

Opening Prayers

Opening Prayer #1

Let us begin by welcoming the presence of God within each of us.

As we lift into the loving
that joins us together as one,
let us surround Bride and Groom
with our love, our prayers,
and our best wishes for them
on this, their wedding day,
and throughout their journey together
as Marriage Partners.

For those wanting a prayer with no mention of God, the word "God" in the first paragraph of Opening Prayer #1 can be replaced with the word "love." Another ecumenical prayer could be as follows.

Opening Prayer #2

Beloved God,
we welcome your presence in our hearts today.
We have come together
as a community of family and friends
to witness and bless the vows of Bride and Groom
and the beginning of their journey together
as Partners in Marriage.
We ask that you bless them
with a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.

We also ask for a blessing of renewal,
devotion, kindness, and loving

for each of us present,
that we may demonstrate our love for you
through our love of each other
in all of our partnerships and family relationships.

*Others may want to address God directly, declaring their intentions and asking for
God's guidance and blessing for the Couple, as in the following prayer.*

Opening Prayer #3

Beloved God,
we welcome you
and are so grateful for your presence
here with us today.
We have come here
as a community of family and friends
to love and support Bride and Groom,
to witness their entrance
into the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage,
and to celebrate
the beginning of their journey together
as Marriage Partners.

We are here because we love Bride and Groom.
We rejoice that they have found each other
and that through each other,
they have come to know the power of love
as they have never known it before.

We celebrate this union
of their hearts, minds, bodies, and souls
and wish them great joy.

We ask, Beloved God,
that you guide and bless Bride and Groom
with a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.
We ask that through this union
they may come to know you more deeply.

A more Christian version of the final portion of this prayer might be as follows.

Opening Prayer #3a

We call forward and stand
in the light of the Holy Spirit
and the light of the Christ within each of us.
We join together
in support of Bride and Groom
and ask, as a community gathered in your name,
Beloved God,
that as you gladdened the wedding in Cana of Galilee
by the presence of your Son,
so, by his presence now,
bring your joy to this wedding
and bless Bride and Groom
with a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.
Amen.

Opening Prayer #4

Let us come into the quiet of prayer.
Beloved and Eternal God,
we are here to celebrate
the marriage of Bride and Groom.
We pray that they each may find a depth of kindness,
caring, and joy through this union
that will serve as a safe haven for them

as they journey through their lives together.
We also pray that together they may build a life
that brings them balance, health, and great learning
as they venture through
the trials and triumphs to come.
May they strengthen their bond of love
and find a gentle peacefulness
in being together hand in hand.

And finally, Beloved,
for those of us who are here with our partners today,
we ask for a blessing of renewal and devotion
to the vows we have made.
May we comfort each other with our love
today and every day.
God bless us all.

Opening Prayer #5

Let us lift our hearts together as one
in jubilant celebration
of the marriage union we are about to witness
between Bride and Groom.

As they enter into
the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage,
we are blessed to witness
the magnificence of their love,
their open hearts,
and their vibrant and willing spirits.

Inspired by their love,
let each of us rededicate ourselves

to the loving relationships in our own lives.
May we all be enriched
for having shared this day together.

Opening Prayer #6

Lord God,
we call forward the presence of the Holy Spirit
and the light of Christ
to fill us, surround us, and lift us
into a communion of loving
as we witness and bless
the marriage of Bride and Groom.

Beloved God,
we honor your presence within each of us.
We know you
through the divine spark of your loving,
your wisdom, and your truth within our hearts,
where you reside in pure and perfect love.

Through our love and with Spirit's blessing
we extend to you
our prayers and best wishes
for Bride and Groom
on this, their wedding day,
and throughout their journey together
as Partners in Marriage.

The following Opening Prayer is from The Book of Common Prayer.

Opening Prayer #7

Dearly beloved,

we have come together
in the presence of God
to witness and bless the joining together
of these two individuals
in Holy Matrimony.

The bond and covenant of marriage
was established by God in creation,
and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life
by his presence and first miracle
at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.
It signifies to us the mystery
of the union between Christ and his Church,
and Holy Scripture commends it
to be honored among all people.

Into this holy union
Bride and Groom now come to be joined.
The union of Marriage Partners
in heart, body, and mind
is intended by God for their mutual joy;
for the help and comfort given one another
in prosperity and adversity;
and, when it is God's will,
for the procreation of children
and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Therefore marriage is not to be entered into
unadvisedly or lightly,
but reverently, deliberately,
and in accordance with the purposes
for which it was instituted by God.

Opening Prayer #8

Dearest and beloved God,
we pray for Bride and Groom
as they enter into the sacred vows of marriage,
that they may live according to their promises
each to the other
and that they may create a marriage
that is filled with joy and tenderness.
We pray that they may enter into
the deepest mysteries and wonders of love
and therein create
a safe haven in their hearts for each other.
May they know the peace
that comes from truly being received
and known and accepted by another.

May their love for each other
enrich them as individuals
and provide a safe and loving environment
for the family they are creating through this union.

Guide them and bless them, Beloved,
that they may know
that there is nothing more priceless
than the gift of loving one another
as they journey through life side by side.

When a marriage results in the creation of a new family because the spouses have children from previous marriages, some couples like to include or somehow acknowledge the children in the ceremony. The following Opening Prayer is an example of how that can be done.

Opening Prayer #9

Beloved God,
we are gathered here,
uniting our hearts as one
in support and celebration of Bride and Groom
as they enter into
the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage.

We ask you to bless the family created by this union
as Bride's daughter, Child 1,
and Groom's son, Child 2,
join with them in the creation of a new family.

We ask that you guide and bless each of them
in loving and honoring one another
and in building and strengthening a family unit
that will be a safe and nurturing haven for them all.
Help them to find the balance and harmony
of their individuality and their shared life.

We ask that your light and grace
be extended to each of them,
that they may know you and welcome you in their lives
each and every day.

Gathering Words

Gathering Words #1

Welcome.

A wedding is such a wonderful occasion,
filled with hopes, dreams, and excitement.
We are here today to celebrate the love
that Bride and Groom have for each other,
and to recognize and witness their decision
to journey forward in their lives
as Marriage Partners.

A more formal and traditional beginning to the Gathering Words might be as follows.

Gathering Words #2

Dearly beloved,
we are gathered here
in the presence of these witnesses,
to join together these two individuals
in holy matrimony;
which is an honorable estate,
revered since time immemorial
as the most profound and tender of human relationships.

It is therefore not to be entered into
unadvisedly or lightly,
but reverently and deliberately.
Into this holy estate
these two persons come now to be joined.

The following selections are grouped thematically by the meaning of love, marriage, and the gathering of the Couple's families and friends. This first group of passages (Gathering Words #3–8) focuses on the value and importance of love in our lives.

Gathering Words #3

For those of us blessed by a true partnership of love,
we feel safe in the presence of our loved one.
There is no need to hide any part of ourselves
for fear of being judged or rejected.
We can just be together from moment to moment,
believing that those moments
will thread together into eternity.

There is a gentleness to the presence of love
that softens life's rough edges.
It makes us somehow braver
to go forth into the world
knowing that the shelter of someone's love
awaits us at day's end.

We are most vulnerable when we love.
We place our trust in another
to honor us and to care for us,
to treasure us and to receive our love.

In love, we trust that the other will provide a safe haven
in which we can experience and share
the fullness of our being with one another.
And in so doing,
we trust that our lives will be far richer
than had we chosen separate journeys through this world.

We trust that our love will fill us full
and make us wiser and more beautiful beings.
We find that our union graces our lives with balance,
a sweetness beyond any we have ever tasted,
and a treasure beyond any measure of value
we have ever known.

Gathering Words #4

Whenever we attend a wedding celebration,
we are given the opportunity
to reexamine our own lives.
We might look at the radiance
of the couple before us
and be tempted to compare their obvious joy
to the quality of our own primary relationships.

The truth is that each one of us
is a powerful creator
in the dance of love and marriage.
Each one of us,
each moment of every day,
has the choice to rededicate ourselves to one another
or to withhold our love and caring.

Love is powerful.
It is simple.
Yet it is very complex.
In order for love to flow between two people,
four things must be happening at once.
Each person gives their love to the other
and each is the receiver of the other's love.
Love requires us to be vulnerable to each other

so that our love may flow back and forth
through these four doors.

There are so many ways that we can choose
to be in a relationship with each other.
It is only through love
that our spirits are lifted into a oneness
that transcends all the dualities
we experience in our lives.
Loving is the only experience that enables us to see
that our separation is only a condition
of the physical and material level of being—
that our souls can soar and merge as one.

It is love that gives the deepest meaning to our lives.
It is our highest calling,
our greatest purpose,
and our finest achievement.

Gathering Words #5

If you ask most couples
who have a strong and abiding love
what they like most about their partners,
usually they will say
that they don't have to pretend
to be anything other than what they are.
They are able to express themselves
without fear of being judged or rejected.
There is room in the relationship
for both of them to be unique individuals.
They are free to surrender

to the possibility of profound intimacy—
to be known and loved without condition.

Gathering Words #6

For quite some time now,
Bride and Groom have known and loved each other.
They have been strengthened by their love
and have received many blessings
through its beauty and tenderness.
They have learned that they can depend on each other
and on the power of their love,
and that through each other
they are becoming better people.

Today, they come before us
to enter into the sacred covenant of marriage,
vowing to be partners through the trials and triumphs
of their shared life.
They are declaring to each other
and to all of us present
that they will be by each other's side,
no matter what life brings their way.

Gathering Words #7

Love has gathered us here today.
We are here to celebrate the love
that Bride and Groom have for each other
as well as the love that each of you has given them
throughout their lives.
As families and friends,
you are the ones
who have taught Bride and Groom how to love.

You have shown them the blessings
that come through loving one another.

Having planted this seed of love in them,
we are now gathered to support them
as they embark upon their voyage of discovery
as Marriage Partners.

We are here to see them off on this journey.
Let us also be there to see them through.

Gathering Words #8

Bride and Groom have been together
for quite some time now.

As the years have gone by,
their love has grown stronger and more beautiful.
They have learned that they can depend on each other
and the comfort of their bond
to bring forward an abundance
of gifts and lessons into their lives.

Through their sacred union in marriage this day,
they are declaring to each other
and to this gathering of their families and friends
that they will be by each other's side,
no matter what life brings their way.

The next passages (Gathering Words #9–13) express the power and importance of marriage. The first is from The Book of Common Prayer.

Gathering Words #9

The union of Marriage Partners
in heart, body, and mind

is intended by God for their mutual joy;
for the help and comfort given one another
in prosperity and adversity,
and, when it is God's will,
for the procreation of children
and their nurture in the knowledge
and love of the Lord.

Therefore marriage is not to be entered into
unadvisedly or lightly,
but reverently, deliberately,
and in accordance with the purposes
for which it was instituted by God.

Alternatively,

Gathering Words #9a

The commitment of two individuals in marriage
is of the heart, body, mind, and spirit,
and is for the intention of mutual love, help, and comfort
through the trials and triumphs of life.
It is a relationship not to be entered into
unadvisedly or lightly,
but deliberately, lovingly, and reverently.

Knowing and embracing this,
Bride and Groom have invited those present
to witness their union.

Gathering Words #10

The marriage relationship provides the opportunity
for the most intimate joining together of two people.
This union occurs in heart, body, mind, and soul.

It is the most enduring and comprehensive relationship
that can be experienced between two individuals.
Therefore, the choice to enter into marriage is profound.

In choosing a lifelong partner,
we are choosing the one
who will witness our changes and growth,
and who will affect these changes
and shape our maturation as well.

On this day, Bride and Groom
are acknowledging their shared values
and are choosing a future with each other,
their destinies colored
by having experienced life together.

Gathering Words #II

We are gathered here together
as family and friends
to celebrate the coming together of Groom and Bride.
We come to witness the joining
of this man and this woman in marriage
and to rejoice in their making
of this important and lasting commitment.

The essence of the marriage relationship
is the openness to another person
in his or her entirety
as lover, companion, and friend.
We join our lives together
in search of something greater and richer;
something that transcends our solitary lives.

Really loving one another with depth and passion
is perhaps the greatest treasure
we human beings can attain.

It adds richness and profound meaning to our lives.
Love is one of life's greatest joys.
By simply giving ourselves to each other,
honestly and courageously,
each partner is infinitely enhanced.

As companions in our day-to-day lives,
we take pleasure in sharing
our time, thoughts, and feelings.
We delight in reporting on
our separate adventures in the world.
These become the rhythm of life
between devoted life partners
as they build their life together.

In marriage, two lives are intimately shared;
and the blending of the two
must not diminish either one.
Rather, it should enhance
the individuality of each partner.

As a marriage matures, it takes on a life of its own.
And within it,
each partner is individually evolving
while growing in understanding of the other.
This wonderful intimacy with another person
can mirror a depth of inner knowing
that awakens levels of awareness

we never knew existed.
To be awakened in this way is a priceless gift.

When we give of ourselves
into a loving Marriage Partnership,
we do not abandon ourselves;
we do not shed our individuality;
for that is what brought us together in the first place.

Gathering Words #12

The marriage ceremony is a ritual
representing an institution rooted in antiquity.
Marriage serves as the model for all relationships.
In marriage, two people turn to each other,
reaching for a greater fulfillment
than either can imagine achieving alone.

The marriage ceremony is a bold first step
onto the path of your life together
as husband and wife.
Each of you is risking what you are
for the sake of what you yet can be.
Today, through the ritual of marriage,
you are joining together in your entirety
as lovers, companions, and friends.

Remember that this is a sacred union
in which two people join together
in a bond of loyalty, devotion, and freedom,
allowing the eternal dimensions of life
to emerge and be known.

Bride and Groom,
this day not only signifies
a celebration of shared values and commitment,
but it attests to the fact that you have chosen
to build your future together.
Through the sacred vows of marriage
you are saying that who you are
and who you want to be
can best be achieved through this union.

Bride and Groom,
remember that love and faithfulness alone
will provide a solid foundation
for a long and happy marriage.
No relationship is more tender
than that of husband and wife.
And no promises are more sacred
than those of Marriage Partners.

In keeping faithfully to your vows
and in bringing to this marriage
the best that is within you,
your life together will be filled with grace and joy,
and your home will be a place of peace.

Gathering Words #13

Being married is like trying to keep your balance
in a three-legged race.
You are walking side by side in a forward momentum,
yet each of you is making choices,
moment by moment,
that will either help you maintain balance together

or cause you to lose your rhythm,
your balance, or your way.
While you are two separate individuals,
you walk along one path together.
Your every gesture, word, expression, and action,
and those you withhold or omit,
will determine the quality of your experience together.

It is through loving, kindness, caring, and sharing
that a successful marriage journey is created.
A good marriage takes patience,
dedication, humor, and forgiveness.

You keep your love alive
through the choices you make moment by moment,
day after day, and year after year.
Through practice,
you learn how to love yourselves and each other
with devotion and freedom.

Spiders build webs, birds build nests,
and we build safe and comfortable havens
through our loving.
Bride and Groom,
through your marriage, and through your love,
may you give the gifts of tenderness,
comfort, joy, and peace to each other
to nurture you throughout the years.

The following passages (Gathering Words #14–17) express sentiments regarding the Couple's gratitude for having their family and friends with them on their wedding day.

Gathering Words #14

One of the great joys of the wedding day
is the joining together
of the couple's families and friends.
Bride and Groom are filled with gratitude
to each and every one of you
for the loving, caring, friendship, and support
that you have given them throughout their lives.

Being able to share their wedding day with you,
surrounded by your love and support,
is a treasured blessing.

Knowing that your best wishes
go forward with Bride and Groom
strengthens them as they embark upon their journey
as husband and wife.

Gathering Words #15

Bride and Groom have asked all of you
to be with them today
because each of you has given something of yourself
into their lives.

Your friendship and love
will always be appreciated.
They welcome you here
and thank you for sharing
this important day with them.

Gathering Words #16

Bride and Groom are truly blessed
to be surrounded by their dearest family and friends.
They are so grateful to you

for all of the unconditional love,
joy, support, and guidance
you have given them over the years.
They deeply appreciate
having you all here with them today
to share their joy
and to celebrate their marriage.

Gathering Words #17

Bride and Groom have brought us together here
for an occasion of great joy
and a cause for great celebration.
Having found each other,
they have built the kind of relationship
that will serve them well
as the foundation for their marriage.
They have chosen each and every one of us
to be here with them
to witness their Wedding Vows
as they join together as Partners in Marriage.

Each of us knows that a marriage is not created
by a law or a ceremony;
rather it occurs in the hearts of two human beings.
It grows out of loving,
caring, and sharing ourselves with another.
And so it is that Bride and Groom
have connected their hearts and souls,
one to the other,
drawing upon the depths of their being,
into the deep well of human need—
the need to live united, loving, and complete.

So, in witnessing this ceremony today,
we are observing only an outward sign of an inward union
that already exists between Bride and Groom.
Today, they have come before us
to publicly affirm their love;
to promise to nurture themselves,
each other, and this union;
and to acknowledge its centrality in their lives.
They do so knowing
that marriage is at once the most tender,
yet challenging, of all relations in life.

And so, we have gathered here together
as family and friends
to witness and to celebrate
the coming together of Bride and Groom
as they enter into
the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage.

Another appropriate theme for the Gathering Words is to offer guests the opportunity to rededicate themselves to their own marriages or primary relationships.

Gathering Words #18

As we rejoice in Bride and Groom's marriage today,
let us each consecrate the relationships in our own lives
and rededicate ourselves to these unions we share.
Let us each choose the path
of loving and caring for one another
and of making these commitments
a priority in our lives.

A nice ending for the Gathering Words might be as follows.

Gathering Words #19

So let us come together now,
as families and friends,
to witness, to support, and to celebrate
this union of Bride and Groom.
Please join me in wishing them
a healthy, loving, and joyful marriage.

Sometimes, the wedding location bears particular meaning for the Couple and they like to share that with their guests in the Gathering Words, as in the following two examples.

Gathering Words #20

We are gathered here in this beautiful place
to witness the joining of Bride and Groom in marriage.
They particularly wanted to invite you here
because their sense of spirituality
and the growth of their love
are connected to this place.
They wanted to share with you
the beauty of these mountains
because this is where they have made their home.

During their seven and a half years together,
they've come here on many mornings like this one,
and walked quietly through the mountain laurel,
listening to the wind in the pines.
Their time spent in nature,
climbing some of the mountains you see before you here,
has been a time of connectedness,
of shared reverence for the world,
and a deepening respect and love for one another.

It is this sense of timelessness and peace
that they wanted to share with you
on this, their wedding day.

As you look out over the mountains,
please take a moment for reflection and quiet prayer
to open your hearts and minds
to the love and togetherness we are here to share
through this ceremony.
You may also want to take a moment
to remember those loved ones who are not with us today.

Gathering Words #21

Dear friends,
we are gathered together for an occasion of great joy.
We are assembled in this beautiful place
to witness the joining of Bride and Groom in marriage.

They wanted to invite you here
to experience a place that has special meaning to them
and has nurtured their love for each other.
Just being here together, listening to the birds
and feeling the wind and breezes,
seeing an occasional deer, fox, or hawk,
has affirmed for them the beauty of the connection
that exists between us all
and the need to fill themselves
with the soft and gentle things of life.

As physicians, Bride and Groom
often get swallowed up
by the fast pace of life, as many of us do.

But here, they come home to that tender place inside
that is nurtured by nature's beauty,
timelessness, and peace.

It was here on this rock ledge
that Bride and Groom
first declared their love for each other.
And it was here that they decided
to share their lives as husband and wife.
So it is only fitting that we are gathered here today.

They've learned here that the process
of falling in love with another person
is a little like the exploration of a wild and lovely place,
and that loving another person
can deepen your sense of connectedness to all of life.
They have found that the intimacy
and the surprises of that experience
are a form of reverence and can be a form of wholeness.

And it is this that they wanted to share with you
on the day of their wedding.

The final two selections of Gathering Words serve as examples of what a couple might do to create an intimate sharing of their story with their guests. In the first case, the couple was interracial and had faced many extra trials and triumphs in their love. The second is a shorter, heartfelt, yet lighthearted story of finding your love in unexpected places.

Gathering Words #22

As an ecumenical minister,
one of my basic beliefs

is in the importance of unconditional loving.
That means that we love others
not because they are handsome or rich
or only do what we like,
but we love them no matter what they say or do.
Our loving is not conditioned
by the other person's behavior,
but rather it pours forward
from a wellspring of loving
that we tap into inside of ourselves.
We choose to love them
through good times and bad—
just the way the classic wedding vows suggest.

Those of us who are fortunate enough
to heal our misconceptions about loving
learn that true and sustainable love
comes forth from within,
rather than in reaction to others.
Ever so rarely,
we meet a person who radiates love,
and we just want to be around them.

Those of us who are most fortunate
are able to express unconditional loving
and find a wonderful partner who can do that also—
that's where the true magic of love comes in.
Today, we all have the privilege
of witnessing and celebrating
the union of two such people.

Bride and Groom have a love story

that is filled with wisdom
and inspiration for us all.
So let me tell you their story.

Once upon a time
there was a little white girl named Bride,
and a little black boy named Groom,
who went to the same school
where her father was the principal.
When they were in fifth grade,
Groom first saw Bride at a softball game,
and he started watching for her everywhere he went.

In sixth grade,
they were in the same class
and Groom knew that this was the girl for him
and that, someday,
they would be boyfriend and girlfriend.
He told his friends this
and they, of course, told him he was crazy.
But Groom wasn't crazy,
and he was very patient.
Bride still didn't realize it,
but Groom was always keeping his eye on her.

They became good friends until the ninth grade
when Bride wrote Groom a letter
to let him know that she wanted to be his girlfriend.
Then, on October 28, 1983,
he asked her out
and she said yes!

There were no games—
they knew that they were boyfriend and girlfriend.
And it didn't take long before they realized
that they wanted to spend
the rest of their lives together.

They simply loved each other,
and shared a powerful commitment to that love
that carried them through
good times and bad times
in a world filled with challenges,
including racial prejudice
and rules about who should be with whom.
But the fact that the chemical composition of their skin tones
was different
mattered to them about as much
as having different blood types and eye colors.

Over the years,
not only did they see
beyond society's barriers and challenges,
they also served as an example to others
who learned through them
how to do that as well.

So why didn't they just get married many years ago?
I wondered. And so I asked.

