

Wedding Planning Booklet

Dear Couple,

Congratulations on your decision to join your lives. Thank you for the honor of letting us help you plan your special day. In this book you will find ideas and suggestions for planning your ceremony. Be assured that you do not have to choose just from this book, it is only meant as a guide and outline to help with planning.

Please remember that you can choose members of your family and friends to help with readings and toasts as part of the ceremony. This is your ceremony, and from our perspective there is no 'right way' to get married. This is your wedding alone so please only give consideration to what will make your day special and help you to feel married.

Vows here are examples and you may use them or write your own. I suggest if writing your own vows that you consider sharing them ahead of time or decide on a number of words that you both stick to so that one of your vows is not more elaborate or longer than the other and neither of you end up feeling disappointed on your special day.

Also please do consider the length of your service. The length of your service will determine how many readings, rituals (such as candle lighting, rose and sand ceremonies) and pieces of music you will add.

As for music, if you are celebrating your service in our Meeting House and you want music to be a part of your service you need to contact Linnea Bardarson 781-329-6688 or linneabardarson@gmail.com. Linnea's fee for weddings is \$350 with an additional \$100 if she is needed for rehearsals.

There are additional fees for use of the Meeting House, Parish House, Custodian, Building Use Facilitator and Minister. If you are a member of the church these fees are negotiable. Please see the Building Use Form for more details.

Once you have looked this booklet over and made some decisions make an appointment with Rev. Rali Weaver to complete your planning 617-459-5979 raliweaver@dedhamuu.org

And finally if you are planning to hold your service and or reception at First Church and Parish in Dedham you need to make yourself acquainted with our Building Use, Alcohol Policies and fill out a Building Use Form so that your dates may be approved by the Building Use Committee (this process may take up to two weeks). These forms may be found on the calendar page of our website <http://www.dedhamuu.org/calendar>

Or by stopping by our church office at 670 High Street in Dedham (Office hours 9-1 during the church year). You may contact the Church office to have these forms mailed at 781-326-7463 or firstchurch@dedhamuu.org.

We wish you all the best in your planning.

Rali

Possible Elements in your Order of Service

Traditional Elements (essential elements in bold)

Background Music as the congregations enters

Prelude

- Optional Candle lighting by the couple's parents

- Minister and half of wedding party (traditionally groom and groomsmen) enter from the front of the meeting house.

Congregation Rises

Processional (The rest or the entire wedding party enters at this time)

Opening Words

Statement of Purpose/ Address

Blessing by Parents/Family Member

Presentation

Declarations

Commitment of Congregation

Homily by the Minister (optional)

Preface to the Vows

Exchange of Vows

The Tradition of the Wedding Rings

Exchange of Rings

Prayer of Aspiration

Pronouncement

Closing Words

Wedding Kiss

Recessional

Additional Optional Elements:

Musical Interlude/Soloists

Readings

Recognition of those departed

Recognition of Children

Signing Ceremony

Reading(s)

Wine Cup Ceremony

Rose Ceremony

Candle Ceremony

Closing Words

Number: or other or none

Wedding Kiss

Yes No

Recessional Music:

Yes No

Check Additional Optional Elements:

____ Personal Address to the Couple:

____ Musical Interlude/Soloists:

____ Recognition of those departed

____ Recognition of Children

____ Signing Ceremony

____ Reading(s) (list below with Readers names)

1.

2.

3.

____ Wine Cup Ceremony

____ Rose Ceremony

____ Candle Ceremony

____ Additional Prayers (list below):

Attendants (Bridesmaids/Groomsmen):

Ushers (2-4) _____

Opening Words (choose one or find one from another source):

1. What greater thing is there for two human souls to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labor, 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 unspoken memories.
-George Eliot
2. Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.
-*Sonnet 116* William Shakespeare
3. The most wonderful of all things in life is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvelous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.
-Sir Hugh Walpole
4. Marriage is a relationship which embodies the warm and precious values, which grow from human companionship and love. Into this relationship, with deep commitment and high expectations _____ and _____ come now to join themselves.

Enter it joyfully and in the knowledge that love is both our highest achievement and life's most precious gift.

To be true, this outward form must be a symbol of that which is inner and real: a sacred personal union which the church may solemnize and the state make legal, but which only love can create and create and mutual loyalty fulfill.

To endure the marriage of these two must be a consecration of each to the other and both to the wider community of which their lives are a part.

Statement of Purpose (choose one or draw one from another source):

1. We are gathered here to celebrate with _____ and _____ on the occasion of this marriage in which they are now to be united. From time immemorial marriage has been recognized as a natural relationship, solemnized by the observances of religion and consecrated by the couples in all ages who have brought its beauty to flower. It is not therefore to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly but with deliberation and reverence.

The celebration in which we join today is but an outward symbol of this inward relationship, recognized by society but made real and living only in the lives that share it. It is into this sacred unison these two persons now desire to enter.

