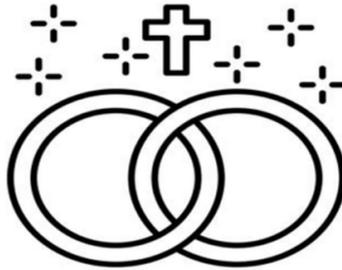


# A Celebration of Love

1 March 2026



*Welcome to Liverpool Parish Church.*

*All are welcome to take part as they feel called.*

*This evening we celebrate God's gift of love, and the reflection of  
that gift in the lives of couples to be married here this year,  
and those married here recently.*

Before the service

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Organ: Aria (from Water Music) – George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)

Please stand, as you are able, as the clergy enter and the Saint Nicholas' Singers sing the introit:

Gloria in excelsis Deo. [Glory to God in the highest]

Words: Luke 2

Music: Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you. **And also with you.**

God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.

**Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;  
To his feet thy tribute bring.  
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,  
Who like me his praise should sing?  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise the everlasting King.**

**Praise him for his grace and favour  
To our fathers in distress;  
Praise him still the same for ever,  
Slow to chide, and swift to bless.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Glorious in his faithfulness.**

**Father-like, he tends and spares us;  
Well our feeble frame he knows;  
In his hands he gently bears us,  
Rescues us from all our foes.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Widely as his mercy flows.**

**Angels, help us to adore him;  
Ye behold him face to face;  
Sun and moon, bow down before him;  
Dwellers all in time and space.  
Praise him! Praise him!  
Praise with us the God of grace.**

*Words: Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847) based on Psalm 103*

*Music: 'Praise, My Soul' John Goss (1800-80)*

*Preface (please sit)*

In the presence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we gather this evening to celebrate the gift of love, and to rejoice together in the expression of love through marriage and faithful partnership.

Love is shared in many ways, and finds many expressions: at first we know the love of parents, grandparents, carers, and those who tend to us when we are new-born and helpless. In time we may know the love of sisters and brothers, of our wider family, and of strangers.

As we grow, we learn the love shared in friendship, and discover in time romantic love and physical attraction. Life may challenge our love for others and ourselves, for the paths of life and love are sometimes stony.

In our pain and in our joy, we look to God, who knit us together in our mothers' womb, who knows us fully and loves us without end.

Today we renew our commitment to love God in ourselves and one another, and to show God's love for the world in our lives.

*The Declarations and Collect*

Will you, with all your heart, look for the signs of God's love in the world, seek God in the face of the stranger and the unloved, and declare that love in your life? **We will.**

Will you, with all your heart, look for the signs of God's love within you, seek God at work in your lives, and accept God's love for all that you are?

**We will.**

Let us pray.

God our Father, you have taught us through your Son that love is the fulfilling of the law. Grant to us your servants that, loving one another as he commanded, we may continue in your eternal love, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

*The Saint Nicholas' Singers sing the anthem:*

May the road rise to meet you  
May the wind be ever at you back  
May the sunshine warm upon your face  
And the rain fall soft upon your fields  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you, may God hold you  
Ever in the palm of his hand

*Words: Traditional Irish*

*Music: Bob Chilcott (born 1955)*

**First Reading** (Song of Solomon 8.1-7)

○ that you were like a brother to me, who nursed at my mother's breast!  
If I met you outside, I would kiss you, and no one would despise me. I would lead you and bring you into the house of my mother, and into the chamber of the one who bore me. I would give you spiced wine to drink, the juice of my pomegranates. ○ that his left hand were under my head, and that his right hand embraced me! I adjure you, ○ daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready! Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? Under the apple tree I awakened you. There your mother was in labour with you; there she who bore you was in labour. 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. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If one offered for love all the wealth of one's house, it would be utterly scorned.

*The Saint Nicholas' Singers sing:*  
For the beauty of the earth,  
For the beauty of the skies,  
For the love which from our birth  
Over and around us lies

*Refrain: Lord of all, to thee we raise This our joyful hymn of praise*

For the beauty of the hour,  
Of the day and of the night,  
Hill and vale, and tree and flower  
Sun and moon and stars of light: *Refrain*

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild: *Refrain*

For each perfect gift of thine,  
To our race so freely given,  
Graces human and divine,  
Flow'rs of earth and buds of heav'n: *Refrain*

*Words: F. S. Pierpoint (1835-1917)*

*Music: John Rutter (born 1945)*

**Second Reading** (Sonnet 116 - William Shakespeare)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. Love's not Time's fool,  
though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

**Love Divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.**

**Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.**

**Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee,  
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise!**

*Words: Charles Wesley (1707-88)*

*Music: 'Blaenwern' William Rowlands (1860-19037)*

*Vows (please stand)*

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*Please repeat each line after the Priest:*

We live in love;  
Love lives in us.  
We live in God;  
God lives in us.  
We turn away from God,  
Yet God has called us children.  
As Jesus Christ loves us  
with a love stronger than death,  
we vow to love all people  
by the help and love of God.

*Prayers (please sit or kneel)*

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Almighty God give you grace to persevere, that he may complete in you the work he has already begun, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Almighty God, you send your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of all your people. Open the hearts of these your servants to the riches of his grace, that they may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Eternal God, true and loving Father, in faithful love you make your servants one. May we together witness to your love in this troubled world; may unity overcome division, forgiveness heal injury and joy triumph over sorrow, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name,  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive them that trespass against us; And lead us not into  
temptation, But deliver us from evil. Amen.**

*The Blessing: (please stand)*

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God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,  
defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace;  
and the + blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

*Organ: Toccata (from Symphonie Nr.5) – Charles Marie Widor*

*Please join us after the service for refreshments.*

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Never marry but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely.  
He that minds a body and not a soul  
has not the better part of that relationship,  
and will consequently lack the noblest comfort of a married life.

Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love.  
As love ought to bring them together,  
so it is the best way to keep them well together.

A husband and wife that love one another  
show their children that they should do so too.  
Others visibly lose their authority in their families  
by their contempt of one another,  
and teach their children to be unnatural by their own examples.

Let not enjoyment lessen, but augment, affection;  
it being the basest of passions to like when we have not,  
what we slight when we possess.

Here it is we ought to search out our pleasure,  
where the field is large and full of variety, and of an enduring nature;  
sickness, poverty or disgrace being not able to shake it  
because it is not under the moving influences of worldly contingencies.

Nothing can be more entire and without reserve;  
nothing more zealous, affectionate and sincere;  
nothing more contented than such a couple,  
nor greater temporal felicity than to be one of them.

*Never Marry But For Love: William Penn (1644-1718)*

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