Bride never thought that Groom would propose
and, while that might not have made sense to others,
it was OK with Bride.
She knew they would always be together
and that was what she wanted most of all.

Meanwhile, Groom knew he had some feelings
he needed to heal within himself
before he could be as secure and confident
as he wanted to be
as a black man entering marriage
with a white woman in this world of ours.
And so, he set about working things through.
And Bride was patient.

Then, on October 22, 2000,
he went out, bought a ring,
and asked her parents' permission.
He got down on his knee
and proposed to Bride,
and she cried and cried and cried...
and of course she said yes.

And so here we are, one year later,
and Bride and Groom are getting married
after an eighteen-year journey
of following their hearts together.
They still get all excited
and filled with butterflies
when they see each other
at the end of the workday,
and they still are best friends.
They have learned to rely on each other
to make themselves stronger and better people.

How blessed we all are
to be here with Bride and Groom today
to celebrate the power of their love
and their union as husband and wife.

This world of ours needs all the love it can get.
So let us learn through Bride and Groom's example
and let us all do everything we can
to support them in keeping the flame of their love
vibrant and radiant.

Gathering Words #23

As many of you know,
Groom and Bride met at her veterinary office
in Greenville, South Carolina,
three years ago.
Groom had no idea
that a thousand miles from where he grew up
in rural Vermont
amongst the dairy farms,
he would meet a girl
with a cow on her license plate;
a girl that cut her own grass
and drove a stick shift
in a car with no air-conditioning;
a girl that understood about such things
as ice fishing and cross-country skiing.

He enlisted the help of his mom
to find out if Bride was single.
That was something he had never done before.

Some say he poisoned his poor dog
so he could return to the clinic week after week.

And so, they began their relationship as friends.
Bride remembers

dinners out with groups of friends.
Groom always made her feel
like the most important person in the room.

She says sometime
during those months of friendship,
she fell in love.
She isn't sure of the exact moment.
Perhaps it was a picnic in the woods,
a surprise champagne toast
with the purchase of her first car,
or when Groom became an assistant
with a caesarian section on a cow
during a date.

Today, these friends become Marriage Partners,
and the story continues.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments

REMEMBRANCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS #1

At this time,
we would like to honor the memory
of Groom's paternal grandparents,
____ and _____,
and Bride's father _____,
*who, while no longer with us physically,
are carried in our hearts.

**Alternatives:*

- a. who are here today in our hearts.
- b. who, while unable to be with us here today,
are carried in our hearts.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #2

Bride and Groom
have asked that we take a moment
to honor the memory of those loved ones
who could only be here today in spirit.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #3

There are many special people
who are unable to be here with us today
for one reason or another.
So let us call them forward in our hearts.

We would especially like to remember
____ and _____,
who were unable to make the trip,
and Bride's maternal grandfather, _____,
who has passed away.

We also remember at this time
three people through whom
Bride and Groom witnessed and experienced
inspirational commitment and love:
____, ____, and ____.

We welcome their presence here with us today
and celebrate their places in our lives.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #4

At this time, Bride and Groom
would like us all to remember with them
a very special person, ____,
a loving wife, mother, and great friend,
who, while unable to be here with us today,
is carried now and forever in our hearts.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #5

At this time, we would like to remember ____,
of the Seneca Iroquois,
revered father of Bride and Bride's sister,
and grandfather to ____ and ____.
____ was known for his honor,
intelligence, integrity, and native spirituality.
He demonstrated unfaltering dedication
to furthering understanding and appreciation
of the natural world.
His spirit lives on
in all fortunate enough
to have known and loved him,
and is felt here today
at this happy occasion.

We also remember Groom's grandmothers,
____ and ____.

Their very special love, friendship, and support
are priceless gifts that Groom carries with him
every day of his life.

These loved ones are held in our hearts.

*There might also be occasion to acknowledge the coincidence of your wedding day
with an important event in the life of one of your dear ones.*

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #6

At this time,
Bride and Groom would like to make
a special acknowledgment of Groom's parents,
____ and _____,
who are celebrating their fortieth wedding anniversary
this very day!

Happy Anniversary to you!

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #7

Today is All Saints' Day.
It is a day when we are to remember and honor
the saints who have gone before us—
those who were officially named as saints
as well as those unofficial saints
of our daily lives.

One of the remarkable things that we learn
when we study the lives of saints
is that they were ordinary people

like you and me.
What set each of them apart
was their coming to know
the presence of God in their lives,
and their choosing to Live in God's Holy Thoughts—
otherwise known as the LIGHT.
They lived their lives
as journeys home to the heart of God.

Isn't it amazing
that each of us has the opportunity
to make that same choice with our life?

Which of us will be remembered and honored
as the saints of our times?

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #8

At this time, Bride and Groom
would like to extend their love and best wishes
to Groom's sister and brother-in-law,
____ and _____,
who are home in Santa Barbara
giving birth to their first child.

We send our blessings and best wishes
to them and their new baby.

Remembrances and Acknowledgments #9

Today is special for Bride and Groom
not only because it is their wedding day,
but because it is the seventh anniversary
of the day they met

and the second anniversary
of the day they became engaged.

Bride and Groom,
as you move through the years ahead
as Marriage Partners,
may you come upon this date,
year after year,
only to find yourselves
more deeply and profoundly loving each other.

Charge for the Couple

Charge for the Couple #1

Bride and Groom,
you have made
a very serious and important decision
in choosing to marry each other today.
You are entering into a sacred covenant as life partners.

As in tending the flowers in a garden,
the quality of your marriage
will reflect the effort
you put into nurturing this relationship.
You have the opportunity
to go forward from this day
to create a faithful, kind, and tender relationship.

We bless you this day.
It is up to you
to keep the blessings flowing
each and every day of your lives together.

We wish for you
the wisdom, compassion, and constancy
to create a peaceful sanctuary
in which you can both grow in love.

Groom, do you understand
and accept this responsibility,
and do you promise
to do your very best each day
to create a loving, healthy, and happy marriage?

Groom: Yes, I do.

Bride, do you understand
and accept this responsibility,
and do you promise
to do your very best each day
to create a loving, healthy, and happy marriage?

Bride: Yes, I do.

Charge for the Couple #2

Bride and Groom,
by entering into the covenant of marriage today
you are declaring your faith in each other.
You have indeed earned this faith and trust
by creating a sound foundation for this marriage.

Your task now is to build on this solid base.
Imbue your loving partnership
with the caring, trust, vulnerability, and kindness
that are essential to a healthy marriage relationship.

In dedicating yourselves to these values
you will create a marriage that is a source of joy,
in which you may both grow in love
and find fulfillment.

Know that you will be tested
by the routines of daily life,
by chance and circumstance,
and by the full cycle of the seasons of life.

Know that together you must encounter life's sorrow
no less than its sweetness,
its frustration along with its grace and ease,
its disappointments along with its fulfillment.

Enter your marriage
confident in the love and trust
you have already created between you.
As you go forward in your journey together
as husband and wife,
devote yourselves to living
according to the vows you share today.

Keep your love alive
with your openness to each other
and your enthusiasm for each other.
You hold each other's hearts
in the palms of your hands.
Be gentle caregivers, honoring this trust.

Let this be a marriage
that enhances your individuality
and allows you to know
the greatest gift that God has given us—
the ability to love one another and to be loved.

Is it in this spirit
and for this purpose
that you have come here to be joined together?

Bride and Groom: Yes, it is.

The Declaration of Support

Declaration of Support #1

Bride and Groom,
today we have come together
to celebrate the love you have found with each other.
By being here with you,
each of us is declaring our support
for your decision to join together in marriage.

(To guests)

As families and friends,
you form the community of support
that surrounds Bride and Groom.
Each of you, by your presence here today,
is being called upon
to uphold them in honoring and loving each other.

Always stand beside them, never between them.
Offer them your love and support,
not your judgment.
Encourage them with your kindness and loving hearts,
and honor this marriage
into which they have come to be joined today.

Declaration of Support #2

We give thanks for the gift of love
and the opportunity to enter into its mystery.

We pray that Bride and Groom
possess the kind of love

that will bring them great delight,
peacefulness, and friendship.
May they find their hearts and souls
growing ever more closely together over the years,
and may the sanctuary
of their love and friendship
nurture each of them
in their own most beautiful and unique expressions.
May their love be strong enough
to survive the tides of life.

May they know God's presence in their lives
through their love for each other
and through our love for them as well.

May all of us here be ready
to offer our support when it is needed,
and may we have the wisdom to know when it is not.
And, above all, may we return to them
the love that they have given us.

In the next version, the parents are called forward to stand behind the Bride and Groom to declare their support for the marriage. This action symbolizes the joining together of the two families. Sometimes, couples like this sentiment but do not have the "perfect" families with both sets of parents still married and/or living. In such cases, other family members may be called forward to represent one's heritage.

Declaration of Support #3

When two individuals
come together in marriage,
their families and friends are also joined together
into a larger circle of caring.

From now on,
you will know Bride and Groom
not only as individuals,
but as Marriage Partners,
and your individual lives will be linked together
as members of this community.

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
would you please come and stand behind Bride?

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
would you please come and stand behind Groom?

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
you stand before us
symbolizing the traditions and family
from which Bride comes.
Do you willingly and gladly support
Bride's marriage to Groom?

Mr. and Mrs. _____: Yes, we do!

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
you stand before us
symbolizing the traditions and family
from which Groom comes.
Do you willingly and gladly support
Groom's marriage to Bride?

Mr. and Mrs. _____: Yes, we do!

(Families greet each other and return to their seats.)

The form of this greeting between the families will reflect the level of formality of the ceremony as well as how well-acquainted the two families are with each other. Some choose handshakes, others are huggers. Sometimes the Bride and Groom get involved and other times it is simply the parents or family members greeting each other.

Declaration of Support #4

Today, we form a circle of love
around Bride and Groom
as they enter into marriage.

To last, their marriage must be a consecration
of each to the other,
and of both to the wider community
of which they are a part.

That community starts with each and every one of you,
their loved ones.

Through their act of marriage,
Bride and Groom have gathered you around them
like a comforting blanket,
forming their community of love and support
as they move forward
into a shared life as Marriage Partners.

Now, let us share in a moment
of silently extending our blessings
to Bride and Groom
for a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.

Bride and Groom, it is very special
that you have chosen to celebrate your marriage union
in the circle of your families.

So, I would like to welcome
each member of your families:

*(Family members are each called by name, given a flower by the Bride and Groom,
then one by one join into a circle around the Bride and Groom.)*

This circle of your family
represents your circle of loving, caring,
friendship, and family support.
These people embody the traditions and values
that have brought you to this point in your lives.

Bride and Groom, at this time,
your parents would like to share
their best wishes with you.

Bride's mother:

Bride, your father and I
are so happy for you today
and filled with pride and joy that our baby girl
has become such an accomplished and lovely woman.
And, as though that were not enough,
you have found a profound love with Groom
and brought this magnificent young man into our family.

Bride's father:

Groom, I never imagined there would come a day
when I could sincerely feel
that anyone was wonderful enough for our Bride.
But you have changed all that.
She has chosen wisely,

and we are delighted to have you in our family.

Bride's mother:

Bride and Groom, we have had the good fortune
to build and enjoy a secure and nurturing marriage.
Our greatest wish for you
is that you too have the good fortune
to share a healthy and happy marriage,
and that you continue
to light up the room for each other
for the rest of your lives.

Groom's mother:

My dear son Groom,
nothing could give your father and me greater pleasure
than to stand here with you today
knowing that you have found
what your generation calls your soul mate.
I have watched you and Bride really take your time
in getting to know each other
and in building a solid foundation
of love and respect for each other.
And now,
as you stand on the threshold of your marriage,
I can truly say
we support you both without reservation
and with great enthusiasm.

Groom's father:

I remember when Groom was a young boy
and used to love learning
all the names of the trees, flowers, and birds.
Now I listen to the two of you

share your anecdotes and lessons from nature
and am so pleased for you both
that you share this common bond.
Seeing how much you two
love and understand nature
touches me deeply.
You are a wise and wonderful pair,
and you make us all better people
just by knowing you.
May God bless you always.

Some couples like to have their guests take a pledge of support for their marriage.

Declaration of Support #5

I invite each of you as members of this gathering
to indicate your support for Bride and Groom
by answering "I will"
to the following question:

By God's grace,
will each of you
do everything you can
to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?

Guests: I will.

I encourage you as families and friends
to always choose your loving
in your thoughts about
and interactions with Bride and Groom.
Stand beside them, not between them.
Come to them with hearts of peace, not judgment.

Honor them and yourselves as children of God.
Honor their marriage
as a sacred union with God.
Show them your kindness, your support,
and your loving hearts.

Declaration of Support #6

Collectively, you represent
the families, friends, and traditions
that have brought Bride and Groom
to this point in their lives.
Please affirm your support for this marriage
by responding “Yes, I do” to the following question:

As part of the community
that surrounds Bride and Groom,
do you offer your love and support
to strengthen their marriage
and bless this family created by their union?

Guests: Yes, I do!

Declaration of Support #7

Bride and Groom
would like to acknowledge their parents,
whose love, support, and nurturing
are such an essential part
of who they are today.
They thank you for being their first teachers
of the power and possibilities of love.

May you take great pride in the fact

that the seeds of love
you have planted in Bride and Groom
will flourish in the formation
of this new family today.
Let us all remember, today and always,
that there is nothing more important
than loving one another.

Marriage Address

Marriage Address #1

Marriage is the essence of human relationships.
It challenges us to be of one accord
without abandoning the truth of our individuality.
It challenges us to not lose ourselves in one another,
but rather to walk side by side
heading in the same direction.

As with all relationships,
marriage is an endless presentation of choices
about how we want to be with one another.
Each choice results in either more unity
or more separation.
Choose into that unity, Bride and Groom,
every chance you get.

Sacrifice your judgments, expectations,
and any other ways
that you have learned to separate yourselves
from each other.
Share the gifts of your friendship, humor,
vulnerability, sensitivity, and kindness.
Be sure to find ways each day
to protect, affirm, and support each other,
and to treasure the balance and shared values
that you have found with each other.

Enjoy the intertwining
of your independence with your intimacy.
I wish you the courage

to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives.
God bless you.

*The following two paragraphs are an alternative to the first two paragraphs of
Marriage Address #1.*

Marriage Address #1a

Marriage is the essence of human relationships.
It challenges us to be of one accord
without abandoning the truth
of our individuality.
It challenges us to recognize ourselves in one another,
and to admire and respect each other
while walking side by side
heading in the same direction—
sometimes so close together
that there will be only one set of footprints.

As with all relationships,
marriage is an endless presentation of choices
about how we want to be with one another.
Each choice presents an opportunity for more unity.
Choose into that unity, Bride and Groom,
every chance you get.

Marriage Address #2

Bride and Groom,
demonstrate your love for yourselves and each other
through caring and sharing.
Stretch your love large enough
to embrace whatever life brings to you.

Let it fill you, surround you,
comfort and protect you.

Let your hearts be truly safe and at home with each other.
Be generous in expressing your love.
Be open to receive love from each other.
Be flexible and forgiving with each other.
Let your relationship be a catalyst
that transforms you
into the expression of your highest selves.

Remember that your relationship
is alive and ever-changing
and that your love is a miracle,
always inviting you to grow, to learn,
to blossom, and to expand.
How you regard each other
and how you behave toward each other
will determine the destiny of your union.
It is your creation together,
your sacred responsibility.

Be kind to your relationship.
Nourish it with tender loving care,
and, above all else,
keep your love alive.
Treat it as the precious blessing it is.

Do not just be married or in love;
but let your marriage be an active process
of loving each other.

The quality of your marriage is up to you.
Both of you as individuals
and together as a couple
will choose what kind of marriage you will create,
promote, and allow
through your thoughts, feelings, and actions each day.

In the hardest of times,
always remember to reach for the Godness—
the goodness inside yourselves and each other—
to the Oneness of our Lord's most loving message of
"When two or more are gathered in my name,
there I am also."

May you always honor the sanctity of your union
and thus be blessed beyond your wildest dreams.

Marriage Address #3

Bride and Groom,
your marriage will, no doubt,
be filled with surprises.
Some you will welcome,
while others will test the strength and flexibility
of your bond.

Your life together will present many opportunities
to refine and deepen your love
and to explore the profound depths of your being.
May you be compassionate with each other
and nurture yourselves, each other,
and this union with tender loving care.

May your love create a safe haven for you both
on the journey that lies ahead of you.
Lead with your hearts
and take the time to do the simple things
that will nurture your love.

Deeply listen to each other—
to your dreams and to your frustrations.
Be helpmates.
Be playful in finding ways
to give your love anew to each other every day.

Let your love be an inspiration to others
to reach for what is good within us all.
May your love be so abundant
that you have plenty to share with the rest of us as well.

It is your love
that has brought us together here today.
May it grow deeper and sweeter
with each passing year.

Marriage Address #4

A true marriage is the ultimate relationship
because it offers the opportunity of limitless intimacy
between two people.

It is a great and challenging adventure
into the depths and heights of human caring,
affection, trust, and understanding.

For those who take its sacred vows,
their lives are intermingled

as the waters of two streams become one,
flowing together into a mighty river.

A true spiritual marriage
is a journey of transformation
into the profound mysteries of life and creation.
In marriage, two become one,
and that one is far more complex and dynamic
than the simple addition of the two.

In marriage,
we do not give ourselves to another,
but rather surrender into something greater
while maintaining our balance
and well-being as individuals.
Together, we co-create a shared identity we call "we."

A truly sacred marriage union
is a vehicle for self-realization
that allows us to know our true selves
by reflection through our loved one.
Thus, marriage is a divine instrument
through which we come to know God's presence
in each other and in the world around us.

Bride and Groom,
you have come here today
to surrender into the co-creation
of something wholly new and transcendent
your precious, sacred, and unique journey
as Marriage Partners.
Today, you step into a much fuller experience
and expression of the mysteries and miracles of love.

Your precious, blessed, and sacred union
is lovely in its innocence,
mighty in its strength,
and abundant with possibilities.
It belongs to you both.
Over time you will give it an identity.
We wish for you the wisdom,
strength of character,
and divine creativity
to make this a happy marriage,
a safe harbor,
and a joyful journey to share.

Marriage Address #5

Marriage is a magnificent opportunity
to share one's life with another
and to enjoy the adventures inherent
in this most intimate of human relationships.
Today, we gather here
to rejoice with and for Bride and Groom
as they embark on this voyage of discovery.
Bride and Groom,
from this day forward,
this date, _____,
will always have special meaning for you
as the day you vowed to love and to cherish each other
in all ways, always.

Each year when you come upon your anniversary
I encourage you to rededicate yourselves
to the vows you make here today.

Take stock of where you are in your marriage
and how you are doing as Marriage Partners.
Express your gratitude to each other
for the ways that you have effectively loved
and supported one another,
and forgive yourselves and each other
for any judgments that have come between you.

Show each other
that you can be trusted and counted on as a comfort
when facing difficult times,
and celebrate abundantly
the successes and joys life brings your way.
Let your love lead the way
and be more important than anything else.
Then, your lives together
will be filled with blessings and joy.

Marriage Address #6

Bride and Groom,
this bond you share is a true miracle
and a blessing from God.
Treasure it and carefully tend it each day.
You breathe life into each other
and provide a safe and sacred harbor
where you are able to shed all of your worldly illusions
while witnessing, receiving, and cherishing
the precious truth of one another.

Generously shower each other
with the gifts of your faith, strength, honesty,
beauty, and complexity.

This Marriage Address is customized to acknowledge the creation of a family with children from previous marriages.

Marriage Address #7

Bride and Groom,
you began as best friends,
and now that friendship has grown
into a loving and abiding commitment.

Remember that the strength and power
of the love you share
with each other and with your children
stand upon your health and well-being as individuals.

Be aware of your needs as individuals
and lovingly communicate them to each other.
Teach the other how to love you
and care for you as well.

Tenderly nurture your children
so that they always feel your love
and know that they are safe and cared for.
Celebrate your love for each other
and for the children
each and every day.
Remember that God's infinite wisdom
brought you together
and will continue to light your path
all the days of your lives.

Share the gifts of your friendship,
your patience, and your tenderness.
Always nurture this partnership

with your incredible ability
to communicate with each other,
and your abiding respect for each other's strength,
wisdom, freedom, and differences.

Continue to bless each other with your eternal honesty
and your delight and gratitude
for the glory of being able to share your destiny.

Remember to let each of your children know every day
how precious they are to you.
Surround each other and your children
with your tender loving care.

I wish you the courage
to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives.
God bless you.

Candle Ceremonies

Candle Ceremony #1

From every human being there rises a light
that reaches straight to heaven.
When two souls
who are destined to be together
find each other,
their streams of light flow together,
and a single brighter light
goes forth from their united being.
Human love is not a substitute for divine love—
it is an extension of it.

Bride and Groom,
when you see each other
as the divine and eternal beings that you are,
you will never cease to wonder and glory
in your coming together.

The purpose of human love
is to awaken love for God.
The truth that is continually reborn
is that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.

When two people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride and Groom,
in committing to one another today,

you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in one another,
to nurture and tend
that divine flame in your partner
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times your partner may doubt or forget
the existence of that light within him or herself.

Bride, take this candle now,
and light it from the center candle
representing the divine source.
As you do so, symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Groom.

Groom, as you light this candle from the divine source,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Bride.

Now, bring your individual flames together,
symbolizing the new and greater flame of your marriage,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

And never forget that the light of your union,
while made up of
your unique and individual expressions of light,
is continually sustained and renewed
by your connection to
the eternal and inexhaustible light of God, the Source.

Some couples choose to extend the light to their guests as well. The ushers distribute candles to all the guests as they arrive. After lighting and joining together their own candles, the Bride and Groom turn to the Best Man and Maid of Honor to light their candles. They in turn pass the light to other members of the bridal party and then it is extended through the Bride's and Groom's parents to all the guests. Given the time it takes to do this, however, it is best done only in small gatherings. Some background music works well here. The text for this goes as follows.

Candle Ceremony #1a

Will everyone please stand?

Now, share the blessings of your divine love
by passing the light to your guests,
bringing us all more deeply into one accord
as we stand together in celebration
of your sacred union.

As we pass the light,
let us take a moment to look into the eyes
of the one we are passing the light to.
As you receive the light,
take a moment
to silently extend your own special blessing
to Bride and Groom on their wedding day.

