

This booklet was originally written for "Efficient" use and it has been very well received by the clergy community. However, as I began to perform more ceremonies myself, I realized that the best way to meet a couple's needs is to give each couple a copy of this book. So, that is what I do.

Over the last fourteen years, I have been rewarded by receiving all of the additional material that I've just added to this third printing. I want to thank every one of those couples who asked me to perform their ceremony, and have helped me put it together, in one booklet, as much helpful information.

Marriage License:

Obtaining the marriage license is an important responsibility of each couple. They will need copies of divorce settlement papers for any previous marriages. Make sure they are attending to this and always check the license itself to see if it is "in effect" on the day of the ceremony. Licenses are only good for a specified amount of time, which is usually 60 days.

The signing of the marriage license is very important. DON'T FORGET IN THE COMPANY OF THE RECTOR/DUE, FOR EXACTLY THE WITNESSES SIGNATURE ON THE LICENSE. I advise it is a part of the ceremony itself or select the couple to sign photos taken at the signing at the reception. It is a good idea for you to place the license from the couple at the rehearsal and have the witnesses sign it at that time. Present the rehearsal, witness the couple to bring it with them.

Make sure to fill out the correct time, location, city, and county where the ceremony is taking place. You are typically witnessing the two select witnesses as they sign the certificate. Check to see if there is an age requirement for the two witnesses. In New York State, at least one witness must be age 18 or over.

FOR AT LEAST TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO HAVE THE LICENSE. Don't wait until before the ceremony unless plans. (Witnesses change happens) Mail it immediately after the ceremony. In New York, the license must be mailed within 60 days.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

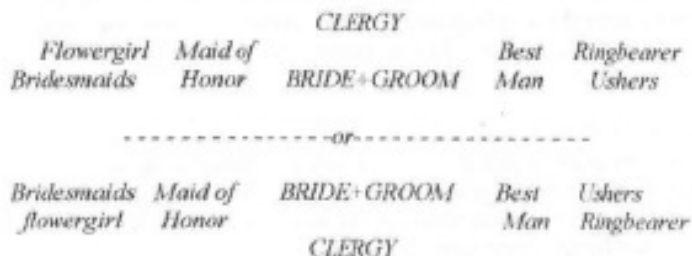
Here's how to establish that you are in charge and that you know what you are doing. The wedding party's time is limited, especially if the rehearsal is the night before the wedding. Bring the list of the names of those in the wedding party and what "parts" they play that you established in the preliminary meeting.

Go over with the couple exactly what they want so that you don't have several people making suggestions as to how a wedding party is arranged. There are so many variations these days and you don't want Aunt Mary and Cousin Harry arguing over how it was done at their wedding thirty years ago.

Make sure you know if there are mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, step-mothers and step-fathers, and/or significant others belonging to the parents of the couple that must be considered. Make sure each usher knows who they are responsible to seat before the service begins.

Greet everyone and invite them to come forward to the location of the actual ceremony. Place them all in the positions where they will stand after they come down the aisle. Then send them back to line up in the proper order and proceed down the aisle. (This is the same whether in a church, temple, garden, restaurant or back yard) Encourage them to take their time, walking slowly and gracefully.

The following are diagrams of some typical line-ups. Don't be afraid to be original in arranging the wedding party.



Traditionally, looking from the back of the room toward the front, the bride's family and friends sit on the left and the groom's family and friends sit on the right. The bride walks to the left of her escort, unless she walks alone. Also, the bride's mother is usually the last person to be escorted down the aisle just before the wedding party enters. She

stands when she sees her daughter, which is a signal for the guests to stand and turn their attention to the bride. The clergy person usually invites the guests to sit after the presentation of the bride (see below).

Try to keep the rehearsal to no more than an hour. That way, the wedding party will have time for the rehearsal dinner and visiting with out-of-town family and friends.

The rehearsal is NOT the time to read through the entire ceremony. The words should be fresh and new on the day of the wedding. The only purpose for the rehearsal is for everyone in the wedding party to know how to proceed down the aisle, where to stand during the ceremony and how to leave at the end. They will also want to decide where and how the receiving line is to be arranged after the ceremony and who is responsible for saying the "blessing" (if there is a lunch or dinner) and the "toast" to the bride and groom at the reception.

Remember, the couple may be distracted, having a great deal on their minds. The more you can orchestrate everything smoothly, the easier it will be for them. Then, get out of their way (unless you are family, of course) and go home and get a good night's sleep to be ready for the next day.



TRADITIONAL WEDDING CEREMONY PROCESSIONAL & WEDDING PARTY ARRANGEMENT

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the presence of family and friends to join together this Man and this Woman in Holy Matrimony which is an Honorable Estate, instituted by God, and therefore is not to be entered into unadvisedly or carelessly, but reverently, joyfully and in the love of God. Into this Holy Estate, these two persons present come now to be joined.

PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE:

Clergy says, "Who gives this bride in marriage?"
Father says, "I do." (Father sits with Mother)

(At this point, the bride gives her bouquet of flowers to her attendant.)

PRAYERS AND/OR READINGS followed by:

DECLARATION OF INTENT

_____, will you have this woman to be your wife, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love, honor and keep her, forsaking all others, be faithful to her for as long as you both shall live?

GROOM answers, "I will"

_____, will you have this man to be your husband, to live together in the covenant of marriage. Will you love, honor and keep him, forsaking all others, be faithful to him for as long as you both shall live?

BRIDE answers, "I will."

VOWS

CLERGY SAYS TO GROOM "Repeat after me"

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish. I pledge to you my faithfulness for all the days of our lives.

AND THEN BRIDE REPEATS

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish. I pledge to you my faithfulness for all the days of our lives.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

CLERGY ASKS, "May I have the rings please."

BLESSING OF THE BRIDE'S RING:

Bless this ring, oh Lord, that he who gives it and she who wears it may abide in thy peace, and continue in thy favor, unto their life's end. Amen

To Groom: _____, place this ring on _____'s hand and repeat after me.
"With this ring, I thee wed. May it be a lasting symbol of my abiding love for you."

BLESSING OF THE GROOM'S RING:

Bless this ring, oh Lord, that she who gives it and he who wears it may abide in thy peace, and continue in thy favor, unto their life's end. Amen

To Bride: _____, place this ring on _____'s hand and repeat after me.
"With this ring, I thee wed. May it be a lasting symbol of my abiding love for you."

COUPLE JOIN HANDS

"Those whom God hath joined together let no one put asunder".

CLOSING PRAYERS

"Oh, eternal God, Creator and Preserver, Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life. Send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy Name; that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them as symbolized by these rings as a token and pledge, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together and live according to thy laws."

"O Almighty God, Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, who only art the well-spring of life, bestow upon these thy servants, if it is thy will, the gift and heritage of children, and grant that they may see their children brought up in thy faith and love, to the honor and the glory of thy Name." AMEN

PRONOUNCEMENT

"For as much as _____ and _____ have consented together in holy matrimony and have witnessed the same before God and those present, and have pledged their faithfulness, each to the other, and have declared their love by giving and receiving Rings and by joining hands, I now pronounce that you are husband and wife"

CLERGY SAYS "You may seal your vows with a kiss."

BENEDICTION

"May the Peace and the Unconditional Love of God surround you and remain with you now and forevermore. Amen"

FORMAL INTRODUCTION OF NEWLYWEDS

"It is my pleasure to introduce to you,
Mr. & Mrs. ____ & ____ Last Name(s).

RECESSIONAL**VARIATIONS****OPENING REMARKS**

(All present usually stand during the opening remarks.)

On behalf of the families of ____ & ____, I welcome you to this, their wedding day.

Dearest Loved Ones, we are gathered together in the sight of God and this company to celebrate the greatest of Joys, To Love and Be Loved.

We especially bless and honor the Love shared between these two unique and special treasures ____ & _____. May their love forever be one of continued fulfillment, as they share together in body, mind and spirit.

It is with Joy that we gather here together, family and friends, witnesses to the commitment ____ & ____ are making to each other and to their son, _____. With words from the heart, they each wish to express their thoughts and feelings to each other.

We are gathered together here to celebrate the joining together of ____ & _____. We rejoice with them in the making of this commitment. This is a commitment of taking each other in his or her entirety as friend and companion. The companionship of a couple, doing day-to-day things together, or supporting each other in doing things separately is enhanced by this union called marriage. Marriage symbolizes the intimate sharing of two lives. This sharing will not diminish, but enhance the individuality of each partner. The wedding ceremony is one of the highest symbolic experiences of love all of us as humans can have. Love adds great meaning to our lives. Indeed, it is the reason we are here on this earth. This is so beautifully spoken by Bartholomew, when he states:

"When you finally understand that you can generate that which you have been desperately looking for outside of yourself, you become the master of your life. You have been looking for love, security and peace outside yourself and the minute you find it inside, you are the master. Not in an arrogant sense, but with a sense of wonder. Then you are in a position to totally love someone else, not before. Then you are love in motion. When you are love in motion, and centered in the love of God, you can be with each other and other people in a totally committed way. Not out of need, but out of joy."

Through love, ____ & ____ have chosen to be together for the rest of their days. Deep knowledge of another person is not something that can be achieved in a short time. Only after years of deep intimacy can a real understanding of each other's feelings be reached. A deep caring and respect for each other is priceless. Through this process, we mirror to each other our human failings, our worries, and our cares. And through this intimacy, we learn that love is the key to supporting and nurturing each other's growth through these human attributes.

Each of you are here because you are family and friends of ____ & _____. You all have a history with each of them. You were invited to celebrate this deep love, commitment and devotion, and this is an honor! ____ & ____ are confident that their love & friendship will be sufficient unto their needs as a couple and will enable them to grow in wisdom and depth and stature of their loving relationship. Surely, you all share in this deep and basic loving confidence.

Welcome friends and family, new and old, and thank you all for joining us here today to share in the sacred bonding of these two living souls. For ____ and ____, it is truly a blessing and an honor to have you here at the beginning of their new life together.

We ask you now to join hands and help us give thanks for all the wonderful blessings we encounter every day in our lives. Our ancestors, all our relations, our families, our friends, the great spirit in all things, celebrate with us the bonding of hearts and souls and the beauty of love. Help us see and know the divine presence in all that is, and keep that truth alive for us today and through all our years together.

For ____ and ____, this day will forever represent the first day of the union of their hearts in marriage. We are gathered here today, wrapped in the loving arms of the great spirit that is all life, so that we may all bear witness as they promise their eternal love for one another.

We gather here this day in the presence of God, family, and friends, to join ____ & ____ in marriage. As we celebrate this ritual together we also pay tribute to _____ (deceased loved ones), who are with us together in spirit.

Marriage is a Holy Estate born in the love of God. It is a relationship entered into thoughtfully, reverently, with gratitude for the past and hope for the future. In the tradition of our faith, we believe God calls a man and a woman to leave the homes of their childhood to become, together, a new family.

Come on now, pull up your chairs,
open your hearts, turn off your mind.
We've come here together to celebrate and have fun,
to see what magic and moonlight have done,
to see how love can make a king and a queen
out of a man and a woman.

This is a wedding, ____'s and ____'s wedding,
and we're here to listen, to love, to dance, and rejoice.
And to send them into the future
with one outrageous, gigantic blessing.
So sit back now, open your hearts,
and let the wedding begin!

As witnesses to the promises they are about to exchange, we especially bless and honor the love shared between ____ and _____. May their love for each other be one of continued fulfillment and may their friendship and trust in one another grow with each passing day. And as they begin their married life together, may they feel the love and support of their friends and their family.

It is a sacred moment in life when two people, who were once strangers to each other, are drawn together in love; when a man sees in a woman that dream of companionship and inspiration that has been the constant thirst of his soul; when in a man, woman finds the peace, the understanding and the fulfillment her heart has always sought.

____ & _____, you are linking your lives in the closest possible relationship with that of another human soul. Two souls, properly communing, have the power to love each other more and more. The greater that love grows the more loveable do the objects of that love become, and in pure affection they seek together the magnificence of the Infinite Wisdom, Beauty, and Love, of which they are a part.

There will be many challenges to your patience and wisdom, but your love shall meet them all. You are performing an act of complete faith, believing in God, and trusting each other to the utmost.

From "Weddings from the Heart" by Daphne Rose Kingman

We gather here today in the presence of God, family, and friends to join ____ & ____ in marriage. As we celebrate this ritual together, we also wish to pay tribute to _____, who are with us together in spirit.

You have come here today from your varied life experiences to make public the commitment you have made, each to the other. You come to combine your two separate lives into one.

Although you will be sharing one life, never forget, you are two separate people. Cherish and affirm your differences. Love each other. Keep your commitment primary. Together you will laugh and cry, be sick and well, be happy and angry, share and grow. Grow, sometimes together, sometimes separately. But never remain stagnant. Love and life are always changing, always new.

If you will ensure a healthy lasting marriage, always, always value each other. Although you will disagree, remember to respect each other's feelings, needs and wants. And, above all, never, never lose your sense of humor.

Marriage, to be complete, must first be spiritual. From this inner state of consciousness there comes the outer state corresponding to it, making the outer complete, peaceful, and harmonious. Marriage is true matrimony only when based on this inner communion of two souls who aspire toward each other. Do you ____ & ____, understand this? Answer, "Yes, we do".

Today, as you join your lives together, keep your own memories, goals, dreams, and accomplishments. Hold onto that sacred essence that is you, for the singular person is the one you've each grown to love. Make not your mate fit a mold, but give wings to your loved one, each for the sake of the other. For it is through the support and belief in each other that each of you will be the best that you can be, and each of you will bring to this marriage the Glory that is YOU!

"When love is right, you see it in each other's eyes, you feel it in each other's arms...you taste it in each other's kiss. When love is right, you hold onto it with all your heart and soul."

On behalf of ____ & ____, we welcome you. They want to thank you for sharing their very special day.

We are here today to witness and to celebrate the marriage of ____ & _____. They have invited me to lead their wedding ceremony as a special guest. The words and form of the ceremony were determined by them, and express their understanding of marriage and what they wish to say to their families, to their friends and to each other.

