

# the celebration of a life covenant

Prelude: *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*

J.S. Bach

Processional

*Please stand and sing*

Hymn 376

1 Joy - ful, joy - ful, we a - dore thee, God of glo - ry, Lord of love;  
2 All thy works with joy sur-round thee, earth and heaven re - flect thy rays,  
3 Thou art giv - ing and for - giv - ing, ev - er bless - ing, ev - er blest,

hearts un - fold like flowers be - fore thee, prais - ing thee, their sun a - bove.  
stars and an - gels sing a - round thee, cen - ter of un - bro - ken praise.  
well - spring of the joy of liv - ing, o - cean - depth of hap - py rest!

Melt the clouds of sin and sad - ness; drive the dark of doubt a - way;  
Field and for - est, vale and moun - tain, bloom - ing mea - dow, flash - ing sea,  
Thou our Fa - ther, Christ our Bro - ther: all who live in love are thine;

giv - er of im - mor - tal glad - ness, fill us with the light of day.  
chant - ing bird and flow - ing foun - tain, call us to re - joice in thee.  
teach us how to love each o - ther, lift us to the joy di - vine.

## The Gathering

*The Celebrant says*

Dear friends and family, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the covenant of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in a life-long commitment of love. This calling is a gift from God, in whose image we are created, and by whom we are called to love, to reason, to work, to play and to live in harmony with God and one another. In celebrating this covenant, we are reminded that Jesus said to his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you."

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are here to bear witness to their love for each other and to publicly acknowledge their Covenant with each other for a life-long commitment and union. Each has found the other to be a gift from God in the midst of a suffering world. They ask us to pray for them, to stand with them and to witness to them. Together, we rejoice in the goodness of God's creation shown forth as people loving one another with body, mind and soul. Together, we discover how Jesus Christ calls us to abundant life. And together, we recognize the gifts by which the Holy Spirit builds up the Christian community.

The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given to one another at all times, and for the manifestation of love in the lives of all whom they encounter. Therefore, this commitment is to be undertaken and affirmed seriously, reverently, deliberately and in accordance with God's intention for them.

## The Declaration of Intent

**Celebrant** \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have come here so that God may confirm and strengthen your love in the presence of this company. Therefore I ask you to declare the firm intention of your Covenant. Do you believe God has called you to live together in love?

**Response** We do.

**Celebrant** Will you remain faithful to each other, never allowing any other relationship to come before the one you are now to affirm?

**Response** We will.

**Celebrant** Will you nurture each other's ability to grow in maturity and wisdom within this relationship?

**Response** We will.

**Celebrant** Will you do all in your power to make your life together a witness to the love of God in the world?

**Response** We will.

**Celebrant** \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to live together in a covenant of love as long as you both shall live?

**Response** I will.

**Celebrant** \_\_\_\_\_, will you take \_\_\_\_\_ to live together in a covenant of love as long as you both shall live?

**Response** I will.

### The Charge to the Witnesses

**Celebrant** Let me ask this of you who have gathered here today: Do you who know and care for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ give them your blessings now as they enter into a new stage of their relationship, and do you promise to give them your love, understanding, and support during both good times and bad?

**People** *We will.*

*Please stand and sing*

Hymn 482



1 Lord of all hope - ful - ness, Lord of all joy,  
2 Lord of all ea - ger - ness, Lord of all faith,  
3 Lord of all kind - li - ness, Lord of all grace,  
4 Lord of all gen - tle - ness, Lord of all calm,



whose trust, ev - er child - like, no cares could de - stroy,  
whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,  
your hands swift to wel - come, your arms to em - brace,  
whose voice is con - tent - ment, whose pres - ence is balm,



be there at our wak - ing, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our lab - ors, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our hom - ing, and give us, we pray,  
be there at our sleep - ing, and give us, we pray,



your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.  
your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.  
your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.  
your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

## The Liturgy of the Word

Celebrant        The Lord be with you.

**People**        *And also with you.*

Celebrant        Let us pray.

O God, creator and lover of the world, we offer to you our lives, our words and deeds, our hopes and fears, and our love for each other. Accept us as we are. Make us what you would have us be. And by the power of your Spirit enable us to be a sign of your presence in the world, through Jesus Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

*Please be seated*

Reader: A reading from the book of Ezekiel

*Ezekiel 37:26-38*

I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore.