The next version of the Candle Ceremony is an abbreviated rewrite of the first version. This one is designed for those who would like to do a Candle Ceremony without reference to God. Here, the center candle represents the marriage while the other two candles represent the Bride and the Groom. A small votive candle is lit before the ceremony begins and the other candles are lit from it.

Candle Ceremony #2

Every human being possesses a special light
that burns within them.

When two spirits, destined to be together, find each other,
their streams of light flow together,
and a single, brighter light
goes forth from their union.

Bride and Groom,
by committing to one another today,
you kindle the light within each other,
and promise to do your best
to always see that light within one another,
to nurture and tend that flame in your partner
as best you can,
especially in difficult times,
when this may be hardest to do.

Bride, take this candle as a symbol of your spirit;
and Groom, take this candle as a symbol of your spirit.

Now joining your individual flames together,
light the center candle which symbolizes the spirit of your union
and the new and greater flame of your marriage.
As you do so, silently vow to tend the spirit of this union,
and never forget that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

The next adaptation of the Baal Shem Tov Candle Ceremony is designed to include young children from previous marriages in the candle lighting. The wording has been altered to be more meaningful to the children.

Candle Ceremony #3

God has made each person unique,
and each of us is born with special gifts.
Within each of us there rises a light
that reaches straight to the heavens.
And when two people like Bride and Groom find each other,
their light touches together
and a single brighter light
is created from their being together.

When a family is formed as an extension of this union,
the light gets even brighter
because of the light that flows
from the children as well.

The purpose of human love is to awaken love for life.
Within each person burns the spark of life,
and when people love one another,
they make each other more aware
of that spark within each other.
Bride, Groom, and Child,
take these candles now,
and light them from this center candle
representing the source of life.
As you do so,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the spirit in one another.

Now, bring your individual flames together,
symbolizing the new and greater flame of your family,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

May the light of your family
guide you through your lives.
May it always help you to know
that your life has purpose.
May it also show you that
while there is sadness in life,
there is also great joy and comfort.
May this light help you to see
the wonder of the world around you.
May it remind you to see the light in others
with whom you cross paths.
And may the light that is the love you share
grow brighter with time.

This next version is also designed to include children but preserves the language of the first Candle Ceremony.

Candle Ceremony #4

Child 1 and Child 2,
will you please come and join us?

From every human being there rises a light
that reaches straight to heaven.
And when two souls who are destined to be together
find each other,

their streams of light flow together,
and a single brighter light
goes forth from their united being.

When a family is formed as an extension of this union,
the light is intensified
by the light that flows from the children as well.

Human love is not a substitute for divine love.
It is an extension of it.
And when each of you come to know one another
as the divine and eternal beings that you are,
you will never cease to wonder and glory
in your coming together.

The purpose of human love
is to awaken love for God.
The truth that is continually reborn
is that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.

When people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness
of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
in joining together today,
you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in each other,

to nurture and tend that divine flame in one another
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times when one of you may doubt or forget
the existence of that light within him or herself.

Take these candles now,
and light them from this center candle
representing the divine source.
As you do so,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in one another.

Now, bring your individual flames together,
symbolizing the new and greater flame of your family,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

And never forget that the light of your union,
while made up of your unique and individual
expressions of light,
is continually sustained and renewed
by your connection to the eternal
and inexhaustible light of God, the Source.

Candle Ceremony #5

The lighting of the Unity Candle is a ritual
symbolizing the union of two people
as they enter into marriage.
The Unity Candle itself represents

the oneness that is being created
by the joining of their individual lives
into a shared journey.

The individual candles symbolize
the uniqueness of Bride and Groom
as they walk side by side heading in the same direction.
They are separate yet one.

The lighting of the Unity Candle
in the presence of God
symbolizes the great mystery
of the union of two becoming one.
Bride and Groom, always remember
that as you join together in marriage,
you are still two separate beings,
each with your own unique needs, dreams, and desires,
and that in marriage,
you are creating a covenant
of loving, caring, and sharing between you.

Now, Bride and Groom,
as you bring these lights
which symbolize your individual selves
closer and closer together,
your individual flames merge
into the greater light of your union.

As you light the Unity Candle
to symbolize the enduring flame of your marriage,
let us each take a moment
to silently express our prayerful wishes
for your happiness and well-being in this marriage.

And let us remember that
just as Bride and Groom are becoming one,
so are we coming together
into a circle of family and friends
in loving support of this marriage.

Bride and Groom,
tend the light of your loving union
with great devotion and kindness.
May you be blessed with a lifelong partnership
of loving and learning through God's grace.

This next Candle Ceremony uses either five or seven candles to include either the mothers or all four parents of the Bride and Groom. The mothers or parents come forward and light their candles from two votive candles that are lit prior to the ceremony. They then turn to light the candles of the Bride and Groom, who in turn light the Unity Candle. The text is as follows.

Candle Ceremony #6

Within each human being
burns the spark of the divine light
that illuminates us all.

As Bride and Groom's mothers/parents light their candles,
we are reminded of the faith, wisdom, and love
that have been passed on to Bride and Groom
from the generations before them.
Each generation has passed on their light
through the mystery of two becoming one.
And here again today,
we witness the gathering light
as two families become one.

As they light Bride's and Groom's candles,
they pass their heritage
into this newly forming family
and once again two become one.
And finally,
as Bride and Groom light the Unity Candle,
they are symbolically stepping
onto the shared path of their marriage.
May their love for each other
grow deeper each day.
And may they tend this union well
so they may enjoy the fruits of its harvest—
abiding in peace, joy, and happiness.

This last version occurs after the exchange of rings. The Couple steps forward, picking up two candles and lighting a large central candle. The text is as follows:

Candle Ceremony #7

This flame you ignite before us today
is strong and shining brightly.
May you tend it well
so that it may shine throughout your lives.

May the warmth of the love it symbolizes
forever bring you courage, reassurance, and comfort
and fill you both with strength and joy.

TREE PLANTING CEREMONY

Tree Planting Ceremony #1

Within each human being there is a spirit,
an immaterial essence unique to each individual.
Some might call this a soul,
others an inner voice,
and yet others may give it no name at all.
Yet, we all recognize
the set of motivating passions,
beliefs, impulses, and heartfelt truths,
which make up the person we know as our true self.

When two people meet and share these true selves freely,
a special union develops.
And when it is two naturally kindred spirits who meet,
they intuitively recognize each other
and their kinship as love.

Bride and Groom,
in committing to one another today,
you give expression to the kinship
that exists between you,
acknowledging the new strength and meaning
it gives your lives.
You promise always to be true to yourselves
and to share your true selves with each other.
You promise also to nurture and tend
the spirit in the other,
especially in difficult times
and times when one of you may forget
the existence of that spirit
within him or herself.

It is with these thoughts
that Bride and Groom plant this seedling
in soil from the land of both of their families.

(Bride and Groom plant their seedling.)

Just as the kinship
between Bride and Groom
needs nurturing,
so does this seedling
which symbolizes the joining of two families
and the start of new life.

SAND CEREMONY

SAND CEREMONY #1

Bride and Groom
today you join your lives together
promising to walk side by side
heading in the same direction
into your future.

You promise to carry each other's hearts
in the palms of your hands
with tender loving care
as you journey through the trials and triumphs of life
that lie ahead of you.

Now, take your individual vessels of sand
representing your lives from birth to this day.

As you pour them into the central container
representing your shared union,
you are symbolically blending your individual lives
into a marriage partnership—
walking the road of life together
from this day forward.

Just as these grains of sand can never be separated,
so too may you be united in love
for the rest of your lives.

WATER CEREMONY

Water Ceremony #1

Many of us have been blessed to notice
that when we share
a true and abiding love with a partner,
even plain water tastes sweet.
Bride and Groom,
share this clear water now
as a symbol of the sweet and precious love you share.

(The Bride and Groom give each other a drink from the same glass.)

As you do so,
remember that just as you are now partaking
of the sweetness and purity
of this fresh and clean water,
you have already been blessed
to partake of the brilliance and magnificence
of the love you share.

By devoting yourselves
to cherishing and nurturing this love,
may your marriage grow sweeter
with each passing year.

Wedding Vows

Wedding Vows #1

I, _____, take thee, _____,
to be my wedded wife/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,
till death us do part,
according to God's holy ordinance;
and thereto I pledge thee my faith.

Wedding Vows #2

In the name of God,
I, _____, take you, _____,
to be my wife/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,
until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

Wedding Vows #3

I take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband,
from this day forward,

to join with you
and share all that is to come.

I promise to be faithful to you
until death parts us.

Wedding Vows #4

____, I take you to be my wife/husband,
to laugh with you in joy,
to grieve with you in sorrow,
to grow with you in love,
serving mankind in peace and hope,
as long as we both shall live.

Wedding Vows #5

I, _____, choose you, _____,
in the presence of our friends and families,
to be my wife/husband and partner
from this time forward;
to love you,
to be a comfort and safe haven in your life,
to hold you close,
to listen deeply when you speak,
to nourish you with my gentleness,
to uphold you with my strength,
to weigh the effects of the words I speak
and the things I do,
to never take you for granted,
and to always give thanks
for your presence in my life.

Wedding Vows #6

Dearest _____,
I choose you to be my wife/husband,
to be by each other's side
through our life's journey together.

You are my best friend.
You are my precious love.
You are the one I choose to spend my life with.

I promise to cherish you,
to honor you,
to love and respect you.
I promise to comfort and encourage you,
when we are healthy
and when we must endure sickness;
when we are filled with the joys of success
and when we are burdened with sorrows.

_____, I promise to love you without condition
for all the days of my life.

Wedding Vows #7

I, _____, choose you, _____,
as my wife/husband.
I will love you tenderly,
I will laugh with you and cry with you
through the trials and triumphs to come.

_____, I stand before our families and friends
as your lifelong partner.

Wedding Vows #8

I, _____, choose you, _____,
as my Life Partner.

I am so glad that I waited
for my dreams to come true
by finding you.

I am so blessed that I get to be your partner
and am comforted to know
that I have chosen wisely.

Whatever life has in store for us,
I will honor and respect our marriage
and be by your side,
loving you through it all.
I will always strive to be
the wife/husband of your dreams.
_____, I will love you forever.

Wedding Vows #9

As your wife/husband,
I am blessed to receive your love,
I will honor you with my caring,
sensitivity, strength, and gentleness.
I will be kind and honest, fair and true.
May God always keep us
and watch over our love and our home.

Wedding Vows #10

_____, each of us has had quite a journey
in our lives so far.
I feel so blessed
to have found you as my partner.

I love you,
and I am choosing to share all of life's blessings,
challenges, joys, and sorrows with you.
As your husband/wife,
I promise to nurture you,
to be kind and patient,
forgiving and faithful.
I promise to honor our differences
and to learn from them.
I will encourage you and stand by you
in our life together,
and will grow with you
in the shelter of our love.

I promise you this with my heart and soul.
I vow to you
before our families and friends,
to dedicate myself to our marriage,
our friendship, and our love.

Wedding Vows #11

____, I love you
and choose to share my life with you.
I will laugh with you in times of joy
and comfort you in times of sorrow.
I will be at your side
through all of life's challenges.

____, I will love you forever.

Wedding Vows #12

____, I promise to love you,

to cherish you,
and to respect you
in all ways, always.

I promise to participate fully
in our Marriage Partnership.
I will give fully
of my mind, body, heart, and soul.

I promise to make your plans and dreams
as important to me as my own.
I promise to do my share
so that our lives together
can be healthy, happy, and abundantly satisfying.

I promise to lovingly fulfill these vows
each and every day
for all of my days.

Wedding Vows #13

I, _____, promise
to always keep my love for you alive
and out in front of all I do.
I promise to be faithful and true
no matter what challenges may come our way.
I promise to nurture you as my wife/husband,
my lover, and my best friend.
I will continue to love you and cherish you,
walking through this life, together, hand in hand.

*Some couples choose to exchange vows by responding to a question posed by the
Officiant, as in the following two examples:*

Wedding Vows #14

Do you, _____,
of your own free will and consent,
choose _____
to be your beloved wife/husband,
and do you promise
to love, honor, and cherish her/him always?

Groom/Bride: I do.

Wedding Vows #15

_____, do you take this woman/man
as your wife/husband and equal,
your lover and your best friend;
keeping yourself only unto her/him,
for as long as you both shall live?

Groom/Bride: Yes, I do.

Wedding Vows #16

I, _____, take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband,
my lover, and my best friend.
I am choosing to share with you
all of life's blessings:
the joys and sorrows,
the successes and disappointments.

_____, I will love you and cherish you always.
I promise you this with my heart and soul
for all the days of my life.

Wedding Vows #17

I, _____, receive you, _____,
as my wife/husband.

May we love one another with constancy,
live joyously, laugh freely,
and support our marriage
through the trials and triumphs to come.

I will strive to be fair and honest,
wise and true.

Join me in making our hopes and dreams come true
today and forever.

Wedding Vows #18

_____, the moment I first met you,
I knew deep within my heart
that I loved you.

Now that our love has stood the test of time,
I know that I want to spend my life with you.

I honor you, _____.

I cherish your spirit
and am so grateful
for all the ways you share your beautiful love with me
each and every day.

I will always be true to you, _____,
while remaining true to myself.
I will nurture you with tender loving care
and always be by your side
whenever you need or want me.

I am so blessed,
knowing that I get to spend my life with you
singing, dancing, laughing, and crying.
And that we will raise a family together
with all the joy, passion, gratitude, and love
that we are so fortunate to share.

Wedding Vows #19

I, _____, welcome you, _____,
as my partner in life.

May our love forever nourish us
and keep us strong.

Wedding Vows #20

I choose you, _____,
to be my lifelong partner,
lover, and best friend.
I will always be faithful to you,
and be at your side
to laugh with you in times of joy
and comfort you in times of sorrow.
Wherever our path leads us,
it takes us together.

I will encourage and support you,
honor and love you.
I will respect our differences
and do my part to work through
all our challenges.

____, I'll be your safe haven and your home.
With purity of heart and love in my soul,
I stand before our loved ones
as your lifelong partner.

Wedding Vows #21

____, when I look at you,
I see everything that I want and need in my life.
I feel so blessed
every day I wake up and find you next to me.
My love for you is so overwhelming
that at times it leaves me breathless.

After all these years,
I still get excited
to hear your voice on the phone
or to see you after being apart.

My heart aches when we are separated,
yet it is filled with anticipation of seeing you again.
I feel butterflies when you hold my hand
and melt when I look in your eyes.
I am so at peace because I have you.

You are my best friend
who has been with me through it all.
You help me feel safe when I am scared.
You help me laugh when I am sad.
You comfort me when I am hurting.
You reassure me when I am doubting.
When you hold me, I feel that everything is possible,
and that no matter what happens,
we can make it through together.

These past ____ years with you
have been so wonderful.
The bond we have built between us is so strong,
I know that nothing can weaken it.
For all that you have done for me and given to me over the years,
I promise to do the same for you.

All I ask of you is to have faith in us
and let the love we share continue to surround you.
____, as I stand here before you
ready to be your husband/wife,
know this:
you have my heart
and I will be yours and stand by you through eternity.
You are my love.

I love you.

Wedding Vows #22

I have known you
since the beginning of time, _____,
and loved you longer still.
I am so happy, so blessed,
that I found you here in this life.

I promise you
that I will never take this great love for granted;
I will always nurture our love
and be awed by its power.

I vow to you that every day,
I will hold this marriage sacred,
for you are the greatest gift of my life.

Wedding Vows #23

____, when I was a little boy/girl,
I used to dream of my Cinderella/Prince Charming.
Then as I grew up and gained some life experience,
I gathered the wisdom and knowledge
of the qualities and characteristics
that would be important for me to find
in my life partner.

In finding you, _____,
my dreams have come true.
In your love, I have found a home
for my heart and soul.

____, I love that I can trust you and depend on you.
I love your sensibility, integrity,
humor, and generosity.
I love all the ways you let me know
how much you love and value me.

____, I honor and respect you,
and consider it a great privilege
to be able to share our lives together.

I, _____, take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband.
May our love forever nourish us
and keep us strong.

Wedding Vows #24

____, you will always be surrounded by my love.
From this day forward, I promise:

to be by your side,
to be your partner, your husband/wife,
and your very best friend.

Let my love comfort you always.

Wedding Vows #25

In the name of God,
and in the presence of our families and friends,
I, _____, choose you, _____,
to be my beloved wife/husband.

I promise to love you and hold you close,
and to be a comfort
and a safe haven for you in your life.

I promise to nourish you
with my gentleness and caring
and to uphold you with my strength.

I will listen to you with an open mind and heart
and will weigh the effects of the words I speak
and the things I do.

_____, I will forever thank God
for your presence in my life
and you will always be surrounded by my love.

Wedding Vows #26

I, _____, choose you, _____,
to be my wife/husband.
From this day forward,

I promise to love you,
to honor you,
to respect you,
and to support you,
as long as we both shall live.

Wedding Vows #27

____, in the presence of our friends and families,
I offer myself to you in my entirety,
and I accept and love you
without condition.

I promise to support you when you need help.
I promise to turn to you when I need help.
I promise to hold you when you are sad.
I promise to smile with you when you are happy.

My love for you reaches higher than the mountains
and deeper than the sea.
____, I choose to share
the rest of my life with you.

Wedding Vows #28

____, I choose you
for the way your smile lifts my spirit,
for the way you support and respect me,
and for the way you make me feel about us.

I promise to share with you
all my hopes, fears, and dreams.
I promise to nurture your spirit
as I nurture my own.

I will keep laughing with you,
learning with you,
and growing with you.
I will faithfully care for you
with an open heart and with tenderness.

I promise to be there for you,
to warm your toes through the coldest nights.
I promise to remind you how great you are,
just as I did on our first date.

I promise to be at your side in sorrow and in joy
and to love and cherish you always.
I promise you this from my heart
and with my soul
as I dedicate myself to our marriage,
our friendship, and our life together.

Wedding Vows #29

I love you, _____,
and in that love,
and with my deepest gratitude for your presence in my life,
I am honored to become your husband/wife today.

I know that our life together
will include sadness as well as joy.
But I also know
that going through life with you
will make it all the more meaningful.

I know that between the two of us,
we have all the resources, imagination,

strength, and clarity of intention
to protect, grow, and nurture our love
through all of life's ups and downs.

____, I promise to respect you always
and to recognize that your interests, desires, and needs
are as important as mine.

I also know
that the quality of our inner life together
is far more important
than anything we can create
or accomplish in the outer world.

I promise to keep my mind, heart,
and soul open to you.
I promise to be vulnerable enough to let you in
to the tender and secret places within me.

____, I promise to love you without condition
with all that I am and all that I have,
completely and forever.

Wedding Vows #30

My dear and precious _____,
on this, our wedding day,
before God and our families and friends,
I declare my intention to love you well
and to love you always, in all ways.
When we are old and sitting in our rocking chairs
looking back on our life together,
I want us to be proud of ourselves
for how well we loved,

honored, and respected each other.
I want us to be full of memories
about how we enjoyed ourselves and each other,
and how we weathered the storms that came our way.
I want us to be joyful, satisfied, and enriched
by the life we led together.

With that vision in mind, dear _____,
I promise not to take you, your love,
or our relationship for granted.
I promise to give my best to you
and to the family we will create together.

I, _____, take you, _____,
to be my beloved wife/husband
for the rest of my life.

This is a pairing of vows between a Groom and a Bride.

Wedding Vows #31

Groom:

Bride, each of us has traveled a long way
to be here today,
and I feel truly blessed to have found you.

Bride, to you I vow these things:
never to forget the wonder of having found you,
never to lose sight of the rare gift
that is your love,
never to take that love for granted,
and always to place our relationship first.

I vow always to be open with my heart,

to be honest, sincere, respectful, and kind.
In the presence of these witnesses,
I take you as my wife and partner,
from this day forward,
in happiness and in sorrow,
in sickness and in health,
in good times and in bad,
in weakness and in strength.

All that I am, I give to you
in a bond that is everlasting.
I pledge my love forever.

Bride:

Groom, I too feel truly blessed to have found you.
My days with you fill me with wonder.
At times you are a mirror to my soul.
Other times you are my perfect complement.
You enrich my life
in ways you cannot imagine,
and with each day you give my life new meaning.

You are my lover, my partner, and my best friend.
As your wife, I will be faithful to you always,
laugh freely with you in times of joy,
and cry with you in times of sorrow.
Whatever path life lays before us,
it takes us together.

I will always accept you for who you are,
wholly and without reservation.
And I ask you to accept me as I am.

Your love is my greatest treasure.
I am blessed by the love,
patience, and devotion you have shown me.

All that I am, I give to you
in a bond that is everlasting.
I pledge my love forever.

Wedding Vows #32

____, you reached out to me
and reopened my heart
when I had closed myself to the idea of love.
You have taught me to believe in my ability
to love and be loved.
You have enriched me beyond measure.

____, you have restored my faith and enthusiasm
about being in a relationship with someone
as my partner, my friend,
my confidante, my lover, and my soul mate.
I thank you, _____,
from the bottom of my heart and the depths of my being.
As we stand here today,
I am excited about our journey together as Marriage Partners.
I promise to always be by your side
through the joys and sorrows that lie ahead.
And I promise to keep my heart open to you
for the rest of my life.

____, I am truly blessed to stand before you as your husband/wife.
With all that I am and all that I have,
I will love you each and every day to come.

Wedding Vows #33

My dear and precious, strong and tender ____,
receiving your love and giving my love to you
is what I treasure above all else in this world.

I promise you that I will pay attention
to the needs of our love
and continue to place it above all else.

You can count on me,
as I know I can depend on you,
to share life's joys and sorrows,
to keep my mind, heart, and soul open to you,
to be honest and true.

And just in case you have been wondering
why those two rocking chairs are over there,
they are my gift to us.
They are the rocking chairs
that will sit on our front porch
in every house we own.
They are the very chairs that we will sit in
when we are old and gray,
looking back on all the years that now stand before us.
I promise to be right by your side, ____, through it all.

I love you today.
I will love you even more tomorrow.
I will love you always.

Wedding Vows #34

____, you are my friend and my partner.

I want to spend all my days, weeks,
months, and years with you,
facing life's worst
and celebrating life's best together.

I am so grateful to you
for all the ways that you enrich my life
and inspire me to stand tall in my truth.
I have known since the moment we met
that you are my greatest blessing.