(To the couple)

_____ and _____ you have decided to commit yourselves each to the other in a close and continuing relationship in which your lives will be intertwined. In the presence of these witnesses you will exchange your pledge of that commitment, affirming your intention to strengthen and cherish the relationship you are building together and find through the sharing of your lives with each other a unity that will take you out of the loneliness of the isolated self.

Let this celebration of your commitment to each other begin.

2. _____ and _____ you have invited us to be with you today as witnesses to your affirmation of the happiness you have found together, and to the pledge through which you publicly express your personal commitment to one another.

The ceremony in which you now join marks neither a beginning nor an end in your relationship, but one step in the continuing process of change and growth. Growth is an essential part of marriage as it is an essential part of life. Your relationship must keep unfolding into new dimensions and if you can keep step you will go forward together and your marriage will be an increasing source of support and insight.

Inevitably there will be mistakes. Inevitably there will be times of tension and conflict but if these are openly acknowledged and faced they can be turned from problems into opportunities and you will find new meanings and richness in your shared life together.

3. We who gather here today are privileged to be with _____ and _____ in their celebration of this high and memorable moment in their lives. The marriage between them is not created by you or by me. It is created by themselves through the mutual love and commitment they already share and will put into words in the presence of all of us.

It is good that those who are persons of special significance should be present to rejoice with them: to hear their vows, their hopes and plans, to extend good wishes and to be reminded of the loves and commitments that are part of their own lives as well.

4. We've come together to witness the marriage of _____ and _____. We've come together to share our sense of the sacredness and significance of their vows, to share in their joy and to toast their every happiness. This will be our witness to the flowering of their collective spirit. For here are two people who feel free with each other, free to grow and free to create a future full of promise and hope.

_____ and _____ we come with our best wishes. Your marriage does not depend on us or this day, but upon you yourselves. We will stand behind you and beside you, recognizing the importance of our support and friendship. What we know let us share with you, what you have learned and will learn, share with us. The friends and relatives you have form a larger family of people who care about you and what you do and now at this most important time we share your joy and bear witness to your love which we all support. Let this celebration of your commitment now begin.

5. We are gathered here to witness the marriage of _____ and _____. It is fitting and appropriate that you their family and friends are here to witness and participate in their wedding, for the ideals, the understandings and the mutual respect, which they bring to their marriage have their roots in the love friendship and guidance you have given to them. Marriage makes us aware of the changes wrought with time, but this relationship transformed and renewed by the vows we will witness here today, will continue to draw much of its beauty and meaning from the associations with the past. You are invited today to covenant with _____ and _____ to honor their love and union of their lives in marriage.

6. We can derive no moral from love except the moral to love more deeply. We can expect nothing from love except what love gives. We cannot choose what chances and changes might befall us, but we can shape the spirit with which we shall meet them. This is a time of celebration and joy. Yet for friends and relatives alike this

is a beginning that calls for more than celebration. Two people known and loved by all of you here, have grown into persons in their own right-- with their own ideas and feelings. Know them for who they are now-- for what they wish to become. Know them for their dreams and aspirations-- and share with them what you have learned in your own lives. For all of you here, this is a glad occasion. Your family has been enlarged, your circle of friends widened. Let this be a time of celebration and joy.

Blessings by the Parents (optional) - Candle Ceremony

A larger and two smaller candles have been placed on the table in front of the church. Both sets of parents step forward and each light one of the candles representing each family.

With the lighting of these flames, you demonstrate your love for _____ and _____, your blessing of their marriage and your commitment to encourage them as they continue their life's journey and enlarge your family.

(After the exchange of rings the couple uses the individual candles to light the one larger candle to represent their union. This may be done in silence or with music.

Recognition of Children (optional) may be used here or after vows

1. _____ and _____ will now be joined by _____ (names of children) so that they may express their love and commitment for (him/her/them) as they grow within the circle of this new family.

Bride and Groom together say: _____ (names of children) We Vow to commit ourselves and our love to you for as long as we each shall live.

Or:

_____ (names of children) we vow to commit ourselves this day to your health and wellbeing as long as we each shall live.

2. _____ (names of children) we invite you to share in the joy of our family home as long as we each shall live.
3. (Child's name) (and) _____, you will share in this union, for your lives will inevitably be touched by the covenant into which your father/mother enters today, and your participation will be needed to develop the bonds of

a new family. As _____ and _____ exchange their pledge, that you will make room in your own life (lives) for _____, that you will join together to weave a fabric of mutual help and comfort, of challenge and support, and that you will help create a home and a way of life in which all of you may grown into the fullness of the best people you can be. In this spirit, do you recognize and honor your new relationship. If so please say I/we do.