Reader            Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

**People**        *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 121

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; \*  
    from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord, \*  
    the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not let your foot be moved \*  
    and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.
- 4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel \*  
    shall neither slumber nor sleep;
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you; \*  
    the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
- 6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, \*  
    nor the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; \*  
    it is he who shall keep you safe.
- 8 The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, \*  
    from this time forth for evermore.

Reader: A reading from the first letter of John

*I John 4:7-16*

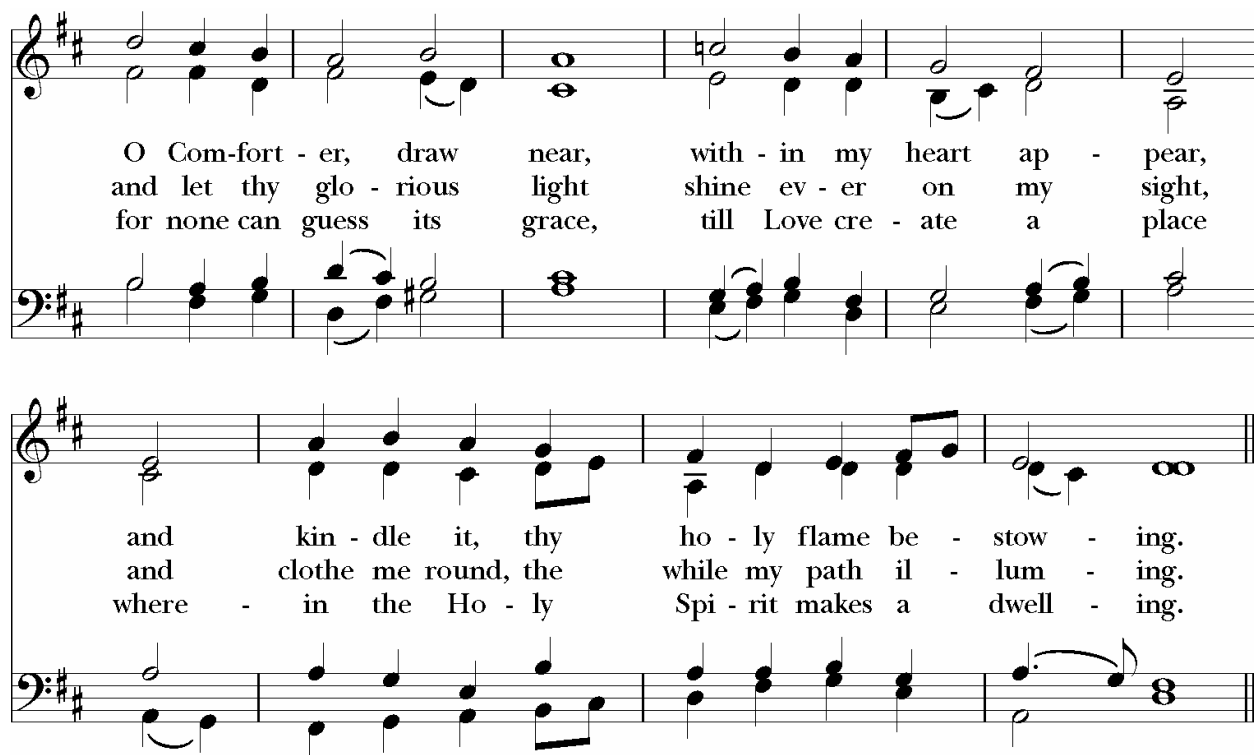
Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

*People Thanks be to God.*

*Please stand and sing verses 1 & 2 of Hymn 516*

1 Come down, O Love di - vine, seek thou this soul of mine,  
2 O let it free - ly burn, till earth - ly pas - sions turn  
3 And so the yearn - ing strong, with which the soul will long,  
and vis - it it with thine own ar - dor glow - ing;  
to dust and ash - es in its heat con - sum - ing;  
shall far out - pass the power of hu - man tell - ing;



O Com-fort - er, draw near, with - in my heart ap - pear,  
 and let thy glo - rious light shine ev - er on my sight,  
 for none can guess its grace, till Love cre - ate a place

and kin - dle it, thy ho - ly flame be - stow - ing.  
 and clothe me round, the while my path il - lum - ing.  
 where - in the Ho - ly Spi - rit makes a dwell - ing.

