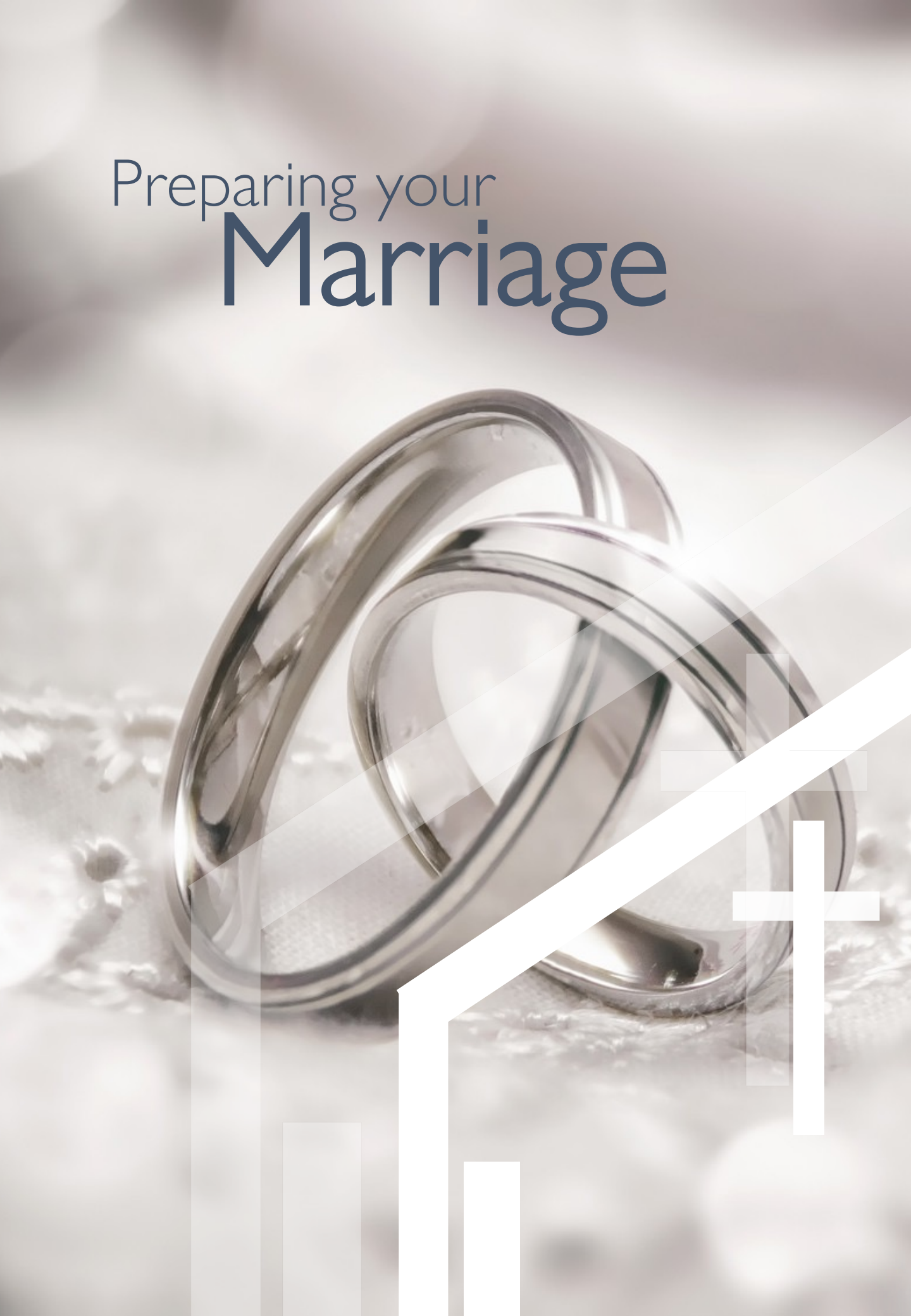
Preparing your Marriage



Congratulations

Marriage is special. It is a commitment between two people to love one another for the sake of love, to triumph in difficulty and to be steadfast in trial.