____, I promise to love you,
comfort you, support you,
and be by your side
building a healthy and happy marriage
and family together.

I, _____, take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband.

Wedding Vows #35

____, I choose you
to be my lifelong partner.
I offer myself completely to you
and promise to be faithful and at your side,
honoring and loving you
each and every day,
now and forever,
wherever our life may lead us.

Wedding Vows #36

____, I am honored to stand before you today
surrounded by our families and friends

as we embark upon our journey together as Marriage Partners.
As your life partner in marriage,
I promise to respect you as your own person
with interests, desires, and needs as important as my own.
I promise to do my part
to weather whatever storms lie ahead
and to joyously celebrate our triumphs.

My intention is to be a wonderful husband/wife to you
and to contribute daily
to the health, balance, and comfort
of our relationship
and the family we plan to create together.

I promise to keep myself open to you,
and to always take delight
in having the privilege of sharing my life with you.

I promise to love you, _____,
in the only way I know how—
completely, and forever.

Wedding Vows #37

_____, it is you, above all others,
who has awakened my soul
and enthused me with the possibility
of becoming all that I am capable of being in this world.
I am so grateful to you for these blessings.
I want you to know
how much I cherish your friendship
and how much I appreciate your belief in me.
Your love is my greatest treasure.
I will be at your side

through all of life's challenges and joys
as we become one in spirit before God.
I promise to give of myself to you
in every way I can,
and to care for you and protect you
as I would my own self.
I promise to be faithful to you in this life,
and to be honest and true to our union until God,
in his perfect wisdom and timing,
calls one of us to Death.

____, I promise to carry
the flame of your love with me forever
in this world and the next,
so that the light of our love,
now one light drawn
from the mingling of two souls,
will always prevail.

In this next example, the Bride and Groom first speak separate vows and then a final statement of commitment together.

Wedding Vows #38

Bride:

Your tenderness and love
have awakened the very best of my spirit.
With you, I enter life stronger
and with greater joy.

On this, our wedding day,
I continue and strengthen my commitment to you:

to hold your trust tenderly and faithfully,
to celebrate loudly,
and to comfort you with my love.

I promise you, Groom,
to keep my heart open,
for now and always.
I will be your home.

Groom:

I enter this day with you, my love,
as my soul partner.
And I ask you to become my wife
so that our journey through life
will be forever filled with this balance.

It is only from knowing
your brilliant love for me
that I can finally see my future.
I want to visit each new moment together;
to rejoice, console, and live with you.
Know that I will be forever true to you
and the family we create.

We shall always be my priority.

Bride and Groom:

I am your partner in and for life.

The following Wedding Vows incorporate the Ring Exchange at the end.

Wedding Vows #39

Groom:

Much time and effort has brought us here today.
When I first felt the power of our love,
I couldn't keep from smiling,
like an explorer overjoyed at having reached his destination.

Your love for me was unmistakable,
quiet as a whisper,
strong as thunder.

We both know that we have found a miracle
and that our love will continue to grow
as we experience life together.
From this day forward,
I take you to be my wife,
promising to stand by you,
through all God has in store for us,
faithfully and compassionately,
as long as we both shall live.

Bride, I give you this ring as a symbol of my promise.

Bride:

Groom, I am honored to become your wife,
and feel blessed to have you as my husband.

I promise you today, Groom,
that I will keep an open mind,
a loving heart, and a giving spirit,
and will do all I can

to make our marriage and our family a work of art
to be both treasured and respected.

I vow to cherish you above all others,
and to respect our individuality.
I promise to encourage you
and to support your decisions.

I will laugh with you in times of joy,
and cry with you in times of sorrow.

I promise to always be true.

I will hold these promises close to my heart
and always protect our sacred bond of marriage.
As we stand before our families and friends,
I pledge this vow to you.

Groom, I give you this ring
as a symbol of my promise.

*These next vows were shared by a couple who were forming a new family with their five
young children from previous marriages.*

Wedding Vows #40

Groom:

Bride, I have never before known
the desire and passion
I have found with you.
I never imagined these feelings
were even possible.
Words cannot describe
our spiritual, physical, and emotional connection.

Life is a series of events and experiences
that together make us who we are;
that person someone else sees when they meet you.

Bride, from the moment we met,
I discovered a unique bond
with a truly special person.
My life was forever changed,
and now, with you in my life,
each day is truly lovely.

We came together from separate paths
and today begin our journey
along the same road,
our destinies forever linked,
our lives intertwined.

I have heard that love consists
not of gazing into each other's eyes,
but of looking outward together
in the same direction.

From deep within my heart, I love you.
Bride, in you I have found someone
to share not only the good times, but the bad;
not only the pleasure, but the pain;
someone to support and be supported by.
You are my companion to confide in and console.
You are my best friend.

I am confident that with you,
none of life's obstacles will stand in our way
and together we will enjoy all that life has to offer.

Bride, my love, my soul mate, my partner, my best friend,
today, I ask you to be my wife and companion.
I commit myself to you
for the rest of our lives together and beyond.
Please share with me the joy of guiding my boys,
Child 1, Child 2, and Child 3,
as I will enjoy guiding Child 4 and Child 5,
together raising our family.

Who knows what other beautiful facets
our relationship will foster?
There awaits us all
the pleasure of growing together
in a life shared for years to come.

Bride:

Our love developed over time,
with respect for each other's talent and ability,
into a friendship.

As we supported and guided each other,
you patiently and tenderly broke down my walls.
While you taught me to look into my heart and soul,
we shared our dreams, hopes, fears, and desires.

Sometime, probably sooner than either of us knew,
we fell in love.
I asked you to catch me while I was falling,
and you wrapped your loving arms around me.
Groom, as I gaze into your beautiful green eyes,
I look into your soul and I join you there.

I have fallen in love with you, my best friend,
a thousand times.

I will fall in love with you thousands more,
giving my love to you freely.

Groom, I know that we will be tested
by the routines of daily life,
by chance and circumstance,
and by the full cycle of the seasons of life.
I am entering into our marriage
knowing that together we will face life's sorrow
no less than its sweetness,
its frustration along with its grace and ease,
its disappointments along with its fulfillment.

I promise that, as your partner,
I will do my best to help us keep our hearts open to each other
and the love flowing between us
even at the times this may be hardest to do.

I will remain at your side,
holding you close and supporting you above all.

The strength of the connection we have between us
was evident when we first met.

In our lives, I will continue to explore
and develop that connection.

As I give myself to you in marriage,

I vow to be a loving woman,
filled with passion and friendship,
to make a happy home
for both of us and our children.

When we are apart,
I will always look at the sky and the moon,
knowing that we are together,
never truly apart,
for our hearts and souls
are so incredibly linked.

You have freed my wings for flying,
and I will fly with you forever.
I will look for your secret places
and share mine with you,
always working to keep our love new,
exciting, adventurous, and young,
especially as it grows in maturity and familiarity.

You were made to love me
and I was made to love you.
Our destinies intertwined,
bringing us together here today
and for the rest of our lives.
Keep your loving arms around me.
Our love proves to me that fairy tales really do come true.
It will last forever.

We have reached our island! Love...
We are there!

Sometimes, knowing the life circumstances of a couple makes vows that they have written deeply meaningful. For example, this set of vows was exchanged by a beautiful couple—well-heeled, well-spoken, well-dressed—and one would assume they were sitting on top of the world in love. Yet, they were both HIV-positive and had met in a recovery program for intravenous drug users. They were thus facing a very uncertain future. There were no dry eyes in the room as they shared these heartfelt vows.

Wedding Vows #41

Groom:

Bride, as my heart and soul yearn for your love,
above all others,
I ask you to be my wife;
to join me in living our lives together
with serenity, courage, and wisdom.
Come with me and we'll grow together,
nourishing the seeds of Love, Faith, and Hope
planted in us by our God.

I promise to love you, Bride,
for who you are,
to honor you as my equal,
to cherish you above all others,
and to respect your individuality.

I promise to encourage and support your decisions
whether I understand them or not.
I will laugh with you in times of joy,
and cry with you in sorrow;
I will be at your side during life's challenges.
I will be gentle and forgiving.
I will be fair and always strive to be honest and true.

As I stand before family and friends,
I pledge this, my vow to you,
and ask you to be my wife.

Bride:

Groom, I strongly believe that our union is God's will.
Therefore, through his grace,
I, Bride, take you, Groom, to be my beloved husband.

With all the sincerity in my heart,
I promise to love you dearly,
to confide in you honestly,
to respect you proudly,
and to always be kind.
I have learned, through you,
the importance of being true to myself,
and as your partner,
I will strive to be fair and true to you.

I look forward to our life together,
enriched by our friendship
and the encouragement we give to one another.
And I am comforted to know
you have promised to be by my side
in times of fear and sorrow.

Groom, from this moment forward,
I offer to you all that I am
and all that I hope to be.
I will be faithful to you
and grateful to God for our love
all the days of my life.

Wedding Vows #42

Groom:

Bride, my love,
it is with deep admiration and quiet humility
that I come before you today
to pledge my life to you and to us.
It is with great honor and the utmost respect
that I ask you to be my wife.

And it is with the deepest sincerity
that I vow to be your husband.

You have shown me a beauty
I thought existed only in dreams,
and a love I thought had been reserved for fairy tales.
It is with warm fondness
that I look back on our time together,
and with excited anticipation
that I look to our future.
From every meal shared
to every dream realized,
I promise to hold our love and our togetherness
with the highest reverence
and the greatest admiration.

From this day forward,
we shall walk together into our future;
even as we walk separately into our own.
I promise to walk before you when you need me,
behind you when you don't,
and beside you always.

I promise to cherish you and to love you
for all time and beyond.
For our love is, and shall be, immeasurable;
not even the hands of time
shall fashion a boundary on our love.

Bride:

Groom, our life together
continues from this day,

for countless days.
And so, in the presence
of our closest friends and families,
I offer this vow and prayer for our love:

May I always let my candle light my way
into your soul
so that I may know your needs
and anticipate your sadness.

May I always be able to ease your fears,
sate your hunger,
and honor the magic
of your presence on this earth.

May our journey together always bring us more joy
than could the sum of our journeys
on separate paths.

With each sunrise may we dance,
and with each sunset may we happily remember.
May we forever know
our own beauty and strength
because we are so deeply cherished by one another.

On sleepless nights,
let my heart sing you a lullaby.
When you lose your way, let me rekindle your torch.

When we are apart,
may I always feel you running through me
like a river that carries my boat to a safe harbor.

When we are too weak in our journey,
may we carry each other in our arms.
And when we can walk forward no further,
may we return in kind to the earth
whispering in the winds of change.

Groom, as your life partner,
I promise to love you
with honesty, dedication, and respect.
I will forever cherish and honor you as I do now,
in sickness and in health,
for richer or for poorer,
for every day you live within me.

Wedding Vows #43

Groom:

Bride, I love you more than everything.
We have been through so much already.
With you at my side,
I look forward to whatever may lie ahead.

You are beautiful and smart, strong yet gentle.
You are charming and fun, intelligent and loving.
You make me laugh at times when I am ready to cry.
You make me smile and relax
even when I am stressed.
You make me a better person just by being in my life.

I love the way you burst into song
and dance for no particular reason.
I love the way you can ignore the rest of the world
and all of its conventions.

I love the way you fall asleep on my shoulder
while trying to stay awake
just so we can spend more time together.

When we are apart,
I am always thinking about you.
I no longer find it sensible to make any plans
that don't include you.
When we are at home,
I don't like us to be in separate rooms.
As we sit side by side,
I love holding your hand in mine.

I vow to always be here for you
and to make any of your problems my own.
I vow to help you with tough decisions
and to always speak my feelings.
I vow to support our dreams
and to shelter you when times are troubled.
I vow to apologize when I am wrong
and to forgive when we misunderstand.
I vow to trust you
and to always believe in you.
I vow to faithfully love you forever
with all of my heart.
Bride, spend your life with me and my life is yours.

Bride:

I love you, Groom, with all my heart.
I have known for many years
that you are part of me
and that we will share our lives together.

With you, I have discovered what love truly means.
I feel lucky for every moment we have together.

You are sweet, brilliant, and fun.
You are extremely gentle and strong at the same time.
You are silly.
You are so logical and level-headed,
yet can be just as nutty as me.
I smile every time I think of you.

I love that you have high ideals
and are not afraid to go after your dreams.
I love that you appreciate the little beauties of life
and live each day to the fullest.
I love that I still get a tingling feeling inside
every time I come home to you.

I vow to always come home to you,
and to always be there
for you to come home to.
I vow always to try to make you laugh,
and to be by your side
when you need someone to hold you.
I vow always to love you for who you are
and to accept the changes that life brings.

Groom, I adore you,
and will tenderly care for you
for all the days of my life.

Ring Exchange

PRELUDE BY THE OFFICIANT

Here are some samples of Preludes to the Ring Exchange. Some couples like to mix and match the sentiments.

Prelude #1

These rings are symbols of the love
that joins you spirit to spirit.
They represent the oneness, eternity, and renewal
inherent in the marriage union.
May these rings serve you
and those who see them upon your fingers
as reminders of the vows you have made here today
and of our need to be faithful in all our relationships.

Prelude #2

These rings are circles,
and circles are symbolic
of the sun, the earth, and the universe.

As arms that embrace,
these wedding rings you give and receive this day
reflect the circle of shared love
into which you enter as partners in life.

May you always be blessed,
and may you abide in peace and love.

Prelude #3

Wedding rings are symbolic reminders
of the unbroken circle of a healthy and abiding love.

Within the safety and comfort of a true marriage,
love freely given has no beginning and no end.
Love freely given has no separate giver and receiver.
Each of you gives your love to the other
and each of you receives love from the other.
And the circle of love goes around and around.

May these rings serve to remind you
of the freedom and the power of your love.

Prelude #4

Bless, O Lord, the giving and receiving of these rings.
May Bride and Groom abide in thy peace
and grow in their knowledge of your presence
through their loving union.

May the seamless circle of these rings
become the symbol of their endless love
and serve to remind them of the covenant
they have entered into today
to be faithful, loving, and kind to each other.

Beloved God,
may they abide in your grace
and be forever true to this union.
Amen.

Prelude #5

Let us pray.
Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings,
that they who wear them
may abide in thy peace
and continue in thy favor;

through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prelude #6

Rings are adornments,
carefully chosen for their beauty and simplicity.
They quietly sit upon our fingers,
reminding us of the power of love
and the pledge of the wearer to his or her partner
to be faithful and true,
and to nurture their love so it will last a lifetime.
Bride and Groom,
may these rings be for you always
your most treasured adornment,
and may the love they symbolize
be your most treasured possession.

Prelude #7

Just as we bear witness to a written covenant
with our signature,
so, too, do we exchange wedding rings
to seal the vows of marriage.

Wedding rings are enduring symbols
that remind us of the pledges we have made to each other
and of our responsibility to honor each other
by honoring our promises.

Prelude #8

Bride and Groom,
these wedding rings symbolize
the holiness, perfection, and peace

that are present in your marriage.
They are symbols of the love, friendship, and faithfulness
that you share.

As circles, they have no beginning or end.
They are round like the sun, moon, earth, and universe.

Just as these rings have no points of weakness,
may your union be strong,
and may you be blessed with joy
as you journey through life together
surrounded by the circle of your love.

Prelude #9

Wedding rings are a symbol
that has been carried forward from antiquity.
They are simple and strong.
They are round like the sun and the moon,
like the eye, and like the embrace of love.

As circles, wedding rings remind us
that as we give our love,
so it comes back around to us,
and that we give and receive love around and around
in the circle of love.

May your wedding rings always serve as a reminder to you
that your love, like the sun and moon, illumines;
like the eye, lets you see clearly;
and like an embrace, is a grace upon this world.

Prelude #10

The wedding ring is a circle
symbolizing the sun, and the earth, and the universe.
It is a symbol of wholeness, perfection, and peace.

As you enter into the circle of your shared love,
may you be blessed through your devotion to this union.
May your journey as Marriage Partners
be filled with peace, love, and joy.

RING EXCHANGE BY THE COUPLE

The actual exchange of rings by the Couple is typically accompanied by a statement of the symbolic meaning of the rings or a simple statement pledging one's love to their partner.

Ring Exchange #1

While exquisitely simple, this first exchange symbolically emphasizes the conscious choice to give and receive one another's love. It draws attention to the fact that, for love to exist between two people, four things must be happening. Each partner must give their love to the other and receive the other's love. In this Ring Exchange, the Couple looks into each other's eyes while the Groom places the ring up to the knuckle of the Bride's ring finger and makes a statement such as "I love you." Next, she moves it over the knuckle, responding with something such as "I wed you." Then, they reverse roles and the Bride becomes the giver and the Groom the receiver. Alternative responses include:

Giver: "May this ring encircle your finger
as my love does your heart."

Receiver: "I love you."

Giver: "I give you this ring as a symbol of my love."

Receiver: "I receive your love as my greatest treasure."

Giver: "I give you my love."

Receiver: "I will treasure your love always."

Ring Exchange #2

____, I give you this ring
in token and pledge of my abiding love for you.

____, with this ring, I thee wed,
in the name of the Father, and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Ring Exchange #3

With this ring,
I give you my promise to honor you,
to be faithful to you,
and to share my love and my life with you
in all ways, always.

Ring Exchange #4

____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of my love for you,
and of my promise to honor you,
comfort you,
and be faithful to you and to our marriage
through God's grace
for as long as we both shall live.

Ring Exchange #5

____, I give you this ring

as a symbol of my love and devotion,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Ring Exchange #6

As a sign of my love
and my knowledge that in marrying you,
I am becoming much more than I am,
I give you this ring
with the promise that I will love you
and keep my heart open to you
all the days of my life.

Ring Exchange #7

____, with this ring
I am giving you my promise
to always love you, cherish you,
honor you, and comfort you.
I will always be grateful to God
for your presence in my life.

Ring Exchange #8

____, from the moment we met,
I knew I wanted to spend my life with you.
With this ring,
I pledge myself to you,
to our marriage,
and to our everlasting love.

Ring Exchange #9

This ring is my gift to you.
May it always remind you

that from this day forward,
you will be surrounded by my love.

Ring Exchange #10

I give you this ring
as a sign that I choose you
to be my lover, my partner,
and my best friend
today, tomorrow, and always.

Ring Exchange # 11

With this ring, I thee wed.

Ring Exchange #12

____, I give you this ring
as a symbol of my vow.
May it encircle your finger always,
as my love will your heart.

Ring Exchange #13

____, this ring is a symbol
of the strength and beauty of our love.
May it belong to your hand
as my heart belongs to you,
separate yet close,
simple yet miraculous.

Ring Exchange #14

I give you this ring
as a symbol of my promise
to always love you, cherish you, honor you, and respect you.

And finally, here is a more traditional version where the Officiant asks the Groom and then the Bride to pledge their love to each other.

Ring Exchange #15

Officiant:

____, do you take ____
to be your lawfully wedded wife/husband,
to love and to cherish
from this day forward?

Groom/Bride: I do.

(The Officiant hands them the rings to place on their partner's finger.)

Final Blessings

Final Blessing #1

Bride and Groom,
you have declared your intention and vows
before God and this gathering of your families and friends.

May the grace of this day
carry forward with you all the days of your lives.
May you find delight in each other
and may your love continue to grow
and to nurture you throughout your lives.

I wish you the strength to be true to the vows
you have made here today.
May you always have the wisdom
to cherish the precious love you share.
May you abide by the laws of Spirit
nurturing yourselves and this marriage
with acceptance, understanding, cooperation, and loving.

May the life you share
be peaceful, healthy,
and filled with blessings and joy.

As the Apache Wedding Blessing declares:

“Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter to the other;
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other;

Now there will be no loneliness,
for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons,
but there is one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place
to enter into the days of your togetherness,
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.”

And now, by the power vested in me by the State of _____,
I witness and affirm your union of love
and now pronounce that you are Partners in Marriage.

You may now kiss as Marriage Partners for the first time.
Congratulations and God bless you!

Final Blessing #2

Beloved Father, Mother, God,
we ask you to bless Bride and Groom
with the strength to keep the vows they have made,
and to cherish the love they share,
that they may be faithful and devoted to each other.

Help them to support each other
with patience, understanding, and honesty.
Enable them to have a home
that is a place of blessings and of peace.

We seek your love and grace
for all who are witnesses of this holy marriage.
May all who share the marriage covenant
be renewed through their witnessing this union.

Bride and Groom,
may your life together be joyful;
may you both be enriched and made better people
for living in this blessed union.
May the grace and wisdom of God be always with you.
May the love of God always fill you, surround you, and protect you.
Amen.

Now, go forth in peace, joy, and celebration.

Final Blessing #3

Bride and Groom,
on behalf of your loved ones
who are here with you today,
I would like to mention some of the things
we wish for you:
First, we wish for you a love
that is rich, deep, and powerful enough
to inspire others and to support you both
in bringing forth the best that is within you.
May you lavishly love one another
and love being loved by one another
today, tomorrow, and always.

Second, may you sustain a deep and abiding friendship
in which you are considerate of each other,
kind, thoughtful, and so much more.

Third, we wish for you the kind of home
that will be a sanctuary for you both,
a place of peace, freedom, vitality, growth, and humor.
And in this home,

we hope that you are blessed
with a healthy and happy family.

Finally, we wish that at the end of your lives
you will be able to look back
and smile upon the life that you have shared together,
pleased, satisfied, and fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams.

And now, by the power vested in me by the State of _____,
it is my great pleasure to pronounce you husband and wife.

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
you may now kiss as husband and wife for the first time.
Congratulations and God bless you!

Final Blessing #4

Bride and Groom,
our best wishes go forward from this day with you.
We wish for you a fulfilling life,
rich in caring and in happiness.
We wish for you a gentle and peaceful life
that nurtures and comforts you.
We wish for you a noble life,
which reflects your honesty, kindness, and integrity.
We wish for you an adventuresome life,
exploring the fullness of your own and each other's true selves.

Bride and Groom,
there is a wonderful life ahead of you.
Live it fully.
Love its changes and choices.
Let life amaze you and bring you great joy.

And now, by the power vested in me by the _____ church
and by the State of _____,
I now pronounce you husband and wife.
You may now kiss!

Final Blessing #5

Now that Bride and Groom
have joined themselves to each other by solemn vows,
and by the giving and receiving of rings,
I do now,
by virtue of the authority vested in me,
pronounce that they are Partners in Marriage.