Gospeler            The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.  
**People**             *Glory to you, O Christ.*

*John 15:9-12*

Jesus said: As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 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. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Gospeler            The Gospel of the Lord.  
**People**             *Praise to you, O Christ.*

*Please sing verse 3 of "Come Down, O Love Divine"*

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The Homily

## The Vows

*Each person, facing each other and taking the other's right hand in his/hers, says:*

In the presence of God and God's people, I, *name*, declare my love for you, *name*, and take you to be my partner. I promise you these things: I will be faithful to you and honest with you. I will respect you, trust you, help you, honor you, listen to you, laugh with you, and care for you. I will consider your needs before my own, in good times and in bad. I will love you even when you do not love yourself.

I will share my life with you in plenty and in want. I will rejoice when you are happy, and grieve when you suffer. I will share your interests and hopes for the future. I will try to understand you even when I don't agree with you. I will help you to be your true self, no other than yourself. I will support you in your vocation and ministry.

Loving what I know of you, trusting what I don't yet know and in your love for me, through our years together and in all that life may bring us, I welcome you as my partner in life, for all my life.

*They loose their hands.*

*The Celebrant places the rings on the open Gospel book and asks God's blessing as follows:*

Bless, O God, these rings as signs of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_'s vows, by which they have bound themselves to each other in love.

**People**                      **Amen.**

*Each person, placing the ring on the other's left hand, says:*

*Name*, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the name of God.

May my heart be your shelter, and my arms your home. May you feel deeply loved, for indeed you are. May you always see your wholeness in my eyes. With this ring, I give you my heart. I have no greater gift to give. May we feel this joy for as long as we live. I thank God. I thank you. Amen.

*The Celebrant joins the right hands of the couple, wraps the stole around their hands, and says*

Now that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have given themselves to each other by sacred vows, with the exchange of rings and the joining of hands, I declare that they are united to one

another in a sacred covenant of love, in the name of God. Let us all uphold them in this covenant.

*People: Amen.*

### The Prayers

*Please stand or kneel*

Celebrant: Let us pray together.

*Eternal Spirit,  
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:*

*The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth!*

*With the bread we need today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.*

*For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.  
(alternative Lord's Prayer from "A New Zealand Prayer Book")*

Intercessor: Let us pray.

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, and giver of all grace: Look with favor upon the world you have made, and for which your Son gave his life, and especially upon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ who have committed themselves to one another. *Amen.*

Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. *Amen.*

Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your Spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their life. *Amen.*

Give them grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. *Amen.*

Make their life together a sign of Christ's love to this sinful and broken world, that unity may overcome estrangement, forgiveness heal guilt, and joy conquer despair. *Amen.*

Give them such fulfillment of their mutual affection that they may reach out in love and concern for others. *Amen.*

Grant that all persons who have witnessed these vows may find their lives strengthened and their loyalties confirmed. *Amen.*

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all your children are united one to another, and the living to the dead, may be so transformed by your grace, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven; where, with your Son and the Holy Spirit, you live and reign in perfect unity, now and for ever. *Amen.*

### **The Blessing of the Union**

*The people remain standing.*

*The couple kneel at the communion rail and the Celebrant says*

Blessed are you, God of our ancestors,  
creator and redeemer of the world.  
You spoke and the heavens came into being,  
the earth and everything that lives.  
You looked and found it good.  
The world was charged with your glory and mercy.

Blessed are you, for you have joined \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
Hold them together by that same love by which we cling fast to Christ,

who holds us in close embrace.  
Reveal your love in the life they share,  
a sign of the new world of justice and peace.

Blessed are you, for you have come near and visited us  
in the love of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for each other,  
bringing together what was apart and uniting them by the law of love.

Give your Holy Spirit to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
Make their life together a sign of trust,  
and a blessing upon the whole world.  
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 foreheads.  
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 life and in their death.

Grant all this through your beloved one, Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever.