____ & _____, this is your day. It is your time. It is your celebration. This ceremony is the public expression of something already real. Today you declare the love and commitment you have

expressed to each other many times before. Today, each of you declares for the whole world to see, that this other person has that special primary place in your life that can only be given to one other.

We are concerned here with something more beautiful than just romance. You two have decided to make the journey through life together and to help each other make as much of it as two unique individuals can. Your families and your friends are here, standing with you. Through all these people, you have become the individuals and the couple you are.

For you, the families of the bride & groom, this is a special day in your lives as well. You have gathered to celebrate this joyous occasion with your children, but those children are no longer children. Those who look to you for love have become sources of new love.

____ & ____ are accepting the responsibility of this marriage for themselves, to build together a life and tradition; as you have prepared them. They will draw together the wisdom of many lives to build their own life.

Those of you who are not "family" are here today because you are important friends of ____ & ____, and you have become even more special by being here to share in this celebration. You have been as family with whom they have shared the good times and the bad times. The qualities of your friendship have enriched the quality of their lives. Now you will witness and confirm the uniqueness of their friendship and love for each other.

All of us here wish to give ____ & ____ the gift of happiness. However, we are limited in our ability to provide such a gift. Happiness is the fulfillment that comes from building their marriage together. Marriage is more than words or ceremony. It is a commitment to be reaffirmed each & every day. Happiness is the product of contentment that each has the strength to accept in their lives of what cannot be changed, and the love to change what cannot be accepted.

You can make your marriage a living thing. It will be you who begin every day making choices to express caring or avoiding it; to reveal love or to be too busy; to acknowledge respect and to take joy from one another or build walls, and through those daily choices, to renew the wedding vows you will make today. It will be you, also, who shapes what is possible for each other, allowing each other the space and the privacy to be unique individuals. When you follow the leading of your own personalities and talents, then each of you will have strength upon which both can depend.

All of us gathered here have the honor of taking part in one of the most joyous and sacred moments in the lives of ____ & _____, as they pledge their union to one another. Some define a miracle as the joining of two minds and hearts with one purpose. So today we bear witness to this miracle that ____ & _____'s love for each other has

created. ____ & ____ stand apart from the families who have nurtured them and given them loving examples of marital union; they stand apart from friends and loved ones. Each alone and ready to become married partners in a new union, a new family, which will unite these two families and bring union to these friends. And they shall become one.

According to ____ & ____'s wishes, this ceremony is one that spans different traditions, bridges customs from different cultures and mystical sources. As we celebrate today the union of this man and this woman, so we honor the unions of all couples present here and everywhere, the union of all people, earth and heaven, spirit and substance.

The Viking rune "Unuz" stands for strength, manhood and womanhood. It is the rune of termination and new beginnings. It indicates that a life that has been lived has outgrown its old form. That form must die so that life energy can release in a new birth, a new form. And the new form, the new life, is always greater than the old.

This is a rune of passage, with firm principles attached to it, requiring adaptation and humility, and a desire to serve. This rune serves to announce that your soul(s) and the universe support new growth. At this time, we acknowledge that ____ & ____ are formally shedding their old separate forms, to join their minds, bodies and souls in their new form, that of married union.

____ & ____ have honored us by inviting us to be with them during this time that will make them husband and wife. What they mean to each other is obvious in their lives but not easily expressed in the language of a ceremony. They are adult. They have known each other for ____ years. They choose to live together. The choice is responsible, free, independent and happy.

____, as a Priest/Priestess in the Order of Melchizedek, you have taken a vow, of your own free will, to teach and to heal. The lesson you teach is "Love".

____, you have the opportunity to offer ____ a place in which he/she may grow in service to others.

Together, you will be an example of love, trust and freedom in action, delighting in each other's discoveries, supporting each other's ever-changing and growing commitment to the human condition and to God.

We have come together, families and friends, in the presence of God to uphold ____ & ____ as they make their vows of marriage. We welcome those in spirit, most especially ____ who join us in the celebration of the love ____ and ____ have discovered in each other. All of you are to support their decision to commit themselves to one another for the rest of their lives.

Marriage is a Holy Estate born in the love of God. It is a relationship entered into thoughtfully, reverently, with gratitude for the past and hope for the future. In the tradition of our faith, we believe God calls a man and a woman to leave the homes of their childhood to become, together, a new family.

____ & ____ have gathered us here to witness and celebrate their marriage. They feel that the essence of marriage is the taking of another person in his or her entirety as sole lover, lifelong companion, and best friend. The journey through that lifetime together involves the joys and the challenges of the discovery of the many aspects of who we were, who we are and who we will be to each other. The journey is one of learning and growing in the process of relationship which requires nothing but the most and the best that one will ever be asked to give to another. It is, therefore, a decision which is not to be entered into frivolously, but rather, undertaken with great consideration and respect for the other person and oneself.

____ & ____ have asked me to thank you for being here to share this moment in their journey. They feel very blessed and loved and grateful for your presence. They especially want to thank their parents and siblings for standing by them. ____ & ____ both understand that it is the love from which they have come that brings them to this spot today and enables them to go from here to create a strong and loving family of their own.

All of us gathered here have the honor of taking part in one of the most joyous and sacred moments in the lives of ____ and ____, as they pledge their union to one another. Some define a miracle as the joining of two minds and hearts with one purpose. So, today we bear witness to this miracle that ____ and ____'s love for each other has created.

____ and ____ stand apart from the families who have nurtured them and given them loving examples of marital union. They stand apart from friends and loved ones. Each alone and ready to

become married partners in a new union, a new family, which will unite these two families and bring union to these friends. And they shall become one.

According to _____ and _____'s wishes, this ceremony is one that spans different traditions, bridges customs from different cultures and mystical sources. As we celebrate today the union of this man and this woman, so we honor the union of all couples present here and everywhere, the union of all people, earth and heaven, spirit and substance.

We have gathered in the presence of God to give thanks for the gift of marriage, to witness the joining of _____ & _____, to surround them with our prayers and to ask God's blessing upon them, so that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in their love of God.

God created us, male and female and gave us marriage so that husband and wife may help and comfort each other for the full expression of the love between two adult people. In marriage, a woman and a man belong to each other and, with affection and tenderness, freely give themselves to each other.

Welcome, family and friends to this glorious day. For _____ & _____, it is a very special day, a day in which they and their families have asked each of us to gather here, in this beautiful place, surrounded by these beautiful trees (or ...surrounded by nature... before this waterfall, a wonder of nature...in this lovely garden), a day in which to hear them exchange vows of love, desire and commitment to each other, a day in which to celebrate their decision to spend their lives together.

They would like to share with everyone how much they care for each of you and how grateful and happy they are that you are all here today, especially the littlest ones among us. Each of you are very special to _____ & _____. Let us now pause for a moment of silence (excluding all infants, of course), first to make sure each of us are fully here, meaning present in mind and soul, but also, to remember those loved ones who are present with us today in our hearts. And lastly, let us send our love strength and energy towards _____ & _____.

Welcome friends and family, new and old, and thank you all for joining us here today to share in the sacred bonding of these two living souls. For _____ and _____, it is truly a blessing and an honor to

have you here at the beginning of their new life together. We ask you now to join hands and help us give thanks for all the wonderful blessings we encounter every day in our lives. Our ancestors, all our relations, our families, our friends, the great spirit in all things; celebrate with us the bonding of hearts and souls and the beauty of love. Help us see and know the divine presence in all that is, and keep that truth alive for us today and through all our years together.

The ancient Mayan civilization believed that this date, July 26th, was the beginning of all time. Likewise, for _____ and _____, this day will forever represent the first day of the union of their hearts in marriage. We are gathered here today wrapped in the loving arms of the great spirit that is all life, so that we may all bear witness as these two lovers promise their eternal love for one another.

_____ & _____, I remind you, as you stand in the presence of God, that love and loyalty are the foundation of a happy and enduring home. During the days of your engagement you have given careful thought to the meaning of your marriage. You began the joining of your lives and we pray that you will continue to grow together throughout the time you share.

The future is unknown to any of us. Yet your love for one another and trust in the goodness of God's will, make possible the act of faith you now make in our midst. As you exchange your vows of faithfulness we will be listening and supporting you with our love.

We have gathered in the presence of God to give thanks for the gift of marriage, to witness the joining of _____ & _____, to surround them with our prayers and to ask God's blessing upon them, so that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in their love of God.

God created us, male and female and gave us marriage so that husband and wife may help and comfort each other for the full expression of the love between two adult people. In marriage, a woman and a man belong to each other and, with affection and tenderness, freely give themselves to each other.



PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE/GROOM

In the olden days, the bride was passed on from her father to her husband, almost as a piece of property. Some brides still wish to carry on the tradition of having permission from her parents to marry, and if this is so, her wishes should be honored, as in the following:

Clergy person asks,
Who presents this bride to be joined in Holy Matrimony? Answer from parents or father: "We do." -or- "Her mother and I do."

Who, upon _____'s (the Bride) request, gives her hand to this man in marriage? Designated person answers, "I do."

Often, as a sign of acceptance from the children of a previous marriage, the following may be appropriate.

Who presents the Bride to this marriage? (Children present their mother with a hug.)

"Who stands with this woman to symbolize the traditions of family out of which she comes?" Bride's parents say, "We do."

"Who stands with this man to symbolize the traditions of family out of which he comes?" Groom's parents say, "We do."

"Before _____ & _____ take their vows, I now address this question to all of you as their community of family and friends. Will you offer to them the best of your care and counsel in their times of struggle and your celebration with them in their times of Joy?"

Answer "We do."

(At this time, the congregation is usually asked to be seated.)

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Bride & Groom join hands. Clergy says:

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together with God's guidance in the Holy Estate of Matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in health, be faithful to her for as long as you both shall live? (Answer, "I Will.")

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together with God's guidance in the Holy Estate of Matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in sickness and in health, be faithful to him for as long as you both shall live?
(Answer, "I will.")

Of all the men and women you know, you have chosen each other as partners in your life's journey together. Are you ready to be married? Answer, "We are."

_____ & _____, having heard how God has created, ordered and blessed the covenant of marriage. Do you affirm your desire and intention to enter this commitment? Answer by both: "I do."

_____ and _____, do you affirm your desire and intention to be wed? Both answer, "I do."

_____, living in faith which your love for _____ and her/his love for you creates and being concerned with the goodness, love and understanding friendship which alone gives your marriage the meaning you desire, will you dedicate yourself to the growth of that love with _____ as your wife/husband? Answer "I will." (Repeat)

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded wife, to live together with God's guidance in the Holy Estate of Matrimony? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, and be faithful to her with guidance from the Blessed Creator? Answer, "I will."

_____, will you have _____ to be your wedded husband, to live together with God's guidance in the Holy Estate of Matrimony? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, and be faithful to him with guidance from the Blessed Creator? Answer, "I will."

(Question to GROOM)

_____, is it your wish to take _____ to be your wife and soul mate, to join together your heart unto hers, uniting your spirit and her, into a common being. Gifting her with your trust, respect and abiding love for so long as you both shall live? (Answer: It is.)

(Question to BRIDE)

____, is it your wish to take ____ to be your husband and soul mate, to join together your heart unto his, uniting your spirit and his into a common being. Gifting him with your trust, respect and abiding love for so long as you both shall live? (Answer: it is)

____, do you come before this gathering of friends and family to proclaim your love and devotion for ____? Do you promise to affirm her, respect her, and care for her? Do you commit yourself to share your feelings of happiness and sadness? Do you pledge to remain faithful to her? Answer, "I do."

____, do you come before this gathering of friends and family to proclaim your love and devotion for ____? Do you promise to affirm him, respect him, and care for him? Do you commit yourself to share your feelings of happiness and sadness? Do you pledge to remain faithful to him? Answer, "I do."

____ and ____ is it your desire and intention to state before God, family and friends, your commitment to become husband and wife. Answer, "Yes, it is."

Do you, ____, choose to be ____'s husband, to live with and laugh with and to stand by her, to be joy in her heart, to bring out the best in each other always and to be the most you can be for each other, to laugh with her in good times, to struggle with her in bad times, to comfort her when she is downhearted, to share with her all your riches and honor, to keep your marriage strong and to keep each other first and foremost over all things until you grow old until your lives shall come to an end? Groom says, "I do."

Do you, ____, choose to be ____'s wife, to live with and laugh with and to stand by him, to be joy in his heart, to bring out the best in each other always and to be the most you can be for each other, to laugh with him in good times, to struggle with him in bad times, to comfort him when he is downhearted, to comfort him, to share with him all your riches and honor, to keep your marriage strong and to keep each other first and foremost over all things until your lives shall come to an end? Bride says, "I do."

____ and ____ have come here to make public their love for each other; to give voice to their truth; to declare their choice to live and partner and grow together.

____ and ____, you have told me it is your firm understanding that you are not entering into this marriage as a means of limiting, controlling, hindering, or restricting each other from any true expression and honest celebration of that which is the highest and best in each of you. Is that still your firm understanding? Answer, "It is"

We have come together here under the great blue ceiling of God's most magnificent cathedral where you can pledge your love in a setting that will never be duplicated in all the world. Take each other by the right hand, here under the canopy of heaven, do you share a vow?
Answer: "We do"

____ and ____, you have said to me that you do not see marriage as producing obligations, but rather as providing opportunities for growth, for full self-expression, for lifting your lives to their highest potential, for healing every false thought or small idea you ever had about yourself, and for ultimate reunion with the One Living Spirit.

You both believe that marriage is a journey through life with the one you love as an equal partner, sharing equally both the authority and the responsibilities inherent in any partnership, bearing equally what burdens there may be, sharing equally in the glories.

Is that the vision you wish to enter into now? Answer, "It is."

Affirmation of Families:

Will the parents, brothers and sisters (or "siblings") and grandparents of the bride and groom please stand. Do you give your blessing to ____ & ____ and promise to do everything in your power to uphold them in their marriage and to enhance their relationship?

Answer by all family members: "I give my blessing and promise my loving support." -or- "We do."