When two people commit themselves to each other before God, it is important to ask the question:

Do you believe in God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

Having a minister conduct your ceremony means that you are accepting that it is a Christian marriage, and therefore the ceremony will be an **act of worship** which will include prayers, scripture readings and a short devotional as well as the exchange of vows and other ceremonial moments that are part of the event.

The Church of Scotland does not view Marriage as a holy sacrament, as the Roman Catholic church might do, however, it does consider it to be an institution that God desires for humanity, and one that he blesses. Jesus himself said that a couple should hold steadfast to one another as God had ordained in Creation (Matthew 19:2-9)

Gods created order makes clear in Genesis 2:24 that a man and woman should come together and unite as one, holding steadfast together. It is therefore right to say that it is God's plan for some people to marry.

There also may be things in this guide that you will not like or would rather change or adapt and I am happy to discuss these with you. This, afterall, is your day and nobody else's. So, feel free to make it yours.

With all that said, Congratulations again!

Let's get started on planning your ceremony....

The Order of Service

This page contains a standard order of service. It can be adapted to suit you, but it is generally the way in which a marriage ceremony would be conducted. It is built around a ceremony in the church, but this may change if you are having your wedding in another building.

Grey areas are conducted by the minister.

Bold areas are essentials to the religious service/marriage ceremony *Italics* are optional and you can decide as a couple of you want them or not.

It is equally **not essential**, but desirous, to have hymns sung at your service as an act of worship.

The Service	Possible choices	Your Choice
Entry of Bride/ Wedding Party	You can choose to enter: • Together, • Separately. • At the same time from different places. • *You can also choose what music you would like to enter to.*	
Welcome	Minister does this	Minister does this
Hymn	*The opening hymn is a necessary part of the service*	
Prayer of Thanksgiving	Minister does this	Minister does this
Statement of Marriage	Minister does this	Minister does this
Exchange of Vows	You can choose from this pack, or you can opt to write your own. **It is important to note that the minister is not marrying you**. You are marrying each other.	

The Service	Possible choices	Your Choice
Rings	You can choose: • One or two rings • Exchange of promises • Ask the minister to say something	
Other Symbols	If you are having any other symbols, then this is a good place to have them.	
The Blessing	This is a blessing bestowed on you, for you. You can choose from this pack, ask the minister to say them or you can write your own.	
Second Hymn	*This hymn is part of a religious service, but is a non-essential element and it is your choice to have some here.*	
Readings	As this is a religious ceremony, then these are usually bible, but if you select two readings, then having a poem or other reflection is okay too. It is essential that the bible is read.	
Address/Sermon	Minister does this	Minister does this
Other Symbols	Another place to make any symbolic acts that you wish to make.	
Prayer for Others	Names of people can be mentioned here, those who can't be here through illness, distance or Covid restrictions.	Minister does this
Signing of Schedule	Depending on the location, this is usually signed either before the gathered congregation/ family/audience, or in another room. Each location is different and that is up to you to clarify with your location hire.	
Hymn	*This hymn is part of a religious service, but is a non-essential element and it is your choice to have some here.*	
Benediction	*Final Blessing on couple conducted by minister before end of ceremony.*	Minister does this.

Entry

For the entry of the bride (or couple if that's how you are planning to do it) there are a number of options:

- *You can have a traditional piece played on the organ or on a cd.*
- *You can have a modern song played on the organ or cd.*
- *You can have a piper play a piece of music as you enter*
- *Organist/Piper: You would negotiate this with the person playing*
- *CD: It is a good idea to ensure that the host venue is able to play music for you either via CD or stream.*

Exit

At the end of the service the same options for the entry are possible.

During the Service

It is possible to have a song played on a cd or sung instead of a reading, or during the signing of the register. This can be a modern secular song or a modern/traditional hymn.

It is very important that you make contact with the organist and/or piper before your wedding to discuss the music and keep the minister presiding up to date with the plans and organisation. The minister is not responsible for any of the arranged music unless the musician providing it is an employee of the church in which you are getting married.

Vows

Here are seven options that are usually used within marriage services. Choose one, choose bits of more than one or feel free to get creative and write your own.

Option 1 – Christian Matrimonial vows

Before God
and in the presence
of our families and friends
I, *(Name)*
declare my love
for you, *(Name)*
And I give myself to you
as your husband/wife
I promise you my love, my loyalty and my trust
for as long as we both shall live.