*People*                    *Amen.*

The Living God bless you.  
May you flourish together and rejoice in your friends.  
May God grant you the good that endures and bring you to everlasting joy. And the  
blessing of the Living God, the Source, the Word and the Spirit, One God, be with  
you now and forever.

*People*                    *Amen.*

### **The Peace**

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

*The couple greets each other, after which the peace is exchanged throughout the congregation.*

## The Holy Communion

Choir Anthem  
*Sing Me To Heaven*

Daniel E. Gawthrop

*Please stand.*

*Celebrant* The Lord be with you.

***People*** ***And also with you.***

*Celebrant* Lift up your hearts.

***People*** ***We lift them to the Lord.***

*Celebrant* Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***People*** ***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

*The Celebrant continues*

We praise you and we bless you, holy and gracious God, source of life abundant. From before time you made ready the creation. Your Spirit moved over the deep and brought all things into being: sun, moon, and stars; earth, winds, and waters; and every living thing.

You made us in your image, and taught us to walk in your ways. But we rebelled against you, and wandered far away; and yet, as a mother cares for her children, you would not forget us. Time and again you called us to live in the fullness of your love. And so this day we join with saints and angels in the chorus of praise that rings through eternity, lifting our voices to magnify you as we sing:

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 6/4. The melody is written in the treble clef, and the bass line is in the bass clef. The lyrics are: "Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of power and". The music is a simple, hymn-like setting with a steady rhythm.

might, heaven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -

san - na in the high - est. \* Bless - ed is he who comes

in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the

high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

*The Celebrant continues*

Glory and honor and praise to you, holy and living God. To deliver us from the power of sin and death and to reveal the riches of your grace, you looked with favor upon Mary, your willing servant, that she might conceive and bear a son, Jesus the holy child of God.

Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all the world to himself yet we were heedless of his call to walk in love. Then, the time came for him to complete upon the cross the sacrifice of his life, and to be glorified by you.

On the night before he died for us, Jesus was at table with his friends. He took bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to them, and said: "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

As supper was ending, Jesus took the cup of wine. Again, he gave thanks to you, gave it to them, and said: "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is poured out for you and for all for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Now gathered at your table, O God of all creation, and remembering Christ, crucified and risen, who was and is and is to come, we offer to you our gifts of bread and wine, and ourselves, a living sacrifice. Pour out your Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Body and Blood of Christ. Breathe your Spirit over the whole earth and make us your new creation, the Body of Christ given for the world you have made.

In the fullness of time bring us, and all your saints, from every tribe and language and people and nation, to feast at the banquet prepared from the foundation of the world. Through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to you be honor, glory, and praise, for ever and ever. **AMEN.**

### **The Breaking of the Bread**

*The Celebrant breaks the consecrated Bread.*

*A period of silence is kept.*

Celebrant            Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;  
**People**                **Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.**

Je - sus, Lamb of God: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, bear - er of our sins: have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, re - deem - er, re - deem - er of the world:

give us your peace, give us your peace.

*The Celebrant says the following invitation*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

*The Bread and the Cup are given to all with these words*

The Body of Christ, the bread of heaven. [*Amen.*]  
The Blood of Christ, the cup of salvation. [*Amen.*]

First Communion Hymn

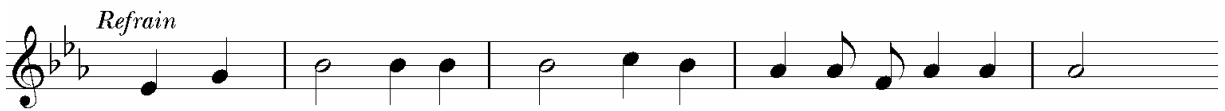
Hymn 325



1 Let us break bread to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_  
2 Let us drink wine to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_



let us break bread to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_  
let us drink wine to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_



when I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing sun,



O Lord, have mer-cy on me. \_\_\_\_\_



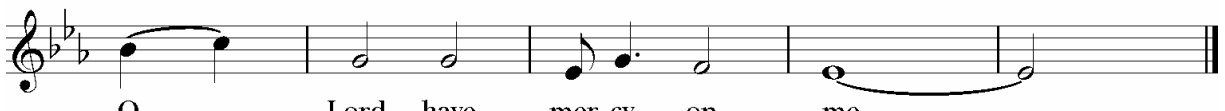
3 Let us praise God to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_



let us praise God to - geth-er on our knees; \_\_\_\_\_



when I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing sun,



O Lord, have mer-cy on me. \_\_\_\_\_

Second Communion Hymn

*Eat This Bread*

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "Eat This Bread". It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the notes.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, come to me and nev-er be hun-gry.