Before ____ & ____ take their vows, I now address this question to all of you as their community of family & friends: Will you offer to them the best of your care and counsel in their times of struggle and your celebration with them in their times of joy? Answer: WE DO

Promise from the Congregation:

Will all of you witnessing these vows do everything in your power to uphold _____ & _____ in their marriage?
Answer by all present, "We will."

Let this ceremony be a time for the renewal of our own vows, a re-committment to our expression of love. It is a time for all of us to affirm our willingness to allow love to flow through us. Let's have a moment of silence for individual reflection.
(After a time of silence, clergy says, "Please be seated.")

The following is an example that helps you to encourage the couple to place items that are meaningful to them, symbols of their spiritual nature, on an altar or central table. These symbols can vary according to the creativity and religious backgrounds of those being married.)

We are gathered here today to honor the oneness of us all as represented by the vows of _____ & _____. These vows are spoken on this plane, at this time, in this place, in the presence of friends and family. They symbolize the coming together and the synthesis of many aspects of light returning to the light.

With this white candle (clergy lights a candle), we honor the Divine Light, the source, the Alpha and the Omega.

We honor the gift of the earth symbolized by the crystal bowl and the water.

We honor matter becoming aware of its Divine essence by accepting the human consciousness as symbolized by this pyramid.

We honor the Yang energy being will, justice, and purity represented by these white roses.

We honor the Yin energy being love, wisdom and passion represented by these red roses.

We honor the violet flame (lights a violet candle) being the light of hope and the flame of Divine desire represented by the violet candle.



READINGS

Part 1 Spiritual Readings

Old Testament - Book of Genesis

Then God said:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.
Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,
the birds of the air, and the cattle,
and over all the wild animals
and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

God created man in his image;
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, saying :

"Be fertile and multiply.
Fill the earth and subdue it.
Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of
the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

God looked at everything he had made, and he found it
very good. This is the Word of the Lord.



1st Corinthians 13: 1-8

If I speak with the wisdom of humanity and with the brilliance of the angels, but have not love, I am but a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all the mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is LOVE.

Modern Version:

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not compile statistics of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad when Truth prevails.

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope: it can out-last anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.

From Song of Songs 2:8-10, 14, 16a; 8:6-7a

I hear my Beloved. See how he comes leaping on the mountains, bounding over the hills. My Beloved is like a gazelle, like a young stag. See where he stands behind our wall. He looks in at the window, he peers through the lattice. My Beloved lifts up his voice, he says to me, "Come then, my love, my lovely one, come.

My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock, in the coverts of the cliff, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet and your face is beautiful."

My Beloved is mine and I am his. He said to me, "Set me like a seal on your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is strong as Death, and jealousy as relentless as Sheol. The flash of it is a flash of fire, a flame of the Lord himself. Love no flood can quench, no torrents drown." This is the word of the Lord.

From Philippians 2:1-11

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

From Ephesians 3:14-19

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches, he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

God has given us promises in the word of scripture. _____ and _____ have given their promises to each other in their marriage. This hour of promise is also a time of prayer. We turn to God our Father and make our response by saying:

"Lord, have mercy."

For our Church, to keep the promise of salvation, we pray to the Lord.

For our world, to keep the promise of peace, we pray to the Lord.

For our country, to keep the promise of freedom, we pray to the Lord.

For our parish, to keep the promise of discipleship, we pray to the Lord.

For our hearts, to keep the promise of loving, we pray to the Lord.



For our hands, to keep the promise of giving, we pray to the Lord.

For our lives, to keep the promise of growing, we pray to the Lord.

For this couple, to keep the promise of marriage, we pray to the Lord.

From Buddhist teachings....

This is what should be done by the man and woman who are wise, who seek the good, and who know the meaning of the place of peace.

Let them be fervent, upright and sincere, without conceit of self, easily contented and joyous, free of cares; let them not be submerged by the things of the world; let them not take upon themselves the burden of worldly goods; let their senses be controlled; let them be wise but not puffed up, and let them not desire great possessions even for their families. Let them do nothing that is mean or that the wise would reprove.

May all things be happy and at their ease. May they be joyous and live in safety.

All beings, whether weak or strong, omitting none; in high, middle, or low realms of existence; small or great, visible or invisible, near or far away, born or to be born; may all beings be happy and at their ease.

Let none deceive another, or despise any being in any state. Let none by anger or ill will wish harm to another.

Even as a mother watches over and protects her only child, so with boundless mind should one cherish all living beings, radiating friendliness over the entire world; above, below, and all around without limit. So let them cultivate a boundless good will toward the entire world, unlimited, free from ill will or enmity.

Standing or walking, sitting or lying down, during all their waking hours, let them establish this mindfulness of good will which is the highest state.

From the I Ching

When two people are at one in their inmost hearts, they shatter even the strength of iron or bronze. And when two people understand each other in their inmost hearts, their words are sweet and strong, like the fragrance of orchids.



See page 82 - 85 for additional biblical readings.

Part 2 – Secular Readings

On Marriage from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran

Then Almitra spoke again and said, "And what of Marriage, master?"

And he answered saying:

"You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.

You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.

Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness.

And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:

Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.

Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing & dance together & be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.

For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts

And stand together yet not too near together. For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

Also by Gibran

Marriage is the union of two souls in a strong love for the abolishment of separateness. It is that higher Unity which fuses the separate unities within the two spirits. It is the golden ring in a chain whose beginning is a glance and whose ending is Eternity.

It is the pure rain that falls from an unblemished sky to fructify and bless the fields of divine Nature.

As the first glance from the eyes of the beloved is like a seed sown in the human heart, and the First Kiss of her lips like a flower upon the branch of the Tree of Life, so the union of two lovers in marriage is like the first fruit of the first flower of that seed.

Sonnet 16: by 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:

Oh No! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering 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 proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.



"Only out of deep experience of love, sweet, and bitter,
pleasant and painful, high and low, heaven and hell, only out of deep
experience of pain and pleasure through love does one become aware.
They are needed to make you aware."

Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh

Your hearts are filled with happiness
So great and overflowing
You cannot comprehend it
For it's far beyond all knowing
How any Heart could hold such Joy
Or feel the Fullness of
The Wonder and the Glory
And the Ecstasy of Love.

You wish that you could capture it
And never let it go.
So you might walk forever
In it's radiant magic glow.
But love in all it's ecstasy
Is such a fragile thing
Like a gossamer in cloudless skies
Or a hummingbird's small wing.



In his letters, Rainier Maria Rilke said:

"Marriage is in many ways a simplification of life, and it
naturally combines the strengths and wills of two people so that,
together, they seem to reach farther into the future than they did before.
Above all, marriage is a new task and a new seriousness--a new
demand on the strength and generosity of each partner, a great new
danger for both.

The point of marriage is not to create a quick commonality by
tearing down all boundaries; on the contrary, a good marriage is one in
which each partner appoints the other the greatest possible trust. A
merging of two people is an impossibility, and where it seems to exist,
it is a hemming-in of freedom and development.

But once the realization is accepted that even between the
closest people, infinite space exists, then a marvelous living side-by-
side can grow up for them. If they succeed in loving the expanse
between them, they have the possibility of always seeing each other as
"whole" before an immense sky."

What does love mean to you?
You hear it
You speak of it
But what does it really mean to you?



It is not a word
It is an essence
It is a power
It is a vibration
It is life.

Love is the most priceless element in all existence
It is a dynamic living force
It is spiritual
Eternal
All-powerful

Love banishes all evil
Love overcomes all fear
Love is a creative force of unlimited power
Love can restore, rebuild and rectify
Love exalts and glorifies
Love rises above all that would drag it down into the mire.

Love looks deeper than the surface
 It looks beyond the visible
 Into the innermost depths of your soul
 Love is a balm
 That contains the power of healing and renewing
 It is a great refiner and beautifier
 It is the key to every door.

"To love is to enter a whole New World, a world of togetherness, a world of sharing all that is dearest and deepest within your hearts.

To love is to remember and keep alive forever all those unique qualities that drew you to one another in the beginning, those first halting phrases, that wonderful feeling of oneness when your eyes first met.

To love is to constantly search for new ways to bring each other happiness, to make the most of every moment you share together and marvel at how your feelings for one another keep rising to new dimensions.

To love is to create an oasis of tranquility for one another and a quiet place, apart from others, where you need not pretend...where you can be yourselves and know within your hearts, you will be accepted by one another.

To love is to greet each day with anticipation, always eager for another opportunity to share new adventures and gather up new memories together!

To love is to follow the rainbow through the rain, to be able to laugh at yourselves and be willing to say, "I was wrong, I'm sorry", to forgive, and more importantly, to forget, and to always believe and trust in one another.

To love is to watch with wonder all the miracles of creation, to find beauty in all the simple things of life, and to find, within yourselves, a deeper appreciation and a new awareness of how wonderful it is to be alive, to be happy, to be together.

To love is coming together from the pathways of your past and then moving forward, hand in hand, along the uncharted roads of your future, ready to risk, to dream, and to dare, always believing that all things are possible with faith and love."



I WILL BE HERE

By Steven Curtis Chapman

If, in the morning when you wake...
 if the sun does not appear... I will be here...
 If in the dark, we lose sight of love...
 hold my hand and have no fear...I will be here.

I will be here, when you feel like being quiet...
 when you need to speak your mind, I will listen...
 through the winning, losing, and trying, we'll be together.

And I will be here...if in the morning when you wake,
 if the future is unclear, I will be here.
 As sure as seasons were made for change...
 our lifetimes were made for years, I will be here.

I will be here, and you can cry on my shoulder,
 when the mirror tells us we're older...I will hold you,
 to watch you grow in beauty...
 and tell you all the things you are to me.

We'll be together and I will be here.
 I will be true to the promises I've made...
 to you and to the one who gave you to me...I will be here.

We each create an image of our perfect match.
 We go through life thinking we know what we want.
 And then, with time and patience, we find each other.
 But no one can be the perfect person we created, over the years, in our minds.
 Our partner has many of the qualities we love and we discover qualities we had not even thought to wish for.

The perfect man and woman does not exist. We are all flawed.
 But, it is those other qualities which make us unique and to help us to love unconditionally.

Today, ____ and ____ join their lives knowing they will continue to learn more about each other with each passing day. Their love will sustain them for as long as they give each other room to grow, change and explore who they are as individuals and as a couple.



As we celebrate their love, take time to reflect on the importance of love in our lives.

Whether you are married, a parent, a child or a close friend, embrace all the reasons why you were brought together. Use this moment to honor ____ & ____'s love by honoring the ones you love.

My House, My Car, My Bed, My Arms,
My Life, My Soul.
My Smiles and all my dreams are touched by
the magic of your sounds, your smell,
the perfume of your life intertwined with mine
in a silvery blend.
So that I can think of only you, precious lover,
partner, friend.



May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring.

And may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.

May you always need one another, not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness.

A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another but not out of weakness.

May you want one another, but not out of lack.

May you entice one another, but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another, but not out-encircle one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fall in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the aware-ness of one another's presence, no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side-by-side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy. May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.

By James Dillet Freeman

"When love is right, you see it in each other's eyes, you feel it in each other's arms, you taste it in each other's kiss.

When love is right, you hold onto it with all your heart and soul.

The quiet thoughts of two people a long time in love touch lightly like birds nesting in each other's warmth you will know them by their laughter.

But to each other they speak mostly through their solitude.

If they find themselves apart, they may dream of sitting undisturbed in each other's presence of wrapping themselves warmly in each other's ease

by Hugh Prather

"Dusk" written by LAZ BORRERO

I drift in the soft fragrance
of this warm and fertile earth,
I abandon myself to the patient hope
of the afternoon.

A sunset in red and ochres
glides over the horizon
like a repeated refrain
in the warm remembrance of your eyes.

My body, the stone, and the plants,
lull in the ethereal harmony of silence
dancing at the doorstep of night.

I am nothing but the echo of a color,
or the flavor of an afternoon,
which only in the uncertainty of memory
dare to exist.



The Invitation by Oriah Mountain Dreamer

"It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for, and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the center of your own sorrow, if you have been opened up by life's betrayals or have become shriveled and closed from fear of further pain. I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own. If you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, to be realistic, to remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself; if you can bear the accusations of betrayal and not betray your own soul; if you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see beauty, even when it's not pretty, every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand on the edge of a lake and shout to the slir of a full moon "Yes!"

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the center of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what you studied. I want to know what sustains you, from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments."

From Gift from the Sea by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

"A good relationship has a patter like a dance and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly because they move confidently in the same patterns, intricate but gay and swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart's. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of it's unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch. The clinging arm, the heavy hand, only the barest touch in passing, now, arm in arm, now face to face, now back to

back, it does not matter which. Because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it.

The joy of such a pattern is not only the joy of creation or the joy of participation. It is also the joy of living in the moment. Lightness of touch and living in the moment are intertwined. One cannot dance well unless one is completely in time with the music, not leaning back to the last step or pressing forward to the next one, but poised directly on the present step as it comes. Perfect poise is not the beat. It is what gives good dancing its sense of ease, of timelessness, of the eternal.

On Love by Thomas Kempis

Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good,
Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth.
It bears every hardship as though it were nothing,
And renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable.

Nothing is sweeter than love, Nothing stronger,
Nothing higher, Nothing wider, Nothing more pleasant,
Nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth,
For love is born of God.

Love flies, runs and leaps for joy.
It is free and unrestrained.
Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds.
Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil, attempts things beyond its strength.

Love sees not as impossible,
for it feels able to achieve all thing.
It is strange and effective,
while those who lack love faint and fall.

Love is not fickle and sentimental,
nor is it intent on vanities.
Like a living flame and a burning torch,
It surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.



"To love is to enter a whole New World, a world of togetherness, a world of sharing all that is dearest and deepest within your hearts.

To love is to remember and keep alive forever all those unique qualities that drew you to one another in the beginning, those first halting phrases, that wonderful feeling of oneness when your eyes first met.

To love is to constantly search for new ways to bring each other happiness, to make the most of every moment you share together, and marvel at how your feelings for one another keep rising to new dimensions.

