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This book is pre-Gay Marriage but has all the elements for a service.
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BACKGROUND FOR THIS BOOKLET

This booklet is designed to help you write your own wedding. You are not confined to its pages. You may cut and paste, chop, rewrite, write your own, borrow from other sources, etc., to gather materials for your own service.

This book follows a normal wedding outline. As you read through these instructions, *select readings (as many as you would like) and other pieces from each section of the booklet.* You will easily build a good service for yourselves. Remember that the sections of this booklet appear in the order you would normally use them in constructing a service. You can select more than one reading for use in your service.

As you piece together your wedding you will want to consider those things you have always wanted to be a part of 'YOUR' wedding - those touches that will make it just right for both of you. Putting the service together should be fun, interesting, and provide some occasion for discussions about feelings. Most couples report back that they have worked on the service together and learned a lot about their future partner in the process - even those who have lived together for years!

That brings up a point - I say future partner - that is somewhat of a misnomer - once you decide to get married or even live together that relationship changes and the partnership begins. The partnership is a lifetime process which requires attention, work, and patience midst the celebrations, the joys and the quiet times. Expectations of each other may change subtly after the wedding. You are no longer just lovers and friends, but have added the roles of husband and wife. Your models and expectations come from your parents and previous marriages. Taking time to talk about your recollections of your father as a husband and your mother as a wife can be an enjoyable and enlightening activity. Sharing about your parents can certainly help you to understand yourself and your new partner better. For some the insights will help build a healthy lasting marriage.

HAVING FUN PUTTING YOUR WEDDING TOGETHER

When I go to a wedding service there are some things I expect to see ... a functionary doing the wedding, a bride and a groom (unless it is a 'Holy Union'), exchange of vows, ring(s), and a kiss at the end. These are some of the minimal things that mark a wedding for me. From your own traditions there may be other ritualistic elements. If you are Catholic it may be the priestly vestment, the mass which follows the wedding, or simply things like candles. If you are Jewish, it may be the Huppa, the wine, the goblet crushed under the groom's heel, or the sounds of "MAZELTOV" joyously rumbling through the witnesses at the close of the service. If you are Quaker it may be the expectation of friends facing friends in silence, speaking your own vows, or the simple quiet of 'waiting' in the meeting house. For the Protestant it may be the bride walking down the aisle with her father, the groom lined up with the best man and ushers, or even the expectations that the service will be fairly short. Ultimately a meaningful service taps into what is familiar.

Each section of the traditional Protestant wedding service gets detailed treatment in the chapters of this booklet. Within each of the following chapters, there may be more detail than this simple outline shows. For instance, the exchange of rings may include an introduction, the ring vows, and a blessing over the rings. This detail is found in the individual chapters of this booklet. The traditional service would have these elements:

Opening Readings

Parental Blessings

Introduction to Vows

Vows

Introduction to Ring Vows

Exchange of Rings

Ring Blessing

Prayers

Signing the Church Register and Licence

Recognition/Pronouncement

Closing Words/Benediction

The Kiss

Presentation of Bride and Groom to Guests

This book follows the outline given above. There may be thirty introductory readings, a dozen or more vows, words for the exchange of rings, etc. You are not bound to this book but may write your own sections, draw from other sources, or cut up sections as you like.

ONTARIO LAWS

Ontario Provincial law requires that the officiant ask, in front of the witnesses, the Bride and Groom "if they know of any reason why they can not be legally married." This may be done at a meeting with the couple and witnesses, as a formal part of the service, or more informally during the signing of the license and register. The couple being married is required to ask the witnesses to be "witnesses." The minister is required to say "By the power vested in me by the *MARRIAGE ACT* I do pronounce you husband and wife." While this exact wording may not appear in all of the appropriate sections of this booklet, the officiant will see to it that the requirements of the law are met.

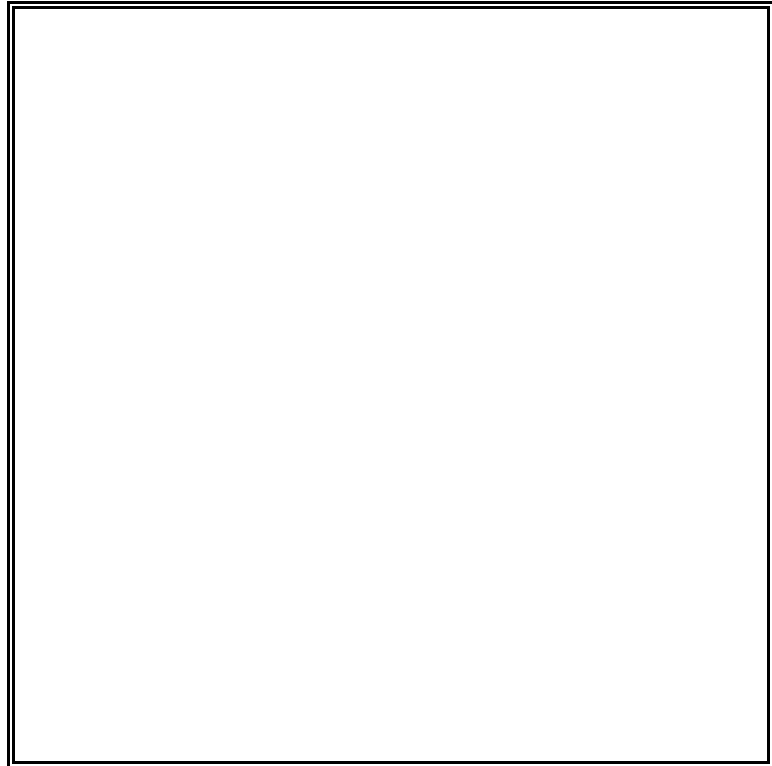
SERVICES IN QUEBEC

Our licence to perform weddings is issued by the Province of Ontario. We can not perform weddings in the Province of Quebec. From time to time we do perform a small wedding in Ontario then go to Quebec for a larger 'celebration of the wedding' which looks much like a wedding with the exception that we do not pronounce the couple husband and wife.

BACKGROUND FOR THESE READINGS

You may choose as many readings as you want from this section. Some of these readings may be appropriate prayers to be used later on in the service. If only one reading is chosen, this may make for a very short wedding service. On the other hand, six readings may make for a long wedding service. The choice and style is yours!

This section contains numerous readings for use in constructing your wedding. They represent many different philosophical and personal outlooks. Read through them carefully. Select the ones which best state your thoughts and feelings about LOVE, YOUR MARRIAGE, and YOUR RELATIONSHIP. These are the first words your friends and family hear during the service. They will set the tone for all that follows.



Several other books you may want to use are Great Occasions, ed. by Carl Seaburg, or The New Wedding, by Koran Arisian. The Seaburg book is a collection of readings and the Arisian book has entire services in it. The church has several "loaners" of the Seaburg book.

The following readings have been divided into three sections: Opening, Body, and Ending. Opening readings might be best used at the start of a service. The Body follows the Opening. Ending readings might be used to close the reading section of the service - just prior to the parental blessings. The body of readings contains a larger group which would be appropriate in many locations. The divisions are artificial. Your choices are important. If you want to change the order, do so and talk about your choices with the minister or chaplain officiating at your service.

SELECTIONS: READING I

- 1-A. What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to minister to each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent unspeakable memories?
(George Eliot)
- 1-B. We who gather here thank you for allowing us to share in your joy on this occasion. Our hope for you is that the love adventure you have begun will be nourished. Our pledge to you as friends is to help you, to the best of our abilities, in its nourishment. Love is not some accident we fall into. Falling in love should be suspect. But if we grow in love, then there is the possibility that our tomorrows will be even more joyous, more tender and caressing, more devoted to life flowing through us; tomorrows more full of the thrill of life even as each today is better than yesterday. Love has the capacity for that magic. Perhaps only love has such capacity.

Martin Buber implies that a person becomes fully human only when his/her being is confirmed by another person. Buber writes, "secretly and bashfully (man) watches for a 'Yes' which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. It is from one person to another that the heavenly bread of self being is passed."

Thus, it is in loving relationships that we can find out what the meaning of existence is about. Marriage is the most holy of loving relationships. Such a state of love does not start with a public ceremony; the wedding ceremony is only a public testimony, a community YES, to what already exists. The state (province) can make it legal; religious institutions may call it holy and make it a sacrament, but the love which binds a man and a woman in the sacred relationship of husband and wife is far too precious to be controlled by either institutionalized religion or the state ... too precious and too delicate.

A love that can grow can also protect itself then from the myriad blights; the attrition of the work-a-day world; the many distractions that erode one's commitment.

As the lack of love breeds contempt for the world, you will find your growing love to unite you not merely to one another but in closer bonds with all people, and, indeed, to the world of nature from which we all come. When your love is secure and you are secure in your love, you are then free to see the preciousness of people behind their masks

and to see the sunsets, the star filled nights, the movements of waves upon the beach with brilliant new perspective. Such love had been pictured by the Chinese in poetry ... this way:

"Let us live
Among the white clouds and scarlet woodlands
Singing together
Songs of the Great Peace."

(Ralph Stutzman)

1-C. We are gathered together here to unite this man and this woman in marriage, which is an institution founded in nature, ordained by the state (province), sanctioned by the church, and made honourable by the faithful keeping of good men and women in all ages. It is, therefore, not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but discreetly, following consideration, and with due reverence. This celebration is the outward token of a sacred and inward union of hearts, which religion may bless and the state (province) may register and legalize, but which neither state (province) nor church can create nor annul, a union created by loving purpose and kept by abiding will. Into this estate ____ and ____ come now to be joined.