Final Blessing #6

Now, because you have chosen one another
and pledged to love each other
for all the days of your lives,
before God
and before this loving community of family and friends,
it gives me great joy to pronounce that you are now married.

Final Blessing #7

Bride and Groom,
I wish you the courage
to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives,
and to cherish the precious love you share.
May you continue to find delight in each other
and in your being together.
May your love forever nourish you and keep you strong.

I now pronounce that you are Partners in Marriage.

Benedictions

Benediction #1

And now in our going,
may the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the Lord be gracious unto you.
Let us rejoice and be glad.
Amen.

Benediction #2

May you endlessly delight one another.
May you love and fulfill each other always.
Go in peace.
Live in joy.
Thanks be to God.

Benediction #3

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord look kindly upon you
and be gracious to you.
The Lord bestow favor upon you
and give you peace.
Amen.

Benediction #4

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

Benediction #5

May your feet be firmly rooted in the earth.
May the air you breathe be sweet and fresh.
May your lives flow together like two streams into a graceful river.
May the flame of spirit burn strong within you.
May you know God's presence in your lives.
And may God bless your life together.

Benediction #6

Beloved God,
source of love, light, and sound,
pour your grace down upon Bride and Groom,
that they may fulfill the vows that they have made today
through their love and faithfulness to each other.

Bride and Groom,
go in peace and love,
seeing in each other the face of God
smiling upon you
and blessing you each and every day.

Friendship Circles

Friendship Circle #1

Bride and Groom have expressed to me the importance of actively involving all of you in their wedding celebration.

We are going to share a ritual, the Friendship Circle, that originated in the Quaker tradition.

In a moment, I'm going to ask you all to get up and form a circle around the chairs.

Then, anyone who wishes to may share their thoughts and feelings about Bride and Groom coming together in marriage.

You may want to offer them your blessing or to share a story about them, a reflection of a time you have shared together. Whatever comes forward is just fine.

So now, let us form our circle of family and friends.

When Your Ceremony Involves Children

In this first example, the Bride had a five-year-old daughter from a previous marriage.

Involving Children #1

Officiant:

This ceremony marks not only the union of Groom and Bride as husband and wife, it also celebrates the combining of Groom and Bride with her daughter, Child 1, to form a new family.

(The daughter is invited to join her mother.)

Bride to Daughter:

Because Groom and I are getting married today,
that means we three are becoming more of a family today too.
One reason I decided to marry Groom
is because he cares so deeply for you.
So, today Groom is joining our family
because we love him and we are so happy together.

Groom to Bride's daughter:

Child 1, I am so happy that we are a family.
I want to protect you, to take care of you,
to love you, and to always be your friend.
I give you this necklace as a symbol of my promise
to always be there for you.

(He puts the necklace on her and she sits down.)

In this next version, the Bride and Groom brought five children under age seven together from their previous marriages into their newly formed family.

Involving Children #2

Officiant:

Today marks not only the marriage of Bride and Groom,
but the formalizing of the family bond they are creating
with their children Child 1, Child 2, Child 3, Child 4, and Child 5.

Bride and Groom to Children:

(reading alternating paragraphs)

Child 1, Child 2, Child 3, Child 4, and Child 5,
we are now one family, a mom and dad, brothers and sisters.

Each of you has so much beauty inside.
You can do anything you choose to do with your life.

We promise to be patient and to support each of you,
to give you strength and room to grow,
to do less correcting and more connecting,
to stop playing serious and to seriously play,
to do less tugging and do more hugging.

Life is full of surprises,
and we want you to know
that no matter what happens,
no matter what you do or who you become,
we will always love you.

Child 1, Child 2, Child 3, Child 4, and Child 5,
today we give you these rings
to remind you of our love
and to serve as a symbol of the unity of our new family.

Here is another version in which the Bride and Groom each bring a son to the new family created by their marriage.

Involving Children #3

Officiant:

This ceremony marks not only the union of Bride and Groom
as husband and wife,
but like ripples on the water,
their union creates new family circles as well.

So we are here also to celebrate
the combining of Bride and Groom

with their sons Bride's son and Groom's son
into a new family created by this marriage.

Bride to Groom's son:

Groom's son, I feel blessed
that our families are joining together today
and that Bride's son and I
can continue our special friendship with you.
Even though we will spend time together as a family,
your time alone with your father is just as important.
I promise you that will continue.
I give you this chain as a symbol of my promise
to be your friend and to always be there for you.

Bride to her son:

Because Groom and I are getting married today,
that means we are becoming more of a family today too.
One reason I decided to marry Groom
is because he cares so deeply for you.
So, today Groom is joining our family
because we love him and we are so happy together.

Groom to Bride's son:

Bride's son, I am so happy that we are a family.
I want to protect you, to take care of you,
to love you, and to always be your friend.
I give you this ring as a symbol of my promise
to always be there for you.

Groom to his son:

Groom's son, you and I will always be special buddies,
and I want you to know that it means a lot to me

that you have grown to love Bride and Bride's son too.
While we will all be a new family together,
you and I will always have our special friendship.
I love you forever, buddy.

In this example, the children are called forward to say vows of love and loyalty to their new family after the Bride and Groom exchange their Wedding Vows.

Involving Children #4

Officiant:

Today, Bride and Groom are joined in their vows
by Child 1 and Child 2,
for they too wish to express the love and commitment
they have given and received,
and will continue to feel as a part of this family.

For you, Child 1 and Child 2,
something very special is happening today.
In this ceremony, you are sharing in the celebration
of the happiness that is present in your family,
and you are affirming your role
in that most fundamental of all human relationships.

May the joy and excitement of today
and the warmth and loving of your home
also serve as a model for you of what you will seek and find
when it is your time to enter into marriage
and to create your own family.

(The Officiant then asks each child to repeat the following vow):

I, Child 1, do hereby promise to love, honor, and cherish
my family and God,

to always be honest and true about who I am,
and to honor and respect the truth of each member of this family.

(The children return to their seats and then, after the Bride and Groom share rings, the children are again invited up to receive rings as well.)

Officiant:

May I have the children's rings, please?

Bride and Groom:

Child 1 and Child 2, we give you these rings today
as tokens of our love for you,
and as a symbol of the unity of our family.

Older children are more likely to be sensitive about participating in the ceremony if their other parent is unhappy about it, especially if still single. These concerns should be honored by all means. It is important to remember that there are many confusing emotions to be processed by children when a parent is getting remarried. Sometimes, more mature children like to write something to read during the wedding ceremony. Again, they should be invited to participate, but never forced to do so.

This next sample is an adaptation of the Candle Ceremony to include children.

Involving Children #5

Officiant:

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
you have all pledged your love to your new family
and promised to love and nurture each other.

Love is something very magical.
It is a gift from God that lights us up inside.
And when two people
join their hearts together in marriage,

their lights flow together
and a single brighter light goes forth
from their united being.

When a family is formed as an extension of this union,
the light is intensified by the light
that flows from the children as well.

The happiness you feel in being a family together
is a reflection of this.

This light that you have, this happiness,
comes from God.

So when we love one another,
we are experiencing God's presence in our lives.

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
you are divine and eternal beings,
and as you come to know this,
you will never cease to wonder and glory
in your coming together as a family.

By being a loving family,
you will awaken your love for God
and your knowledge of the fact
that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.

When people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness of that spark
in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
in joining together today,
you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in each other
and to nurture and tend that divine flame
in one another
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times when one of you may doubt or forget
the existence of that light within yourself.

Jewish Wedding Rituals

Explanation of Jewish Traditions #1

Officiant:

Today, along with the wedding of these two people, there is a marriage of two religions taking place.

Two religions, one God.

Bride and Groom have included some Jewish traditions in their ceremony.

I will explain what the symbols and traditions mean, so we can all understand and appreciate the sentiment that is being invoked here.

Bride's grandfather, _____, will co-officiate this part of the ceremony with me.

The first symbol we see today is the chuppah.

It is referred to as the wedding canopy.

The chuppah symbolizes the framework of the home, whose poles are supported by the friends and family who stood by the Couple during their childhood and are now standing by in loving support of their marriage union.

The openness of the chuppah pledges that there shall be no secrets, and serves to remind the Couple of the importance of openness to one's partner and to God's centrality in the relationship.

The chuppah's flimsiness reminds the Couple that the only thing that is sturdy about a home is the people in it who love each other and choose to be together, to be a family.

The only anchor that they will have

will be holding onto each other's hands.

As guests today,
we are here not only to rejoice
and honor Bride and Groom,
but also to provide a sustaining community for them.
We give Bride and Groom
the outlines or sketch of a foundation,
but it is up to them
to determine where they want to go
and what they want their life together to be.
For this the Jews say "Mazel tov!"
which means "Good luck!"

The breaking of the glass at the end of the ceremony
is the most recognizable symbol of a Jewish wedding.
It has numerous symbolic undertones.
One is that, in celebration,
there should always be awe and trembling as well.

The breaking of the glass is an expression of hope
for a future free of all violence.
The fragility of the glass
suggests the frailty of human relationships.
Even the strongest love
is subject to disintegration.
In this context,
the glass is broken to "protect" the marriage
with an implied prayer,
"As this glass shatters,
so may the marriage never break."
The shattered glass also serves us all

as a reminder that the world is replete with imperfection
and thus serves as an imperative to us
to partake in the mending of the world.

The breaking of the glass
symbolizes the end of the ceremony,
just after The Kiss.

At that time
I ask you to join me in calling out
“Mazel tov!” or “Congratulations!”

The prevailing sentiment provided
by all the symbols I’ve talked about
is really a message about human beings
and not religious beings.

Moving out of the sphere of Jewish symbols
and non-Jewish symbols,
as human beings we need community for strength,
past traditions to provide a road map
for how to behave now,
and love to build a future.

Take the symbols of this love,
Bride and Groom,
and indulge in the moment
and your future.

Mazel tov!

(Note: At the end of the ceremony, the glass is placed on the ground in front of the Groom, who stomps on it to break it and then kisses the Bride. It is common practice to have a lightbulb prewrapped in a napkin on the table, which is used in place of a glass for the actual “breaking of the glass.” This is done because it is easier to break a lightbulb and it makes a festive popping sound.)

BLESSING AND DRINKING THE WINE

The ritual of drinking wine can be placed before the exchange of Wedding Vows with a Co-Officiant saying the prayers in Hebrew, followed by the Officiant echoing them in English, line by line.

Blessing and Drinking the Wine #1

Officiant:

Common to the Jewish wedding ceremony
is to ask God to bless the wedding.

A common prayer used is called Mi Adir:

Co-Officiant:

Mi Adir el hakol

Mi Baruch el hakol

Mi Gadol el hakol

Hey' varesh h'hatan v'kallah

Officiant:

Splendor is upon everything

Blessing is upon everything

Who is full of this abundance

Bless this Groom and Bride

(At this point the Co-Officiant raises the wine glass.)

Officiant:

The symbol of drinking the wine
is associated with celebrations, festivals,
and simcha (which means joy).

Without wine there would be no blessing.

The act of drinking the wine
is referred to as kiddush,
and is part of virtually all Jewish observance
as a prayer of sanctification.

(At this point the wine is handed to the Groom.)

*At this time
I ask Bride and Groom to share this wine
as Co-Officiant bestows the blessing upon them.

Co-Officiant:

*Baruch Ata Adonai
Eloheyne Melech Ha-olam,
borey p'ree ha-gaffen.
Amen.*

Officiant:

Holy One of the blessing
Your presence fills creation,
forming the fruit of the vine.
Amen.

(At this point the Co-Officiant sits down.)

**Alternative prayer for the drinking of the wine.*

Blessing and Drinking the Wine #1a

Officiant:

As you share this wine from a single cup,
so may you, under God's guidance,
share contentment, peace, and fulfillment
from the cup of life.

May you find life's joys heightened,
its bitterness sweetened,
and each of its moments
hallowed by true companionship and love.

Blessed are you, Lord, our God,
King of the universe,
who creates the fruit of the vine.

THE SEVEN BLESSINGS

Some couples like to include the reading of the seven blessings as part of the Final Blessing after the Ring Exchange. They can be read by one person or assigned to seven guests who rise in their

places in turn to read them. This reading is a wonderful way to create participation among more of your guests.

Seven Blessings #1

1. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Creator of the fruit of the vine.
2. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Creator of all things to thy glory.
3. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Creator of man and woman.
4. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who creates us to share with You
in life's everlasting renewal.
5. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who causes Zion to rejoice in her children.
6. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
who causes the Bride and Bridegroom to rejoice.
7. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
Creator of joy and gladness,
Bride and Groom,
love and kinship,
peace and friendship.
May there always be heard in the cities of Israel
and in the streets of Jerusalem:
the sounds of joy and of happiness,

the voice of the Groom
and the voice of the Bride,
the shouts of young people celebrating,
and the songs of children at play.
Blessed art thou, O Lord,
who causes the Bride and Groom to rejoice together.

PRAYERS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

Another Jewish tradition is the inclusion of prayers from the Old Testament. The following selection, for example, can be included as part of the Final Blessing (again involving the Co-Officiant). These readings include one of seven special prayers for the wedding couple, a prayer for special occasions, and a blessing.

Prayers from the Old Testament #1

Grant perfect joy to these loving companions,
as you did to the first man and woman
in the Garden of Eden.
Praised are you, O Lord,
who grants the joy of Bride and Groom.

Blessed is the Lord our God,
Ruler of the universe,
for giving us life,
for sustaining us,
and for enabling us to reach this day of joy.

This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord look kindly upon you

and be gracious to you;
the Lord bestow favor upon you
and give you peace.
Amen.

Crowning Ceremony #1

Officiant:

In the Greek Orthodox tradition,
the blessing and exchange of crowns
is an essential element of the wedding ceremony.
Just as monarchs are crowned
and charged with the welfare of their realm,
so are the Bride and Groom crowned
and vested with the authority and responsibility
to care for one another's well-being.
Symbolically, each marriage is a kingdom unto itself,
which can lead the couple to God's Heavenly Kingdom
by living with forbearance, compassion,
righteousness, respect, and loving.
The crowns are traditionally kept in the home
to remind the couple of their responsibility and commitment
to live by good Christian values
in their marriage kingdom.

Let us pray.

Beloved God,
we ask that you extend to this Groom and this Bride
the same blessing
you extended to Abraham and Sarah,
Isaac and Rebekah,
Jacob and Rachel,

Moses and Zipporah,
Joakim and Anna,
and Zacharias and Elizabeth.

We ask your blessing
for Groom and Bride's parents,
who nourished them
and for all of their family and friends
who surround them with their love.

Beloved God,
we ask that you bless Groom and Bride,
that they may perpetuate
the lineage of your love.
We ask that through the grace of the Holy Spirit,
who Groom and Bride are,
where they come from,
their likes, dislikes,
skills, talents, and characteristics
will all be brought into a harmonized oneness
whereby the two become one flesh.
May these crowns serve to remind them
to bring your kingdom here to earth
in their marriage.

(The Officiant places a crown on the Groom's head.)

As a servant of God,
I crown you Groom to Bride
in the Name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

(The Officiant places a crown on Bride's head.)

As a servant of God,
I crown you Bride to Groom
in the Name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

(The Couple's sponsor exchanges the crowns three times, moving them back and forth over the Groom's and Bride's heads while the Officiant repeats the following statement three times.)

O Lord our God,
crown Groom and Bride
with honor and with glory.

This ritual is usually followed by a recitation of the Lord's Prayer (see page 259) and then the sharing of the Common Cup.

(As the Officiant speaks, the Groom and Bride each take three sips of wine.)

Common Cup #1

Officiant:

Groom and Bride,
as you drink from this common cup of wine,
you drink from the cup of life
as husband and wife.
From this day forward
you will share life's bitterness
with its sweetness,
its disappointment
with its happiness,
and its tribulation
with its joy.
From this moment forward
you will share everything,

doubling your joys
and dividing your sorrows.

The Polish Ritual of Symbolic Gifts

A Polish wedding tradition involves the parents of the Bride and Groom giving the Couple symbolic gifts. It is traditionally done during the wedding reception, but can also be incorporated in the ceremony as described in the following text.

Symbolic Gifts #1

Officiant:

Bride's and Groom's parents are going to join us now
for a cherished Polish tradition,
which has been passed down through the centuries.
It involves the symbolic sharing
of bread, salt, wine, and a silver coin.

As their parents give Bride and Groom each a piece of bread,
we wish: "May you never go hungry or be in need."

As they are given a sip of wine,
we wish: "Enjoy the sweetness of life with good health,
good cheer, and the company of good friends."

As they each place a speck of salt on their tongue
we wish: "May you overcome the bitterness of life."

As they are given a silver coin
to hold between their right hands together,
we wish: "May you be wealthy and abundant."

Finally, Bride's and Groom's parents kiss them

as a welcome to the family
and as a sign of their love and unity.

(Parents return to their seats.)

The Wrapping of the Mantilla

In Spain, the Couple is wrapped in a large scarf, or mantilla, by their parents.

Mantilla #1

Officiant:

The wrapping of the mantilla
around the Bride and Groom by their parents
is the traditional Spanish symbol
of two families uniting as one
in the love shared by their children.

Today, we are witnessing a beautiful expression
of commitment, unity, and dreams coming true
as Bride and Groom become wife and husband.

At this time, I ask Bride's parents and Groom's parents
to place the mantilla around their children
in what is hoped will be the first of many traditions
that will hold this newly formed family
as one loving unit for generations to come.

(The parents wrap the mantilla around the Couple for a few moments and then the mothers fold it and the Bride's mother takes it with her to her seat.)

Sample Ceremonies

Ceremony One: Spiritual and Heartfelt

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin
by welcoming the presence of God
within each of us.
As we lift into the loving
that joins us together as one,
let us surround Bride and Groom
with our love, our prayers,
and our best wishes for them
on this, their wedding day,
and throughout their journey together
as Marriage Partners.

Beloved God,
we welcome you
and are so grateful for your presence

here with us today.
We have come here as a community
of family and friends
to love and support Bride and Groom,
to witness their entrance
into the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage,
and to celebrate the beginning of their journey together
as Marriage Partners.

We are here because we love Bride and Groom.
We rejoice that they have found each other
and that through each other,
they have come to know the power of love
as they have never known it before.

We celebrate this union
of their hearts, minds, bodies, and souls
and wish them great joy.

We ask, Beloved God,
that you guide and bless Bride and Groom
with a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.
We ask that through this union
they may come to know you more deeply.
Amen.

REMEMBRANCE

Bride and Groom
have asked that we take a moment
to honor the memory of those loved ones
who could only be here today in spirit.

GATHERING WORDS

Dearly beloved,
we are gathered here
in the presence of these witnesses,
to join together this man and this woman
in holy matrimony;
which is an honorable estate,
revered since time immemorial
as the most profound and tender
of human relationships.

The union of two people
in heart, body, and mind
is intended by God
for their mutual joy;
for the help and comfort given one another
in prosperity and adversity,
and, when it is God's will,
for the procreation of children
and their nurture
in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Therefore marriage is not to be entered into
unadvisedly or lightly,
but reverently, deliberately,
and in accordance with the purposes
for which it was instituted by God.

Bride and Groom,
remember that love and faithfulness alone
will provide a solid foundation
for a long and happy marriage.

No relationship is more tender
than that of husband and wife.
And no promises are more sacred
than those of Marriage Partners.
In keeping faithfully to your vows
and in bringing to this marriage
the best that is within you,
your life together will be filled with grace and joy,
and your home will be a place of peace.

The choice to enter into marriage is profound.
In choosing a lifelong partner,
we are choosing the one
who will witness our changes and growth,
and who will affect these changes
and shape our maturation as well.

Bride and Groom,
this day not only signifies a celebration
of shared values and commitment,
but it attests to the fact
that you have chosen to build your future together.
Through the sacred vows of marriage
you are saying that who you are
and who you want to be
can best be achieved through this union.

As we rejoice in Bride and Groom's marriage today,
let us each consecrate the relationships in our own lives
and rededicate ourselves to these unions we share.
Let us each choose the path of loving and caring
for one another

and of making these commitments
a priority in our lives.

DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

Bride and Groom,
today we have come together
to celebrate the love you have found with each other.
By being here with you,
each of us is declaring our support
for your decision to join together in marriage.

(To guests)

As families and friends
you form the community of support
that surrounds Bride and Groom.
Each of you, by your presence here today,
is being called upon to uphold them
in honoring and loving each other.

Always stand beside them,
never between them.
Offer them your love and support,
not your judgment.
Encourage them with your kindness and loving hearts,
and honor this marriage
into which they have come to be joined today.

Will everyone please stand?

Collectively, you represent
the families, friends, and traditions
that have brought Bride and Groom
to this point in their lives.

Please affirm your support for this marriage
by responding “Yes, I do”
to the following question:

As part of the community
which surrounds Bride and Groom,
do you offer your love and support
to strengthen their marriage
and bless this family
created by their union?

Guests: Yes, I do!

Please be seated.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

Marriage is the essence of human relationships.
It challenges us to be of one accord
without abandoning the truth of our individuality.
It challenges us to not lose ourselves in one another,
but rather to walk side by side
heading in the same direction.
As with all relationships,
marriage is an endless presentation of choices
about how we want to be with one another.
Each choice results
in either more unity or more separation.
Choose into that unity,
Bride and Groom,
every chance you get.

Sacrifice your judgments, expectations,
and any other ways

that you have learned
to separate yourselves from each other.

Share the gifts of your friendship, humor,
vulnerability, sensitivity, and kindness.
Be sure to find ways each day
to protect, affirm, and support each other,
and to treasure the balance and shared values
that you have found with each other.

Enjoy the intertwining
of your independence with your intimacy.
I wish you the courage
to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives.
God bless you.

CANDLE CEREMONY

From every human being there rises a light
that reaches straight to heaven.
And, when two souls who are destined to be together
find each other,
their streams of light flow together,
and a single brighter light
goes forth from their united being.
Human love is not a substitute for spiritual love—
it is an extension of it.

Bride and Groom,
when you see each other
as the divine and eternal beings that you are,
you will never cease to wonder and glory

in your coming together.
The purpose of human love
is to awaken love for God.
The truth that is continually reborn
is that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.
When two people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride and Groom,
in committing to one another today,
you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in one another,
to nurture and tend that divine flame
in your partner
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times your partner may doubt or forget
the existence of that light
within him or herself.

Bride, take this candle now,
and light it from the center candle
representing the divine source.
As you do so,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Groom.