Option 2 – Christian Matrimonial Vows

I, *(Name)*
take you, *(Name)*
to be my wife/husband
In the presence of God
and before this congregation
I promise and covenant
to be a loving, faithful and loyal husband/wife to you so
long as we both shall live

Vows (continued)

Option 3 – Faithful Partnership in Life

I (Name),
take you (Name),
to by my husband/wife,
secure in the knowledge that you will be my constant friend, my faithful partner in life,
and my one true love.

On this special day,
I give you in the presence of God
and all those in attendance,
my sacred promise to stay by your side
as your faithful husband/wife,
in sickness and in health,
in joy and in sorrow,
through the good times and the bad.

I promise to love you without reservation,
comfort you in times of distress,
encourage you to achieve all of your goals,
laugh with you and cry with you,
grow with you in mind and spirit,
always be open and honest with you,
and cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

Vows (continued)

Option 4 – The Promise

In the presence of God,
I promise to encourage your compassion,
Because that is what makes you unique and wonderful.
I promise to nurture your dreams,
Because through them your soul shines.
I promise to help shoulder our challenges,
For there is nothing we cannot face if we stand together.
I promise to be your partner in all things,
Not possessing you, but working with you as a part of the whole. Lastly, I promise to you perfect love and perfect trust,
For one lifetime with you could never be enough.
This is my sacred vow to you, my equal in all things. I promise to encourage your individuality,

Because that is what makes you unique and wonderful.
promise to nurture your dreams,
Because through them your soul shines.
I promise to help shoulder our challenges,
Because through them we'll emerge stronger.
I promise to be your partner in all things,
Not possessing you, but working with you as a part of the whole. I promise to share with you the joys of life,
Because with you they will be that much sweeter.
Lastly, I promise to you perfect love and perfect trust,
For one lifetime with you could never be enough.
This is my sacred vow to you, my equal in all things.

Vows (continued)

Option 4 – Standing by your side

I (Name) promise to you, (Name),
before our family and friends,
and in the presence of Almighty God
to stand by your side,
to share and support your hopes and dreams.

I vow to always be there for you
When you fall, I will catch you.
When you cry, I will comfort you.
When you laugh, I will share your joy.
No matter what lies ahead of us,
I will see it as a journey,
that can only be completed together.

I promise this now and forever

Symbols

The obvious symbol of marriage is a ring or rings. If you are exchanging rings, it is normal practice for the minister to ordain over the giving and receiving of rings but below I have added several options for you, including options that give you the chance to exchange blessings together

Option One - Woman/Man:

Let this ring be the sign and seal that I am yours and you are mine

Option Two - Woman/Man:

I give you this ring in God's name, as a symbol of what we have promised, and all that we shall share.

Option Three - Minister: (may adapt for the day)

As a visible sign of your commitment to one another, these rings are given and received. By this sign you take each other, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part.

Option Four - Minister: (my adapt for the day)

Rings are an ancient symbol, blessed and simple. Round like the sun, like the eye, like arms that embrace. Circles - for love that is given comes back again. Therefore, may these symbols remind you that your love, like the sun, illuminates. That your love, like the eye, must see clearly and that your love, like the arms that embrace is a grace upon this world.

Some couples chose to have other symbols, which might include:
To read something to each other.
To light a candle together
To exchange a gift like a book or picture,

Blessings

This is what the minister will say immediately after you have exchanged your wedding vows and ring(s). It is a request for **God's blessing** specifically for you both and your commitment to one another. Choose from the list below or ask the minister. *It is a necessary part of a Christian service of marriage.*

Blessing One

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Blessing Two

The peace of God be with you.
The peace of Christ be with you.
The peace of the Spirit be with you and with your children.
From the day that we have here today
to the day at the end of our lives.
The grace of God be with you.
The grace of the Spirit be with you and with your children,
for all eternity for eternity.

Blessing Three:

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
The rain soft upon your fields;
and may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Blessing Four:

God the Father
God the Son
God the Holy Spirit
bless, preserve and keep you the Lord mercifully
grant you the riches of his grace
that you may please him both in body and spirit
and living together in faith and love
may you receive the blessings of eternal life.