To love is to create an oasis of tranquility for one another and a quiet place, apart from others, where you need not pretend...where you can be yourselves and know, within your hearts, you will be accepted by one another.

To love is to greet each day with anticipation, always eager for another opportunity to share new adventures and gather up new memories together!

To love is to follow the rainbow through the rain, to be able to laugh at yourselves and be willing to say, "I was wrong, I'm sorry", to forgive, and more importantly, to forget, and to always believe and trust in one another.

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To love is coming together from the pathways of your past and then moving forward, hand in hand, along the uncharted roads of your future, ready to risk, to dream, and to dare, always believing that all things are possible with faith and love."

Hands of the Bride and Groom

(Bride's name) ____, please turn and face (Groom's name) ____, and hold his hands palms up, so that you may see the gift that they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong, that are holding yours on your wedding day, as he promises to love you all his days.

These are the hands that will passionately love and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

These are the hands that will comfort you in illness, and calm you when your mind is filled with fear or grief.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands you will place with expectant joy against your stomach, until he too, feels his child stir within you.

These are the hands that look so masculine, yet will be so gentle as he holds your baby for the first time.

These are the hands that will work proudly to provide comfort and safety for you and your new family.

(Groom's name) ____, please turn and face (Bride's name) ____, and hold her palms up, so you may see the gift they are to you.

These are the hands of your best friend, young and gentle, that are holding yours on your wedding day as she pledges to love you always, and accepts your ring.

These are the hands that will work along side yours, as together you build your future, as you laugh and cry, and as you confide in one another your secrets and dreams.

These are the hands that will passionately love and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness.

These are the hands that will soothe you when you are sick and hold you tight as you struggle through difficult times.

These are the hands that will draw you close and wipe tears from your eyes...in wonder and awe that you would cry for her.

These are the hands that will embrace you in joy, excitement and hope each time she tells you that you are to have another child; that together you have created a new life.

These are the hands that will nurture each child in tender love, supporting and encouraging them along the way, and knowing when it is time to let go.

Together, these are the hands that will ease your parents' loneliness as you leave the nest, will raise your own children, and will be a sign to friends and strangers alike as to just how wonderful married life can be.

These four hands will give you support as you build your life and future. Reaching first out to each other, then united towards the world, these hands will be your strength, your shield, your shelter, and your guide.

I want to be your friend...for ever and ever...when the hills are all flat...and the rivers are all dry...when the trees blossom in winter...and the snow falls in summer...when heaven and earth mix...not till then will I part from you.



"A Sacred Space" Lau Tzu, interpreted by William Martin

Your love requires space in which to grow.
This space must be safe enough
to allow your hearts to be revealed.
It must offer refreshment for your spirits
and renewal for your minds.
It must be a space made sacred
by the quality of your honesty,
attention, love, and compassion.
It may be anywhere,
inside or out,
but it must exist.



"Transforming Power" Lau Tzu, interpreted by William Martin

Your love contains the power
of a thousand suns.
It unfolds as naturally and effortlessly
as does a flower,
and graces the world with its blooming.
Its beauty radiates a transforming energy
that enlivens all who see it.
Because of you, compassion and joy
are added to the world.
That is why the stars sing together,
because of your love.

The Irrational Season By Madeleine L'Engle

"Ultimately there comes a moment when a decision must be made. Ultimately two people who love each other must ask themselves how much they hope for as their love grows and deepens, and how much risk they are willing to take. It is indeed a fearful gamble.

Because it is the nature of love to create, a marriage itself is something which has to be created, so that, together we become a new creature.

To marry is the biggest risk in human relations that a person can take. If we commit ourselves to one person for life this is not, as many people think, a rejection of freedom; rather it demands the

courage to move into all the risks of freedom, and the risk of love which is permanent; into that love which is not possession, but participation.

It takes a lifetime to learn about another person. When love is not possession, but participation, then it is part of that co-creation which is our human calling."

When I was younger, I wondered how I'd know
that I'd met the "one" for me.

"You'll just know," they said.

I didn't understand. I kept wondering, wandering, wishing.

But then you appeared, and when I gazed into your eyes
and fell into the circle of your arms, something inside me
whispered, "Now you know."

And so I do.



FIDELITY by D.H. Lawrence

Man and woman are like the earth that brings forth flowers in summer, and love, but underneath is rock.

Older than flowers, older than ferns, older than foraminiferae, older than plasm altogether, is the soul underneath.

And when, throughout all the wild chaos of love, slowly, a gem forms, in the ancient, once-more-molten rocks of two human hearts, two ancient rocks, a man's heart and a woman's, that is the crystal of peace, the slow hard jewel of trust, the sapphire of fidelity, the gem of mutual peace emerging from the wild chaos of love.

"GIVE ALL TO LOVE" by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Give all to love; Obey thy heart,
Friends, kindred, days,
Estate, good-fame,
Plans, credit and the Muse,
Nothing refuse.

'Tis a brave master, Let it have scope
Follow it utterly, Hope beyond hope:
It was never for the mean;
It requireth courage stout.
Souls above doubt,
Valor unbending, It will reward,
They shall return More than they were, And ever
ascending.

Love Sonnet 17: translated from the Spanish of Pablo Neruda.

I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz or arrow of
carnations that propagate fire;

I love you as certain dark things are loved, secretly, between
the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries hidden
within itself the light of those flowers, and thanks to your love, darkly
in my body lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,

I love you simply, without problems or pride:

I love you in this way because I don't know any other way of
loving.

but this, in which there is no "I" or "you", so intimate that
"your hand" upon my chest is "my hand", so intimate that when I fall
asleep it is your eyes that close.

Re-statement of Romance: by Wallace Stevens

The night knows nothing of the chants of night.
It is what it is as I am what I am:
And in perceiving this I best perceive myself

And you. Only we two may interchange
Each in the other what each has to give.
Only we two are one, not you and night,

Nor night and I, but you and I, alone,
So much alone, so deeply by ourselves,
So far beyond the casual solitudes,



That night is only the background of our selves,
Supremely true each to its separate self,
In the pale light that each upon the other throws.

The Question Answer'd: by William Blake

What is it men in women do require?

The lineaments of Gratified Desire.

What is it women do in men require?

The lineaments of Gratified Desire

From Paradise Lost: by John Milton

With thee conversing I forget all time,
All seasons and their change, all please alike.
Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun
When first on this delightful land he spreads
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
Glistening with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
Of grateful evening mild, then silent night
With this her solemn bird and this fair motion,
And these, the gems of heav'n, her starry train:
But, neither breath of morn when she ascends
With charm of earliest birds, nor rising sun
On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
Glistening with dew, nor fragrance after showers,
Nor grateful evening mild, nor silent night
With this her solemn bird, nor walk by moon,
Or glittering starlight without thee is sweet.

A poem by John Ciardi

Men marry what they need. I marry you,
morning by morning, day by day, night by night,
and every marriage makes this marriage new.

In the broken name of heaven, in the light that shatters granite,
by the spitting shore, in air that leaps and wobbles like a kite,

I marry you from time and a great door is shut
and stays shut against wind, sea, stone, sunburst, and heaven fall.
And home once more inside our walls of skin and struts of bone,
man-woman, woman-man, and each the other,

I marry you by all dark and all dawn
and have my laugh at death. Why should I bother
the flies about me? Let them buzz and do.

Men marry their queen, their daughter, or their mother
by hidden names, but that thin buzz whines through:
where reasons are no reason, cause is true.
Men marry what they need. I marry you.

From Canticles 11:16

Nor Time, nor Place, nor Chance, nor Death can bow
My least desires unto the least remove;
He's firmly mine by Oath; I His, by Vow;
He's mine by Faith; and I am His by Love;
He's mine by Water; I am His by Wine;
Thus I my Best-Beloved's am; thus He is mine.

He is my Altar; I, his Holy Place;
I am his Guest; and he, my living Food;
I'm his, by Penitence; He, mine by Grace;
I'm his, by Purchase; He is mine, by Blood;
He's my supporting Elm, and I, his Vine:
Thus I my Best-Beloved's am; thus He is mine.

He gives me wealth. I give him all my Vows:
I give him Songs; He gives me length of days:
With wreaths of Grace he crowns my conqu'ring brows:
And I, his Temples, with a Crown of Praise,
Which he accepts as an ev'rlasting sign,
That I am my Best-Beloved's; that He is mine.

Rumi, the famous love poet, once wrote:
A lifetime without love is of no account
Love is the water of Life
Drink it down with Heart and Soul.

May the love of your family and friends surround you
like water, may it be pure and as plentiful as the oceans.

May you love each other with enough strength and
perseverance
so as to give your dreams the breadth and joy of reality.
By living them, with passion and energy, gentle abandon and
fullness, may those dreams, someday, come to be a reality that
you share together as a couple.

May you care for each other with tenderness and warmth, and
may the love generated by your marriage wash over those who
know you and be cleansing and hopeful, like the Spring rain.

Advice: by Langston Hughes

Folks, I'm telling you, birthing is hard
and dying is mean- so get yourself
a little loving in between.

WHY MARRIAGE? By: Mari Nichols-Haining

Because to the depths of me, I long to love one person,
With all my heart, my soul, my mind, my body...

Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,
Who won't hold them against me,
Who loves me when I'm unlikable,
Who sees the small child in me, and
Who looks for the divine potential of me...

Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night
With someone who thanks God for me,
With someone I feel blessed to hold...

Because marriage means opportunity
To grow in love in friendship...

Because marriage is a discipline
To be added to a list of achievements...



Because marriages do not fail, people fail
When they enter into marriage
Expecting another to make them whole...

Because, knowing this,
I promise myself to take full responsibility
For my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness
I create me,
I take half of the responsibility for my marriage
Together we create our marriage...

Because with this understanding
The possibilities are limitless.



PRAYERS

Be certain, in your interviews, to ascertain the spiritual beliefs of both families and be careful to use appropriate language which will be comfortable for everyone. Do not use Christian language for non-Christian believers. Research the proper terminology for religions with which you may not be familiar. Be ready to admit that you need help from the couple if their traditions are not familiar to you. If possible, use inclusive language for the Creator unless the couple is insistent upon more traditional language. Don't forget the "Goddess"!

The Prayer for Protection

The Light of Love Surrounds Us
The Essence of Love Enfolds Us
The Power of Love Protects Us
The Presence of Love Watches over Us
Wherever We are, encompassed in this
shielding Protection of Love,
Only Good will come to Us
And only Good will come from Us.
And so it is!



Cherokee Prayer

"God in heaven above, please protect the ones we love. We honor all you created as we pledge our hearts and lives together. We honor mother-earth and ask for our marriage to be abundant and grow stronger through the seasons. We honor fire and ask that our union be warm and glowing with love in our hearts; we honor wind and ask that we sail through life safe and calm as in our fathers' arms. We honor water to clean and soothe our relationship, that it may never thirst for love. With all the forces of the universe you created, we pray for harmony and true happiness as we forever grow young together. Amen"

MORE TRADITIONAL PRAYERS

Eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all humanity, Giver of all spiritual grace, the Author of everlasting life, send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy Name, that they, living faithfully together, may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant between them made, whereof these rings given and received are tokens and pledge, and may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to thy laws, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Almighty Creator of Us All, who only art the well-spring of life; Bestow upon these thy servants, if it be thy will, the gift and heritage of children; and grant that they may see their children brought up in the light of thy blessings and unconditional love to the honor and glory of thy Name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father (Beloved), who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (ignorance). For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Couple repeats together:

Divine Creator, You are Our Shepherd.
We shall not want,
You maketh us to lie down in green pastures.
You leadeth us beside the stilling waters.
You restoreth our souls.
You leadeth us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though we walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.
We will have no fear,
For You are with us
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort us.
You prepare a table before us and anoint our heads with oil.
Our cup runneth over.
Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives.
And we shall dwell in the House of the Divine forever. Amen.

PRAYERS TO BEGIN THE SERVICE

Mother, Father, God, you have created us all in the image of love, the image of Yourself. Bless now these two who stand before you. Guide them in your Wisdom, shine your Light upon them, that as they journey through this life together they will walk as Bearers of Your Truth.
AMEN

This ceremony is a public declaration of love as well as a legal contract. It is also a spiritual union, one which, without the grace and mercy of God, will not stand the test of time. So now we ask:

Mother-Father God, Divine Creator, protector and guide, source of all love and wisdom, strength and healing, be with us here and now.

Grant your blessings upon ____ & ____ at this moment and forever more. We ask that your Divine Light be forever present in their hearts for all of their days, aiding and guiding them to the greatest good in all that they do.

Grant also, precious Lord, that your divine children, ____ & ____ will always honor, respect and protect the child within themselves and each other. Grant that they will always embrace each other in love and understanding. May they recognize their own vulnerability and express their most intimate selves to each other. May they may remain always safe in each other's arms.

We pray this day, Heavenly Mother-Father, that the dreams which they dream together, will be in accordance with Your Divine Plan and that their new life together will serve the greatest good and the highest purpose. AMEN

A MEDITATION

Mindfulness can begin by recognizing the beauty around us. ____ and ____ have chosen to hold this ceremony outdoors because nature is such an integral part of their lives. It reminds us that we are but a small part of a much larger world. The waterfall, the bird song, the wind playing, these are the sounds of LIFE! As ____ and ____ prepare to take their vows, let us take a few moments to listen, pray, rejoice, and give thanks for the gift of life and love. (silence for a few moments)

PRAYERS TO END THE SERVICE

Heavenly, Father/Mother (Creator), we have heard from these two people the impressive acceptance of the solemn and significant vows of marriage. Do Thou grant unto them grace and courage, love and loyalty, constancy and faith to maintain these vows to the end of their days.