1-D. Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God, and in the face of this company to join together this man and this woman into the holiness of marriage.

To each other shall be made a vow by these two, loving and loved, testifying before us of the blending of their ways, and the wedding of their hearts.

Before us they shall come together into that estate of marriage which has been treasured and made honourable by faithful keeping, and which, in the presence of God, before whom the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, men and women enter reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the joy that comes to those who truly love.

To be true, this outward ceremony must be but a symbol of that which is inner and real; a union of hearts, which religion may bless and the state (province) make legal, but which neither can create. Marriage partakes of the mystery of creation.

It grows through the joy of life fully shared and grows again through pains given and returned and forgiven. While it can be the fount of greatest happiness, it is not meant for happiness alone, but also for the growth of new qualities of life - two separated and partial beings become one, and each to his or her separate ways, becoming more complete because of the other. To this end, there must be a consecration of each to the other, and of both to the noblest purposes of life.

- 1-E. Dearly Beloved, we are gathered this day to join this man and this woman in marriage, an estate which embodies all the warm and precious values which grow from human companionship and love. It is therefore not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly, but reverently, thoughtfully, and in the knowledge that love is both our highest achievement and life's most precious gift. Into this estate _____ and _____ now come to join themselves in front of this community.

It is one of life's richest surprises when the accidental meeting of two life paths leads them to proceed together along the common path of husband and wife, and it is one of life's finest experiences when a casual relationship grows into a permanent bond of love. This meeting and this growth bring us together, here, today.

- 1-F. We have come to this place to unite this man and this woman in marriage. Marriage is an institution which the state may regulate and the church may sanction, but which can only become real in the lives of two people. This celebration is but the outward sign of an inward union of hearts and as such, marriage is the most tender and yet the most difficult of all relations in life.

SELECTIONS: READING II

- 1-G. Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together, and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music,
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping,
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together;
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.
But let there be spaces in your togetherness,
And let the winds of heaven dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love.
(Gibran)

1-H. May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage can bring.
And may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.
May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you know your fullness.
A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more,
And the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it.
So let it be with you and you,
May you need one another, but not out of weakness.
May you want one another, but not out of lack.
May you entice, but not compel, one another,
May you embrace, but not encircle, one another.
May you succeed in all important ways with one another and not fail in the little graces.
May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you."
And take no notice of small faults.
If you have quarrels that push you apart,
May both of you have good sense enough to take the first step back.
May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence physical and spiritual, together,
Warm and near when you are side by side,
Warm and near when you are in separate rooms, or even in distant cities,
And may you have happiness, and may you find it in making one another happy.
May you have love; and may you find it in loving!

1-I. Marriage, which is spoken of as a bond becomes actually many bonds - many strands -of different texture and strength - "Are not a man and a woman different, utterly different, at sunset from what they were at dawn? And does not the changing harmony and discord of their variation make the secret music of life?"
(D.H. Lawrence)

The bonds of marriage are woven into a web fashioned of love, but of many kinds of love: romantic love, first, then a growing devotion, and the blending of these into a loving companionship.

It is made of loyalties, and interdependence, and shared experiences. It is woven of memories and meetings and conflicts - of triumphs and disappointments. It is a web of communication, a common language, and the acceptance of silences, too, a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental. It is a web of known and unknown exchanges.

The web of marriage is made in day by day living side by side. It is woven in space and

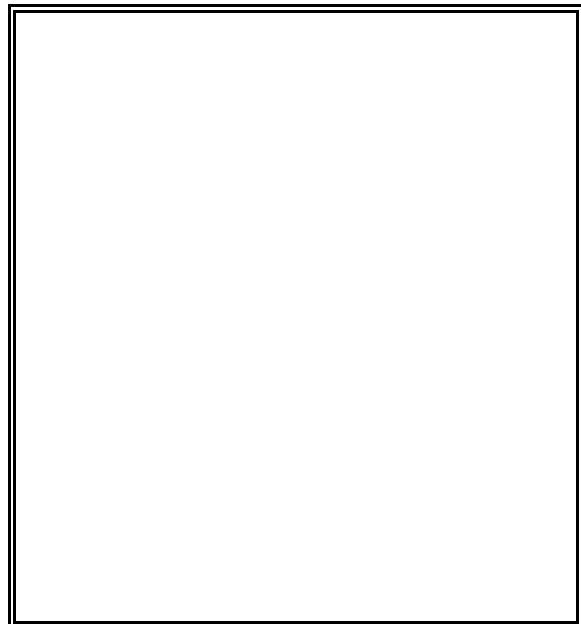
time of the substance of life itself. Into this estate of marriage made holy by the sacredness of existence, _____ and _____ come now to be joined.
(Robert Senghas)

- 1-J. Love can be one of the most meaningful experiences that comes to any human being. At its best it reduces our selfishness, deepens our understandings, and gives value to life, far beyond what words can describe.

The institution of marriage is a public recognition of the private experience of love and a dedication of man and woman to love's greatest purposes in life. Two people in love live within the embrace of all humanity. The greatest intimacy between a man and a woman, love, need not diminish, but can strengthen the individuality of each partner.

A marriage that lasts is one that has a little more to grow. The poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, said that marriage is not a matter "of creating a quick community of spirit by tearing down and destroying all boundaries, but rather a good marriage is that in which each appoints the other guardian of his solitude ... once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up, if they succeed in loving the distance between them" no less than each other.

- 1-K. "What is real?" asked the velveteen rabbit one day, when he and the toy skin horse were lying side by side in the nursery. "Real isn't how you're made," said the toy skin horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When someone really loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with but really loves you, then you become real." "Does it hurt?" asked the rabbit. "Sometimes," said the skin horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are real you don't mind being hurt." "Does it happen all at once, like being wound up?" he asked, "Or bit by bit?" "It doesn't happen all at once," said the skin horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or have to be carefully kept. Once you are real, you can't become unreal again."



(Margery Williams)

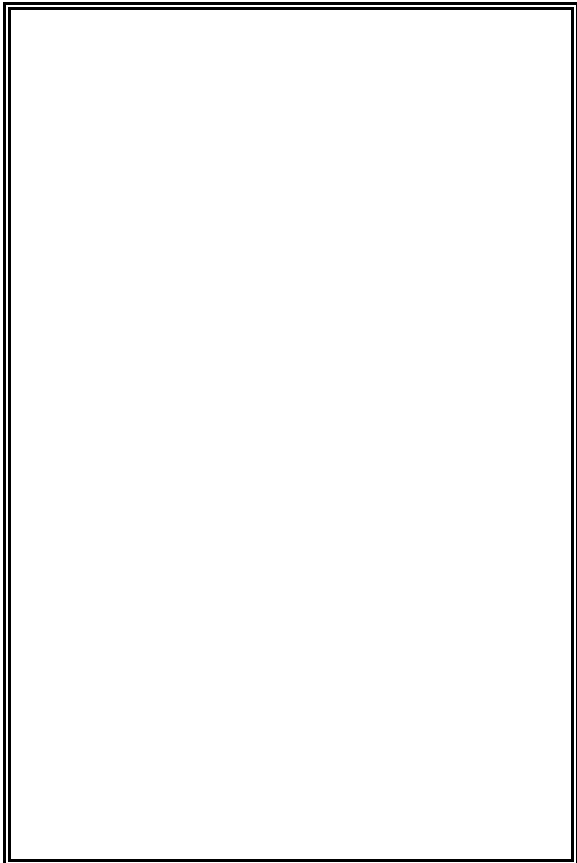
- 1-L. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the end of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, -- I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears of all my life! -- and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.
(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)
- 1-M. When two individuals meet, so do two private worlds. None of our private worlds is big enough so that we could live a wholesome life in it alone. We need the wider world of joy and wonder, of purpose and venture, of toil and tears. What are we, any of us, but strangers and sojourners forlornly answering through the night time, until we draw together and find meaning of our lives in one another, dissolving our fears in each other's courage, making music together, and lighting torches to guide us through the dark night? We belong together. Love is what we need, to love and to be loved. Let our hearts be open; and what we would receive from others let us give. For what is given still remains to bless the giver - when the gift is love.
(A. Powell Davies, ed.)
- 1-N. Society has encouraged and protected the institution of marriage through the sanctions of its laws, but the relationship of marriage is more fundamental than any law. For marriage is the willing acceptance by man and woman that they shall live with each other both in good fortune - and it will be good - and in bad fortune - and such there will be for every marriage. Marriage is the acceptance by man and woman that they shall be prepared to bring forth children and to nourish and rear them physically and spiritually. Each of us was brought into the world without any decision of his/her own; each of us was stamped with the condition of mortality from the moment of conception. And so, of the three most significant events in our lives, birth, marriage and death, it is only in marriage that we have the full power of personal decision.

In marriage the greatest courage will be required. We shall be put to the test of continuing to accept husband or wife with all defects revealed; but beyond this we shall be faced with the anguish of having to accept our own weaknesses. In the eyes of our husband or wife we shall see our most deeply hidden defects reflected. And this is the most difficult of all that is required of us: to accept that we are not as we should like to think we are, and that we are not as we should like the world to think we are.

