

Marriage Thanksgiving and Rededication Service



This is a service for those who have been married for some time whether in church or not, but it is not designed as a service for use in lieu of a Marriage Service shortly after a civil marriage. Please feel free to amend our material.

Please note, the expression "Renewal/Re-affirmation of Vows" has not been used, for the sake of some of those who were married in a Register Office who did not make vows.

Planning the Event

Date - A Saturday afternoon is recommended. .

Invitations - The Service is designed for:

- Church members
- Their relations, friends and neighbours
- Those married in the Church in the last x years
- Any other married couples

There is a draft invitation card at the end, which could be used by Church members to invite their relations, friends and neighbours and by the Church to invite those who were married there and have since moved away.

Other couples can be invited through a poster on the Church notice board, an advertisement in the local paper etc. However, a personal invitation is the best way.

It could be made clear that widows and widowers who wish to give thanks for their marriage will be welcome at the Service also.

Couples could also invite their former Best man and Bridesmaids.

Service Cards - If these can be printed, they will be a helpful reminder of the occasion. Otherwise, the words, which are to be said together, will need to be typed and copied.

Wedding Photographs - A group photograph after the Service might be appreciated. Also, each couple could be asked to bring one of their own wedding photographs for display afterwards.

Refreshments - Cake(s) and a glass of wine or soft drinks can be prepared beforehand. It is important that no one is involved in the preparation of refreshments during the Service and thereby excluded from it. The time of refreshments after the Service will provide an opportunity for old friends to meet and for Church members to welcome those who are not members (rather than talking to each other).

Children - In order to enable couples with children to come, a simultaneous event should be planned nearby for children, with activities for various age groups, e.g. DVDs. There also needs to be a crèche for babies and toddlers in or close to the Church.

Planning the Service

Style Churches differ from one another in the style of their Services, even weddings, so you are encouraged to plan a Service in your way provided it is “outsider friendly.” We include an Order of Service for those who would like to follow ready made material, and other material from which you can ‘pick and mix’ if you wish. These are only suggestions. If your tradition is normally to have a wedding with a Communion/Eucharist/Mass, please consider foregoing that for the sake of outsiders present.

Address This would be best early in the Service so that the Re-dedication is made later in the light of what has been said. It may be an occasion for inviting a good guest Preacher. It should be seen as an opportunity to get across some teaching to help people improve their marriages however good they are - albeit done with honesty and humour. Let the Preacher choose the Bible reading.

Testimony A short and honest account of the Lord’s goodness to a couple who can speak well would be helpful, provided they resist the temptation to preach at the end.

Drama A relevant drama, well performed, before the address, might be much appreciated.

Speed It is important that the words of the Thanksgiving, Confession, and Rededication are taken on the slow side to give time for meaning.

Singing It is important to make non-churchgoers feel at home, so the best choice will be to include at least a couple of hymns which are old favourites, but introduce them so as to help people think of their meaning. Anything which non - churchgoers will not know should be easy to sing and tuneful. A good solo/duet might be attractive provided the words are audible; it will probably be appreciated more than a choir or a group.

Other Participants If there are office holders in the Church who have the ability to read the Bible or lead the Prayers well, make clear that they have been asked to do so because of their office, so that others present do not think “Why wasn’t I asked?”

Service Leader's Spouse If the Service Leader is married, his/her spouse should sit near the front and then join the Leader so that they can make their rededication together at the same time as everyone else.

A Suggested Order of Service

Welcome, including explanation of Service,

Hymn

Bible Reading

Address

Hymn or songs

Thanksgiving and Confession

Hymn or song

Rededication

Hymn/Solo

Prayers

Hymn/song

Closing Prayer



Examples for use or adaptation

A THANKSGIVING Before the congregation pray this together, explain that each particular person should omit what does not apply to them. Give time to read it first.

Leader - Let us thank God for all the people and things with which he has enriched our lives; we will pause briefly after each line.

All - For our parents and homes and for our upbringing,
For our schools, and for all who have influenced us for
good,
For our growth to maturity,
For our first meeting, our courtship and marriage,
For life together so far,
For the happiness we have known and for the problems we
have overcome,
For the adjustments we have made, and for our
companionship together,
For our home,
(For our children, and for our grandchildren,)
For the confidence these gifts give of your good hand upon
us, we thank you Heavenly Father, in Jesus' name. Amen.

A CONFESSION

Leader - God's Word says "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

In silence, let us recall things we ought to have in mind as we confess our sins to God, and read through the Confession below.

Silence

Leader - In the light of God's generosity to us, and our failure to live in response to it, we pray; pausing briefly after each part, but omitting what does not apply to us.

All - Almighty God, we confess and are sorry for the times:
When we have not given enough quality time to our marriage;
When we have failed to thank or failed to encourage our spouse;
When we have been reluctant to share our problems and feelings, and to deal with our differences;
When we have not listened to the other, or have not tried to understand the other;
When we have used overbearing language or behaviour;
When we have criticised unkindly, or been disloyal;
When we have been too demanding, whether for time, help or intimacy;
When we have lacked sympathy or helpfulness;
When we have been more concerned about our own interests than those of our partner;
When we have been reluctant to say 'sorry'.
Lord, these things have been utterly wrong.
Please forgive us, enable us to forgive each other,
And help us become the spouse You wish us to be;
For Jesus' sake. Amen.