May this new home radiate the sunshine of Thy Love, and may everyone who comes in contact with this home be enriched and ennobled. Through Christ who shares in this sacred institution, we pray.
AMEN

Prayers of Gratitude

Let us pray. Almighty God, we are filled with gratitude for the blessings we continually receive. Thank you for the abundance that provides us with the grains in the field, the fruits of the vine, the rain, the sunshine and the miracle of birth. Thank you for guiding us to be loving to each other as you are loving to

us every day. Thank you for sending messengers in the form of parents, grandparents, friends and children who teach us to be patient, kind and compassionate as our lives unfold before us. We offer our thanks in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

-or-

(couple repeats together)

Dearest Father-Mother God of the Universe, Creator of the wonderful Life-Force energies, we bow in gratitude for the bond of Love we share. May all our days be filled with Love, Laughter and Learning, and may we forever be a source of love for each other and all others with whom we come in contact. In Thy Name we pray. Amen

Let us pray. Eternal God, look with favor upon the world you have made, and especially upon this man and this woman whom you make one flesh in Holy Matrimony. Give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their life together, that each may be to the other a strength in need, a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy.

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 with one another all the days of their lives.

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

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

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

Grant that the bonds of our common humanity, by which all people are united with one another, and to nature, may be so transformed by Your Grace and that Your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. AMEN"

Let us pray. Eternal Being, we invoke for this man and this woman who have entered into this spiritual union abiding consciousness of your love. May they stand before you always as lighted candles, symbolic of your Eternal Light, Life, Truth, and Beauty. As they have each willingly consecrated their life to the ONE LIFE, may they live each day with an awareness that their inner light

radiates to all mankind; thus being a light unto the feet of their brothers and sisters upon the Path of Life.

In the name of the Creator of all that is LIVING, all LOVE UNCONDITIONAL, all UNION & CREATION, may this marriage be blessed with enduring happiness, with peace, power, and prosperity through all the years to come.

Breathe on them from above with Your Pureness and Tender Love, guarding them with Your Presence. May the Love that You make Holy this day, be an Endless Love begun. Amen.

"Dear God, Creator of all life, as _____ & _____ exchange these promises to one another, bless them on their way, surround them with your unconditional love, and guide them as they begin their married life together with the belief that their love for each other will remain strong and that the years ahead will be filled with joy and with peace.

May their commitment to each other serve as a reminder to all of us of the preciousness and the miracle of love. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for Your love for us which creates in us with the ability to love each other. Accept our thankfulness and grant _____ & _____ grace and courage, love and loyalty, constancy and faith to maintain these vows to the end of their days. AMEN



VOWS

Repeat after me:

I appreciate your love for me, your wisdom and your understanding.
I promise to share my hopes, my thoughts and my dreams with you.
I promise to treasure the wonderful, unique person that you are.
I promise to share with you in times of joy, as in times of trouble,
To talk & to listen, to provide for & support you, in trust & in love.
I want to work with you to continue to build our life together.
Let us create a home that expresses our individuality, and our love for each other.

May it be a home filled with peace, with happiness and with love.

Rainbow of Candles Lighting Ceremony

Clergy says:

Tonight, _____ & _____ come declaring their love and their desire to live united as husband and wife. The candle lighting ceremony they now share is symbolic of the total love they feel and wish to continue sharing as they integrate physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, pledging to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of all they touch.

I now light the WHITE CANDLE, symbolic of the White Light of Divine Love, from which _____ & _____ will light their own candle flames, and together, they will light the Rainbow of Candles, all symbolizing our human connection with Divine Life Force Energy.

_____ & _____, please repeat after me:

I light the candle of the RED RAY of STRENGTH, pledging to you my strength and vitality, that our life and love together may be grounded in safety and security.

I light the candle of the ORANGE RAY of CREATIVITY, pledging to you my attention, affection, and approval, so that we may together express all of the creativity that we are.

I light the candle of the YELLOW RAY of JOY, pledging to you to use my gifts of wisdom and understanding, in making choices for our highest good.

I light the candle of the GREEN RAY of LOVE, pledging that I will love myself, that I might radiate that love to you, and allow your love to return to me in full measure.

I light the candle of the BLUE RAY of TRUTH, pledging to communicate my true thoughts and feelings, that our relationship may be strengthened by the peace that comes from sharing our highest truth.

I light the candle of the INDIGO RAY of INTUITIVE KNOWING, pledging my gifts of extra sensory perception to be used for our highest good.

I light the candle of the VIOLET RAY of DIVINE CONSCIOUSNESS pledging to seek to realize and actualize my highest potential, sharing with you, that we may live at One with the universe.

Couple repeats together...

I am a source of endless love
Centered in the Light of Love Divine
I seek this source in you.
That in humanity, we may together
Build a Point of Love Divine
And send it forth, that all who recognize it's Light
May build Anew.



_____ & _____, you have brought to life the varied colors and aspects of the Rainbow Rays that symbolize the unique and special treasures that you are, and have pledged to share in Love with each other.

As you love and laugh and learn together, blending these Rainbow energies, you can indeed actualize all of your potential, thus becoming expressions of the White Light of Divine Love. And so it is!

The vows which you are about to exchange serve as a verbal representation of the love you pledge to each other. For it is not the words you will speak today which will bond you together as one, but it is the inner sense of love and commitment that each of you feels within your soul.

Repeat after me:

I, _____, promise you _____, to be your husband for as long as I shall live. I promise to love you and to support your growing toward full maturity. I promise to seek peace for ourselves and for the world which encircles us. As I commit myself to care for you, I also offer myself into your loving care, now and throughout our lives.

Repeat after me:

I, _____, promise you _____, to be your wife for as long as I shall live. I promise to love you and to support your growing toward full maturity. I promise to seek peace for ourselves and for the world which encircles us. As I commit myself to care for you, I also offer myself into your loving care, now and throughout our lives.

_____ & _____, at this time, I would like to share a few thoughts for you to take to heart. The purpose of marriage is not for two incomplete people to become one, but rather, for two complete people to join together for the greater glory of God.

The Holy relationship is a context within which you feel safe enough to be yourselves, knowing that your weaknesses will not be judged, but unconditionally accepted. In this way, a place is created where healing takes place and you are free to move into the Light of your true being.

A Holy relationship is a common state of mind where errors are gladly transformed to correction so that both may be happily healed as one. As you see your partner, you see yourself. As you think of your partner, you think of yourself. In your partner, you find yourself.

You are different today. You were different five years ago and five years from now you will be different still. You are about to make promises which are meant for a lifetime. May you grant each other the gift of growth.

Please repeat these vows to each other after me:
(Bride & Groom say vows together)

I pledge myself to the growth of our love.
I will be patient and considerate,
Understanding and Honest,
I will respect your judgment,
I will respect your integrity,
I will respect your privacy,
I will respect your individuality,
And I will work to keep our love active and alive
So that it may always be an inspiration
for everything we cherish.

Here, before God, family, and friends, I, _____ do promise to share my hopes, dreams, and tears in marriage. I offer my heart when you are sorrowed, my hands when you are troubled, and laughter when you are happy. I love you for the person that you are, and for being my



best friend now and forever. I will cherish you, honor you, and with guidance from the Blessed Creator of all things, I give you my name. I love you. I am your husband.

Here, before God, family, and friends, I, _____ do promise to share my hopes, dreams, and tears in marriage. I offer my heart when you are sorrowed, my hands when you are troubled, and laughter when you are happy. I love you for the person that you are, and for being my best friend now and forever. I will cherish you, honor you, and with guidance from the Blessed Creator of all things, I accept your name. I love you. I am your wife.

Let us celebrate and receive the eternal vows pronounced here today in the name of the Christ Consciousness within the human race.

Groom & Bride each say:

I, _____ take thee _____ to be my wedded wife (husband),
to hold and to love, to cherish and to support
from this day forward and beyond time and space,
with all my heart, my mind, and my being
at all levels and dimensions until the task is complete.
This I pledge to you in joy, in humility
and in Divine Consciousness.

Repeat after me: (repeated together to each other)

I commit to keeping the love and light of God always present within myself, and to recognizing it within you.

I vow to encourage and support our individual growth as well as to create a loving environment which promotes the growth of our relationship. I will stay focused and aware of the purpose of our union.

_____, look into _____'s eyes and into her heart, and repeat after me:

"I commit my life to our partnership in marriage. I promise to comfort you, to encourage you in all walks of life. I promise to express my thoughts and emotions to you, and to listen to you in times of joy and in times of sorrow. _____, I love you, and you are my closest friend. Will you let me share my life and all that I am with you?"

Bride answers: I will

____, look into ____'s eyes and into his heart, and repeat after me:

"I commit my life to our partnership in marriage. I promise to comfort you, to encourage you in all walks of life. I promise to express my thoughts and emotions to you, and to listen to you in times of joy and in times of sorrow. ____ I love you, and you are my closest friend. Will you let me share my life and all that I am with you?"

Groom answers: "I will"



____, repeat after me:

I, _____, promise to love and cherish you, _____, to give you my strength, to help you in good times and bad, to respect our individuality, to make our home one of love and understanding. I give you all of my trust, all of my tomorrows, all of my life.

____, repeat after me: I, _____, promise to love and cherish you, _____, to give you my strength, to help you in good times and bad, to respect our individuality, to make our home one of love and understanding. I give you all of my trust, all of my tomorrows, all of my life.

____, please repeat after me....

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband, 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 to you, in the presence of God and all those in attendance, my sacred promise to stay by your side as your faithful wife in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, as well as through the good times and the bad.

I further 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, cherish you and remain faithful to you all the days of our lives.

____, repeat after me....

I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife, knowing in my heart that you will be my constant friend, my faithful partner in life, and my one true love.

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

I further promise to love you without reservation to honor and respect you, provide for your needs as best I can, protect you from harm, comfort you in times of distress, grow with you in mind and spirit, always be open and honest with you, cherish you and remain faithful to you all the days of our lives.

____ and ____ have carefully chosen the words for their vows to each other. I invite you to listen carefully. This is an opportunity to remember the preciousness of love and commitment.

(groom)____, look at ____ and repeat after me....

____, on this day, I offer you my heart.
I promise to share new discoveries and perspectives,
to seek and recognize beauty in you
and to nurture and encourage you
as you cultivate your god-given gifts.



Together we will experience life's suffering and joy,
sorrow and happiness, and anguish and bliss.

I will be your partner in the quest for wisdom and enlightenment.
We will build a balanced and harmonious life,
in which peace, goodwill, and kindness prevail.

(Repeat for Bride)

____, repeat after me....

In the name of God, I, _____, take you, _____,
To be my beloved wife (husband), to have you and hold you,
To honor you, to treasure you,
To be at your side in sorrow and in joy
To suffer with you and be transformed,
And to love and cherish you always.

I promise you this from my heart, with my soul,
For all the days of my life,
And, if God wills,
Beyond the walls of life,
Beyond the bounds of time.

_____, please repeat after me...

My vows are my promise to you, as my best friend and my wife (husband).

- I Promise that I will be true to you always
- I Promise to keep you in my heart always
- I Promise to grow with you
- I Promise to share my life with you forever
- I Promise that I will always appreciate you
- I Promise that I will always be there for you
- I Promise that I will always take care of you
- I Promise that I will never let anything keep us apart
- I Promise that I will always be honest with you
- I Promise that I will keep the wonderful memories of the past with me
- I Promise that I will love you more with each day that passes
- I Promise that I will spend my life making you happy
- I Promise that we will experience many wonderful things together
- I Promise that we will raise our family, grow old together, and be in love forever

I will now ask you to individually repeat after me...one vow at a time please, _____ first.

I promise to love you.
 I promise to remain faithful and honest to you always,
 To be supportive of all that you hope to do.
 I promise to be true to you and to myself,
 So that we may love one another for whom we are.
 I promise to stand by you in times of sorrow and in
 times of joy;
 I promise to hold you close in sickness and in health.
 I will strive to be the best that I can be each day so that
 our lives together might be that much sweeter.
 I give you my heart in exchange for your own,
 And vow with all that I am, to cradle it gently to the end
 of my days.

(Repeat for Bride)



EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The circle has no beginning. It has no ending. The circle continues beyond the circle of our understanding. It is complete. All parts are equal. It turns, revealing first one side... and then the other. Thus, there seems to be change, but the Circle at all times, on all sides, does not change! So too, with this union, although you both will change, your commitment to each other is, and will remain unending.

Repeat after me: "This ring I give to you in token and pledge of our constant faith, and abiding love."

Let the strength and beauty of these rings remind you that your love is also unending, strong, and beautiful enough to withstand whatever may come. May they always mean to you what they have meant today, and may you carry the joy and peace of this moment with you on the journey ahead. May your love, like these rings, shine brightly all the days of your lives together.

May I have the rings, please:

A ring is a beautiful symbol of love, of equality. A ring has no beginning and no end. It is complete. Like the love you share today, and tomorrow and tomorrow, may these rings you give each other be a loving token of the promises you have freely given.

Bless these rings, Dear Lord, that in giving and receiving,
 _____ & _____ may abide in thy peace, and continue in thy favor, unto their life's end. Amen.

_____, repeat after me, "With this ring, I thee wed. May our life together be filled with God's abundant love. Amen"

_____, repeat after me, "With this ring, I thee wed. May our life together be filled with God's abundant love Amen"

The vows which _____ & _____ just gave to each other will be signified by the exchange of rings. This ring is the symbol of the unbroken unity of love. It is the symbol of life.

As we give, so shall we receive, and _____ & _____, as you exchange these rings, know that it symbolizes, as you give to each other, so shall you both receive. Bless these rings, God, symbolizing your unending love for us, co-creators in your universe. May _____ & _____ always walk in your Infinite Love. Amen!

____, as you place the ring on ____'s finger, will you repeat these vows after me?

____, with this ring, I thee wed
To have and to hold
From this day forward
In sickness and in health
For richer for poorer
Till death do us part
Let this ring be to us
A token of love deeper than words can express
I promise to love, honor and cherish you
For all of our days

Repeat for Bride.

May we please have the rings:

The rings exchanged today symbolize never-ending love. The love that must first begin within each of us as self love, then radiates out to another and allows this love to return in full measure completing the circle of love without end. Now please exchange rings and repeat after me:

"As a symbol of my everlasting Love
With this Ring I thee wed, that we may bond as one,
in Body, Mind & Spirit.
Radiating our love to improve
the quality of All of Life."