But marriage also offers us the condition for the supreme fulfilment of human life: for our acceptance of our spouse with all the strengths and weaknesses, our works of love for our companion in marriage and for our children, and above all our acceptance of ourselves as we are, all these open us to receive the very ground of our being; all these bring us to the glory of existence.

(Robert Senghas)

1-O. _____ and _____, in presenting yourselves here today, you are performing an act of faith in each other - a faith which should grow, and mature, and endure. If you would have your love set on such faith, not just at this moment, but in all the days ahead, then ever cherish the hopes and dreams you now hold. Resolve that love not be blotted out by the commonplace nor blurred by the mundane in life. Faults will appear where now there is satisfaction; talents will fade in bleaching experience; wonder will flatten in the rituals of daily living -- but devotion, joy, and love can remain, as you build them together. Stand fast in hope and confidence, believing in yourselves and believing in each other. In this spirit you can create a marriage which will radiate to one another and give new hope and strength to all who watch your quest with interest.



1-P. Love is a thing to walk with hand in hand,
Through the everydayness of this
workaday world,
Bring its tender feet to every flint
Yet not letting one heart beat go astray

From beauty's law of plainness and content.
Such is true love, which steals into the heart
With feet as silent as the lightsome dawn,
That kisses smooth the rough brows of the dark,
And has its will through blissful gentleness;
A love that gives and takes, that seeth faults,
But loving kindly ever looks them down
With the o'ercoming faith that still forgives;
A love that shall be new and fresh each hour.
(James Russell Lowell)

1-Q. Love is possible only if two persons communicate with each other from the centre of their existence, hence if each one of them experiences him/herself from the centre of his/her existence. Only in this "central experience" is human reality, only here is aliveness, only here is the basis for love. Love experienced thus is a constant challenge; it is not a resting place, but a moving, growing, working together; even whether there is harmony or conflict, joy or sadness, is secondary to the fundamental fact that two people experience themselves from the essence of their existence, that they are one with each other by being one with themselves, rather than by fleeing from themselves. There is only one proof for the presence of love: the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness and strength in each person concerned: this is the fruit by which love is recognized.
(Eric Fromm)

1-R. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophet powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

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

Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes the imperfect will pass away. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.
(I Corinthians, Chapter 13)

- 1-S. We have, for all our ingenuity, not yet designed a vow impossible to break. We have developed law and conscience, even pride, as keepers of our sacred pledges. In our cunning we have found devices to mitigate each one. So it is not to our institutions that we look this day of uniting. It is not this church, nor the state (province), which truly sanctifies, but the deepest well of human need, the need to live united and complete before the broken and imperfect world.
- 1-T. Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! It is an ever - - fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although its height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, through rosey lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.
(Shakespeare)

SELECTIONS: READING III

- 1-U. We know not what the future may bring into the life of this couple, but we pray that together they may be equal to the needs of their tomorrows. May they have patience in time of strain, strength in time of weakness, courage in time of discouragement, vision in time of doubt, and above all, growing love. And now may the love in your hearts and the greatness of life's possibilities give you joy, the awareness of your friends' good wishes give you peace and strength.
- 1-V. We ask for _____ and _____ a full life - a life rich in meaning, in purpose, in caring, and in joy. We ask not that they be "happy ever after", although we hope that they will feel happy often. We ask what is perhaps a more realistic goal, though by no means a simple one:
that they may continually strive to do and be what their inner voices urge them

to attain. Not a static contentment with each other and with their world, but an ongoing process of exploring the fullness of their own and each other's personality; of helping and being helped by others, of working for the survival of our endangered planet. But let us not ask for them what we would not ask for ourselves.

Let us join with them,
Let us play with them,
and work with them,
through many more years of friendship and love.

- 1-W. A few years ago I might have been tempted at this point in the ceremony to give you a few words of wisdom concerning how to keep your marriage vital and alive with love. Having grown a little older and more cautious about giving advice to anyone, I, in behalf of your relatives and friends gathered here will simply thank you for allowing us to share your joy on this occasion.

I used to think I knew a few formulae that made for a happy marriage. But now, instead of looking at formulae ... if you do this, then ... kinds of things, I tend more to hope that the chemistry is good between you ... that what you bring from your past and now share deeply with one another, hopefully will be joyous and enriching, a source of sustenance to each other's continuous growth.

I have come to believe that dumb luck has as much to do with happy marriage as wise choice and fortuitous chance as much as conscious willing.

So, we wish you well. We wish you health; we wish you happiness. I guess, aside from these good wishes, the wisdom of the ages concerning love we would pass on to you. It was said succinctly by e e cummings in a line:

"Be of love a little more careful than anything."
(Ralph Stutzman)

- 1-X. Awed by the many meanings of this hour and overjoyed by its promises, we hope the spirit of trust, understanding and love may be with _____ and _____ through all the years that lie ahead. Whatever the trials and testings that may come, may they trust each other wholly, for without such faith, marriage is a mockery; may they understand each other, for without understanding there is neither acceptance nor forgiveness; and

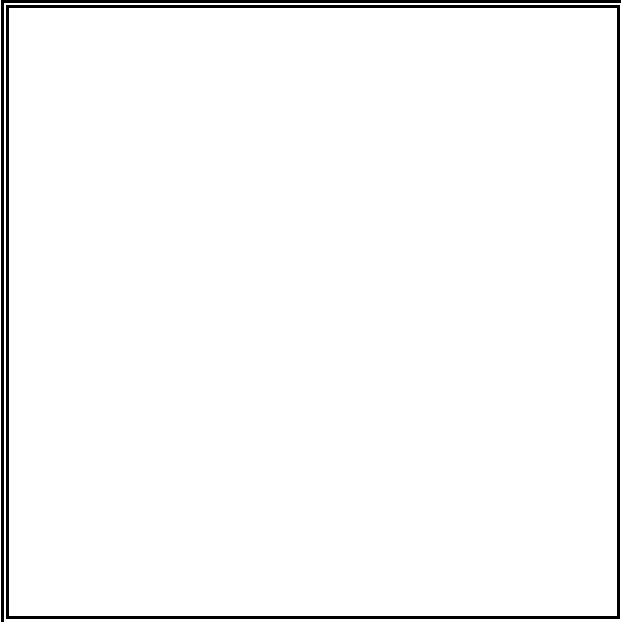
may they truly love each other, for without love, marriage is only an empty shell from which the white bird has flown.

As they build together a new life and a new home, may that home be bright with the laughter of children and of many friends; may it be a haven from the tensions of our time and a wellspring of strength; and in the world may it be the one place they most want to be, the place where they discover the ultimate human mystery - the secret of how two become one.

So may this shining hour be an open door through which _____ and _____ will go forth to build that dearest of all relationships, a happy harmonious marriage. May the years deal gently with them; walking together may they find far more in life than either would have found alone; and even more fully may they come to know this one supreme truth: caring is sharing ... that living is giving ... that life is eternal ... and that love is its crown.

(W. Waldemar W. Agrow)

- 1-Y. Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; listen to others, even the dull and ignorant; they too have their story. Avoid loud aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism. Be yourself. Especially do not feign affection, neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your labours and aspirations. In the noisy confusion of life, keep pace with your soul. With all its sham and drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.



BACKGROUND FOR PARENTAL BLESSING/PRESENTING

Medieval traditions abound in the wedding. The bride walks in on her father's left arm leaving his right arm free to wield his sword. The custom of the bride being the property of the father and a business deal being struck for her betrothal is no longer culturally acceptable (What a barbaric custom in any culture!) the bride and the groom enter the marriage relationship as equals! Some of the vestiges of that old tradition still pop up in the wedding services - however - and not all of them should be avoided out of hand.

Let us explain . . . some families find it appropriate to ask the father (and mother) "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" In other families it is more appropriate simply to have the father walk down the aisle giving her a kiss before leaving her at the altar with the groom. In still other traditions it is respectable for the father and the mother to walk the bride to the altar. On occasion, the parents of the groom have walked him to the altar, too. Increasingly, the parents of the groom are invited into the process as both sets of parents are asked if they "share the wishes of and extend their blessings to this couple?" Some brides will choose to walk to the altar alone or with her attendants only. In more informal settings it is often the case that the bride and groom will come to the altar together. Much of the developing tradition relaxes the strict 'Emily Post' wedding traditions. The following choices reflect these many traditions.

SELECTIONS: PARENTAL BLESSINGS

- 2-A. Members of both families are present, filled with joy and maybe even a touch of sadness, but content in the love they feel for you. Honour the love of your families, which has been about you all the days of your life. Honour that love by loving and honouring each other. As a symbol of the love of these two families, who presents _____ to be married to _____?
- 2-B. The wedding is a time of pride and hope, memories and sadness, but above all great joy and deep love. Out of all these feelings come the best wishes of your friends and family. (Move to parents)
_____, with joy and love, do you bless _____ and _____, wishing them the best of lives together?

2-C. ____ and ____ your parents have struggled through diapers, homework, the teen years, and who knows what else helping you to arrive at this point. (Couples may wish to add a FEW memories here). Doubtless their help will continue, but the marriage is a clear point of breaking away from the parental home to establish a home of your own, to set out on your own marriage pilgrimage. At the beginnings of such an exciting journey, it is customary for friends and family to join you in your hopes for your marriage and wish you well.

(Move to the parents)

____ and ____, do you share the hopes of and extend your blessings to ____ and ____?

SELECTIONS: PRESENTING THE BRIDE

2-D. Who presents this woman to be married to this man?

