife; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one put asunder. Amen.

The congregation may be invited to stand, and a doxology or other hymn may be sung. The following hymns from the hymn book are suggested:

139 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
408 The Gift of Love
643 When Love Is Found

Intercessions may be offered for the Church and for the world.

BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE *
The husband and wife may kneel, as the pastor prays:

O God, you have so consecrated the covenant of Christian marriage that in it is represented the covenant between Christ and his Church. Send therefore your blessing upon Name and Name, that they may surely keep their marriage covenant, and so grow in love and godliness together that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the congregation turns to A Service of Word and Table III in The hymn book, pp. 15, or one of the musical settings (The hymn book, pp. 17-25), and the service continues with the Thanksgiving and Communion (124-27). If Holy Communion is not to be celebrated, the service continues with the following Prayer of Thanksgiving:
Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in making us a covenant people through our Savior Jesus Christ and for consecrating in his name the marriage covenant of Name and Name. Grant that their love for each other may reflect the love of Christ for us and grow from strength to strength as they faithfully serve you in the world. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their heads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their lives and in their deaths. Finally, by your grace, bring them and all of us to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer, prayed by all, using one of the forms in the hymn book, pp. 270-71, 894-96. The wife and husband may continue to kneel.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING *

Pastor to wife and husband

God the Eternal keep you in love with each other, so that the peace of Christ may abide in your home. Go to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.

Pastor to people:

Bear witness to the love of God in this world, so that those to whom love is a stranger will find in you generous friends. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

THE PEACE *

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also with you.

The couple may greet each other with a kiss and be greeted by the pastor, after which greetings may be exchanged through the congregation.

GOING FORTH *

A hymn may be sung or instrumental music played as the couple, the wedding party, and the people leave. The following recessional hymns in the hymn book, pp. are suggested:

166 All Praise to Thee, for Thou, O King Divine
100 God, Whose Love Is Reigning o'er Us
384 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
90 Ye Watchers and Ye Holy Ones
733 Come We That Love the Lord
89 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
102 Now Thank We All Our God

A SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (Traditional Vows)

This service is a traditional text from the rituals of the former Methodist and former Evangelical United Brethren churches. The decision to perform the ceremony is the right and responsibility of the pastor, in accordance with the laws of the state and The United Methodist Church. All plans should be approved by the pastor. The pastor's "due counsel with the parties involved" prior to marriage, mandated by The Book of Discipline, should include, in addition to premarital counseling, discussing and planning the service with them and informing them of policies or guidelines established by the congregation on such matters as decorations, photography, and audio or video recording. Any leadership roles taken by other clergy should be at the invitation of the pastor of the church where the service is held. The organist or person in charge of the music should be consulted and work with the couple in all decisions on music selection. See the wedding hymns in the hymn book, pp. 642-47 and others suggested in A Service of Christian Marriage I.

Ethnic and cultural traditions are encouraged and may be incorporated into the service at the discretion of the pastor. Any children of the man or the woman, other family, and friends may take a variety of roles in the service, depending on their ages and abilities. They may be members of the wedding party, sing or play instrumental music, or make a witness in their own words. See suggestions for including children in A Service of Christian Marriage I.

In the case of couples who are not church members or are not prepared to make the Christian commitment expressed in our services, adaptations may be made at the discretion of the pastor.
ENTRANCE

GATHERING
While the people gather, instrumental or vocal music may be offered. Throughout the service, use of specifically Christian music is strongly encouraged.

During the entrance of the wedding party, there may be instrumental music, or a hymn, a psalm, a canticle, or an anthem. The congregation may be invited to stand. See the listing of suggested processional hymns (116).

The woman and the man may be escorted by representatives of their families until they have reached the front of the church or until they present the woman and the man, at which time their escorts are seated.

GREETING

Pastor to people:
Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the presence of these witnesses, to join together this man and this woman (Name and Name) in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God, and signifying unto us the mystical union that exists between Christ and his Church; which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence in Cana of Galilee. It is therefore not to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

DECLARATION BY THE MAN AND THE WOMAN

The pastor gives one of the following charges to the persons who are to marry:

I require and charge you both, as you stand in the presence of God, before whom the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, that, having duly considered the holy covenant you are about to make, you do now declare before this company your pledge of faith, each to the other. Be well assured that if these solemn vows are kept inviolate, as God’s Word demands, and if steadfastly you endeavor to do the will of your heavenly Father, God will bless your marriage, will grant you fulfillment in it, and will establish your home in peace.