Groom, as you light this candle
from the divine source,

symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Bride.

Now, bring your individual flames together,
symbolizing the new and greater flame of your marriage,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

And never forget
that the light of your union,
while made up of your unique
and individual expressions of light,
is continually sustained and renewed
by your connection to the eternal
and inexhaustible light of God, the Source.

(To guests)

Please stand and join me in the Lord's Prayer.

THE LORD'S PRAYER
Our Father, 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.
And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom,
the power,
and the glory forever.
Amen.

WEDDING VOWS

Bride and Groom,
please join hands to share your Wedding Vows.

Groom:

I take you, Bride, to be my wife,
from this day forward,
to join with you
and share all that is to come.
To laugh with you in joy,
to grieve with you in sorrow,
to grow with you in love,
serving mankind in peace and hope,
as long as we both shall live.

Bride:

I choose you, Groom, to be my lifelong partner,
lover, and best friend.
I will always be faithful to you
and be at your side
to laugh with you in times of joy
and comfort you in times of sorrow.
Wherever our path leads us,
it takes us together.

I will encourage and support you,
honor and love you.

I will respect our differences
and do my part
to work through all our challenges.

Groom, I'll be your safe haven
and your home.
With purity of heart
and love in my soul,
I stand before our loved ones
as your lifelong partner.

RING EXCHANGE

May I have the rings, please?

Bride and Groom,
these wedding rings
symbolize the holiness, perfection, and peace
that is available to you in your marriage.
They are symbols of the love, friendship,
and faithfulness that you share.

As circles,
they have no beginning or end.
They are round like the sun,
the moon, the earth, and the universe.

Just as these rings
have no points of weakness,
may your union be strong,
and may you be blessed with joy
as you journey through life together
surrounded by the circle of your love.
Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

I love you.

(He places the ring up to the knuckle of her finger.)

Bride:

I wed you.

(She moves the ring over the knuckle onto her finger.)

Officiant:

Bride, place this ring on Groom's finger.

Bride:

I love you.

(She places the ring up to the knuckle of his finger.)

Groom:

I wed you.

(He moves the ring over the knuckle onto his finger.)

FINAL BLESSING

Bride and Groom,

you have declared your intention and vows
before God
and this gathering of your families and friends.

May the grace of this day
carry forward with you
all the days of your lives.

May you find delight in each other
and may your love continue to grow
and to nurture you
throughout your lives.

I wish you the strength
to be true to the vows

you have made here today.
May you always have the wisdom
to cherish the precious love you share.
May you abide by the laws of Spirit,
nurturing yourselves and this marriage
with acceptance, understanding,
cooperation, and loving.

May the life you share
be peaceful, healthy, and filled
with blessings and joy.

As the Apache Wedding Blessing declares:

Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter to the other;
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other;
Now there will be no loneliness,
for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons,
but there is one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place
to enter into the days of your togetherness,
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

And now,
by the power vested in me by the State of _____,
I witness and affirm your union of love
and now pronounce you Partners in Marriage.
You may now kiss as husband and wife
for the first time.
Congratulations and God bless you!

Ceremony One: Spiritual and Heartfelt—Text Worksheet

Opening Prayer:

#1, page 81; #3, pages 82–83

Remembrance:

#2, page 113

Gathering Words:

#2, lines 1–6, page 89; #9, paragraph 1, pages 94–95;
#12, paragraph 5, page 99; #10, paragraph 2, page 96; #12,
paragraph 4, pages 98–99; #18, page 103

Declaration of Support:

#1, page 123; #6, page 130

Marriage Address:

#1, pages 132–133

Candle Ceremony:

#1, pages 144–146

Prayer:

The Lord's Prayer

Wedding Vows:

Groom: #3, lines 1–4, page 164; #4, lines 2–6, page 164
Bride: #20, pages 171–172

Ring Exchange:

Prelude: #8, page 203–204
Ring Exchange: #1, page 205–206

Final Blessing:

#1, with Apache Wedding Blessing, pages 210–211

Ceremony Two:
Short and Sophisticated

GATHERING WORDS

Welcome.

A wedding is such a wonderful occasion,
filled with hopes, dreams, and excitement.
We are here today to celebrate the love
that Bride and Groom have for each other,
and to recognize and witness their decision
to journey forward in their lives
as Marriage Partners.

We are gathered to support them
as they embark upon their voyage of discovery
as husband and wife.

We are here to see them off on this journey.
Let us also be there for them to see them through.

DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

Collectively,
you represent the families, friends, and traditions
that have brought Bride and Groom
to this point in their lives.
Please affirm your support for this marriage
by responding "Yes, I do"
to the following question:

As part of the community
that surrounds Bride and Groom,

do you offer your love and support
to strengthen their marriage
and bless this family
created by their union?

Guests: Yes, I do.

WEDDING VOWS

Bride and Groom,
please join hands
and share your Wedding Vows.

Groom:

Bride, I promise to love you,
to cherish you,
and to respect you in all ways, always.

I promise to participate fully
in our Marriage Partnership.
I will give completely
of my mind, body, heart, and soul.

I promise to make your plans and dreams
as important to me as my own.

I promise to do my share
so that our lives together
can be healthy, happy,
and abundantly satisfying.

I promise to lovingly fulfill these vows
each and every day
for all of my days.

Bride:

Groom, I promise to love you,
to cherish you,
and to respect you
in all ways, always.

I promise to participate fully
in our Marriage Partnership.
I will give completely
of my mind, body, heart, and soul.

I promise to make your plans and dreams
as important to me as my own.

I promise to do my share
so that our lives together
can be healthy, happy,
and abundantly satisfying.

I promise to lovingly fulfill these vows
each and every day
for all of my days.

RING EXCHANGE

Officiant:

May I have the rings, please?
Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

Bride, this ring is a symbol
of the strength and beauty of our love.
May it belong to your hand
as my heart belongs to you,

separate yet close,
simple yet miraculous.

Officiant:

Bride, place this ring on Groom's finger.

Bride:

Groom, this ring is a symbol
of the strength and beauty of our love.
May it belong to your hand
as my heart belongs to you,
separate yet close,
simple yet miraculous.

FINAL BLESSING

Now, because you have chosen one another
and pledged to love each other
for all the days of your lives,
before God
and before this loving community
of family and friends,
it gives me great joy
to pronounce that you are Partners in Marriage.

You may now kiss!

Ceremony Two: Short and Sophisticated—Text Worksheet

Gathering Words:

#1, page 89; #7, paragraph 2, lines 2–5, page 94

Declaration of Support:

#6, page 130

Wedding Vows:

#12, page 168

Ring Exchange:

#13, page 208

Final Blessing:

#6, page 214

Ceremony Three:
Celebrating Our Oneness While
Honoring Our Differences

OPENING PRAYER

Beloved God,
we welcome your presence here today
as we join our hearts together as one
in loving support of Bride and Groom.

We have come here today
as families and friends
to see them off
on their journey together as Marriage Partners.
May we also be there to see them through.

We ask that you guide and protect Bride and Groom
as they go forward through this world
united in marriage.

We are deeply grateful
for their presence in our lives
and for the opportunity they have given us
to bear witness to their great love for each other.

We are also profoundly grateful
for the challenge that their love has presented
to many of us to break free of our limiting beliefs
of who was allowed to love whom
and the judgments, prejudices, and forms of rejection
that flow from such myopic views.

We thank Bride and Groom
for their courage, wisdom, and capacity
to love without condition
and thus to serve us as great teachers
of the power and sanctity of love.

As stated in Matthew 9:16,
what you have joined together, Beloved,
may no man put asunder.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

In every marriage union,
as in every relationship in our lives,
the success or failure of that coming together
rests on the ability of the participants
to simultaneously celebrate their oneness
while honoring their differences.

As we all know, the “samenesses” and “differences”
of Bride and Groom
stand in stark contrast
to what we have grown accustomed to
as the norms of our society.

For some of us
it was a challenge to see beyond that contrast
and the temptation to negatively judge them
rather than to question our very own reaction to their love.

Some of us were quicker to embrace their love
while others needed to find our way
through inner and outer rules,

learning and reinforcing
an important life lesson—
that nothing is more important than loving one another.

Perhaps making rules about who is allowed to love whom
is foolish and ill-advised—
an attempt to play God
in matters that are God's territory and not ours.

Has anyone here ever succeeded
in making themselves love another?
Try as we might to fake it—
love has a purity and beauty
that is unmistakable to us all
and something to stand in awe of.

For over twenty years,
I have been officiating wedding ceremonies
for all kinds of couples.

One thing that has always impressed me
is that when a couple's union challenges
what we are used to,
we are presented with the choice
to either rise to this challenge
or to hold tight to our limiting beliefs.

Whether bridging the gap between
different races, cultures, religions, or age groups,
or being more similar than we are used to
as in couples of the same gender,
these couples have a freedom

that many of us lack.
They are available to love
regardless of race, creed, color,
situation, circumstance, or environment.
There are no walls around their hearts
that prevent them from allowing
love to occur.
And, occur it did between Bride and Groom!

What an interesting lesson for the rest of us.
How would our individual and collective lives
be different if our hearts were also unbound
by rules and beliefs that we must only love others
who are quite like us, but then, not too much like us?

I celebrate Bride and Groom
And all couples who challenge us to unbind our hearts
and render ourselves vulnerable
to the power and possibilities of love.

CANDLE CEREMONY

From every human being there rises a light
that reaches straight to heaven.

When two souls who are destined to be together
find each other,
their streams of light flow together,
and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.

Human love is not a substitute for divine love—
it is an extension of it.
Bride and Groom, when you see each other

as the divine and eternal beings that you are,
you will never cease to wonder and glory
in your coming together.

The purpose of human love
is to awaken love for God.
The truth that is continually reborn
is that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.

When two people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride and Groom, in committing to one another today,
you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in one another,
to nurture and tend that divine flame in your partner
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times your partner may doubt or forget
the existence of that light within him or herself.

Bride, take this candle now,
and light it from the center candle
representing the divine source.
As you do so,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Groom.

Groom, as you light this candle
from the divine source,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in Bride.

Now, bring your individual flames together,
symbolizing the new and greater flame of your marriage,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals made stronger
by the strength of this union.

And never forget
that the light of your union,
while made up of your unique and individual expressions of light,
is continually sustained and renewed
by your connection to
the eternal and inexhaustible light of God, the Source.

WEDDING VOWS

Before Bride and Groom share their wedding vows
I thought you might like to know that
they have kept them secret from one another until now.

Groom:

My beloved Bride,
I have spent most of my life alone
and much of it profoundly devoted
to my soulwork
and to being of service in this world.

I have not pitied myself my solitary life.
I recognized its authenticity
while still hoping that someday
I might be blessed with a true partnership
of loving, cherishing, honoring, and nurturing
shared with a beautiful Wife and equal,
lover and best friend.

With you, Bride,
my dreams have come true
and been surpassed
beyond my wildest dreams.

I can't imagine that I will ever stop
lighting up when you walk into a room.

I am so grateful
to be here with you today
surrounded by our families and friends
and filled with joy and enthusiasm
for whatever our future brings—
knowing that we will stand side by side
through it all.

I will not make false promises to you
about being your perfect partner—
after all, I will continue to be me
with all my faults and frailties—
though hopefully my rough edges
will soften over time.

I do however make you these promises:

I will continue my devotion to my soulwork
and to support you in yours,
knowing that our sacred paths
are now intertwined
in new and exciting ways.

I will do my very best
to love you in the ways you need and want to be loved
for the rest of my life.

I promise to keep learning more each day
how to love you,
honor you,
and respect you
in ways that tickle your fancy.
Bride, I will forever be grateful for the blessing
of having you in my life.

Bride:

Groom, my love,
the blessings we share
are captured in the following two excerpts:

The first is from Rumi's "The Wandering"—
The minute I heard my first love song
I started looking for you,
not knowing how blind that was.
Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
they're in each other all along.

The second piece I want to share with you
I tweaked a bit from D. H. Lawrence's poem "Fidelity"—

Two people in love 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,
the hearts of two lovers

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.

We certainly have had our share of chaos, my love.
But, we also got the prize, the brass ring, the sapphire.

Thank you for having the fortitude
to walk this path together so far.
We have indeed earned the power and privilege
of our love.

I am honored
and filled with joy
to be here beside you
entering into the sacred and joyous

covenant of marriage.
You can count on me
to be there for you
and for us
for the rest of my life.

Groom, my love,
I will be by your side
no matter what life brings our way.
You will always be surrounded
by my love.

RING EXCHANGE

May I have the rings, please.

These rings are symbols of the love
that joins you spirit to spirit.

May they serve you
and those who see them upon your fingers
as a reminder of the oneness, eternity, and renewal
inherent in the marriage union.

Like arms that embrace,
these wedding rings you give and receive this day
reflect the circle of your shared love.

May they also serve to remind you
of the freedom and the power of your love.

May they be for you always
your most treasured adornment,

and may the love they symbolize
be your most treasured possession.

Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

Bride, this ring is a symbol
of the strength and beauty of our love.

May it belong to your hand
as my heart belongs to you,
separate yet close,
simple yet miraculous.

Bride, I give you this ring
as a symbol of my vow.

May it encircle your finger always,
as my love will your heart.

Bride:

Groom, this ring is a symbol
of the strength and beauty of our love.

May it belong to your hand
as my heart belongs to you,
separate yet close,
simple yet miraculous.

Groom, I give you this ring
as a symbol of my vow.

May it encircle your finger always,
as my love will your heart.

FINAL BLESSING AND PRONOUNCEMENT

Bride and Groom,
on behalf of your loved ones gathered here with you today,
I would like to mention some of the things we wish for you:

First, we wish for you a love that is rich, deep,
and powerful enough to inspire others
and to support you both in bringing forth the best that is within you.

May you lavishly love one another
and love being loved by one another
today, tomorrow, and always.

Second, may you sustain a deep and abiding friendship
in which you are considerate of each other,
kind, thoughtful, and so much more.

Third, we wish for you the kind of home
that will be a sanctuary for you both,
a place of peace, freedom, vitality, growth, and humor.

Finally, we wish that at the end of your lives
you will be able to look back
and smile upon the life that you have shared together,
pleased, satisfied, and fulfilled beyond your wildest dreams.

And now, it is my great pleasure
to pronounce that you are Partners in Marriage.

Ceremony Three: Celebrating Our Oneness While Honoring Our Differences—Text Worksheet

Opening Prayer:
Customized

Marriage Address:
Customized

Candle Ceremony:
#1, pages 144–146

Wedding Vows:
Customized

Ring Exchange:
Prelude: adapted from #'s 1 and 2, page 201; 3, pages 201–202;
and 6, page 203
Ring Exchange: adapted from #'s 12 and 13, page 208

Final Blessing:
#3, pages 212–213

Ceremony Four:
Inspired by Nature

GATHERING WORDS

We are gathered here in this beautiful place
to witness the joining of Bride and Groom in marriage.
They particularly wanted to invite you here
because their sense of spirituality
and the growth of their love
is connected to this place.
They wanted to share with you
the beauty of these mountains
because this is where they have made their home.

During their seven and a half years together,
they've come here on many mornings like this one,
and walked quietly through the mountain laurel,
listening to the wind in the pines.
Their time spent in nature,
climbing some of the mountains
you see before you here,
has been a time of connectedness,
of shared reverence for the world,
and a deepening respect
and love for one another.

It is this sense of timelessness and peace
that they wanted to share with you
on this, their wedding day.

As you look out over the mountains,
please take a moment for reflection
and quiet prayer
to open your hearts and minds
to the love and togetherness
we are here to share
through this ceremony.
You may also want to take a moment
to remember those loved ones
who are not with us today.

DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

Today, we form a circle of love
around Bride and Groom
as they enter into marriage.
To last, their marriage must be a consecration
of each to the other,
and of both to the wider community
of which they are a part.
That community starts with each and every one of you,
their loved ones.
Through their act of marriage,
Bride and Groom have gathered you around them
like a comforting blanket,
forming their community of love and support
as they move forward into a shared life
as Marriage Partners.

Now, let us share in a moment
of silently extending our blessings
to Bride and Groom
for a loving, healthy, and happy marriage.

Bride and Groom, it is very special
that you have chosen to celebrate your marriage union
in the circle of your families.

I would like to welcome each member of your families.

*(Family members are each called by name, given a flower by the Bride and Groom,
and then, one by one, join into a circle around the Bride and Groom.)*

This circle of your family
represents your circle of loving, caring,
friendship, and family support.
These people embody the traditions and values
that have brought you to this point in your lives.

Bride and Groom, at this time,
your parents would like to share
their best wishes with you.

Bride's mother:

Bride, your father and I are so happy for you today
and filled with pride and joy
that our baby girl
has become such an accomplished and lovely woman.
And, as though that were not enough,
you have found a profound love with Groom
and brought this magnificent young man into our family.

Bride's father:

Groom, I never imagined there would come a day
when I could sincerely feel that anyone
was wonderful enough for our Bride.
But you have changed all that.

She has chosen wisely,
and we are delighted to have you in our family.

Bride's mother:

Bride and Groom,
we have had the good fortune
to build and enjoy
a secure and nurturing marriage.
Our greatest wish for you
is that you too have the good fortune
to share a healthy and happy marriage,
and that you continue
to light up the room for each other
for the rest of your lives.

Groom's mother:

My dear son Groom,
nothing could give your father and me greater pleasure
than to stand here with you today
knowing that you have found
what your generation calls your soul mate.
I have watched you and Bride
really take your time in getting to know each other
and in building a solid foundation
of love and respect for each other.
And now, as you stand on the threshold of your marriage,
I can truly say
we support you both without reservation
and with great enthusiasm.

Groom's father:

I remember when Groom was a young boy
and used to love learning
all the names of the trees, flowers, and birds.
Now I listen to the two of you
share your anecdotes and lessons from nature
and am so pleased for you both
that you share this common bond.
Seeing how much you two love and understand nature
touches me deeply.
You are a wise and wonderful pair,
and you make us all better people
just by knowing you.
May God bless you always.

Officiant:

I invite each of you
as members of this gathering
to indicate your support for Bride and Groom
by answering "I will"
to the following question:

By God's grace,
will each of you
do everything you can
to uphold and care for these two persons
in their marriage?

Guests: I will.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

A true marriage
is the ultimate relationship
because it offers the opportunity
of limitless intimacy
between two people.

It is a great and challenging adventure
into the depths and heights
of human caring, affection,
trust, and understanding.

For those who take its sacred vows,
their lives are intermingled
as the waters of two streams become one,
flowing together into a mighty river.

A true spiritual marriage
is a journey of transformation
into the profound mysteries
of life and creation.

In marriage, two become one,
and that one is far more complex and dynamic
than the simple addition of the two.

In marriage,
we do not give ourselves to another,
but rather surrender into something greater
while maintaining our balance
and well-being as individuals.
Together, we co-create a shared identity we call "we."

A truly sacred marriage union
is a vehicle for self-realization
that allows us to know our true selves
by reflection through our loved one.
Thus, marriage is a divine instrument
through which we come to know God's presence
in ourselves, in each other,
and in the world around us.

Bride and Groom,
you have come here today
to surrender into the co-creation
of something wholly new and transcendent—
your precious, sacred, and unique marriage journey
as husband and wife.
Today, you step into
a much fuller experience and expression
of the mysteries and miracles of love.

Your precious, blessed, and sacred union
is lovely in its innocence,
mighty in its strength,
and abundant with possibilities.
It belongs to you both.
Over time you will give it an identity.
We wish for you the wisdom, strength of character,
and divine creativity
to make this a happy marriage,
a safe harbor,
and a joyful journey to share.

WATER CEREMONY

Many of us have been blessed to notice
that when we share
a true and abiding love with a partner,
even plain water tastes sweet.
Bride and Groom,
share this clear water now
as a symbol of the sweet and precious love you share.

(The Bride and Groom give each other a drink from the same glass.)

As you do so,
remember that just as you are now partaking
of the sweetness and purity
of this fresh and clean water,
you have already been blessed to partake
of the brilliance and magnificence
of the love you share.
By devoting yourselves
to cherishing and nurturing this love,
may your marriage grow sweeter
with each passing year.

WEDDING VOWS

Officiant:

Bride and Groom,
please join hands
and share your Wedding Vows.

Groom:

I, Groom, choose you, Bride,
as my life partner.
I am so glad

that I waited for my dreams to come true
because they did when I found you.
I am so blessed
that I get to be your partner
and am comforted to know
that I have chosen wisely.

Whatever life has in store for us,
I will honor and respect our marriage
and be by your side,
loving you through it all.
I will always strive
to be the husband of your dreams.
Bride, I will love you forever.

Bride:

I, Bride, promise to always keep my love for you alive
and out in front of all I do.
I promise to be faithful and true
no matter what challenges may come our way.
I promise to nurture you as my husband,
my lover, and my best friend.
I will continue to love you and cherish you,
walking through this life, together,
hand in hand.

RING EXCHANGE

Officiant:

May I have the rings, please?

Wedding rings are symbolic reminders
of the unbroken circle
of a healthy and abiding love.

Within the safety and comfort of a true marriage,
love freely given
has no beginning and no end.
Love freely given
has no separate giver and receiver.
Each of you gives your love to the other
and each of you receives love from the other
and the circle of love goes around and around.

May these rings serve to remind you
of the freedom and the power of your love.

The wedding ring is a circle
symbolizing the sun, and the earth,
and the universe.
It is a symbol of wholeness,
perfection, and peace.
As you enter into the circle
of your shared love,
may you be blessed
through your devotion to this union.
May your journey as husband and wife
be filled with peace, love, and joy.

Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

With this ring,
I give you my promise
to honor you,
to be faithful to you,
and to share my love and my life with you
in all ways, always.

Officiant:

Bride, place this ring on Groom's finger.

Bride:

With this ring,
I give you my promise
to honor you,
to be faithful to you,
and to share my love
and my life with you
in all ways, always.

FINAL BLESSING AND PRONOUNCEMENT

Bride and Groom,
on behalf of your loved ones
who are here with you today,
I would like to mention some of the things
we wish for you:

First, we wish for you a love
that is rich, deep,
and powerful enough to inspire others
and to support you both
in bringing forth the best that is within you.
May you lavishly love one another
and love being loved by one another
today, tomorrow, and always.

Second, we wish for you the kind of home
that will be a sanctuary for you both,
a place of peace, freedom, vitality,
growth, and humor.
And in this home,

we hope that you are blessed
with a healthy and happy family.