Responses:

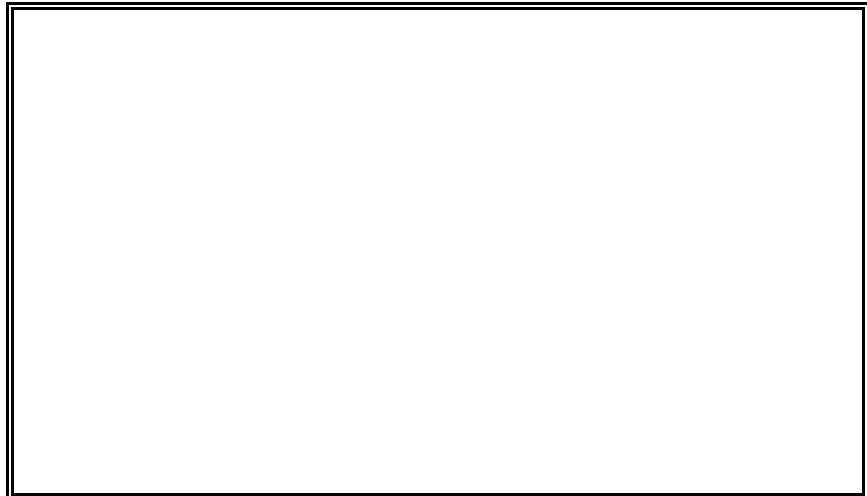
Father: "I do."

Mother and Father: "We do."

Either: "We do", or, "Her Mother/Father and I do."

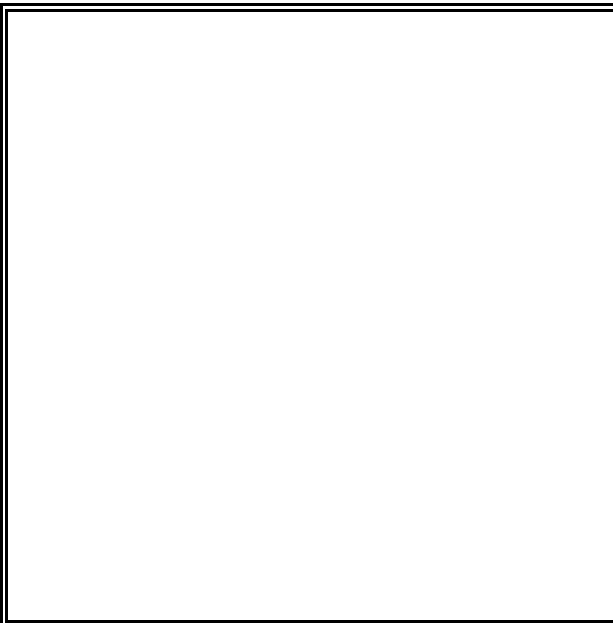
Who Presents this man to be married to this woman?

Responses . . .



BACKGROUND FOR THE VOWS

To say a vow means to consecrate yourself to another person or to a service you will provide to that person, e.g., Sir Lancelot vowed to be Lady Guenevere's protector. To consecrate means to devote one's self or to make sacred the object of consecration. So ... marriage vows are the verbal recognition of the sacredness of the relationship which has grown up between two people. The act of speaking vows is a simple one. Perhaps too simple for the deep meanings vows hold. Devotion, the making of sacred spaces in our lives to be shared with another person, the acceptance of our own needs so that we can love and be loved will expose us to vulnerable portions deep within. It is therefore wise to remember e e cummings' words used in one of the readings:



"Of love be a little more careful than anything."

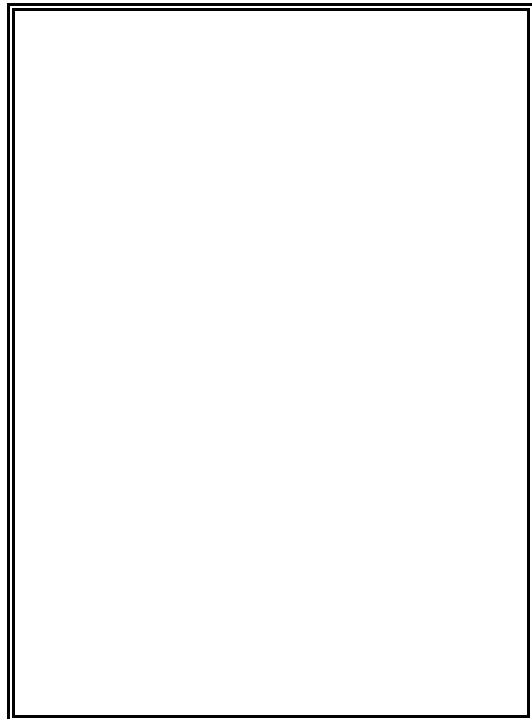
Should you not care for any of the vows in the selections below, feel free to cut and chop, rewrite or go to other sources.

SELECTION: USED TO INTRODUCE THE VOWS:

3-A. ____ and ____, you have carefully considered what you are about to do. In sharing these moments with this group assembled, you are making public what you have felt for quite some time. For this moment of sharing we thank you and extend to you both our hopes and aspirations, our good wishes and our blessings.

**SELECTIONS: WHICH YOU REPEAT AFTER THE MINISTER
OR MEMORIZE**

- 4-A. I, _____, take you, _____, to be no other than yourself. Loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not yet know, with respect for your integrity and faith in your abiding love for me, through all our years, and in all that life may bring us.
- 4-B. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband (wife), to share the joys and sorrows of life together, to honour your integrity, and in trust and understanding to love you.
- 4-C. I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my husband (wife), to learn and to grow with, to come to in both happiness and sorrow, to confide in and trust above all others, to respect you in everything as an equal partner. But above all, to love you with all my being.
- 4-D. I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my wedded husband (wife) to have and to hold from this time forth ... for better, for worse, ... for richer, for poorer, ... in health and in sickness, ... to love and to cherish ... till death us do part, ... and to this I pledge thee my love.
- 4-E. I, _____, take you, _____, to be the husband (wife) of my days, to be the father (mother) of my children, to be the companion of my house; we shall keep together what share of trouble and sorrow our lives may lay upon us, and we shall share together our store of goodness and plenty and love.
- 4-F. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband (wife), to share with me all the wonders life has to offer, through good times and bad, through laughter and tears, as long as we both shall live.



SELECTIONS: VOWS WHERE YOU ONLY RESPOND "I DO"

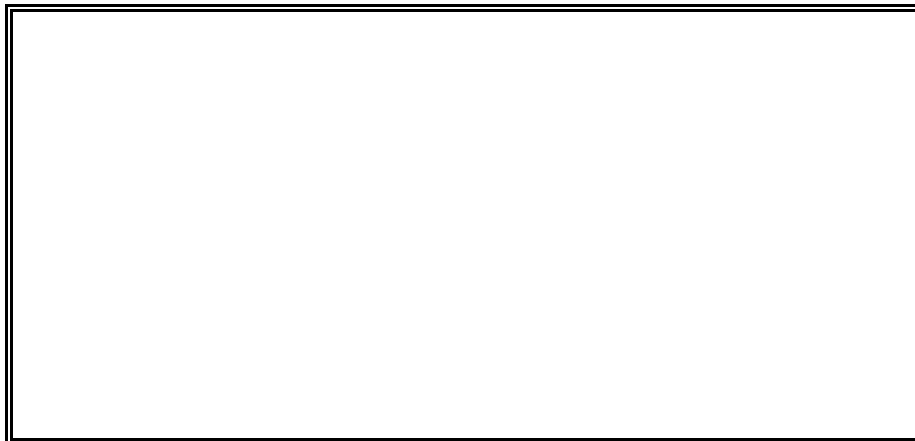
4-G. Do you ____, take ____, to be your wife (husband), to love and to cherish, to honour and comfort, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, in hardship or in ease, to have and to hold, from this day forth?

4-H. ____, do you take ____ to be your wife (husband), to love her (him) and to cherish her (him), to help her (him) and to honour her (him), and to give her (him) understanding and comfort in whatever the future may bring, in confidence that together you are responsible for your destiny?

4-I. [This vow has two questions for responses . . .]

____, do you believe that your love for ____ is deep, rich and lasting enough to enable you to build a worthy home together?

Will you take ____ unto your heart as your wife (husband)? Will you keep her (him), cherish her (him), trust and honour her (him)? For her (him) will you forsake all others and remain loyal toward her (him) as long as you both shall live?

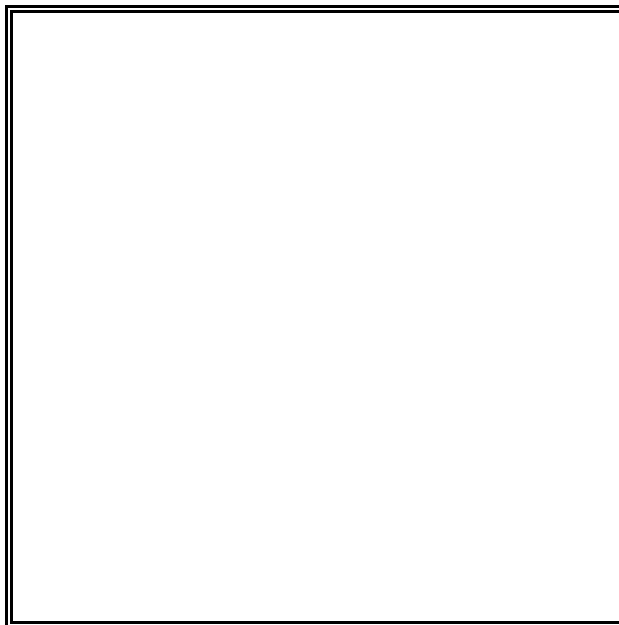


BACKGROUND FOR THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The rings are simple symbols of our longings and of the consecration of our marriage through the giving and receiving of vows. They are circles, unbroken, and therefore more perfect than human vows or longings - and that is a good reminder for us - a reminder that marriage will be work as well as joy and happiness. The work is to make it better, to grow together and separately over a lifetime. The exchange of rings is an old custom which most but not all couples choose to follow.