Readings

I have only included biblical readings in this pack, but I am happy for you to choose your own. You can have words of a song read, or a poem, or even a story; anything that expresses something of your love for each other.

It can also be a beautiful experience to have a friend or relative do a reading, especially if there is someone you know who would be comfortable doing this.

Old Testament Readings

Reading 1	Genesis 2:15-18	The Lord God then put the man into a deep sleep and while he slept, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh over the place. The rib he had taken out of the man the Lord God built up into a woman, and he brought her to the man. The man said: 'This one at last is bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh! She shall be called woman, for from man was she taken.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and attaches himself to his wife, and the two become one.
Reading 2	Song of Songs 8:6-7	Wear me as a seal over your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion cruel as the grave; it blazes up like a blazing fire, fiercer than any flame. Many waters cannot quench love, no flood can sweep it away; if someone were to offer for love all the wealth in his house, it would be laughed to scorn.
Reading 3	Psalm 67	May God be gracious to us and bless us, may he cause his face to shine on us, that your purpose may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, God; let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations rejoice and shout in triumph; for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations of the earth. Let the peoples praise you, God; let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its harvest. May God, our God bless us. God grant us his blessing, that all ends of the earth may fear him.

Readings (Continued)

New Testament Readings

Reading 1	1 Corinthians 13:4- 8a, 13	Love is patient and kind. Love envies no one, is never boastful, never conceited, never rude; love is never quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs, takes no pleasure in the sins of others, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope and its endurance. Love will never come to an end. There are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of the three is love.
Reading 2	St John 2:1-11	Two days later there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee. The mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also among the guests. The wine gave out, so Jesus's mother said to him, 'They have no wine left.' He answered, 'That is no concern of mine. My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' There were six stone washing jars standing near, of the kind used for Jewish rites of purification; each held from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water,' and they filled them to the brim. 'Now draw some off,' he ordered, 'and take it to the master of the feast;' and they did so. The master tasted the water now turned into wine, not knowing its source, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. He hailed the bridegroom and said, 'Everyone else serves the best wine first, and the poorer only when the guests have drunk freely; but you have kept the best wine till now.'

Readings (Continued)

New Testament Readings

Reading 3	John 15:9-12	As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Dwell in my love. If you heed my commands, you will dwell in my love, as I have heeded my Father's commands and dwell in his love. I have spoken thus to you, so that my joy may be in you, and your joy complete. This is my commandment: 'love one another, as I have loved you.'

There are other biblical readings that you might want to consider, and I am happy to talk these through with you too.

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a
Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 56-57
Song of Songs 2
Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 128
Romans 12:1-2, 9-13
Ephesians 3:14-21
Ephesians 5:1-2, 9-13
Philippians 1:9-11
Matthew 7:21, 24-27
Mark 10:6-9

Poems and other ideas for your wedding readings can be found here:
https://www.hitched.co.uk/wedding-planning/ceremony-and-reception/wedding- poems/

Benedictions and Final Blessings

A benediction is a prayer or blessing for everyone at the close of the service and it is there to remind us that although the service is ended, the marriage is just the beginning. Here are some examples...

Benediction One

The hands of the Father uphold you.
The hands of the Saviour enfold you.
The hand of the Spirit surround you,
and the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit uphold you ever more.

Benediction Two

May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Benediction Three

Go in peace and proclaim to the world the beautiful works of God who has brought you liberation. We go forth in faith and hope to love and to serve, secure in the knowledge that God is with us always.

Benediction Four

May God's grace fall on you.
Christ's grace redeems you.
And may the Spirit of grace pour over you
Each day and each night.
As it was in the beginning,
may it be now and ever more.

Benediction Five

The blessing of God be upon you, that good come to you; the blessing of Christ be upon you, that good be done to you; the blessing of the Holy Spirit be yours, that good be the course of your life, each day of your arising, each night of your lying down, for evermore.

What's next

Take this booklet away with you and make the considerations together, allowing yourselves time and thinking space to work out what you want to do.

It is important to get in touch with me about this at any time you need and I'm available on the contact details provided alongside this booklet.

It is important that all aspects of the wedding ceremony are agreed **four weeks** in advance of the wedding day.

For you, confirmation of the plans for the ceremony should be given to me by : ___/____/____