Finally, we wish that at the end of your lives
you will be able to look back and smile
upon the life that you have shared together,
pleased, satisfied, and fulfilled
beyond your wildest dreams.

And now,
by the power vested in me by the State of _____,
it is my great pleasure
to pronounce you husband and wife.

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
you may now kiss as husband and wife
for the first time.
Congratulations and God bless you!

Ceremony Four: Inspired by Nature—Text Worksheet

Gathering Words:

#20, pages 104–105

Declaration of Support:

#4, pages 126–129; #5, paragraphs 1 and 2, page 129

Marriage Address:

#4, pages 137–138

Water Ceremony:

#1, page 158

Wedding Vows:

Groom: #8, page 166

Bride: #13, page 168

Ring Exchange:

Prelude #3, pages 201–202; #10, page 205

Ring Exchange #3, page 206

Final Blessing:

#3, pages 212–213

Ceremony Five:

Short, Spontaneous, and Intimate

This ceremony is one of the shortest and most intimate ones I have yet performed. It has no script, because that was one of the requirements of this particular couple. They wanted every word to be an authentic and spontaneous expression.

There were fifteen guests, including only their closest family members and friends. Before the ceremony, which took place in the backyard of the home they would share together, the guests mingled about until I gave them the sign that the ceremony was to begin. We all followed the Bride and Groom and processed to the spot where the ceremony was to take place. There was no music, except the sounds of nature—wind in the trees and a babbling brook nearby. We formed a circle, joined hands, and stood silently in this peaceful setting, bringing our focus together in loving harmony.

After a few moments of silence, long enough to move past the initial discomfort of this unfamiliar happening, I invited the guests to share their thoughts and feelings about the day. One by one, they all spoke and we laughed and cried together over the joy and tenderness of the bond among them all. Some of them shared stories—both hilarious and tender—about the Bride and Groom. Others simply expressed their best wishes and blessings for the Couple.

After the last of us spoke, the Bride and Groom turned to each other and exchanged their wedding vows and rings as the final sharing. We all fell into a natural silence for a few moments. And, finally, I spoke. As previously arranged with this couple, I said, “I joyously affirm your union as wife and husband.”

Ceremony Six:
A Marriage with Children

OPENING PRAYER

Beloved God,
we are gathered here,
uniting our hearts as one
in support and celebration of Bride and Groom
as they enter into the sacred and joyous covenant of marriage.

We ask you to bless the family
created by this union
as Bride's daughter, Child 1,
and Groom's son, Child 2,
join with them in the creation of a new family.

We ask that you guide and bless each of them
in loving and honoring one another
and in building and strengthening a family unit
that will be a safe and nurturing haven for them all.
Help them to find the balance and harmony
of their individuality and their shared life.

We ask that your light and grace
be extended to each of them,
that they may know you
and welcome you in their lives
each and every day.

THE UNITING OF FAMILIES AND FRIENDS

When two people come together in marriage,
their families and friends are also joined together
into a larger circle of caring.

From now on, you will know Bride and Groom
not only as individuals,
but as Marriage Partners,
and your individual lives will be linked together
as members of this community.

Bride and Groom,
today we have come together to celebrate
the love you have found with each other.
By being here with you,
each of us is declaring our support
for your decision to join together in marriage.

(To guests)

As families and friends,
you form the community of support
that surrounds Bride and Groom.
Each of you, by your presence here today,
is being called upon to uphold them
in honoring and loving each other.

Always stand beside them,
never between them.
Offer them your love and support,
not your judgment.
Encourage them with your kindness and loving hearts,
and honor this marriage
into which they have come to be joined today.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

Bride and Groom,
you began as best friends,
and now that friendship has grown
into a loving and abiding commitment.

Remember that the strength and power
of the love you share with each other
and with your children
stand upon your health and well-being
as individuals.

In order to teach each other
how to love and care for you,
you will need to be aware
of your own needs as individuals
and lovingly communicate them to each other.

Tenderly nurture your children
so that they always feel your love
and know that they are safe and cared for.

Celebrate your love for each other
and for the children
each and every day.
Remember that God's infinite wisdom
brought you together
and will continue to light your path
all the days of your lives.

Share the gifts of your friendship,
your patience, and your tenderness.

Always nurture this partnership
with your incredible ability
to communicate with each other,
and your abiding respect for each other's strength,
wisdom, freedom, and differences.

Continue to bless each other
with your eternal honesty
and your delight and gratitude
for the glory of being able to share your destiny.

Remember to let your children know
each and every day
how precious they are to you.
Surround each other and your children
with your tender loving care.

I wish you the courage
to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives.

God bless you.

MARRIAGE VOWS AND RING EXCHANGE

Groom:

Bride, I have never known
the desire and passion you have created in me.
I never imagined these feelings were even possible.
Words cannot describe
our spiritual, physical, and emotional connection.
Life is a series of events and experiences
that together make us who we are;

that person someone else sees
when they meet you.

Bride, from the moment we met,
I discovered a unique bond
with a truly special person.
My life was forever changed,
and now, with you in my life,
each day is truly a lovely day.

We came together from separate paths
and today begin our journey along the same road,
our destinies forever linked,
our lives intertwined.

I have heard that love consists
not of gazing into each other's eyes,
but of looking outward together
in the same direction.
From deep within my heart,
I love you.

Bride, in you I have found someone to share
not only the good times, but the bad;
not only the pleasure, but the pain;
someone to support and be supported by.
You are my companion to confide in and console.
You are my best friend.

I am confident that with you,
none of life's obstacles will stand in our way
and together we will enjoy all that life has to offer.

Bride, my Love, my soul mate,
my partner, my best friend,
today I ask you to be my wife and companion.
I commit myself to you
for the rest of our lives together and beyond.
Please share with me the joy of guiding my son, Child 2,
as I will enjoy guiding your daughter, Child 1,
together raising our family.

Who knows what other beautiful facets
our relationship will foster.
For there awaits us all
the pleasure of growing together
in a life shared for years to come.

Bride:

Our love developed over time,
with respect for each other's talent and ability,
into a friendship.

As we supported and guided each other,
you patiently and tenderly broke down my walls.
While you taught me to look
into my heart and soul,
we shared our dreams, hopes,
fears, and desires.

Somewhere, probably sooner than either of us knew,
we fell in love.

I asked you to catch me while I was falling,
and you wrapped your loving arms around me.
Groom, as I gaze into your beautiful green eyes,

I look into your soul
and I join you there.

I have fallen in love with you, my best friend,
a thousand times.

I will fall in love with you thousands more,
giving my love to you freely.

Groom, I know that we will be tested
by the routines of daily life,
by chance and circumstance,
and by the full cycle of the seasons of life.
I am entering into our marriage
knowing that together
we will face life's sorrow
no less than its sweetness,
its frustration along with its grace and ease,
its disappointments along with its fulfillment.
I promise that, as your partner,
I will do my best
to help us keep our hearts open to each other
and the love flowing between us
even at the times this may be hardest to do.

I will remain at your side,
holding you close
and supporting you above all.

The strength of the connection we have between us
was evident when we first met.
In our lives,
I will continue to explore and develop that connection.

As I give myself to you in marriage,
I vow to be a loving woman,
filled with passion and friendship,
and to make a happy home
for both of us and our children.

When we are apart,
I will always look at the sky and the moon,
knowing that we are together,
never truly apart,
for our hearts and souls are so incredibly linked.

You have freed my wings for flying,
and I will fly with you forever.
I will look for your secret places
and share mine with you,
always working to keep our love new,
exciting, adventurous, and young,
especially as it grows in maturity and familiarity.

You were made to love me
and I was made to love you.
Our destinies intertwined,
bringing us together here today
and for the rest of our lives.
Keep your loving arms around me.
Our love proves to me
that fairy tales really do come true.
It will last forever.

We have reached our island!
Love...We are there!

VOWS TO THE CHILDREN

Officiant:

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
you have all pledged your love to your new family
and promised to love and nurture each other.

Love is something very magical.
It is a gift from God
that lights us up inside.
And when two people
join their hearts together in marriage,
their lights flow together
and a single brighter light
goes forth from their united being.

When a family is formed as an extension of this union,
the light is intensified
by the light that flows from the children as well.
The happiness you feel in being a family together
is a reflection of this.
This light that you have,
this happiness,
comes from God.
So when we love one another,
we are experiencing God's presence in our lives.

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
you are divine and eternal beings,
and as you come to know this,
you will never cease to wonder and glory
in your coming together as a family.
By being a loving family,

you will awaken your love for God
and your knowledge of the fact
that within each human being
burns the spark of the divine.

When people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness
of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Bride, Groom, Child 1, and Child 2,
in joining together today,
you kindle one another's divine light
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in each other
and to nurture and tend that divine flame
in one another
as best you can each day,
especially at the times it may be hardest to do,
and the times
when one of you may doubt or forget
the existence of that light
within yourself.

This ceremony marks not only the union of Bride and Groom
as Marriage Partners,
it also celebrates their joining together
with Child 1 and Child 2
to form a new family.

Bride and Groom to Children:

(reading alternating paragraphs)

Child 1 and Child 2,

we are now one family,

a mom and dad, brother and sister.

Each of you has so much beauty inside.

You can do anything you choose to do with your life.

We promise to be patient

and to support each of you,

to give you strength and room to grow,

to do less correcting and more connecting,

to stop playing serious and to seriously play,

to do less tugging and do more hugging.

Life is full of surprises,

and we want you to know

that no matter what happens,

no matter what you do

or who you become,

we will always love you.

Child 1 and Child 2,

today we give you these rings

to remind you of our love

and to serve as a symbol

of the unity of our new family.

CHILDREN'S VOWS

Officiant:

An absolute requirement in a wedding ceremony

is the sharing before witnesses

of vows between the two individuals who are being married.

The exchange of these vows
represents the moment of covenant between the two.
It is the vows which bind them
both spiritually and emotionally.
Vows are love made tangible
as they reach from and speak to the heart.

In creating today's ceremony,
Child 1 and Child 2 asked
if they could also take vows
to express their love and commitment to their new family.

It is true, Child 1 and Child 2,
that something very special is happening
for you as well today.
In this ceremony,
you are sharing in the celebration
of the happiness that is present in your family,
and you are affirming your role
in that most fundamental of all human relationships.
May the joy and excitement of today
and the warmth and loving of your home
also serve as a model for you
of what you will seek and find
when it is your time to enter into marriage
and to create your own family.

Child 1, please repeat after me:
I, Child 1, do hereby promise
to love, honor, and cherish my family and God,
to always be honest and true about who I am,
and to honor and respect the truth
of each member of this family.

Child 2, please repeat after me:
I, Child 2, do hereby promise
to love, honor, and cherish my family and God,
to always be honest and true about who I am,
and to honor and respect the truth
of each member of this family.

FINAL BLESSING

Bride and Groom,
I wish you the courage
to keep your loving hearts open to each other
for the rest of your lives,
and to cherish the precious love you share.
May you continue to find delight in each other
and in your being together.
May your love forever nourish you
and keep you strong.

Child 1 and Child 2,
may you also find the strength,
comfort, and support you need
as you grow and develop
as members of this family.

I wish you all the strength
to be true to the vows you have made here today.
May you always have the wisdom
to cherish the precious love you share.

May you abide by the laws of Spirit,
nurturing yourselves and each other
with acceptance, understanding,
cooperation, and loving.

May your home provide each of you as individuals,
and all of you as a family,
with a place of peace and health,
filled with blessings and joy.

Bride and Groom,
by the power vested in me by the State of _____,
I witness and affirm your union of love
and now pronounce you Partners in Marriage.

You may now kiss as Marriage Partners for the very first time.
Congratulations and God bless you!

(The children recess with their parents.)

Ceremony Six: A Marriage with Children—Text Worksheet

Opening Prayer:

#9, page 88

Uniting of Family and Friends:

Declaration of Support #3, paragraph 1, pages 124–125; #1, page 123

Marriage Address:

#7, pages 140–141

Wedding Vows:

#40, pages 189–193

Vows to the Children:

Involving Children #5, pages 232–233; #2 (adapted for two children), page 228

Children’s Vows:

Involving Children #4, pages 230–231

Final Blessing:

#7, paragraph 1, page 215; *#1, paragraphs 2–4, pages 210–211

*Adapted to include children

Ceremony Seven:
Non-denominational
Christian with Scriptural Readings

(After they process into the church, and before they take their seats, the parents of the Couple light two candles on either side of the Unity Candle to represent their families.)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Officiant:

A reading from John 2, verses I–II:

On the third day
there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee,
and the mother of Jesus was there:
Jesus also was invited to the wedding,
with his disciples.

When the wine ran out,
the mother of Jesus said to him,
“They have no wine.”
And Jesus said to her,
“O woman, what does this have to do with me?
My hour has not yet come.”
His mother said to the servants,
“Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there,
for the Jewish rites of purification,
each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants,
"Fill the jars with water."
And they filled them up to the brim.
And he said to them,
"Now draw some out,
and take it to the master of the feast."
So they took it.

When the master of the feast tasted the water
now become wine,
and did not know where it came from
(though the servants who had drawn the water knew),
the master of the feast called the Bridegroom
and said to him,
"Everyone serves the good wine first;
and when people have drunk freely,
then the poor wine;
but you have kept the good wine until now."

This, the first of his signs,
Jesus did at Cana in Galilee,
and manifested his glory;
and his disciples believed in him.

In Matthew, chapter 18, verse 20, Jesus says:

"Where two or three are gathered together
in my name,
there am I in the midst of them."

As represented here today,
in this union of Bride and Groom,
Christ is among us.

It is through their love
and among those who have gathered here today
to witness this union,
that our loving God reveals himself to us.

When we come together in God's name,
we put down our petty and powerful weapons
of judgment and rejection,
and all the ways that we have learned
to withhold ourselves from one another
and we reach together
into that which patiently awaits our choice
to turn away from the multitude of our illusions—
to the presence of God.
To truly enter into this presence,
we need to choose our oneness
rather than our separateness.

Christ taught us that the pathway
into the glory of our true selves
is through our loving hearts.
And it is through choosing our loving
that we truly worship God.

Our greatest blessing in life
comes not from power or possessions
but from the intimate knowing
and loving of another.
Bride and Groom are so blessed.

So, today is a celebration of their love
and how this love
brings God's presence into their lives,

for indeed,
a true marriage such as this one
is the highest form of knowing
and worshiping the Beloved.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

Bride and Groom,
this bond you share is a true miracle
and a blessing from God.
Treasure it and carefully tend it each day.
You breathe life into each other
and provide a safe and sacred harbor
where you are able to shed
all of your worldly illusions
while witnessing, receiving, and cherishing
the precious truth of one another.
Generously shower each other
with the gifts of your faith, strength,
honesty, beauty, and complexity.

In the hardest of times,
always remember to reach for the Godness—
the goodness inside of yourselves and each other—
to the Oneness of our Lord's most loving message of
"When two or more are gathered in my name,
there I am also."

May you always honor the sanctity of your union
and thus be blessed
beyond your wildest dreams.

God bless you.

READING

Now, Groom's sister, _____, will share a reading
from the first letter of John,
chapter 4, verses 7–16,
followed by an excerpt
from First Corinthians, chapter 13.

Dear friends,
let us love one another,
for love comes from God.
Everyone who loves
has been born of God
and knows God.

Whoever does not love
does not know God,
because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us:
He sent his one and only Son
into the world
that we might live through him.

This is love:
not that we loved God,
but that he loved us
and sent his Son
as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends,
since God so loved us,
we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God;
but if we love one another,
God lives in us
and his love is made complete in us.

We know that we live in him
and he in us,
because he has given us of his Spirit.

And we have seen and testify
that the Father has sent his Son
to be the Savior of the world.

If anyone acknowledges
that Jesus is the Son of God,
God lives in him
and he in God.

And so we know and rely on
the love God has for us.
God is love.
Whoever lives in love
lives in God,
and God in him.

Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast,
it is not proud.

It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil,
but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts,
always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails.

CANDLE CEREMONY

Officiant:

The lighting of the Unity Candle is a ritual
symbolizing the union of two people
as they enter into marriage.

The Unity Candle itself represents the oneness
that is being created by the joining of their individual lives
into a shared journey.

The individual candles
symbolize the uniqueness of Bride and Groom
as they walk side by side
heading in the same direction.
They are separate, yet one.

The lighting of the Unity Candle
in the presence of God
symbolizes the great mystery
of the union of two becoming one.
Bride and Groom, always remember
that as you join together in marriage,
you are still two separate beings,
each with your own unique needs, dreams, and desires,
and that in marriage,
you are creating a covenant
of loving, caring, and sharing between you.

Now, Bride and Groom,
as you bring these lights
which symbolize your individual selves
closer and closer together,
your flames merge into the greater light of your union.

As you light the Unity Candle
to symbolize the enduring flame of your marriage,
let us each take a moment
to silently express our prayerful wishes
for your happiness and well-being
in this marriage.

And let us remember
that just as Bride and Groom are becoming one,
so are we coming together
into a circle of family and friends
in loving support of this marriage.

Bride and Groom,
tend the light of your loving union
with great devotion and kindness.
May you be blessed
with a lifelong partnership
of loving and learning through God's grace.

WEDDING VOWS

Please join hands and share your Wedding Vows.

Groom:

In the name of God,
I, ____, take you, ____,
to be my partner in marriage.

It is you, above all others,
who has awakened my soul
and enthused me with the possibility
of becoming all that I am capable of being
in this world.
I am so grateful to you for these blessings.

I want you to know
how much I cherish your friendship
and how much I appreciate your belief in me.
Your love is my greatest treasure.

I will be at your side
through all of life's challenges and joys
as we become one in spirit before God.
I promise to give of myself to you
in every way I can,
to care for you and protect you
as I would my own self.
I promise to be faithful to you in this life,
and to be honest and true to our union
until God, in his perfect wisdom and timing,
calls one of us to death.

Bride, I promise
to carry the flame of your love with me forever
in this world and the next,
so that the light of our love,
now one light
drawn from the mingling of two souls,
will always prevail.

Bride, I will forever thank God
for your presence in my life
and you will always be surrounded by my love.

May God always keep us
and watch over our love and our home.

Bride:

Groom, I strongly believe
that our union is God's will.
Therefore, through his grace,
I, Bride, take you, Groom,
to be my beloved partner in marriage.
And, with all the sincerity in my heart,
I promise to love you dearly,
to confide in you honestly,
to respect you proudly,
and to always be kind.

I have learned, through you,
the importance of being true to myself,
and as your partner,
I will strive to be fair and true to you.

I look forward to our life together,
enriched by our friendship
and the encouragement we give to one another.
And I am comforted to know
you have promised to be by my side
in times of fear and sorrow.

Groom, from this moment forward,
I offer to you all that I am
and all that I hope to be.
I will be faithful to you
and grateful to God for our love
all the days of my life.

RING EXCHANGE

Officiant:

May I have the rings, please?

Let us pray.

Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings,
that they who wear them
may abide in thy peace
and continue in thy favor;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May Bride and Groom abide in thy peace
and grow in their knowledge of your presence
through their loving union.

May the seamless circle of these rings
become the symbol of their endless love
and serve to remind them of the covenant
they have entered into today
to be faithful, loving, and kind to each other.

Beloved God,
may they abide in your grace
and be forever true to this union.

Amen.

Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

Bride, I give you this ring
in token and pledge
of my abiding love for you.

Bride, with this ring,
I thee wed,
in the name of the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Officiant:

Bride, place this ring on Groom's finger.

Bride:

Groom, I give you this ring
in token and pledge
of my abiding love for you.

Groom, with this ring,
I thee wed,
in the name of the Father,
and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE

"Ave Maria"

THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

Officiant:

Beloved Father, Mother, God,
we ask you to bless Bride and Groom
with the strength to keep the vows they have made,
and to cherish the love they share,
that they may be faithful and devoted to each other.
Help them to support each other
with patience, understanding, and honesty.
Enable them to have a home
that is a place of blessings and of peace.

We seek your love and grace
for all who are witnesses of this holy marriage.
May all who share the marriage covenant be renewed
through their witnessing this union.

Bride and Groom,
may your life together be joyful;
may you both be enriched
and made better people
for living in this blessed union.
May the grace and wisdom of God
be always with you.
May the love of God always fill you,
surround you, and protect you.
Amen.

Now, because you have chosen one another
and pledged to love each other
for all the days of your lives,
before God
and before this loving community of family and friends,

it gives me great joy
to pronounce you Partners in Marriage.

You may now kiss.

BENEDICTION

Beloved God,
source of love and light and sound,
pour your grace down upon Bride and Groom,
that they may fulfill the vows
that they have made today
through their love and faithfulness to each other.

Bride and Groom,
go in peace and love,
seeing in each other
the face of God smiling upon you
and blessing you each and every day.

Ceremony Seven: Nondenominational Christian with Scriptural Readings—Text Worksheet

(Parents light two candles on either side of the Unity Candle to represent the families of the Couple.)

Scriptural Readings:

John 2:1–11; Matthew 18:20

Marriage Address:

#6, pages 139–140; #2, paragraphs 5 and 6, page 135

Readings:

First John, Chapter 4:7–16, Groom's sister _____

First Corinthians, Chapter 13:4–8, Groom's sister _____

Candle Ceremony:

#5, pages 152–153

Wedding Vows:

Groom: #2, paragraph 1, page 163; #37, pages 184–185; #25, paragraph 5, page 175; #9, last line, page 166

Bride: #41, pages 193–195

Ring Exchange:

Prelude #4 and #5 combined, pages 202–203

Ring Exchange #2, page 206

Musical Interlude:

“Ave Maria” (by string quartet)

Final Blessing:

#2 (omit last line), pages 211–212; #6, page 214

Benediction:

#6, pages 216–217

Ceremony Eight:
Joyful Family Togetherness

GATHERING WORDS

For those of us blessed by a true partnership of love,
we feel safe in the presence of our loved one.
There is no need to hide any part of ourselves
for fear of being judged or rejected.
We can just be together from moment to moment,
believing that those moments
will thread together into eternity.

There is a gentleness to the presence of love
that softens life's rough edges.
It makes us somehow braver
to go forth into the world
knowing that the shelter of someone's love
awaits us at day's end.

We are most vulnerable when we love.
We place our trust in another
to honor us and to care for us,
to treasure us and to receive our love.