As you prepare this section it might be interesting to share your feelings about rings - What does it mean to you to wear a ring? What does it mean if your partner does or does not wear a ring? How do you feel about that?

During the service, as rings are exchanged, it is usual that the groom and the bride will say a few short phrases to each other. Below are some suggestions.



SELECTIONS: INTRODUCING THE RING VOWS

- 5-A. The circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of holiness and of perfection and peace. In these rings (this ring) it is the symbol of unity, in which your two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return unto one another to your togetherness.

- 5-B. The ring symbolizes the unbroken circle of endless love, it is worn on the third finger because of an ancient Greek belief that a vein from that finger connected directly to the heart, thus symbolizing the depth and sincerity of love.

- 5-C. The vows you make are a statement of intent and commitment. They cannot endure unless you make them endure. The spoken word holds no hidden power within itself,

for human ingenuity has never yet devised a vow which cannot be broken. We have developed law and conscience, even pride, as keepers of our sacred pledges, but we have also found ways to mitigate each one. So it is not simply to words or to institutions that we appeal at this moment of commitment, but to the resources upon which you can draw from within yourselves. (Philip Hewett, adapted)

SELECTIONS: THE RING VOWS

- 6-A. In token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love, I give you this ring.
- 6-B. This ring I give you in token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love.
- 6-C. I give you this ring to wear forever.
- 6-D. As a sign and a symbol of our union, I give you this ring.
- 6-E. Take this ring as a symbol of my love.
- 6-F. This ring is a circle, unbroken, just as my love is unbroken and complete for you.
- 6-G. With this ring I wed you and pledge my faithful love.
- 6-H. _____, accept this ring as a token of my love and devotion.

BACKGROUND FOR THE RING BLESSINGS

It is somewhat of a misnomer to say, "I do not want a religious wedding." The wedding service is a time where we put to words the meaning of this event. Making meanings and speaking those meanings has been the work of religions throughout time. A good argument may be made that religion is meaning making. Thus, we are all religious, even the atheist!

It is alright to have a wedding without a prayer. The choice is yours ... the blessing, prayer or meditation is a good opportunity to give those you have invited a chance to participate in the ceremony by making a small part of it their own - with their own words spoken in companioned silence. Below you will find several blessings, prayers and meditations which might be used at this time in your service.

SELECTIONS: THE RING BLESSINGS

- 7-A. These rings are circles, unbroken, just as your love is unbroken and complete for each other. May the love between you grow and strengthen through all the years that it would take to travel around your rings and come to their ends.
- 7-B. You have had these rings crafted as special symbols of what you intend that your love and your marriage will mean to you. As you wear them, may your commitment to that ideal be fulfilled abundantly.
- 7-C. (May be said after each ring is exchanged.)
May he who gives it and she who wears it honour in life the pledge for which it stands.
- 7-D. In giving and receiving rings, ____ and ____ have taken unto themselves symbols of all that this marriage means to them and in wearing these rings they are joining those meanings with a public statement that they are married. Each of us knows the values of love and devotion, companionship and trust, honour and caring which comes in any intimate relationship. Let us take this time to think on these things and share our hopes for ____ and _____. (Leave 20 seconds of silence.) Amen.

SELECTIONS: SPOKEN MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS

- 8-A. Lord, make them a channel of thy peace - that where there is hatred, they may bring love; where there is wrong, they may bring the spirit of forgiveness; where there is discord, they may discover and reveal harmony; where there is error, they may embody truth; where there is doubt, they may bring hope; where there are shadows, they may bring light; where there is sadness, they may bring solace. For it is by giving that they shall receive, by self-forgetting that they shall find, by forgiving that they shall be forgiven. Lord grant that they shall seek rather to comfort than to be comforted, to understand than to be understood, to love than to be loved.
A-MEN.
(St. Francis, ad.)
- 8-B. God of love, we invoke the gentlest blessing upon all true lovers, and especially upon

this man and this woman who have made these vows of marriage and exchanged these rings. Grant to each of them a clear sense of self and of each other and of the responsibilities to each other and to society.

To keep these pledges, may they be filled with grace and understanding. May they be devoted, one to the other. May the happiness which they have brought to these moments never lose its freshness and may it ripen into fuller flower and deepen until it mingles with the very roots of their being. May they grow ever closer from this day forward, in work, in play, in hope, in counsel, in laughter and in tears. May they in all the changes and chances of life be true helpers one to the other. Hand in hand, heart with heart, may they go forth on their journey in such confidence and trust and affection that no suffering or sorrow or loss can ever blight the joy of their comradeship. Amen.

8-C. Let us enter moments of prayer and meditation together.

We know not what the future may bring into the life of this couple, but we pray that together they may be equal to the needs of their tomorrows. May they have patience in time of strain, strength in time of weakness, courage in time of doubt, and above all, a growing love.

And now may the love in your hearts and the greatness of life's possibilities give you joy; the assurances of your friends' good wishes give you peace and strength. Amen.

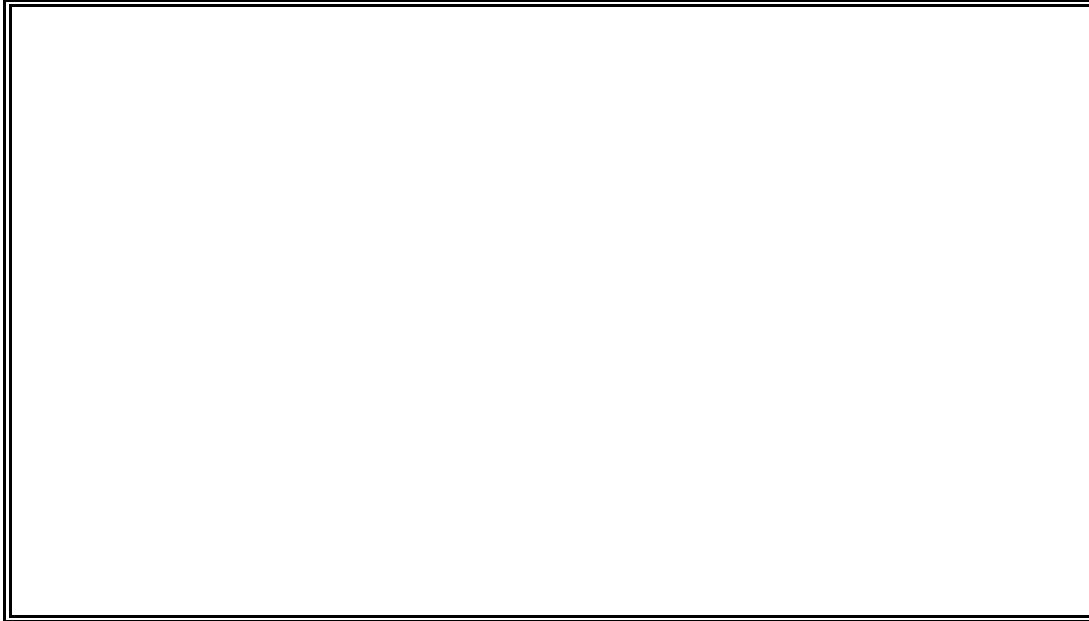
8-D. Out of this tangled world these two souls have drawn together. They are bound with the swift sure bonds of love. Their destinies shall now be woven of one design, and their perils and their joys shall not be known apart. As they increase in mutual understanding, may their joy stand victoriously against the storm of circumstances which beats impartially at all our doors. From the rich encouragement of their affection may they complete the unfinished pattern of their true selves. Even as they have chosen each other from the world's multitudes, so let the days and years, now veiled by time, deepen the joy of that choice and make it abidingly true.
(Samuel Miller)

SIGNING OF THE REGISTER AND LICENCE

The signing of the licence and the register can be done before the service or during the service. Most people choose to sign these documents during the service.

The couple would be seated at a small table, attendants and groom's men looking on. The witnesses sign followed by the officiant. It is a nice ceremony within the marriage ceremony and is a good time for pictures of the entire wedding party.

There is usually a musical selection played during the signing. This selection is about five minutes long.



BACKGROUND FOR THE RECOGNITION/PRONOUNCEMENT

This is the time in the wedding we are all waiting for, the moment when those magic words are spoken, "... pronounce you husband and wife." All the nervousness beforehand, all of the hopes and fears, the joys and plans were directed at this moment. So why not just say, "I pronounce you husband and wife"; there are a number of considerations before we make that leap.