Eat this bread, drink this cup, trust in me and you will not thirst.

*After Communion, the Celebrant says*

Let us pray.

*Please stand or kneel*

*Celebrant and People*

***Eternal God, heavenly Father,  
you have graciously accepted us as living members  
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ,  
and you have fed us with spiritual food  
in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.  
Send us now into the world in peace,  
and grant us strength and courage  
to love and serve you  
with gladness and singleness of heart;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.***

*The Celebrant blesses the people*

*Please stand and sing*

Recessional:

Hymn 657

1 Love di - vine, all loves ex - cell - ing, joy of heaven, to  
2 Come, al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy  
3 Fi - nish then thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less

earth come down, fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy  
life re - ceive; sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er -  
let us be; let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect -

faith - ful mer - cies crown. Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion,  
more thy tem - ples leave. Thee we would be al - way bless - ing,  
ly re - stored in thee: changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry,

pure, un - bound - ed love thou art; vis - it us with  
serve thee as thy hosts a - bove, pray, and praise thee  
till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our

thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - ery trem - bling heart.  
with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.  
crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.

*Celebrant:* Let us go forth rejoicing in the power of the Spirit  
*People:* ***Thanks be to God***

Postlude: *Toccata* from Symphony No. 5

C. M. Widor.

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### **Service Music 164 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Music: From *Deutsche Messe*; Franz Peter Schubert (1797–1828); arr. Richard Proulx (b. 1937)

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### **Hymn 325 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Words: African-American spiritual

Music: *Let Us Break Bread*, Afro-American spiritual; arr. and harm. David Hurd (b. 1950)

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### **Hymn 376 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Words: Henry Van Dyke (1852–1933)

Music: *Hymn to Joy*, Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827); adapt. Edward Hodges (1796–1867), alt.

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### **Hymn 482 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Words: Jan Struther (1901–1953)

Music: *Slane*, Irish ballad melody; adapt. *The Church Hymnary*, 1927; harm. *Hymnal 1982*

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### **Hymn 516 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Words: Bianco da Siena (d. 1434?); tr. Richard Frederick Littledale (1833–1890), alt.

Music: *Down Ampney*, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958)

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### **Hymn 657 (*The Hymnal 1982*)**

Words: Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Music: *Hyfrydol*, Rowland Hugh Prichard (1811–1887)

### **Hymn 858 (*Wonder Love and Praise*) page 12**

Section: Service Music: Sanctus and Benedictus

Title: Holy, holy, holy Lord [*Sanctus*]

Music: American folk melody; arr. Marcia Pruner, harm. Annabel Morris Buchanan (1889–1983)  
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#### Acknowledgements

Unless otherwise noted in the order of service or below, liturgical material is directly from or was modified from the Book of Common Prayer marriage rite.

#### Exceptions:

+ The Gathering, the Declaration of Intent, the Charge to the Witnesses, the Ministry of the Word collect, and the Vows are modified versions of that used in the covenant ceremony of the Rev. Rose Hassan and Judy XMXMXM, November 10, 2001.

+ The vow at the giving of rings is a modified version of that used in “The Celebration and Blessing of the Covenant of David Brain Caley and Terry Sai-Wah Gock, June 28, 1997.”

+ The Blessing of the Union is a combination of that found in the Book of Common Prayer’s marriage rite, “A Rite for the Celebration of Commitment to a Life Together” from the Report of the Second Consultation of Episcopalians on

Same-Sex Unions (Oasis California) July 1996, and “The Blessing and Celebration of the Sacramental Union Between Anthony J. Alfieri and Kevin E. Crispin, October 14, 1995 (Trinity Cathedral, San Jose, Calif.)”  
+ Eucharistic Prayer 2 from *Enriching Our Worship, Supplemental Liturgical Materials prepared by The Standing Liturgical Commission*, (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 1997).