*At this time of the exchanging of rings, this story has been chosen by
____ (new step mother or father) especially for ____ (child of
previous marriage)*

"In a fair and far-off country, many centuries ago, a kind, young king was married to a princess he loved so.

Together, they learned, one day, that duties were to force the king to journey far away.

One night before he left, as he walked through the palace grounds, he tossed, into a moonlit pool, some pebbles he had found.

As the lovely ripples widened from where the little pebbles fell, and the King stood thinking, quietly, of the wife he loved so well.

And, remembering, on the next day, the circles he had seen, he had a gold ring made to fit the finger of the Queen.



"There's no ending or beginning to the circle of this band," the King said to his wife as he slipped it on her hand.

"And that is why I have chosen this golden ring to be a pledge to you that my love, will last through all eternity."

And so, since then, a golden ring has been the symbol of the beauty of devotion and the endlessness of love."



A ring is an unbroken circle, a symbol of unity and love, representative of the greater circle of life of which, spiritually, we all are a part. A ring, having neither a beginning nor an end, reminds one of the continuous cycle of which you are an element. For you, it begins with the gift of life, and will continue through the end of time.

Repeat after me....

"May this ring that I place upon your hand always remind you of the vows we have exchanged today, and of my growing love for you."

Do you ____, accept this ring as a loving symbol of ____'s vows to you this day? Answer: 'I do.'

(Repeat)

In all of nature, rings can be found...when you cut down a tree, from the core of it's being, circles radiate outward as it experiences it's growth through time. Toss a stone into a pond and watch the circles radiate outward until they reach the shore. Just as in the circles in nature, your lives, together and separately reach out to touch everyone you meet throughout your lives.

These rings, which you are choosing to exchange today, represent the continuity of life, the connection from the heart which you share with one another and the commitment you are making to enjoy your life's path in equality and in love.

As you place this ring upon ____'s hand, repeat after me:

"Please accept this ring from me. May it remind you of our wedding vows. I love you and I am blessed to have you for my wife (husband). I thank you for accepting me as your husband (wife)."

____ & ____ have chosen to exchange rings as the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual bond, which unites two loyal hearts in endless love. These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end, no giver and no receiver for each is the giver and each is the receiver.

_____, please repeat after me:

"_____, I choose you be my wife, my partner in life and my one true love. I accept you with all your faults and your strengths, as I offer myself to you with all my faults and my strengths. I will stand at your side and be faithful to you through whatever is to come, joy and good fortune as well as sorrow and adversity. _____, wear this ring, as a token of my constant faith and abiding love, and be my wife. Before these witnesses, I vow to cherish you and honor you as long as we both shall live."

(Repeat for Bride)



Clergy asks, "What symbols do you give of your sincerity?"

Let these unbroken bands of gold represent the unbroken circle of your love, and the larger, all-encompassing circle of God's love, both of which flow through each of you. Let the hardness of the metal represent the strength which each of you will use to uphold your marriage.

May the brilliance of the color represent the brilliance of Universal Wisdom and goodness that makes all earthly things possible. May you each wear these rings as a constant reminder of the beauty and solemnity of the vows you have just taken.

Please repeat after me:

Groom: _____, with this ring I thee wed. Let it ever be, to us, a symbol of eternal love. In sincerity, I place it now upon your hand.

Bride: In sincerity, I give it place upon my hand.

Bride: _____, with this ring I thee wed. Let it ever be, to us, a symbol of eternal love. In sincerity, I place it now upon your hand.

Groom: In sincerity, I give it place upon my hand.

Clergy says:

Rings are ancient symbols, blessed and simple, round, like the sun, like the eye, like arms that embrace. Therefore, may these symbols remind you that; your love, like the sun, illuminates; your love, like the eye, must see clearly; and that your love, like arms that embrace, is a grace upon this world.

_____, will you now place this ring on _____'s hand and repeat after me:

"This ring, being a complete and unbroken circle, itself a symbol of eternity, having no beginning and no end, I now give to you as a token of our love for each other."



May these beautiful tokens and pledges symbolize the purity and never-ending love you have for your chosen companion in life.

Rings are made precious by our wearing them. They carry our meaning, they say who we are, where we have been and where we are going. They become us. They reflect us. They are the symbol of our truest essence. Your wedding rings are most special because they say that, even in the uniqueness, you have chosen to allow the presence of another human being to enhance who you are. Your rings carry the potent double message; we are individuals and yet we belong together. We are not alone. As you wear them through time, they will reflect, not only who you are, but also the union you are making. The fact that, through the rest of your lives, each of you will be imprinted by the other, yet, as yourselves remain.

_____, place this ring on _____'s hand and repeat after me. "I give you this ring as a token of my abiding love as a sign that I have chosen you above all others to share love with, and to know that the treasures of our future shall render invisible the sorrows of the past."

These rings are symbols of the love, strength and devotion you have just expressed to each other. The strength of these rings comes from the bond of the two metals used to create them. As we see them today, they are virtually seamless. But as time progresses, the metals will age, weather and shine in their own unique way. These different metals make the whole, and likewise, your differences from each other combine to make the "whole" which is you. Let your rings remind you of the strength present within both of you and inspire you to shine in your own individual ways.

Please place these rings on each other's fingers and repeat after me. "I give you this ring to keep as a symbol of our never-ending love."

"A circle is the symbol of the sun, and the earth, and the universe. It is a symbol of perfection and peace. It is also the symbol of the timelessness of spiritual truth, love, and life. And in this moment, _____ and _____ choose for it to also be a symbol of unity, but not of possession; of joining, but not of restricting; of encirclement, but not of entrapment. For love cannot be possessed, nor can it be restricted."

To the Groom and Bride....What symbols do you bring as a reminder of the promises given and received today? (Couple gives rings to Officiant)

Now ____, please hold this ring you wish to give to ____ and repeat after me:

"I, ____, ask you, ____, to be my partner, my lover, my friend, and my wife. I announce and declare my intention to give you my deepest friendship and love not only when you moments are high, but when they are low, not only when you are acting with love, but when you are not, and in whatever moments of darkness that may come. It is my intention to be with you forever in a holy partnership of the soul sharing all that is good within us with all those whose lives we touch."

Officiant turns to Bride: ____, do you choose to grant ____'s request that you be his wife? Bride answers "I do"

(Repeat for Bride)

Please then, both of you together, exchange your rings, and repeat after me:

With this ring I thee wed.
I take now this ring you give to me
and place it upon my hand (put rings on hands)
that all may see and know my love for you.



PRONOUNCEMENTS

For as much as ____ & ____ have consented together in Holy Wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and have pledged their faithfulness, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a Ring, and by joining hands, I pronounce that they are Husband and Wife in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

In as much as ____ & ____ have pledged their love and all that they are to each other before God and this Company and by the power vested in me as a Priest of Sanctuary of the Beloved in the Holy Order of Melchizedek, I now pronounce them to be husband and wife.

In so much as you ____ & ____ have shared with all gathered here, your love and devotion, and since you and your friends and family have entered into this commitment of marriage, I declare, in the sight of God, that you are husband and wife.

In as much as you have agreed to enter the marriage relationship, and have given and received rings as tokens of your faith, I now, by the authority committed unto me as a minister of the Gospel, declare that ____ & ____ are husband and wife according to the ordinance of God and the law of the State.

____ & ____, having heard the vows you have made to each other, witnessed by these loved ones; By the authority given to me as a Priest duly ordained in the Order of Melchizedek, I now declare that you are husband and wife. In the name of the Eternal Father and the Eternal Mother of all Creation!

____ & ____, you have chosen each other from all other men and women of this earth. You have declared your love and purpose before this gathering, and have made your pledge to each other, symbolized by the holding of hands and the giving and receiving of rings. Therefore, in accordance with the power and authority vested in me by the State of ____, I declare that you are husband and wife.

_____, and _____, on behalf of the family and friends who love you, both here and far away, and on behalf of the larger family of humankind to which we all belong. I recognize and honor you as husband and wife, as soul mates. We celebrate your union which you have shared with us this day. May that glory which rests on all who love, rest upon you, bless you, and fill you with happiness and a gracious spirit. Despite all changes of time and fortune, may all that is noble and lovely and true abound in your hearts, and abide within you. May it give you strength in all your days together. May you accept life's rewards and bear its burdens together for all time.

_____ and _____, you have come a long way in life and now in love. Through the trials of life you found each other. Remember always your past, embrace the present and carry your love with strength into the future. Before you lies the open road, filled with adventure and love. Life is an adventure to be embraced. Before you found each other, you each traveled alone. And, while you each continue to grow as individuals, your love for each other makes you whole. And before God, Family and Friends, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

We recognize with full awareness that only a couple can administer the sacrament of marriage to each other, and only a couple can sanctify it. Neither my church, nor any power vested in me by the State, can grant me the authority to declare what only two hearts can declare, and what only two souls can make real.

And so now, inasmuch as you, _____, and you, _____, have announced the truths that are already written in your hearts, and have witnessed the same in the presence of these, your family and friends, and the One Living Spirit, we observe joyfully that you have declared yourself to be husband and wife.

_____ & _____, your minds and souls have spoken and you have been given the gift of each other. With the power vested in me, I pronounce you partners for life.

Before us stand two lives who have been joined together as one. Every marriage needs the love and support of family and friends. It is our responsibility to not only acknowledge their relationship but also respect it. We are no longer simply the family and friends of _____ or _____. We are the family and friends of both _____ and _____.

May you never take each other for granted but always experience the wonders of your union. May your love consist not only in gazing into each other's eyes, but also in looking outward in the same direction.

May your life together be a source of strength and inspiration to yourselves, to your families, and to your friends. May you never forget the beginning of your love for one another. Nurture it and allow it to grow strong in the years that are to come. And may you always be in love.

It is my right and special privilege, to pronounce with great joy, you are now husband and wife.

Because _____ and _____ have exchanged their promises of faithful love, and because in our presence they have exchanged symbols, which make their covenant visible, therefore we now recognize before God and the community that _____ and _____ are husband and wife.

(After the pronouncement, it is customary for the couple to kiss.)

BENEDICTIONS

Know that always, the Light of Love surrounds you both. And where Love is, there God is also. Go in Peace. Go in Joy. Go in Love. And So it is! Amen.

*Now you will feel no rain,
For each of you will be shelter for the other.

Now you will feel no cold,
For each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now there is no more loneliness,
For each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two persons,
But there is only one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling to enter into
The days of your life together,
And may your days be good
And long upon the Earth"

Apache Wedding Blessing

May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years. May happiness be your companion. Treat yourselves and each other with respect and remind yourselves often of what brought you together. Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness that your connection deserves. When frustration, difficulty and fear assail your relationship, as they threaten all relationships at one time or another, remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part which seems wrong.

This way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives remembering that even if you lose sight of it for a moment, the sun is still there.

And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

May the light of love always shine in your eyes for one another as it does today, and may your souls dance together in eternity.

May the road rise up to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back,
And may God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Dear Lord, As _____ and _____ leave today as husband and wife please watch over them and those present. May their home be a haven of blessing and peace. Know that always, the Light of Love surrounds you both and where Love is, there God is also. Go in Peace, Go in Joy, Go in love.

_____ & _____, you have now affirmed before your families and friends your love and your caring for each other. You have come from different backgrounds. You have walked different paths. You are different individuals. Your love has transcended these differences. In the years before you, may the richness of the traditions that have nurtured you enhance and brighten your lives as you help to create and shape the future.

May the challenges of your life together be met with courage and optimism. May you learn from your failures and grow in your achievements. May life bless you with children, friends and family in a wide network of mutual support and enjoyment. May you face pain, toil and trouble with a stout but light heart. May you share with others the

radiance of your seasons of joy and pleasure. May you always remember that laughter is the medicine of the Gods.

May the spirit of love be ever a part of your lives so that the union we here celebrate this day be worthy of continued celebration tomorrow and forever.

This is a holy place, for here life is touched by love and love by life, radiating joy like the warmth from fire. Here now, between _____ and _____ lies hidden all the future of their lives together. May that future be blessed with a deepening love. May they trust each other wholly, as they trust themselves, so that together they are equal to the needs of their tomorrows. May they be at home wherever they dwell, and gather wisdom from all the seasons of their lives.

May those who are nearest to you be constantly enriched by the beauty and the bounty of your love for one another, may your lives be an act of joy that serves the world. Continue in your dreams together and grow every day in the love that makes you "One".

May God go with you and bless you,
May you see your children's children
May you be poor in misfortune and rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness from this day.

The following may be used in its entirety or you might want to choose one or two portions as your benediction.

May Almighty God, with his Word of blessing, unite your hearts in the never-ending bond of pure love.

Response... Amen.

May your children bring you happiness, and may your generous love for them be returned to you, many times over.

Response... Amen.

May the peace of Christ live always in your hearts and in your home. May you have true friends to stand by you, both in joy and in sorrow. May you be ready and willing to help and comfort all who come to you in need. And may the blessings promised to the compassionate be yours in abundance.

Response... Amen.

May you find happiness and satisfaction in your work. May daily problems never cause you undue anxiety, nor the desire for earthly possessions dominate your lives. But may your hearts first desire be always the good things waiting for you in the life of heaven.
Response... Amen.

May the Lord bless you with many happy years together, so that you may enjoy the rewards of a good life. And after you have served Him loyally in His kingdom on earth, may He welcome you to His Eternal Kingdom in Heaven.
Response... Amen.

FORMAL INTRODUCTION OF NEWLYWEDS

(Ask the couple by what name they wish to be introduced. Some brides keep their surname. Sometimes, couples hyphenate their names. And couples have chosen a totally new last name for both of them.)

It is my pleasure to present to you, Mr. and Mrs. _____.

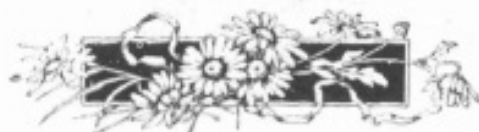
I now present to you Mr. and Mrs. _____.