Many couples who have been living together for some time before the wedding want some recognition of the fact that the ceremony is a public recognition of what has existed for quite some time, others feel strongly that they are making the marriage, not the church or state

or the minister, and they want words expressing those feelings. Still other couples want the community gathered to witness the wedding event to declare the marriage to exist. And there are some couples who want the state and the church or the minister to use their authority to declare that the marriage does, in fact, exist. The wording in each of these cases is simple; the feelings behind the words are important. Take time to discuss this ... How is the wedding made? ... Just as you gave consideration to this question with the choosing of your vows, it is again important to look at the question from another angle this time.

The selections below express many of the options above.

SELECTIONS: RECOGNITION/PRONOUNCEMENT

- 10-A. Forasmuch as ____ and ____ have thus pledged themselves each to the other, I do now, by virtue of the authority vested in me, pronounce that they are husband and wife.
- 10-B. Forasmuch as ____ and ____ have consented together in wedlock and witnessed the same before this company and thereto have engaged and pledged themselves to each other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving rings, I pronounce that they are husband and wife.
- 10-C. Forasmuch as ____ and ____ have consented together in marriage, declaring their love for one another, I declare that they are now husband and wife. May their days be long upon the earth and may they dwell in love and joy and happiness together.
- 10-D. ____ and ____, in a great sense the two of you were married long before you came here today. Today is merely the sharing of your wishes and hopes with these close friends and relatives who have gathered here this afternoon (morning, evening). We all want you to know that our best wishes are with you at this time. We thank you for sharing this very personal moment with us. We now see you as husband and wife.
- 10-E. Now have you, ____, and you, ____, in the presence of these friends and loved ones, declared your confidence that upon the foundation of your love you can build a worthy home. You have solemnly promised to live together in the sacred experience of marriage. You have given and received rings (a ring) and in doing so have declared your marriage to exist; we now see you as husband and wife.
- 10-F. ____ and ____, we now see you as husband and wife. We know that the temptation will

be strong to treat you as one, yet we are well aware that there are two of you. So, we hope we will respect your individuality, giving each of you the time and space that you need to be yourself. For sharing this intimate moment with us, we thank you, and extend to you both our best wishes and loving support.

10-G. ____ and ____, because you have chosen each other, and have promised each other your love and your devotion, and have symbolized this by the exchange of rings, by the authority vested in me by the state and the sanctity of the church, I do pronounce you husband and wife.

May your life together be richly blessed because of the love you have for each other and the good wishes we all bestow on you.

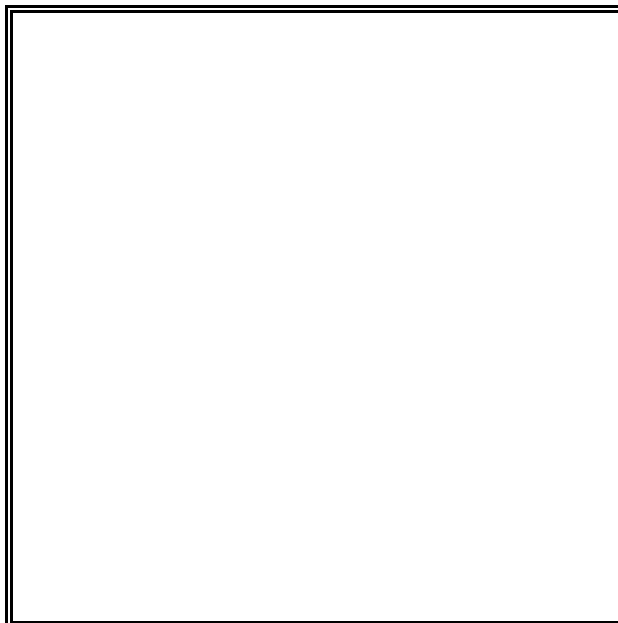
SELECTIONS: CLOSING WORDS/BENEDICTION

To close the service it is customary to have some words which tie up the sentiments expressed earlier in the readings as well as the wishes of all present for many happy years of marriage.

11-A. May all that is noble, lovely, and true abide with you forever. Amen.

11-B. Now and forever may both of you be united in love and harmony;
May both of you share your moods and dreams with loving care;
May both of you keep trust in each other, constant and deep;
May you find joy in life and warm contentment as husband and wife.

11-C. May these two hearts be united one to the other like the flower and its perfume, like the flute and its melody;



may they have many summers of sweet love and happiness; may they in the autumn of life ripen through service into the serenity of Spirit; and may they at the end of their days break all mortal bonds and encounter the great unknown with fearless heart.

11-D. With a perfect and abiding confidence, with a trust and affection which knows no limitation -- I send you forth upon your journey of life -- to laugh for joy; to suffer pain; to see; to serve; to find; and to grow through the wonderful love you share.

11-E. May the love in your hearts give you joy. May the greatness of life bring you peace. And may your days be good and your lives be long upon the earth.

11-F. May the sun shine warmly on your face,
 May the rain fall gently on your fields,
May the wind be always at your back,
 May the road always rise before you,
May your lives be spent in the hand of God.
 Amen.

11-G. Go now in peace, and may peace attend you all your days.

11-H. May the blessing that rests upon all who love, rest also upon you and fill you with all spiritual grace. May the bond that unites you ever be strengthened. May you so love and work together in the days that are to come that your lives shall be enriched and ennobled by a true and deepening comradeship of mind and heart.

11-I. May your love be made stronger, holy, and deathless, that no misunderstanding may fray the bond and no disenchantment of the years have the power to quench your joy in each other. May you early gain the wisdom to discern the true values of life, and may no tyranny of fashion or glamour of cheaper joys steal from you the wholesome peace and inward satisfaction which only love can give. May you look with sober eyes beyond these sweet days of fellowship to the generations yet to come, and realize that the love which you enjoy is part of the sacred issue of the body of humanity, so that you may reverence yourselves and each other, and drink the cup of joy and awe.

11-J. Let us pray ...

We ask that each member of this community, here gathered to witness this marriage, may live in a spirit of sharing, of mutual support, of love, and of caring for one another. May we carry the warmth and smiles from this occasion to the rest of our worlds. Amen.

11-K. Now you will feel no rain, for each of you
will be shelter for the other.
Now you will feel no cold for each of you
will be warmth to the other,
Now there is no more loneliness for you.
Now you are two bodies, but there is only
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.
(Apache blessing)

11-L. Let us now, in a moment of silence, give our individual blessings to this man and woman,
now husband and wife.

May the blessing of each of us be felt by you.
And may you also sense the blessing which is
not ours to give but which comes from the very
heart of life and is known to those who seek it.

11-M. Go now to walk the ways of the world together, and you, Children's Names, you too
have entered this circle of love where you will be sheltered and warmed until you are
grown, and go to find your own world.

May the days of all of you be good and long upon the earth.

THE KISS

Each couple kisses in their own way. We offer only one guideline . . . just enjoy!

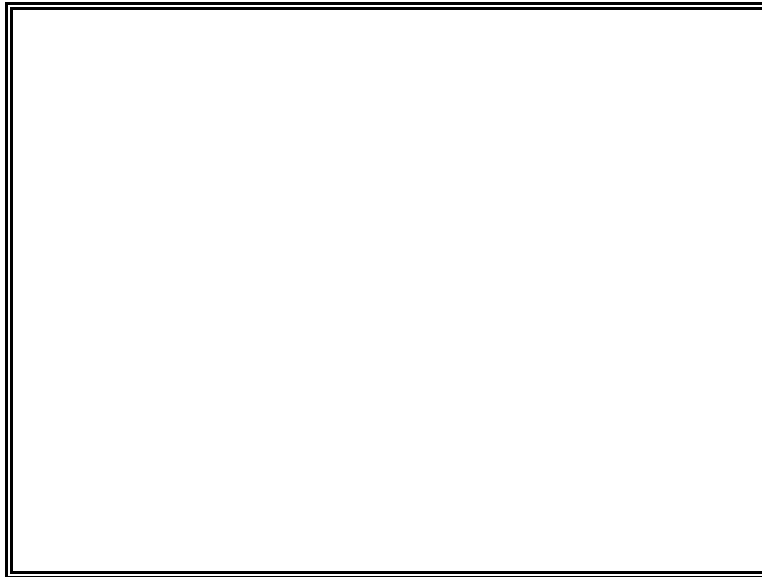
SELECTIONS: PRESENTATION OF BRIDE AND GROOM TO GUESTS

Following the benediction, as the Bride and Groom turn toward the congregation, they are sometimes presented to the guests. This is especially practical as it lets the guests know what is happening to last names following the wedding. Will the bride take the groom's last name? Will she keep her own name? Will one or both adopt a hyphenated name?

13-A. Friends, it is my joy to present Mr. and Mrs. _____.

13-B. It is my honour and joy to present _____ and _____.

(Form depends on what the married names are and the style the couple wants to use.)