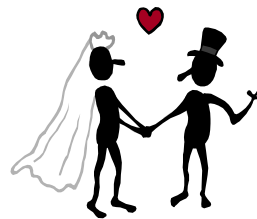
Leader - God's word says "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Silence

Leader - Let us address our spouse in God's presence.

Husbands, then Wives - As I have asked God to forgive me and have accepted that forgiveness, so I forgive you my spouse of anything I have ever held against you, or allowed to irritate or trouble me. I forgive you from the bottom of my heart. And now I ask your forgiveness for all my sins, failures and shortcomings, that have hurt or disappointed you and in any way spoil the love God desires between us.

Leader - Now let us give our spouses a sign - before God - of forgiveness, acceptance, love and a new beginning.



(Couples - Say and do what is appropriate for them!)

REDEDICATION

Leader - Husbands, will you continue to love your wife, comfort her, honour and protect her and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

Husbands - I will (Pause)

Leader - Wives, will you continue to love your husband, comfort him, honour and protect him, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Wives - I will (Pause)

Husbands and wives should now turn to face each other and hold hands. These next words can either be read to each other off a sheet or said after the Service Leader clause by clause. The latter method gives more time for thought. One set of words could be led by the Leader's spouse.

Husbands- I have taken you to be my wife, to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy law, and today I affirm this my solemn vow/promise/pledge.

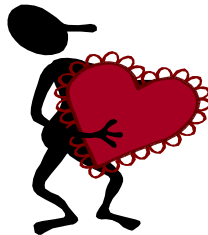
Wives - I have taken you to be my husband, to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, (and to obey / submit) till death do us part, according to God's holy law, and today I affirm this my solemn vow / promise / pledge.

Next they take hold of the wedding rings on their spouse's finger, together if they each have one. These words are also better repeated after the Leader.

All This ring is a sign of our marriage. With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you and all that I have I share with you, within the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

or This ring is a sign of our marriage, a reminder of our promise, of lifelong love and faithfulness, in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Kiss or hug again if wish!



PRAYERS

If your church has a marriage liturgy, you could adapt some of the prayers from it. To avoid copyright problems that has not been attempted here.



Here are some prayers you could use:

Marriage growth

We praise You heavenly Father that You have made mankind, and because it was not good for man to be alone, You created woman, and in marriage

You join man and woman as one flesh, teaching us that those whom You have united should never be divided. We pray for all husbands and wives here today. Grant that each husband may love his wife as Christ loves his bride the Church, giving himself up for it, and grant that each wife may love and submit to her husband, as the Church should submit to Christ. May each be to the other a strength in need, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. May their marriage grow and deepen with the years and be an example of what you intend a marriage to be. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Love in action, and help to others married

God our Father, Giver of all that is good, we thank You for all the ways in which we have grown in our understanding of each other, and thus in our marriage. We pray that we may continue to love each other in our thoughts, our words and our actions, and in what we refrain from thinking, saying and doing. Give us grace also we pray to be channels of your Holy Spirit's help to any who confide in us about difficulties in their marriage. We ask this in the name of Him who promised the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Children

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the children You have entrusted to those present to bring up for You. Continue, we pray, to protect them from all harm. Keep husbands and wives faithful in prayer for them. Enable each child to come to a living faith in You, and to find the good works You have prepared for them to do and to rejoice in doing them. We ask this in your Son's name. Amen.

Single people (including widow/ers)

Thank you Heavenly Father that Your grace is sufficient for all our needs. Grant that those who are living singly may find Your help in every circumstance. May they have fulfilling friendships and know your guidance as to whether they are to marry or remarry. We ask this through One Who, for Your sake, remained single, Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Divorcees

O God, Who has known the sadness of Your Son's death on the cross, have mercy we pray on those who have experienced the sadness of divorce. Give them the grace of forgiveness for their former spouse. Whenever it is possible, enable them to hope and pray and work for the restoration of their marriage. Assure all of them of Your love for them and guide them into Your paths for their life ahead. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

As we grow older

Lord of our whole lives, You provide for all our needs from Your riches. Grant us Your help as we grow older. Help us to care for each other, whatever our latter years bring, to recognise when it is time to move home, and to accept when we should seek help from others. Above all, enable us to be ready for our passing, through repentance and through faith in your Son, and in His death on the Cross bearing our sins. So, help us to be eagerly longing to meet You face to face. We ask this in our Saviour's name. Amen.

Closing Prayer

God Himself, our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct your way together. The Lord make your love for each other increase and overflow; the Lord strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

(From Bible Praying by Michael Perry, page 291 based on 1 Thessalonians 3.

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DRAFT INVITATION



Any Church Any Town invite you to a

**.....Marriage, Thanksgiving
And Rededication Service**

On Saturday..... at

.....pm

Followed by refreshments in

.....

R.S.V.P.

Simultaneous crèche and young people's activities.

RSVP It is better, to avoid confusion, to put a title after RSVP, e.g. 'Church Administrator..', 'Church Secretary...' rather than putting a person's name.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks are due to The Rev. Robert Howarth for part of the Thanksgiving and Confession and to Time for Marriage (One Accord, Marriage Review) for part of the Confession.