Please come forward and congratulate Mr. and Mrs. _____ & _____.

Go forth and greet your friends as husband and wife.

Please follow _____ & _____ for a champagne toast.

Now, as you begin your lives together, accept congratulations from your family and friends.



SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

CHILDREN IN THE PROCESSIONAL

Children can do no wrong in the processional. They are precious and will have the potential to "steal the show". However, there are a few things you can do to help them feel more secure. If the child's mother is in the wedding party, have the child follow directly behind her. Or, if couples are processing together, put a ring-bearer or flower girl/boy between each couple. If need be, the couple behind the child can take his/her hand and continue down the aisle. Have someone assigned to physically helping the little ones keep moving down the aisle to avoid having him/her freeze up and interrupt the bride's grand entrance.

At one wedding I attended many years ago, the bride and her father tried to take the flower girl's hands and bring her along, but ended up leaving her standing in the aisle behind them, crying.

The biggest help is to make the rehearsal fun for children while clearly explaining what is expected of them. At the actual ceremony, seeing all of the people in the congregation staring at them as they walk down the aisle is truly a test for any little one, no matter how outgoing he or she may be. It may best to put "fake rings" on the pillow and keep the real rings in the Best Man's pocket, unless the ring bearer is an older child who will question why he wasn't allowed to do his "job".

CHILDREN FROM PREVIOUS MARRIAGES

Clergy person says:

_____ & _____, you are truly blessed beginning your married life together with this child/these children, _____. Will you now, before God and this Company, pledge yourselves to love them, comfort them, protect and keep them, always consider their needs and their feelings and raise them with Love in your Hearts? (We Will)

_____ & _____ (insert names of parent & children), you come here together, today, already a family. Welcome _____ into your lives in all ways. Share your hopes for each other, your goals as a family, be patient and kind and always be willing to listen and to trust, from this day forward.



The following is a prayer to bless the combining of two families:

Let us Pray: Almighty God, our Creator, bestow upon this beautiful couple, your blessings, that they, living lovingly together may keep their vows to each other and to their children, and live according to your laws. May they share patience and laughter, happiness and peace through your example. Amen.

Let us pray. *(family may hold hands in a circle)*

Dear Heavenly Creator, hear our prayer on behalf of the family of _____, _____, & _____. This family is a circle of strength and love. With every birth and every union, the circle grows. Every joy shared adds more love. Every crisis faced together makes the circle stronger. Surround this family with the love and support of their friends and their families, surround them with your blessings, protect them in times of trouble and share their laughter in their times of joy. Amen

CHILDREN BORN BEFORE MARRIAGE

Bride's mother brings up child and hands her to Clergy, who holds child up, saying:

This child, _____, is the beautiful, living symbol of the union of _____ & _____, which we celebrate and formalize today, the union of the _____ & _____ families in tangible form. May he/she be a source of great blessings and lessons, and a light in your lives forever. I pronounce you "family".

Here is a reading regarding children

Your children are not your children
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself
They come through you but not from you
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts
For they have their own thoughts
You may house their bodies but not their souls
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
Which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.
For life flows not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children, as living arrows, are sent forth.



The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the Infinite
And he bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness
For even as He loves the arrow that flies
So, He loves the bow that is stable.

Bride says:

We danced, awkwardly at first, but full of promise
We danced and our confidence grew strong
We danced and drew closer, learning the rhythm of
our bodies
We danced while he lead me in his strong arms,
the eager follower
We danced and exchanged feelings that could not be
put into words
We danced; enveloping our bodies in each other
We danced our first waltz.

So now, _____ I take you to be my life's partner. For you are the man I trust and depend upon. You are kind, sincere, patient, gentle, and affectionate. You are the father of my child and I love you. I take you to be my life's partner and to dance with me for the rest of our lives.

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. (Bride places ring on Groom's finger)

Groom says:

We have a dream
A Vision of where we want to go together
I dream our dream
You dream our dream
Any time either of us has a dream
It's really our dream
Without this inner vision shared
We easily get lost from our path
Or get stuck where we are.
Sharing this dream, we remind ourselves
That now is part of a longer Presence.



So now, _____ I take you to be my life's partner, for your honesty and beauty, kindness and goodness, wisdom and courage, and all that is you. I take you for my partner, mother of my child, to dance the dance of life, for the rest of our days.

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. (Groom places ring on Bride's finger)

SECOND MARRIAGES - THOUGHTS TO SHARE

Here are examples of words that a couple chose to share with one another that made their ceremony very personal.

Groom to Bride: You know, you are not my first love and I know I'm not yours. We've both seen so much and been through so many things that we're very different people now than we were in those days of first loves. I'm happy we found each other now instead of then because all we've learned about ourselves through the years has made us stronger people, more complete and much more able to truly share our lives and our love.

Bride to Groom: The years have really flown by since we fell in love and they've brought me new reasons to love you more and more; You've been my lover, my partner and my friend. You've been strong when I needed you to lean on and you've been tender when I needed you to listen and understand. Even though I don't always remember to tell you how much I appreciate you each day, you're still the one who makes my heart beat fast. You're the one I want to come home to forever. You are the one I will always love.

CANDLE LIGHTING

Presentation of the couple: "Who presents these two present to be married?"

All four parents rise and say, "We do," and come forward to light the two family candles on the altar. After which, the couple approaches the altar and each light a candle from the parents' candles and together, they light a single candle in the center of the altar.



This is a slightly different approach to the candle lighting ceremony.

Parents come forward after the "welcome" and light two family candles and sit.

At the end of the ceremony, after the pronouncement and the "kiss", the couple lights the center candle with the two candles while the Officiant reads the following:

"A new light shines today, for ____ and ____ begin their life together. How fitting then, that from these candles that have been lighted by their parents, they take from the flame to begin a new brilliance of their own.

It is this love that they have shared with their families that has given them added hope and direction. For the seeds of Love are nourished only through the giving of love itself.

They share with each other the fruits of the Love that they have shared with their parents, it has helped them come to this day, to this beginning.

Together they light a single flame, a shimmering symbol of two lives sharing the same path.

CELTIC TRADITION OF HAND FASTING

What we call the Infinity Sign  in mathematics came to represent infinity because it was the sign of unity between male and female, creating a world without end. This dual circle grew from the world's oldest known wedding custom, the ceremonial joining of hands so the couple's arms formed the double circle. In Celtic tradition, this ceremony became known as Hand Fasting, and it was the preferred method of non-ecclesiastical marriage well into the nineteenth century. Today we revive this ancient ceremony, binding ____'s & ____'s hands with the tartan.

(One may use the appropriate plaid scarf of the family heritage -or- a simple satin or brocade sash or ribbon)

Couple join their right hands, then join their left hands over the right, and the clergy person binds their hands loosely with the tartan. They then turn one circle slowly, looking into each other's eyes.

Clergy Person says after they have completed the circle:
"Blessed Be"



Someone reads the following:

"When the heart is flooded with love, there is no room in it for fear, for doubt, for hesitation. And it is this lack of fear that makes for the dance. When each partner loves so completely that he had forgotten to ask himself whether he is loved in return, when he only knows that he loves and is moving to the music, then, and then only, are two people able to dance perfectly in tune to the same rhythm."

Ann Morrow Lindburgh

Clergy person removes the tartan, saying, "Only your love can bind you to one another."

Couple remain facing one another, holding right hands only, after which they exchange vows and rings.

COMMUNION

A couple may choose to have communion served to their guests as part of the ceremony. The elements may be bread and wine, bread and grapes or grape juice, or even bread and water. You may want to be sensitive to those who cannot have alcohol.

You may bless a common cup or have individual small cups, as in the Baptist Church but "seedless" grapes may simplify the process.

Communion may be served by the ushers or placed on a common table and the guests invited to come forward. The couple may choose to hold two silver trays as each person takes a piece of bread and a grape. The following are two communion ceremonies which I recently had the opportunity to perform:

Christian Communion....

"As the first act of their new life together, ____ and ____ would like to share with you these communion elements.

Blessed art Thou, Oh Lord, Our God, Creator of the Universe, who gave Your Son, Jesus, the Christ, that we might learn, through his teachings and his example, Bless these holy gifts which we now share with one another.

For in his last gathering with his disciples, Jesus brought forth bread, saying, "Take, eat, this is my body which has been given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." Likewise after supper, he took the fruit of the vine and shared it with them saying, "This is my blood which is shed for you. Take this and be thankful.

(The officiant will offer the bride and groom bread & grapes, after which the groom will hold a plate of bread and the bride will hold plate of grapes and offer them to the guests)

Everyone, you are now invited to come forth and be partakers of this Holy Communion. Regardless of your background, ____ and ____ ask that you come, share with them, as one community of children under God, as Jesus did with his disciples." (guests come forward)

Hebrew Communion:

Communion, while often thought of as "Christian, historically predates Christianity as a part of the Passover tradition. The following is taken from the Hebrew tradition:

"The priest of the most high God, Melchizedek, brought forth bread and wine and blessed Abraham with the gift. I now bless this bread and this wine. Atch, Malkuth, Ve-gaburah, Ve-gadulah, Le-olam, Amen. For thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory, now and forever. AMEN.

As the first act of their new life together, ____ & ____ would like you to share in this spiritual meal, their first meal together in the form of holy bread and grapes."

FLOWER AND IVY CEREMONY

Officiant (placing ivy wreath on table): This wreath symbolizes the marriage that ____ and ____ are celebrating here today. We, their friends and their family, will create a visual symbol of the elements of marriage by creating a wreath that will decorate their home, as love decorates their lives. This wreath will let them remember the love shared by all of us here today.

Officiant: The wreath has been created from ivy, a traditional symbol of Matrimony and Friendship. The circular shape of the wreath mirrors the rings that ____ and ____ will exchange here today and symbolizes the never ending devotion that they pledge each other on this day. Ivy does not "feed upon" the tree or stone it clings to, and this is important to its symbolism. Nothing can separate ivy from a tree it has once embraced, and if the tree falls the ivy stays around it. But the ivy is held to the soil by its own roots. It gets nothing from the substance of the companion, and though it dies on the same spot, it dies in its own time, making its own independent gesture. Today ____ and ____ will cement the bond that they share but they will not cease to grow as individuals.

(Choose four people to each participate in adding the following items to the wreath)

1st person: These are branches of larkspur, a traditional symbol of humor and levity, and dock, a symbol of patience. These are added with a wish that ____ and ____ never lose the patience and humor which help to sustain their relationship through even the roughest times and which enrich their daily life.

2nd person: This rosemary symbolizes remembrance. I add this to the wreath with the wish that ____ and ____ never allow each other to forget the way that they feel today, and that they will always recall the romance and passion that they felt on the day of their meeting. This tarragon symbolizes the unselfish regard with which they should treat one another, today and always.

3rd person: I add violets and snowdrops which symbolize faithfulness and hope. ____ and ____ will need these traits throughout their lives together. Their faith and trust in one another will be strengthened as time goes on. Without hope, there is no chance of success. With hope they will realize that they can achieve every goal.

4th person: These roses symbolize the passion (hold up red roses before adding to wreath), the beauty (hold up burgundy roses) and unity (hold up red & white roses) that ____ and ____ feel today. May they always take the time to find the beauty around them, the passion within them, and to feel strength that their unity provides them. May they always recall and honor the vows they will make on this day.

HEBREW TRADITIONS

If choosing to incorporate the Hebrew words, it is best to have a relative (uncle or good friend) pronounce the words followed by the English interpretation by the Officiant. Make certain to research the correct pronunciation for these sacred words.

From the Hebrew tradition, the couple may choose to be married under a silken canopy, or chuppah, symbolizing the couple's new home. Only the bride, groom, best man and maid of honor stand under the canopy.

Explanation of the Chuppah.....

This marriage ceremony is taking place under a canopy supported by four poles. The "chuppah" represents the home that ____ and ____ will make together. It's openness on all four sides pledges there will be no secrets and reminds their friends and family that they are always welcome in their

house. Because it is a fragile structure, it also reminds us that ____ and ____ must work to keep their home strong. Traditionally, the wedding ceremony took place outdoors as an omen that the marriage should be blessed with as many children as the "stars of heaven".

It is the custom, not only for the bride and her father to walk down the aisle, but also for the groom's father escorts him down the aisle as well. Both mothers also participate, walking together.

Hebrew Welcome.....

B'ruchim habahim b'shame Adonai.

May those who enter be blessed in the name of God.

B'ruchim habahim.

We welcome you. With this moment your hopes are being fulfilled. This moment is a merging of two paths of life into one.

B'ruchim haba'iam!

We welcome you to a loving partnership!

The service begins with a blessing of a cup of wine which is offered to the groom who takes a sip and then offers it to his bride.

"Baruch ata adonai. Eloheynu mehlech ha'olam, boray p'recy hagaven.

As you share this wine, so may you share all things from this day on with love and understanding. May life's joys be heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and each of its moments hallowed." (Couple drinks from the wine glass)

Only a plain gold band may be used, unadorned by diamonds and it is placed on the bride's index finger of her right hand. The bride may then switch the ring to the customary finger of her left hand.

Benediction:

Me Adir al hakol, me baruch al hakol, me gadol al hakol, hu y'varaich lehcatan b'hakala

May the one who is supreme in power, blessing, and glory bless this bride and this groom.

Y'vorehchecha adonai v'yeesh m'recha

May the Lord bless you and keep you

Ya air adonai panav aylehcha vee chunehka
May the Lord be gracious unto you.

Yeesa adonai panav aylehcha v' yasame l'cha shalom
May the Lord show you kindness and grant you peace.

The Smashing of the Glass:

The ceremony ends with the breaking of a wine glass wrapped in a cloth. In crushing the glass under his heel, the groom reminds all present that, even in their hour of joy, they must not forget the sacking of the temple in Jerusalem. A more modern interpretation of this custom is that it is the end of violence and the beginning of a peaceful time filled with love and tolerance.

"We conclude the wedding with the Groom smashing the glass. We hope that however many pieces this glass will break into, so may ____'s and ____'s happiness be multiplied."