In love, we trust
that the other will provide a safe haven
in which we can experience and share
the fullness of our being with one another.
And in so doing, we trust
that our lives will be far richer

than had we chosen separate journeys
through this world.

We trust that our love will fill us full
and make us wiser and more beautiful beings.
We find that our union graces our lives with balance,
a sweetness beyond any we have ever tasted,
and a treasure beyond any measure of value
we have ever known.

Whenever we attend a wedding celebration,
we are given the opportunity
to reexamine our own lives.
We might look at the radiance of the couple before us
and be tempted to compare their obvious joy
to the quality of our own primary relationships.

The truth is that each one of us is a powerful creator
in the dance of love and marriage.
Each one of us, each moment of every day,
has the choice to rededicate ourselves to one another
or to withhold our love and caring.

Love is powerful.
It is simple.
Yet it is very complex.

In order for love to flow between two people,
four things must be happening at once.
Each person gives their love to the other
and each is the receiver of the other's love.
Love requires us to be vulnerable to each other

so that our love may flow back and forth
through these four doors.

There are so many ways
that we can choose to be in relationship to each other.
It is only through love
that our spirits are lifted into a oneness
that transcends all the dualities
we experience in our lives.
Loving is the only experience that enables us to see
that our separation is only a condition
of the physical and material level of being—
that our souls can soar and merge as one.

It is love that gives the deepest meaning to our lives.
It is our highest calling,
our greatest purpose, and our finest achievement.

One of the great joys of the wedding day
is the joining together
of the couple's families and friends.
Bride and Groom are filled with gratitude
to each and every one of you
for the loving, caring, friendship, and support
that you have given them throughout their lives.

Being able to share their wedding day with you,
surrounded by your love and support,
is a treasured blessing.
Knowing that your best wishes go forward
with Bride and Groom
strengthens them as they embark upon their journey
as Marriage Partners.

A LETTER WRITTEN AND READ BY GROOM'S SON

Bride and Groom,

I wish you every happiness on your wedding day.

May it exceed your wildest dreams

as a day filled with laughter, community, and fair skies,
perfectly lovely in every detail.

May this day live forever in your hearts

as the beautiful beginning of your forever together.

May the days that follow be a romantic, magical time,
discovering the joy of living together as one.

And as the days turn to weeks and months and years,
take the time to enjoy the little things in life,
like lavender sunsets and evening walks.

May you both wake each morning

to the happy surprise that you love one another
even more than the day before.

And may you gracefully learn life's lessons
of patience and compromise
as you learn to trust each other's feelings
as your own.

Your first year of marriage

will be gone before you know it.

Treasure each anniversary as a happy reminder
of the vows that join your hearts,
your minds, and your destinies.

Perhaps your favorite anniversary gift
will be to renew your vows each passing year.

May your days “for better,”
“for richer,” and “in health”
far outnumber stormy days
and times of trouble.

As you live and love throughout the years,
may you realize all the fulfillment
marriage can bring,
and know that all your days have been happier
because you have shared them with each other.

MARRIAGE ADDRESS

Officiant:

Bride and Groom,
demonstrate your love for yourselves
and each other
through caring and sharing.
Stretch your love large enough
to embrace whatever life brings to you.
Let it fill you, surround you,
comfort and protect you.
Let your hearts be truly safe
and at home with each other.

Be generous in expressing your love.
Be open to receive love from each other.
Be flexible and forgiving with each other.
Let your relationship be a catalyst that transforms you
into the expression of your highest selves.

Remember that your relationship is alive
and ever-changing

and that your love is a miracle,
always inviting you to grow, to learn,
to blossom, and to expand.
How you regard each other
and how you behave toward each other
will determine the destiny of your union.
It is your creation together,
your sacred responsibility.
Be kind to your relationship.
Nourish it with tender loving care,
and, above all else,
keep your loving alive.
Treat it as the precious blessing it is.

Do not just be married or in love;
but let your marriage be an active process of
loving each other.

The quality of your marriage is up to you.
Both of you as individuals
and together as a couple
will choose what kind of marriage
you will create, promote, and allow
through your thoughts, feelings, and actions each day.

May you always honor the sanctity of your union
and thus be blessed beyond your wildest dreams.

WEDDING VOWS

Officiant:

I now invite you all to join me
in witnessing Bride's and Groom's Wedding Vows.

Groom, do you take this woman
as your wife and equal,
your lover and your best friend;
keeping yourself only unto her,
for as long as you both shall live?

Groom: Yes, I do.

Officiant:

Bride, do you take this man
as your husband and equal,
your lover and your best friend;
keeping yourself only unto him,
for as long as you both shall live?

Bride: Yes, I do.

RING EXCHANGE

Officiant:

May I have the rings, please?

These rings are circles,
and circles are symbolic of the sun,
the earth, and the universe.
As arms that embrace,
these wedding rings you give and receive this day
reflect the circle of shared love
into which you enter
as partners in life.

May you always be blessed,
and may you abide in peace and love.

Groom, place this ring on Bride's finger.

Groom:

As a sign of my love
and my knowledge that in marrying you,
I am becoming much more than I am,
I give you this ring
with the promise
that I will love you
and keep my heart open to you
all the days of my life.

Officiant:

Bride, place this ring on Groom's finger.

Bride:

As a sign of my love
and my knowledge that in marrying you,
I am becoming much more than I am,
I give you this ring
with the promise
that I will love you
and keep my heart open to you
all the days of my life.

FINAL BLESSING

Now, because you have chosen one another
and pledged to love each other
for all the days of your lives,
before God
and before this loving community of family and friends,
it gives me great joy

to pronounce you husband and wife.
Congratulations!

Mr. and Mrs. _____,
you may now kiss as husband and wife
for the first time!

Ceremony Eight: Joyful Family Togetherness—Text Worksheet

Gathering Words:

#3, pages 90–91; #4, pages 91–92; #14, pages 100–101

Reading:

A letter written and read by the Groom’s son

Marriage Address:

#2 (omit paragraph 5), pages 134–135

Wedding Vows:

#15, page 169

Ring Exchange:

Prelude #2, page 201

Ring Exchange #6, page 207

Final Blessing:

#6, page 214

Ceremony Nine:
A Heartfelt Commitment Ceremony

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin by welcoming the presence of God
within each of us.

As we lift into the loving
that joins us together as one,
let us surround Partner A and Partner B with our love,
our prayers, and our best wishes for them
on this day of celebration
and throughout their journey together
as life partners.

We are here because we love Partner A and Partner B.
We rejoice that they have found each other
and that through each other,
they have come to know the power of love
as they have never known it before.

We celebrate this union
of their hearts, minds, bodies, and souls
and wish them great joy.

GATHERING WORDS

If you ask most couples
who have a strong and abiding love
what they like most about their partners,
usually they will say
that they don't have to pretend to be anything

other than what they are.
They are able to express themselves
without fear of being judged or rejected.
There is room in the relationship
for both of them to be unique individuals.
They are free to surrender
to the possibility of profound intimacy—
to be known and loved without condition.

For quite some time now,
Partner A and Partner B have known and loved each other.
They have been strengthened by their love
and have received many blessings
through its beauty and tenderness.
They have learned that they can depend on each other
and on the power of their love,
and that through each other
they are becoming better people.

Today, they come before us
to declare their commitment to each other
as life partners,
vowing to share the trials and triumphs
of their shared life.
They are declaring to each other
and to all of us present
that they will be by each other's side
no matter what life brings their way.

Love has gathered us here today.
We are here to celebrate the love
that Partner A and Partner B have for each other,

as well as the love that each of you has given them
throughout their lives.
As families and friends, you are the ones
who have taught Partner A and Partner B how to love.
You have shown them the blessings
that come through loving one another.

Having planted this seed of love in them,
we are now gathered to support them
as they embark upon their voyage of discovery
as life partners.
We are here to see them off on this journey.
Let us also be there to see them through.

FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

Partner A and Partner B have expressed to me
the importance of actively involving all of you
in their celebration today.
So, we are going to share a ritual,
the Friendship Circle,
that originated in the Quaker tradition.

In a moment,
I'm going to ask you all to get up
and form a circle around the chairs.
Then, anyone who wishes to
may share their thoughts and feelings
about Partner A and Partner B
joining their lives together.
You may want to offer them your blessing
or to share a story about them,
or a reflection of a time

you have shared together.
Whatever comes forward is just fine.

So now, let us form our circle of family and friends.

(Everyone forms a circle and the Officiant invites guests to begin their sharing.)

CANDLE CEREMONY

This flame you ignite before us today
is strong and shining brightly.
May you tend it well
so that it may shine throughout your lives.

May the warmth of the love it symbolizes
forever bring you courage,
reassurance, and comfort
and fill you both with strength and joy.

COMMITMENT VOWS

Please join hands to share your vows.

Partner A:

I, Partner A, choose you, Partner B,
in the presence of our friends and families,
to be my partner from this time forward;
to love you,
to be a comfort and safe haven in your life,
to hold you close,
to listen deeply when you speak,
to nourish you with my gentleness,
to uphold you with my strength,
to weigh the effects of the words I speak

and the things I do,
to never take you for granted,
and to always give thanks
for your presence in my life.

Partner B:

Dearest Partner A,
I choose you to be my partner for life,
to be by your side
through our life's journey together.

You are my best friend.
You are my precious love.
You are the one I choose
to spend my life with.
I promise to cherish you, to honor you,
to love and respect you.
I promise to comfort and encourage you,
when we are healthy
and when we must endure sickness;
when we are filled with the joys of success
and when we are burdened with sorrows.

Partner A,
I promise to love you without condition
for all the days of my life.

RING EXCHANGE

Officiant:

May I have the rings, please?

These rings are a symbol

that has been carried forward from antiquity.
They are simple and strong.
They are round like the sun and the moon,
like the eye, and like the embrace of love.

As circles, rings remind us
that as we give our love,
so it comes back around to us,
and we give and receive love around and around
in the circle of love.

May your commitment rings
always serve as a reminder to you
that your love, like the sun and moon, illumines;
that your love, like the eye, lets you see clearly;
and your love, like an embrace,
is a grace upon this world.

Partner A, place this ring on Partner B's finger.

Partner A:

Partner B, with this ring
I am giving you my promise
to always love you,
cherish you,
honor you,
and comfort you.
I will always be grateful to God
for your presence in my life.

Officiant:

Partner B, place this ring on Partner A's finger.

Partner B:

Partner A, from the moment we met,
I knew I wanted to spend my life with you.
With this ring, I pledge myself to you,
to our union,
and to our everlasting love.

FINAL BLESSING

Officiant:

Now that Partner A and Partner B
have joined themselves to each other by solemn vows,
and by the giving and receiving of rings,
I pronounce that they are partners for life.
Congratulations and God bless you!

Ceremony Nine: A Heartfelt Commitment* Ceremony— Text Worksheet

Opening Prayer:

#1, page 81; #3, paragraphs 2 and 3, page 82

Gathering Words:

#5, pages 92–93; #6, page 93; #7, pages 93–94

Friendship Circle:

#1, page 225

Candle Ceremony:

#7, pages 154–155

Wedding Vows:

Partner A: #5, pages 164–165

Partner B: #6, page 165

Ring Exchange:

Prelude #9, page 204

Ring Exchange: Partner A: #7, page 207

Ring Exchange: Partner B: #8, page 207

Final Blessing:

#5, page 214

*Text has been modified to create a commitment ceremony rather than a wedding ceremony.

can be the most sublime of human experiences;
for in any final accounting,
love is what life is all about.”

Yet it was not that wedding ceremony that married you,
but rather your mutual commitment
to love and respect each other
in both the good times and the bad.

And so you stand before us today
with a seasoned love
that has been strengthened through the test of time.
You are still filled with hope and commitment,
and you are an inspiration to us all
as you recommit
to the sacred and joyous covenant
of your marriage here today.

Being here with Wife and Husband
serves as a reminder to us all
that the commitment of a man and a woman in marriage
is of the heart, body, mind, and spirit
and is for the intention
of mutual love, help, and comfort
through the trials and triumphs of life.
It is a relationship
not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly,
but deliberately, lovingly, and reverently.

As Wife and Husband have learned,
the choice to enter into marriage is profound.
In choosing a lifelong partner,
we are choosing the one

Ceremony Ten:
Renewal of Marriage Vows

GATHERING WORDS

We are gathered here together as families and friends
to celebrate the fact that Wife and Husband
have shared twenty-five years of marriage together.

For better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness, and in health,
they have found the strength in their love and commitment
to endure and to enjoy all that has come their way.

They have not only shared a marriage,
but have raised three sons as well:
Son 1, Son 2, and Son 3.

They have formed a family of individuals
who love and care for each other
and who can count on one another
to be there when needed.

So, Wife, Husband,
and Son 1, Son 2, and Son 3,
today we celebrate you as a family as well.

Wife and Husband,
as Reverend ____ reminded you twenty-five years ago,
"Marriage and the union it symbolizes

who will witness our changes and growth,
and who will affect these changes
and shape our maturation as well.

Wife and Husband have learned
through their years together
that the essence of a marriage relationship
is the openness to another person
in his or her entirety
as lover, companion, and friend.
They joined their lives together
in search of something greater and richer,
and created a life
that transcended their solitary paths.

They found that really loving one another
with depth and passion
is the greatest treasure.
It has added richness and profound meaning
to their lives.
They have discovered
that love is one of life's greatest joys.
By simply giving of themselves to each other,
honestly and courageously,
they have both been infinitely enhanced.

As companions in day-to-day life,
Wife and Husband have taken pleasure
in sharing their time
and their thoughts and feelings.
They have delighted in reporting in
on their separate adventures in the world,
which have become the rhythm of life

between these devoted partners
as they have built their life together.

In this marriage, two lives are intimately shared;
and the blending of the two
has not diminished either one.
Rather, it has enhanced the individuality of each partner.

As this marriage has matured,
it has taken on a life of its own.
And within it,
Wife and Husband have individually evolved
while growing in understanding of each other.
This wonderful intimacy
has mirrored a depth of inner knowing
that has awakened levels of awareness
they never knew existed.
To be awakened in this way
is a priceless gift.

When we give of ourselves
into a loving Marriage Partnership,
we do not abandon ourselves;
we do not shed our individuality;
for that is what brought us together in the first place.
Each of us knows
that a marriage is not created by law or a ceremony;
but rather it occurs in the hearts of two human beings.
It grows out of loving, caring, and sharing
ourselves with each other.
And so it is that Wife and Husband
have connected their hearts and souls one to the other,
drawing upon the depths of their being,

into the deep well of human need—
the need to live united, and loving, and complete.

So, in witnessing this ceremony today,
we are observing only an outward sign
of an inward union
that exists between Wife and Husband.
Today, they have come before us
to publicly reaffirm their love;
to promise to continue to nurture themselves,
each other, and this union;
and to acknowledge its centrality in their lives.
They do so
knowing that marriage is at once
the most tender, yet challenging,
of all relations in life.

One of the great joys of this day
is the joining together
as a community of family and friends.
Wife and Husband are filled with gratitude
to each and every one of you
for the loving, caring, friendship, and support
that you have given them throughout their marriage.

Being able to share this day with you,
surrounded by your love and support,
is a treasured blessing.

CANDLE CEREMONY

Every human being possesses a special light
that burns within them.
When two spirits, destined to be together,

find each other,
their streams of light flow together,
and a single, brighter light
goes forth from their union.
When a family is formed
as an extension of this union,
the light is intensified
by the light that flows from the children, as well.
When people love one another
with devotion and freedom,
they kindle the awareness of that spark in each other
as nothing else quite can do.

Wife, Husband, and Son 1, Son 2, and Son 3,
in your commitment to one another,
you kindle one another's divine light,
and promise always to do your best
to see that light in each other;
to nurture and tend that spirit in one another
as best you can,
especially in difficult times,
when it may be hardest to do,
and the times when one of you may doubt or forget
the existence of that light within one another.

Wife, Husband, and Son 1, Son 2, and Son 3,
take these candles now,
and as you light them,
symbolically enter the sacred trust
to honor the divine spirit in one another.

Now, bring your individual flames together,

symbolizing the new and greater flame of your family,
remembering that just as this union is made stronger
by your strength as individuals,
so are you as individuals
made stronger by the strength of this union.

RENEWAL OF VOWS AND RING EXCHANGE

Wife and Husband,
please join hands to renew your marriage vows.

You have traveled a long way together
to reach this place today.
In rededicating yourselves to each other,
this marriage, and your family,
you are affirming that:
You are friends and choose to remain so.
You are lovers and choose to remain so.
You are individuals and choose to remain so.
And you are partners and choose to remain so.

Wife and Husband,
as you place these rings on each other's fingers,
please reaffirm your marriage vows.

Husband:

Wife, I feel blessed to have found you as my partner
and I look forward to sharing the rest of my life with you.

Wife:

Husband, I feel blessed to have found you as my partner
and look forward to sharing the rest of my life with you.

FINAL BLESSING

Officiant:

Wife and Husband,
twenty-five years ago you entered this marriage
with hope, commitment, and a newfound love.
Today, you stand before us
reaffirming a commitment
that has stood the test of time,
that has strengthened you as individuals,
and taught you about the power of love in your lives.
It is an honor and a blessing
for each of us to be here with you today,
celebrating your love and commitment
to each other and to your family.

May you continue to find delight in each other,
and may your love continue to grow
and to nurture you
all the days of your lives.

I wish you the strength
to continue to keep the vows you have made
and the good fortune
to find ever greater tenderness,
joy, and comfort
in the love you share.
Support each other, your marriage, and family
with patience, understanding, and honesty.

May your home continue to be
a place of peace and health,
filled with blessings and joy.

May you endlessly delight one another.
May you love and fulfill each other always.
Go in peace.
Live in joy.
Thanks be to God.
Congratulations and God bless you!

You may now kiss!

Ceremony Ten: Renewal of Marriage Vows—Text Worksheet

This ceremony blends together elements from the Couple's original marriage ceremony with excerpts from this book. Listed below are the passages that have been adapted for inclusion in this ceremony:

Gathering Words:

#9, alternate paragraph 1, page 95; #10, paragraph 2, page 96;
#11, paragraphs 2–7, pages 96–97; #17, paragraphs 3 and 4, pages
102–103; #14, pages 100–101

Candle Ceremony:

#2, pages 147–148

Renewal of Vows and Ring Exchange:

Customized

Final Blessing:

#1, pages 210–211

Benediction:

#2, pages 215–216

Couple/Ceremony Information Sheet

This worksheet is a helpful way for either the Couple or Officiant beginning contact with a Couple to keep track of their personal contact information, beliefs, and preferences regarding their ceremony. This is especially valuable for an Officiant who is working on multiple ceremonies at the same time.

	Ceremony	Rehearsal
Date:		
Time:		
Location:		
Location Contact Person:		
Wedding Coordinator:		
# of Guests:		
Deposit Received:	Date:	Amount:
Referred by:		
	Bride	Groom
Name:		
Address:		
Phone:		
Email:		
Age:		
# of this marriage:		
Any children from this or previous unions?		
Religion/Spiritual Background		
Current Religion/Spiritual Beliefs/Affiliations		
Other information:		
<u>Wedding Party</u> (first names and affiliation with couple)		
Bride's Side:		

Groom's Side:

Other people who will be participating in the ceremony:

What do you know you do or do not want in terms of tone and content for your wedding ceremony?

Are there any particular challenges or issues surrounding your getting married?

What qualities do you most appreciate or admire in your partner?

Bride:

Groom:

What made you decide to get married at this time? What does marriage mean to you?

Bride:

Groom:

What does the commitment of marriage mean to you:

Bride:

Groom:

Ceremony Site Layout Worksheet

Describe exactly how the ceremony site will be set up, including the location of all flowers, decorations and props, Musicians, Readers, the Officiant, Wedding Party members, chairs, and so on. Describe them all in relationship to each other.

Chairs:

Flowers, Decorations, and Props:

Officiant and Wedding Party:

Musicians:

Readers:

Photographer:

Other:

Wedding Contact Information Sheet

Ceremony Location:

Rehearsal (Date and Time):

Ceremony (Date and Time):

Participants/Resources	Name	Phone	Email

Just Before the Ceremony Checklist

List everything that needs a final check to ensure that all goes smoothly.
Indicate who will check which items.

Activity	Person Responsible

Wedding Rehearsal Checklist

Prior to the Rehearsal, contact the Officiant and Location Coordinator to discuss who should attend the Rehearsal, who will be in charge, and what elements need to be rehearsed. List the sequence of Rehearsal events below.

Things we need to bring to our Rehearsal: (See sample worksheet on page 59.)

Designing the Ceremony Text Worksheet

Create a rough draft. Use the sample text elements that have been included in this book and any others that you have gathered for inclusion in your ceremony. For example, you may want to include a religious or family tradition. List all items in the order in which you would like them to occur. If you only want a segment of a sample item or want to change the wording, make note of that here as well. Remember, this is just a rough draft. So don't be too concerned about editing at this point. Just focus on gathering those elements that speak to you, at least in part. At this stage, you are likely to select more passages than will appear in your final ceremony text.

Opening Prayer:

Gathering Words:

Remembrances and Acknowledgments:

Names to be included:

Readings and Songs:

Selection:

Author:

Reader or Singer's Name:

Declaration of Support:

Marriage Address:

Sacred Rituals:

Wedding Vows:

Groom:

Bride:

Ring Exchange:

Prelude:

Ring Exchange:

Final Blessing:

Benediction:

Other:

Once you have created a rough draft according to your directions above, begin the editing and fine-tuning process. Be sure to read the text aloud to see that it flows smoothly and is not too long or short for what you want. Set a specific deadline for completing the ceremony text well in advance of the ceremony.

Processional Cues and Sequencing Worksheet

1. Describe what will happen prior to the Wedding Party processing. Include who will determine when to start and who will cue whom; if mothers, grandmothers, or other honored guests will be formally seated; how the music will be coordinated; and how the Officiant, Groom, and Groomsmen will take their places.

2. Describe the order in which the Wedding Party will walk up the aisle and where each one will go. If there is an aisle runner, who will attend to it and how will they be cued?

Recessional Cues and Sequencing Worksheet

Describe the sequencing of the Recessional and where each person will go once they are down the aisle. What will be the cue for the Musicians to begin playing? Will the parents follow the Wedding Party? Will there be a receiving line and, if so, where will it be and who will be in it? Who will be signing the marriage license, when and where will they meet the Officiant?