(THE BOOK OF WORSHIP, 1965)

I charge you both, as you stand in the presence of God, to remember that love and loyalty alone will avail as the foundation of a happy home. If the solemn vows you are about to make are kept faithfully, and if steadfastly you endeavor to do the will of your heavenly Father, your life will be full of joy, and the home you are establishing will abide in peace. No other ties are more tender, no other vows more sacred than those you now assume.

(EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN, 1959)

Pastor to the man:
Name, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others keep only to her so long as you both shall live?

Man: I will.

Pastor to the woman:
Name, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others keep only to him so long as you both shall live?

Woman: I will.

PRESENTATION

If the woman is presented in marriage, the pastor asks the presenter(s):
Who presents this woman to be married to this man?
Presenter(s): I (We) do.

If the man is presented in marriage, the pastor asks the presenter(s):
Who presents this man to be married to this woman?
Presenter(s): I (We) do.

The presenter(s) may then be seated.
THE MARRIAGE

EXCHANGE OF VOWS
The woman and man face each other, joining hands. The pastor may prompt them, line by line.

Man to woman:  
I, Name, take you, Name,  
to be my wedded wife,  
to have and to hold,  
from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us do part,  
according to God’s holy ordinance;  
and thereto I pledge you my faith.

Woman to man:  
I, Name, take you, Name,  
to be my wedded husband,  
to have and to hold,  
from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us do part,  
according to God’s holy ordinance;  
and thereto I pledge you my faith.

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS
The exchange of rings is optional. Other tangible symbols may be given in addition to, or instead of, rings.

The pastor, taking the rings, may say:
The wedding ring is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying to all the uniting of this man and woman in holy matrimony, through the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.
The pastor may bless the giving of rings or other symbols of the marriage:
Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings, that they who wear them may abide in thy peace, and continue in thy favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The common custom is for the husband to give the wife her ring before the wife gives the husband his ring. While placing the ring on the third finger of the recipient’s left hand, the giver may say (prompted, line by line, by the pastor):
In token and pledge
of our constant faith and abiding love,
with this ring I thee wed,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE
The wife and husband join hands. The pastor may place a hand on or wrap a stole around their joined hands. The couple may turn and face the congregation.
Pastor to people:
Forasmuch as Name and Name have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have pledged their faith each to the other, and have declared the same by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings; I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God hath joined together, let no one put asunder. Amen.

If a unity candle is used, the two side candles representing the husband and wife are lighted first, and the center candle representing the marriage is lighted at this or some later point in the service. The side candles are not extinguished because both husband and wife retain their personal identities.
The congregation may be invited to stand, and a doxology or other hymn may be sung. See hymn suggestions above (122).

BLESSING OF THE MARRIAGE
The husband and wife may kneel, as the pastor prays:
O eternal God, creator and preserver of us all, giver of all spiritual grace, the author of everlasting life: Send thy blessing upon Name and Name, whom we bless in thy name; that they may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together and live
according to thy laws. Look graciously upon them, that they may love, honor, and cherish each other, and so live together in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and a place of peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If Holy Communion is not to be celebrated, the service continues as indicated below. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the congregation turns to A Service of Word and Table III in the hymn book, p.15 or one of the musical settings (The hymn book, pp. 17-25), and the pastor follows the text on 124-26 above, beginning with Taking the Bread and Cup and concluding with the Dismissal with Blessing on 127 or the one below.

THE LORD’S PRAYER *
The husband and wife may continue to kneel, as all pray the Lord’s Prayer.

SENDING FORTH

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING *
God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord graciously with his favor look upon you, and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and love that you may so live together in this life that in the world to come you may have life everlasting. Amen

The couple may greet each other with a kiss and be greeted by the pastor, after which greetings may be exchanged through the congregation.

GOING FORTH *
A hymn may be sung or instrumental music played as the couple, the wedding party, and the people leave. See the listing of suggested recessional hymns (127).