Groom breaks the glass and everyone wishes "Mazal Tov!"

PARENTS, STEP-PARENTS, SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

When the original parents of the wedding couple are no longer together, and when they are attending the wedding with other partners, a frank discussion with the Bride and Groom as to seating arrangements at the ceremony, will save a lot of embarrassment and alleviate an uncomfortable situation. Just about any combination of circumstances can be handled gracefully if you know, ahead of time, what the make-up of the family is.

Traditionally, mothers are escorted down the aisle by an usher with their partners, whether husbands or significant others, walking behind.

The father of the groom and a new wife or girlfriend may be led down the aisle and seated behind the mother, if appropriate.

If a candle-lighting ceremony is included, the couple must decide which "mother and father" they want to light the "family" candles. Often, adopted parents are considered more "parents" than biological ones. Don't presume anything! Always ask for clarification.

Once, at a reception I attended, the ex-wife tinkled the glass for the couple to kiss more than anyone else. There can be lovingly comfortable situations between ex-husbands and wives that, in the past, would have been very awkward. It is always refreshing when kindness and cooperation prevail.

RECOMMITMENT CEREMONY

The following is a ceremony used for a "recommitment". Sometimes, a couple has eloped or has had a small ceremony previously, for one reason or another, and want to renew their vows with all their family and friends. Other time, for a 10th or 25th anniversary, a couple may want to recommit themselves to each other. With this ceremony, you can add readings and/or prayers and, perhaps a benediction, to make it more personal.

WELCOME

On behalf of ____ and ____, I would like to welcome you to this special day as they choose to renew their wedding vows with the blessing of their family and friends.

VOWS

____ and ____, you are about to journey on a new beginning. Perhaps the only thing truer than one's first love is the recommitment of that love. With this in mind, I would like to offer a gentle reminder of how to continue your life-long journey together.

Be kind to each other. And when you disagree, do it respectfully. Be gentle and forgiving to each other. When you forgive, your heart grows a little bigger, with more understanding and more compassion. Be strong but flexible. When you compromise, you both win.

Communicate with each other. Share the joy as well as the sorrow that is in your heart, for this will make your love grow even stronger.

____, please repeat after me....

"I, ____, give to you, ____, a new promise and yet, not so new; a new husband, and yet not so new; and a new affirmation of love, from the heart that has loved you and will love you for as many years as God allots to it. This commitment is made in love, kept in faith and eternally made new."

____, please repeat after me....

"I, ____, give to you, ____, a new promise and yet, not so new; a new wife, and yet not so new; and a new affirmation of love, from the heart that has loved you and will love you for as many years as God allots to it. This commitment is made in love, kept in faith and eternally made new."

BLESSING OF RINGS

The recommitment vows which _____ and _____ have just given to each other will be signified by the blessing of the rings they have previously exchanged. A ring is the symbol of the unbroken unity of love. It is the symbol of life.

_____ and _____, please hold hands... with this water, these rings are blessed by God. May you wear them from this day forth as a reminder of the love you share and the commitment you have made to each other. *(Officiant pours water over hands and then dries them with a cloth)*

_____, please repeat after me...

I recommit myself to our marriage. I promise to love, honor and cherish you for all of our days.

(Repeat for Bride)

SAME SEX UNIONS

If and/or when you are asked to perform a ceremony to bless the relationship of two people of the same sex, we encourage you to accept the opportunity. In a world often filled with anger, distrust, and disharmony, it is always appropriate to honor love between two people.

In this western world, it is not easy for two people of the same sex to maintain a long-lasting union and when they love each other enough to come forward to say they want to be openly recognized before God, their friends and families as a couple who are committed to one another and love each other deeply, we are here to support their choice. Love is the only Power. Love is the only Way. Always choose Love.

Same sex marriages are not recognized legally. However, spiritual ones are performed quite often.

Most words can be adapted to create an appropriate ceremony. The following service was sent to us by a lesbian couple who wrote it for their special occasion:

My dear friends, you have come together in this church so that the Lord may seal and strengthen your love in the presence of the Church's minister and this community. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated you in baptism and now he enriches and strengthens you by a special sacrament so that you may assume the duties of your union in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, I ask you to state your intentions.

Couple repeats together:

All-powerful, ever-living God, we now kneel before you very happy, but somewhat nervous. We feel you brought us together in the beginning, helped our love grow and at this moment are with us in a special way. We ask that you stay by our side in the days ahead. Protect us from anything which might harm this union, give us courage when burdens come our way, teach us to forgive one another when we fail.

Reading #1 The Beatitudes/Matthew 5:1-12a

Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

"How happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the Earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons and daughters of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak against you on my account.

Rejoice & be glad for your reward will be great in heaven."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Reading #2

The Life of a Christian: Romans 12:1-2, 9-18
from the letter of Paul to the Romans

Verses 1-2

Think of God's mercy, my brothers and sisters, and worship him, I beg of you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God.

Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

Verses 9-18

Do not let your love be a pretense, but sincerely prefer good to evil.

Love each other as much as brothers and sisters should, and have a profound respect for each other.

Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with earnestness of spirit.

If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come, and keep on praying.

If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.

Bless those who persecute you; never curse them, bless them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow.

Treat everyone with equal kindness; never be condescending but make real friends with the poor. Do not allow yourself to become self-satisfied.

Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals.

Do all you can to live at peace with everyone.

This is the word of the Lord.

Clergy says to each partner...

_____ do you take _____ to be your partner? Do you promise to be true to him/her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, to love her and honor her all the days of your life? Response "I do."

Lord, bless these rings which we bless in Your Name, Grant that those who wear them may always have a deep faith in each other. May they do Your Will and always live together in Peace, Good Will, and Love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. AMEN

Partners each say:

With this ring, I pledge my love and my faithfulness to you, my partner in life.

Then Clergy says:

Father, you have made the bond of their union a holy mystery, a symbol of Christ's love for His Church. Hear our prayers for _____ & _____. With faith in you and in each other they pledge their love today. May their lives always bear witness to the reality of that love.

We ask you this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Responsorial Psalm - The Goodness of the Lord
Psalm 33:12 and 18, 20, 21 (776-1)

Leader: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

All: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Leader: Happy the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people, He has chosen for His heritage. But see how the eye of Yahweh is on those who fear Him, on those who rely on His love.

All: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Leader: Our soul awaits Yahweh, He is our help and shield;
Our hearts rejoice in Him, we trust in His Holy Name.

All: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Leader: Yahweh, let Your love rest on us as our hope has rested in You.

All: The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

Clergy delivers the Final Blessing:

May Almighty God, with his Word of blessing, unite your hearts in the never-ending bond of pure love.

Response: AMEN

May your children bring you happiness, and may your generous love for them be returned to you, many times over.

Response: AMEN

May the peace of Christ live always in your hearts and in your home.
May you have true friends to stand by you, both in joy and in sorrow.
May you be ready and willing to help and comfort all who come to you in need.

And may the blessings promised to the compassionate be yours in abundance.

Response: AMEN

May you find happiness and satisfaction in your work.
May daily problems never cause you undue anxiety, nor the desire for earthly possessions dominate your lives.

But may your hearts' first desire be always the good things waiting for you in the life of heaven.

Response: AMEN

May the Lord bless you with many happy years together, so that you may enjoy the rewards of a good life.

And after you have served God loyally here on earth, may you be welcomed into God's eternal Kingdom in Heaven.

Response: AMEN

I have presented the above service in its entirety to show that it seemed very important to this couple to have traditional language and Biblical scripture used to seal their commitment to each other. I didn't want to lose the continuity of what they were creating by separating the scripture, the vows, the prayers and the blessings that they chose as the expression of their declaration.

SIGNING OF MARRIAGE LICENSE

Some couples incorporate the signing of the marriage license into the ceremony as follows:

____ & _____, as official witnesses of this commitment, you have been chosen to sign the certificate, thereby legalizing this marriage.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Everything in the first edition of this booklet was provided, over the years, by fellow priests. The second version as well as this new one contains a great deal of new material provided by the couples themselves. As much as possible, I have tried to include the ceremonies without change. I encourage you to take what you read and adapt it in any way that is appealing to the couples you are serving. Be creative in ways that make each ceremony unique for those people and their families.

I have not mentioned anything about music. There are so many wonderful choices for music, both traditional and modern.

For my first wedding, selections from Bach and Beethoven had been chosen. Then, the organist got sick with the flu and sent a friend as a replacement. At the last minute, we were offered a random selection of popular wedding music, including the Hawaiian Wedding Song and, to my delight, a selection that I had heard played by Andres Segovia which I had once vowed to have played at my wedding. It is entitled called "Reverie (Traumerei)" and is a beautiful piece to be played at a wedding.

Encourage the couple to bring into the ceremony their ideas for music. When you meet people whose voices or music ability impress you, find out their names and phone numbers so that you can recommend them.

Often, a hired disc jockey will have copies of almost anything the couple will think of or he or she will be willing to get it for them.

Regarding non-traditional wedding attendants, one groom was so grateful to his future mother-in-law for all her help and guidance, he asked her to be his "best man". She accepted and even wore a tuxedo. A young bride once asked, "Isn't my attendant-of-honor supposed to be my "best friend"? My brother is my best friend."

My daughter and her husband even found a tux for their English Bulldog and he walked down the aisle with the men. Another groom chose his brown Labrador Retriever as his "ring bearer". (of course, these were outdoor weddings).

Encourage couples to follow their hearts in choosing their attendants to express what they truly feel.

Be sure you have a written copy of everything in the service. If someone doing a reading cannot do it, you can step in. If the couple are writing their own vows to each other, ask them to provide you a copy. Even the most well spoken person may need help to remember what he/she wanted to say. And there are no "retakes" possible when the ceremony is over.

The following was actually a part of a wedding ceremony. You may certainly use any and all of it as such, but to me, it feels like the perfect means to advise a couple who are considering marriage. You may wish to give them a copy to take home and read, once a year, on their anniversary.

"The purpose of marriage is not for two incomplete people to become one, but rather, for two complete people to join together for the greater glory of God.

The holy relationship is a context where we feel safe enough to be ourselves, knowing that our darkness will not be judged, but accepted. In this way, we are healed and freed to move into the Light of our true being. A holy relationship is a common state of mind where both give errors gladly to correction, that both may happily be healed as one.

In a holy relationship, as you see your partner, you see yourself. As you treat your partner, you treat yourself. As you think of your partner, you think of yourself. In your partner you will find yourself.

Pain doesn't stem from love denied by others, but rather from the love that we deny them. It feels like we're hurt by what someone else did but what has occurred is that someone else's closed heart has tempted us to close our own and it's our denial of love that hurts us. The miracle of love is to keep our heart open, regardless of what's going on outside us.

Growth is never about focusing on someone else's lessons but only on our own. We need to ask for God to enter and show us a different perspective.

Unconditional love is a sense of well being, wonder and love that comes from you and affects everything you see, think, and do. Everything is meaningful and appropriate. You will sense the value in all things.

Love is not just a thought. Love is a physical sensation. It is a motion within the body that produces wondrous warmth and a sense of well being in the face of anything that might be happening.

We have all had moments when we experience deep love. Those moments are difficult to maintain when they are shattered by the arrival of judgment, perceived differences, feelings of superiority or inferiority, fear of hurting or being hurt, or separation.

You experience love for someone and then, one day, there arises, in your mind, a judgment. "I don't think I like what is happening. I think it might be a little uncomfortable to live with that characteristic for the rest of my life." Nothing is said, but the moment the first small judgment comes in, we begin a process that we may be stuck with for the rest of our relationship. The feeling of separation continues unless the pattern is broken.

For example: A little voice in the back of your mind says, "My family is just a little more right than his/hers".

When the powerful love energy wells up within us, the small voice seems to cease. You can continue to silence this small voice by getting in touch with how you felt when love first sprang up in your heart. The original spontaneous explosion is the feeling of a presence of Light within you, the Light that is always there. The Light in you recognizes God in the other person and, in that explosive realization, you see who they really are, one exalted in the Light of Love.

A relationship is two people who are both looking for God and wish to enjoy each other as they move toward this inner goal. Our partner enhances our spiritual growth because they allow us to really see ourselves. When you are thinking your partner has a particular problem, know that you are looking at yourself. You have created a mirror to see yourself reflected in.

You will see what you expect and want to see. If clothes lying on the floor bother you when you enter the room, you will see the clothes and not the dozen roses left for you. You will not see the other's beauty, strength, courage, love or understanding. You can consciously turn around your judgment by looking for what attracted you to the other in the first place.

A state of love does not come and go. It is constant for those who look for, and find, love. If you are looking for the Light within your relationship, that is what you will find. You have two people with Light in their hearts and when you focus on the Light instead of the shadows between you, you see the Light in them. You see the Light in yourself.

In moments when you could express yourself in unloving ways that would distance you from your partner, try the opposite. Open up and allow love energy to move through you. Pain is relieved by going to a higher frequency. This frequency is the God vibration of Love.

You are different today than you were five years ago and five years from now you will be different still. You are about to make promises which are meant for a lifetime. May you grant each other the gift of growth."

If you choose to give advice to the couple, I would pass on, not only the previous words, but also the following ones which have helped me over the years:

Just before my wedding, my aunt told me, "Don't expect to receive any more than you are willing to give."

Tom Sawyer is often quoted as saying, "Sometimes it's best to treat each other as you would a perfect stranger." meaning... "don't let your familiarity with each other be an excuse to dismiss basic respect."

And remember, just because two people have different opinions, that doesn't mean they don't love each other.

The one thing you can count on in this world is "change". Through every-day thoughtful, honest, open communication, you can change and grow together.

A dear friend of mine once said, "When you walk toward the light, the shadow of your burden falls behind you." So, every day of your marriage, I encourage you choose to "walk together toward the light".

Always invite God into your discussions and don't be too proud to ask for help. Divine Guidance Works Miracles!

Copies of this booklet can be ordered, making checks payable and mailing to:

Life Connections, Inc.
5736 DuCola Shores Road
Conesus, NY 14435

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