

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

Marriage

RCNZ

Marriage

Note: This form is provided to give guidance to pastors conducting a Christian wedding.

Processional

At the time and place for the marriage the persons to be married shall take their place before the minister, the bridegroom having the bride to his left. The music of the processional shall be fitting, reflecting both the solemnity and the joy of the occasion.

Introduction

Dear friends, we gather in God's presence to witness the marriage of _____ *name* and _____ *name*, to share their joy on this occasion, and to pray God's blessing on them, both now and in the years to come.

Song of praise

Prayer

Almighty God, our gracious heavenly Father, you are the God of nature and of grace; the creator, preserver and redeemer of mankind; and the source of life and love, of joy and peace. We thank you for instituting marriage, and designing it to represent the spiritual union of Christ and his church. We praise you for creating us male and female, so that we may find companionship and joy in each other.

We have come together in your presence to witness this marriage. Grant that we would view neither this occasion, nor the promises made, lightly or irreverently. We acknowledge that we are dependent on your love and grace. Guard and keep our hearts and minds for the sake of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Instruction

God himself instituted marriage at the beginning in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world. He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."¹ God then made woman out of man's own body and brought her to the man. The Scriptures say, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."²

Our Lord Jesus confirmed marriage to be a divine ordinance and an unbreakable bond when he said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."³ Husbands and wives are called to be faithful to one another until they are parted by death.

The apostle Paul describes the union of husband and wife as profoundly significant, depicting the union between Christ and his bride, the church.⁴ The Scriptures define the pattern for marriage with these words: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,"⁵ and "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church."⁶

Marriage is given so that husband and wife may serve the Lord together, seeking first the kingdom of God in all they do. Marriage is the foundation for a stable society and for ordered family life, where children may be born and raised in accordance with God's will, in the community of his people, to his praise and glory. In marriage, a husband and wife are to comfort and help one another, living faithfully together in prosperity and adversity. Marriage is given also that they may love and know one another with all tenderness and delight, through the joy of their physical union.

Husband and wife will find mutual happiness in marriage as they follow the law of Christ; helping one another in all that is good, forgiving one another as God has forgiven them, and loving one another as they have been loved by Christ. Living in this way, their marriage will increasingly reflect the unity of Christ and his church, and anticipate the wedding feast of Christ and his bride.

_____ *name* and _____ *name*, having heard God's instruction, do you believe it is God's purpose for you to enter into this marriage and do you commit yourselves to fulfil your obligations to each other?

Answer: I do.

Solemnisation

*Question to the father of the bride:*⁷

Today the father of the bride will give his daughter in marriage, and the bride and groom will make solemn promises to each other. To this end I ask:

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

Answer: I do.

Exchange of vows

I now invite you to exchange your vows.

The couple now join hands and exchange their vows.

Bridegroom's vow

I _____ *full name* take you _____ *full name*
as my wife in Christian marriage.⁸

In the presence of God and before these witnesses,
I promise to love and cherish you,
comfort and honour you,
lead and provide for you,
for better for worse,
for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
and be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Bride's vow

I _____ *full name* take you _____ *full name*
as my husband in Christian marriage.⁸

In the presence of God and before these witnesses,
I promise to love and cherish you,
comfort and honour you,
and submit to you in all things lawful,
for better for worse,
for richer for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
and be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

Exchange of rings (*bridegroom then bride*)

I give you this ring as a symbol of my constant faithfulness and
abiding love.

Declaration

According to the will of God, and the laws of New Zealand, I now
declare that you, _____ *name* and _____ *name*, are husband
and wife, in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the
Holy Spirit.

Therefore, what God has joined together let man not separate. From
now on you walk the pathway of life together. May the God of all grace
bind you together in true love and faithfulness, and grant you his
blessing.

Optional: You may now kiss the bride.

Prayer

Father in heaven, we thank you that today we have witnessed the
joining of this couple in marriage.

We thank you for granting them the gift of saving faith; and that
because of this, all the privileges of belonging to your church are

theirs.

In your good providence you have brought them together. Grant them your wisdom. Work in them the grace of your Holy Spirit. Guide them in the way of righteousness and peace. May they love and serve you with one mind and heart all their days.

Give them steadfastness to keep the vows they have made; help them to be loyal and faithful to each other; may they support and encourage each other throughout their lives, bearing each other's burdens, and sharing each other's joys. Help them to be honest and patient with one another.

May their home be open to friends and to strangers alike. May they shine as lights in the world. May they be diligent in their work, active in the church, and useful citizens of your kingdom. May their life together bring joy to them, blessing to others and glory and honour to you. If it is your will to grant them children, we pray that they may be wise and loving parents.

Keep them faithful to the Saviour to the end of their days. May this bride and groom, and their children after them, celebrate forever the marriage supper of the Lamb in the world to come with all the saints of God.

For we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Optional: Presentation from the session

Song

Scripture reading and sermon

Prayer

Song

Signing of the register

Presentation

The minister may conclude the service saying: It now gives me great pleasure to present to you, for the first time, Mr and Mrs _____ *surname*.

Recessional

¹ Genesis 2:18.

² Genesis 2:24.

³ Matthew 19:6.

⁴ Ephesians 5:25–33.

⁵ Ephesians 5:25.

⁶ Ephesians 5:22–23.

⁷ This helpfully highlights the biblical emphasis of a father giving his daughter in marriage. Where this question is inappropriate, an alternative question may be addressed to the parents of the bride and groom. “Do all of you rejoice in the step your children are about to take, and do you declare that you prayerfully stand behind them in their marriage?” Answer: We do.

⁸ This wording fulfils the legal requirements of the Marriage Act 1955.