

First of all could I say what a delight and privilege it is for me to be here as we celebrate the wedding of Jenni and Matt. Of course weddings are occasions of joy, of celebration – they are also occasions of great hope and confidence, of trust and commitment to the future.

In a time when commitments of any sort are often seen as short term, as long as it suits, we'll see what else comes along, marriage, as a life long commitment to each other, to stand by each other, alongside each other through whatever comes along is a wonderful sign to a wider world.

Now of course Jenni and I go back a long way. I remember well the excitement when the news was announced that you were on the way, the first time your Mum and Dad brought you down to Mountmellick. Of course the memory of being confronted with 3 Weetabix at breakfast when you stayed with us in the caravan in Newcastle has scarred you for life! But you survived, indeed more than survived. Your Mum and Dad have watched with great pride as you have gone from baby to toddler, from primary school through to Methody then on to Cambridge and on into your professional life. At each stage you have brought your own confidence, your irrepressible good humour and your commitment to whatever you have chosen to take on.

Through it all, this place, Fisherwick Presbyterian Church and the faith you imbued here from your parents, from successive clergy, from Sunday School and GB leaders has been a constant thread through it all. It is to here you have

returned whenever you have come back home. It is here you have chosen to have your marriage service, to enter into that life long commitment to Matt.

It must be two or three years now since your Mum first spoke to us about a new man in Jenni's life. Then after a while, 'I think this one might be serious'. Matt comes from a very different background – well let's face it a very different country. He survived the first trip to Northern Ireland to meet the relations. In the course of that trip we began to see that there was indeed something very special between the two of you. You have a shared interest in science and of course you have shared professional interests.

You each bring something unique to this marriage. You bring yourselves, your own individuality, your different personalities. In the unity of the marriage you will cherish not only what you have in common but also your differences.

A day such as this is a day of looking back and looking forward. Your relationship did not happen out of the blue. On this day I invite you to think back to how it all began. The time you first noticed each other, the process in which friendship grew into love and you realised that you wanted to spend the rest of your lives with each other.

Today, your friends and your family come to share with you in celebrating the love and joy you have found in each other and to ask God's richest blessing upon you in the days that lie ahead. The Bible readings for the service today

and the words of the Marriage Service itself are full of themes of commitment, of faithfulness, of the love that you have found for each other.

I spoke earlier of cherishing each other's individuality. Our love for each other must show something of that same self emptying, self forgetting love of Christ himself, in which the needs of the other are placed above our own. In the context of this ceremony the mutual taking of hands represents your openness and commitment towards one another.

A great deal of thought and preparation has gone into this day. The very decision to have the service here in Church, the shape and structure of the service, the choice of readings, the choice of music - and of course you have thought about what you are going to wear.

Clothes are very personal - they say a lot about how we see ourselves, about how we want other people to see us - they express something of our nature, our personality. A reserved person, for example, is unlikely to appear in bright colours.

St Paul, writing to the Colossians, talks of clothes that suit their new found faith in Christ; and so he talks of our spiritual clothing as he tells us to "clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience forgiving each other just as the Lord forgave you." Then he says, "Clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony"
(Col 3)

Paul teases out the meaning of this Christ like love that we are to have for one another in the portion we read from his 1st Letter to the Corinthians. This is a love that goes to the very heart of day to day relationships.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. *1 Cor 13:4-7*

May that love enfold you in the days and weeks and months and years to come as together you continue to share each others' joys, understand each others' shortcomings, forgive each others' failings, sustain each other in all that lies ahead for you both. May you both find in your marriage and in each other true peace and happiness in your life together before God.