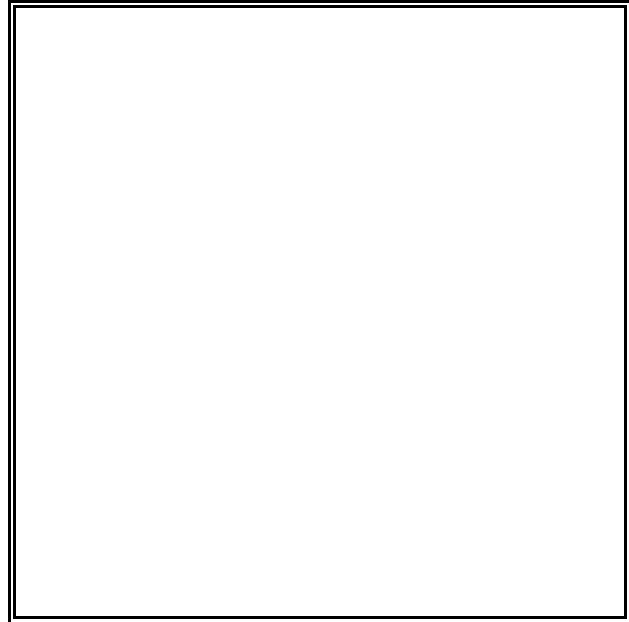


BACKGROUND FOR INCLUDING YOUR CHILDREN

Your children are a precious part of your family. This day will be an important and

emotional event in their lives too. Though this is your service and you have lots of feelings about the ways you want it to be ... and that may not leave much room for children ... it is a day about which they have many feelings too. To leave the children out this day gives them strong messages that may last for years as they try to work out their place in the new family relationships. I urge you to include them and discuss their involvement in the service with them.

That is my pitch ... of course the decision is up to you as parents and there may always be extenuating circumstances which make it impossible to have your children in or at the wedding. We will talk about it.



WHAT CAN YOUR CHILDREN DO

You can include your children in loving and traditional ways by asking them to do any of the following:

- A. Best Woman
- B. Best Man
- C. Attendant
- D. Usher
- E. Flower Girl
- F. Ring Bearer
- G. Stand beside the minister
- H. Do a reading

SELECTIONS: SPEAKING TO YOUR CHILDREN

14-A. (Speaking to the children - name them), ____ and ____ are really very excited today. Perhaps you are excited too and know how much they love you. I want to talk about that a bit. They are starting life together in a new way. In getting married they are opening themselves up to be new parents to you. That does not mean that your other parents are less important or don't count. But it does mean that ____ and ____ are creating another home for you. You will always be welcome there. It is a place where you can share your feelings and your dreams as well as your desires. ____ and ____ love each of you and hope that they will be as open with their thoughts and feelings as you will be.

No family is created simply through the saying of a few words in front of a minister. Families are hard work and take time for they are based on love and caring. You have other parents and other relatives. They are all part of your family too. In making the family circle larger we may have to listen more carefully to discover even our own needs.

Each of you brings to this family a special warmth that is just yours. It is yours to be held in or shared freely as only you will choose to do. For your part in making this family ____ and ____ are deeply thankful and they love you very much. (Hugs are appropriate here.)

14-B. If parents are asked to "share the hopes of the bride and groom and extend their blessing to them" ... why not ask the same of the children:

____, do you share the hopes of ____ and ____, and wish them happiness in the years to come?

(A hug might be appropriate at this time.)

14-C. ____ and ____, you bring children (a child) to this marriage. You are making a new family. Do you affirm that your child (children) is (are) a sacred responsibility and do you welcome them to this new family with love?
("I do" and then perhaps a hug for the kids.)

IF ONE OF YOU IS JEWISH

You and your spouse to be will have to talk over many issues if this is an inter-faith marriage ... especially what happens when you raise the children. (Can I make a plug for Unitarianism which honours both the Jewish and Christian as well as the Humanistic traditions?) Will there be a bris? What church school will best teach a child about religions and honour both of your traditions? Do you christen or dedicate a child? In what setting might they have a wedding?

The ancient Rabbi Jose said, "Indeed a suitable marriage may seem easy to make, yet God considers it as difficult a task as dividing the Red Sea." This refers to what happens in daily life, yet the ancient Jewish wedding was complex. The bride and the bridegroom fast on the wedding day, recite the Afternoon Service of Viddui (from Yom Kippur) as the sins of the past are forgiven and a new life begins. The bride then readies herself for the wedding. A legal document, the tenaim, is written binding both parties. When the groom agrees to the contract it is considered binding. The men then surround the groom and dance with him toward the bride who sits on a throne. The groom lifts the bride's veil (to avoid the deceit practised on Jacob when he married Leah thinking he was marrying Rachael). The bride is then escorted to the huppa where she circles the groom seven times to enter the seven levels of his soul. The huppa is a canopy held by four poles and was first used in market place weddings during the Middle Ages. Rabbis used the huppa to set the wedding off from the bustle of the marketplace.

The Rabbi recites PSALM 118:26-29, before the wine is drunk there is a blessing:

He who is strong above all else/ He who is blessed above all else/
He who is great above all else/ May he bless the bridegroom and the bride.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, who has made us holy through your commandments and has commanded us concerning marriages that are forbidden and those that are permitted when carried out under the canopy and with the sacred wedding ceremonies. Blessed are You, Lord our God, who makes Your people of Israel holy through this rite of the canopy and the sacred bond of marriage.

The goblet is raised and the Rabbi says, "There is no joy without wine." Both the bride and the bridegroom drink from the cup. Then the most important part of the ceremony takes place. The groom places the ring on the left index finger of the bride and says:

Behold, you are consecrated to me with this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel."

In ancient Jewish law a marriage takes place anytime a man gives a woman something

worth more than a dime, she accepts the gift, he says the words above, and has two witnesses! Anytime, anywhere!

The contract is read and handed to the bride followed by recitation of seven blessings, often by friends. The ceremony is closed with the breaking of a goblet by the groom. The goblet is wrapped in white cloth and he smashes it with the heel of his shoe. It is a reminder of the destruction of the Temple. It is also irrevocable and permanent ... just as the marriage is irrevocable and permanent. Today it may be done in silence with recognition of the ancient traditions, or with the words, "May your marriage last so long as it would take to place the pieces of this glass back together." (Groom had better SMASH it!) (No lightbulbs ... please!!!)

The bride and groom would then retire to a private room. In ancient times this would be when the marriage is consummated. Today they would break their fast together. When the couple emerge they are greeted with music, dancing and joyful greetings!

MOST COMMON TODAY is the use of the wine at the beginning, the goblet at the end, occasionally the huppa, or parents standing just behind and to the sides of the bride and groom. If you want to include any of these traditions we will fit them in, it is up to you.

IF ONE OF YOU IS CATHOLIC

The Catholic wedding is more ritualistic than a Protestant service. The ritual and the community do not exist alone, but together. In a Unitarian service an assumption is made that most everything we do will have to have interfaith elements because so many people come from different backgrounds. Therefore, some of the ritual may seem foreign to a few people at the same time as it includes others. While the community is important, the ritual affirms the dignity and worth of individuals and their faith stances in life.

To welcome people of Catholic origins, it is important to include some of the common elements from Catholic services. For traditional Catholics it is affirming to play "Ave Maria" as part of the music and to include I Corinthians Chapter 13, Paul's letter about love. Candles may be used in the service, by using a central candle lit jointly by the bride and groom. The symbolism is rather nice, two becoming one. It is often best for the minister or chaplain to wear robes rather than a suit. The Lord's Prayer may sometimes be appropriate.

We can not replicate the mystery and tradition of the Catholic Church. Sometimes this is difficult because we marry people who have been divorced, people who have not been a regular part of our congregational life, and we have women ministers. All this aside, we can work together to make a meaningful service that respects your background.

IF ONE OF YOU IS HINDU

In a Hindu wedding the bride and groom take seven steps around a purifying flame. With each step a prayer is said for the stages of life. The prayers might include friendship and harmony, strength, courage, prosperity, emotional stability, loyalty, love, dedication, balance, deepening devotion and inspiring companionship. In this service the minds of the bride and groom mingle like two bodies of clear calm waters and their love is undivided for one another.

IF ONE OF YOU IS BUDDHIST

In some Chinese Buddhist services a large paper is provided for the guests to write down their hopes and wishes for the bride and groom. Sometimes the paper is ornate with drawings and paintings of scenes from the couple's lives. Of course the ceremony is more intricate. We are willing to learn about your traditions and include some of them in your wedding.

IF ONE OF YOU IS MUSLIM

There are many beautiful readings from the Koran which can be used in a wedding service. If there are rituals from your particular tradition which you would like to incorporate, speak to us. We are open to the process of honouring your traditions and believe in the richness of interfaith services.

IF ONE OF YOU IS HUMANIST, ATHEIST, OR AGNOSTIC

Many people calling the Unitarian Congregation seeking a minister or a chaplain to perform their service state that they do not want a "religious service". Usually they mean they want a service free from the trappings of any particular denomination, its ritual, its theology. They want a service which is meaningful for their own lives. That is just what Unitarian Universalist ministers and chaplains attempt to provide. Asking you to put together your own service is part of that process.

Weddings are religious services when done by Unitarian Universalist ministers and chaplains. They are filled with meaning. Some of the great issues of life are spoken of and there certainly is ritual that partakes of centuries of traditions surrounding weddings. We would argue that any wedding worth doing is a religious service. But let us not get bogged down with language.

The humanist and the atheist or agnostic will be supported in their search for a meaningful wedding service - free from dogma, theism, and denominational overtones. We will work with you to build a service responsive to your own beliefs.

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Some couples today are choosing to use two candles to light a central candle as a symbol of two lives uniting on one path. The central candle can then be saved and lit on anniversaries, either at dinner or during a short ritual.

The bride and the groom walk to a small table where two candles are lit, awaiting them. They take these candles and light a central candle at the same time as the minister or chaplain says, "There are two of you, yet there is only one life before you. May this life be blessed and ever richer because of everything you bring to it as individuals."

The candle lighting usually takes place just after the vows or just before you are pronounced 'husband and wife.'

These are the most often used selection in recent years:

The two outside candles represent your individual lives, two distinct lights, each with their separate ways. To bring harmony and happiness to your home and family there

must be a merging of these two lights into one light.

From now on your individuality will be matched by your mutuality, your sharing of all your joys and sorrows in life.

As each of you takes a candle . . .
and, together you light the centre candle, . . .
then replace your own candles in their holders . . .

you bring into being the family which, from this time onward, will be your meeting place. This one light can not be divided, neither shall your lives be divided. May the radiance of the one light be a witness to the unity you accept into your lives today. May your marriage grow stronger through all the years ahead. May it ever be a source of sustenance to your individual spirits.

BACKGROUND FOR THE HOLY UNION

The Holy Union is a term commonly used for the "Gay Marriage". The language is different mostly because the state does not recognize a marriage between couples who are gay or lesbian. It is not legal for us to perform a GAY MARRIAGE though we do perform Holy Unions sanctioned by the Unitarian Universalist Association, and we believe, any God or Gods that be.

When two consenting adults, in love, decide to celebrate their love and to sanctify their relationship publicly, we are willing to work with that couple, regardless of sexual orientation, to recognize the holiness of their relationship.

The greatest problem we face is language. Any materials in this manual may be rewritten. Much of the material is OK as is. The most difficult problem arises when we try to recognize what we have just done. In a non-gay wedding we would pronounce the couple husband and wife. The special nature of a Holy Union makes this language inappropriate. There is a hidden blessing in this for the 'husband' and the 'wife' will always struggle to some extent with the traditions of roles passed down by society. The gay or lesbian couple need not struggle with those roles in the same way. They are more free to hoe their own row, make their own pathways in a life-long relationship. What, however, do we pronounce you ... lover and lover ... rather stark, man and man or woman and woman ... it just does not make it. Each couple has come up with different wording that we can use. Let us work together on wording we can be comfortable with.

Most gay or lesbian Holy Unions we performed have been small. Often the family of the couple do not attend nor do friends from work. Family may know about the relationship but disapprove, or grudgingly accept the relationship but would find a Holy Union difficult. Often co-workers simply do not know of the relationship. Unfortunately our society is still discriminating against homosexuals, though there has been progress in the last ten years. Discrimination can eat into the happiness of the occasion if we dwell on it. We will want to discuss this area with you. Who is coming? Will the family be there? Do any of you have children? Will they be there? How do they fit into your lives together? Will there be friends from work? How open have you been able to be about your relationship? In what contexts do you find openness difficult? Talking about these areas does not make them go away. It does help us to know you better, and, we hope, allow you to feel more comfortable with us.

The Holy Union is a time to celebrate the goodness of your relationship and the hopes you hold for a life together. It is as sacred and holy as any wedding. Perhaps the provinces and states will one day, one by one, struggle with the reality of homosexual marriages and make them legal. At least in Unitarian Universalist Churches we have agreed that there should be an end to all discrimination against people on the basis of sexual preference and the church voted

at its 1984 General Assembly to sanction Holy Unions.

SELECTIONS FOR A SERVICE OF HOLY UNION

16-A. Out of this tangled world, two souls have found each other.
They have courted, laughed, cried and grown from being along to becoming a family.
I invite _____ and _____ to come, begin the bonding of your souls and the blending
of your love by joining me here.

16-B. i carry your heart with me(i carry it in
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done by only me is your
doing, my darling)

i fear

no fate(for you are my fate, my sweet)i want
no world for beautiful you are my world, my true
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is a root of a root and the bud of a bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

e e cummings, "i carry your heart"

16-C. When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way,
from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this
is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of
love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are
afraid it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the
only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity - in freedom, in the sense
that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same
pattern. The only real security is not in wanting or possessing, not in demanding or
expecting, not in hoping, even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking to what
it was in nostalgia, nor forward to what it might be in dread or anticipation, but living in

the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. For relationships, too, must be like islands. One must accept their limits - islands surrounded by and interrupted by the sea, continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of ebb and flow, of intermittency.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Gift from the Sea

16-D. On behalf of this community and in the name of the Mystery whose love moves it,

I call this union good, and blessed, and holy - a revelation of grace and creativity.

16-E. Forasmuch as these two, _____ and _____, have stood before a gathering of their kindred and friends to exchange rings and speak the vows of union, then I have the privilege and honour to announce what they have made real - they are united. Let all persons honour the threshold of their home.

16-F. I say that you are united in a covenant and I call your union holy.
Let all respect the threshold of your home.

BACKGROUND FOR FRENCH SELECTIONS

If you are planning to use French in your wedding the following selections may be helpful to you. You are not limited to using these pieces. Selections may be added from other sources or you may wish to translate additional material from this booklet.

All of our chaplains and ministers are capable of including some degree of French in wedding services. They may want to check the pronunciation of some words with you. Would you please give the minister or chaplain a typewritten copy of any new material you provide.

Should you wish, selections may be read by others during the service. If this is the case, please ask all readers to be present at the rehearsal so we can attend to the two most common failures in public reading: 1) too soft, and 2) too fast!

Vows and ring pledges do not have to be the same nor must they be spoken in the same

language. Asking for the blessing of parents, likewise, may reflect your family heritage.

SELECTIONS FOR INCLUDING FRENCH

Family Blessings

17-A. Le mariage est une occasion de fierté et d'espoir, de souvenirs et de tristesse, mais surtout de grande joie et d'amour profond. Tous ces sentiments éveillent les meilleurs vœux de vos amis et votre famille.

(Move to parents)

17-B. _____ et _____, avec joie et amour bénissez-vous ce couple, en leur souhaitant tout ce qu'il y a de meilleur tout au long de leur vie?

Réponse: Oui, nous les bénissons.

17-C. Donnez-vous votre bénédiction à _____ et à _____ et leur souhaitez-vous bonheur et amour jusqu'à le fin de leur vie commune?

Réponse: Oui, nous les bénissons.

Introduction to the Vows

17-D. _____ et _____, vous avez bien pensé au pas que vous allez prendre. En partageant ces moments avec tous ceux qui sont ici réunis, vous donnez le témoignage des sentiments que vous avez l'un pour l'autre depuis longtemps. Pour avoir choisi à célébrer cette occasion avec nous, nous vous remercions et nous vous prions d'accepter nos espoirs et aspirations, nos meilleurs vœux et nos bénédictions.

Vows

17-E. Moi, _____, je te prends, toi _____, telle que tu es. En aimant ce que je connais de toi, en faisant confiance en ce que je ne connais pas encore, avec respect pour ton intégrité et foi en ton amour constant pour moi, autant pour les jours de bonheur que

pour les jours difficiles, tout au long de notre vie.

17-F. Je, _____, te prends _____ comme épouse pour partager les joies et les peines de notre vie ensemble, pour respecter ton intégrité et pour t'aimer le vie entière.

The Ring Exchange

17-G. Cette alliance est un cercle continu, comme mon amour pour toi continu et entier. _____, je te donne cette alliance, signe de mon amour.

(Alternate)

17-H. _____, je te donne cet anneau pour porter éternellement.

17-I. (By the minister: Et puissent celui qui la donne et celle qui la porte, honorer tout au long de leur vie la promesse que représente cette alliance.)

Blessing over the Rings

17-J. Ces alliances sont des cercles continus, comme votre amour l'un pour l'autre est continu et total. Que votre amour devienne plus grand et plus fort à travers les années.

Recognition/Pronouncement

17-K. Puisque _____ et _____ ont décidé d'unir leur vie, en exprimant leur amour l'un vers l'autre, je déclare qu'ils sont maintenant mari et femme. Qu'ils puissent vivre ensemble longtemps dans l'amour, la joie et le bonheur.

Closing Words

17-L. Que la bénédiction qui touche ceux qui aiment, vous touche aussi et qu'elle vous remplisse d'une grâce spirituelle totale. Que le lien qui vous unit grandisse toujours. Que vous puissiez vous aimer et travailler ensemble aujourd'hui, demain, et tous les jours de votre vie de telle façon que vos vies soient enrichies et anoblies par une camaraderie vraie et profonde de l'esprit et du coeur.

Reading

17-M. Frères,
parmi les dons de dieu,
vous cherchez à obtenir ce qu'il y a de meilleur.
Eh bien, je vais vous indiquer une voie supérieure à toutes les autres.
J'aurais beau parler toutes les langues de la terre et du ciel,
si je n'ai pas la charité, s'il me manque l'amour
je ne suis qu'un cuivre qui résonne,
une cymbale rétentissante.

J'aurais beau être prophète,
avoir toute la science des mystères
et toute la connaissance de dieu,
et toute la foi jusqu'à transporter les montagnes,
s'il me manque l'amour
je ne suis rien.

J'aurais beau distribuer toute ma fortune aux affamés,
j'aurais beau me faire brûler vif,
s'il me manque l'amour
je ne suis rien.

L'amour prend patience;
l'amour rend service;
l'amour ne jalouse pas;
Il ne se vante pas, ne se gonfle pas d'orgueil;
Il ne fait rien de malhonnête;
Il ne cherche pas son intérêt;
Il ne s'emporte pas;
Il n'entretient pas de rancune;
Il ne se réjouit pas de ce qui est injuste;
Mais il trouve sa joie dans ce qui est vrai;
Il supporte tout, il fait confiance en tout.
Il espère tout, il endure tout.

L'amour ne passera jamais.