Presentation (optional):

(Traditionally the father has presented the bride, we have seen many variations on this theme, mothers, children, other relatives and friends have often escorted and presented the bride or the couple walks down together. Anyone can present the bride and couple to be married)

1. Who presents this woman to be married this day?
Representative(s) say: I/we do.
Hug and kiss and are seated
2. Who stands with this couple to represent the good wishes of their friends and family?
Representative(s) say: I/we do.
Hug and kiss and are seated
3. As our sons (and/or) daughters find partners and establish homes for the next generation, each family is enlarged. Do you who have nurtured these two give your blessing to their union and their new home?
Representative(s) say: I/we do.
Hug and kiss and are seated
4. (To the Bridesmaid and Groomsmen) Will you who stand here as witnesses pledge to support and encourage this union both today and always? If so please respond with “We Do”

Declarations (optional):

1. To each spouse individually:
_____ do you declare your willingness to take _____ to be your husband/wife/spouse if so please say “I do”
“I do” (repeat with each spouse)

Commitment of the Congregation (optional):

Minister: A marriage is above all else an intimate relationship between two persons. But it also has wider ramifications into the lives of relatives and friends and the community at large. Do you who are here assembled pledge your support to _____ and _____ in the commitment they celebrate with us here today? If so please respond by saying “We do.”

Congregation: “We do:

Preface to the Vows (Choose One):

1. The vows through which you accept one another as (husband and wife/spouses for life...) have no hidden values within themselves. Only to the extent that they express in words your continuing intention and commitment do they have any meaning at all. In a world where pressures pushing people apart often seem stronger than those drawing them together, your commitment to one another will need to be re-expressed in many different ways in the coming days and years. The expression in today’s vows is simply a visible milestone in your very long journey together.

I invite you now to join hands as you repeat your vows. The hand offered by each of you is an extension of self, just as your mutual love.

Cherish the touch, for you touch not only your own, but another life. Be sensitive to its pulse, seek always to understand and respect its rhythm.

2. Marriage has been called “a going-forth, a bold step into the future it is a risking of what we are for the sake of what we yet can be.” We are gathered today to witness and celebrate the first steps on a new path by two who have already traveled together on life’s journey.

_____ and _____, your love and loyalty and mutual respect for one another will be what sustains you on the road ahead. For on that road lie days of joy and days of sorrow; times that comfort you and times that challenge you and moments when you may rest in the warm familiarity of the life you have made together, and moments when change is all around, calling upon you to learn to delight and trust in one another’s growth.

We who are your relatives, friends and community, stand ready to help you on the journey, by cheering you on, by offering a helping hand when needed, by offering prayers and highest hopes for your marriage.

You in turn by your courageous and going forth on this path, offer gifts of hope and encouragement for each of us. For where love is, there also will we find the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of God. And so we rejoice in the presence of your love among us.

In the words you speak in your wedding ceremony, you are offering lifelong companionship to one another in the journey that begins today as you leave this place, arm in arm, the journey that begins anew each day of your marriage. Walt Whitman expressed this offering of the ultimate gift of companionship with these words: "Come I give of you my hand! I give you my love... Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me? Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?"

3. May your love grow strong and sure and deep, so that each step of your journey is a "yes!" to life, a "yes" to one another.

_____ and _____, since you have, in the wisdom of your hearts and minds, decided to share your love, I ask you to join hands and in our presence make these ancient and time-honored commitments.

Exchange of Vows

(choose one or, better yet take what you like and write your own)

1. Minister: _____, will you have _____ to be your beloved husband/wife, to share your life with him/her and do you pledge that you will love, honor and tenderly care for him/her in good times and in bad, in ease and in adversity, for better, or worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, and do you promise never to close your heart to him/her.

Response: I do.

2. I _____, pledge to you, a life of giving and hoping, a life of growing and loving. I shall share with you both my work and my play. I shall be with you in your tears and in your laughter just as I will bring my own sorrows and my own joys to you. I accept you as my companion and pledget to you honor, faith and love.

3. I _____, take you _____ to be my partner in life; to have and to hold, from this day forward; for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish, till death do us part. Thereto, with my whole heart, and with my earnest and complete devotion, I plight thee my love.
4. I _____, take you, _____ to be the partner of my days, to be the companion of house. We shall keep together whatever share of trouble and sorrow our lives may lay upon us. And we shall share together our store of goodness and plenty and love.
5. I _____ take you _____, to be my partner; and in loving you, I promise to be your faithful companion; in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, from this time forward.
6. Minister: Now therefore will you, _____ join your life with this man/woman's life, and will you honor him/her, support him/her, cherish him/her and stand with him/her all your days?
Response: "I will."

Minister: Trials will come, and tests, for there is much in this world of ours in this world of ours that would pull you apart. Do you bring strength and foresight to your relationship, courage and understanding?

Response together: "We Bring all that we are."

Minister: Joys will come, graces and blessings will pursue you, surprises will warm your soul and give you wonder, making your lives easier and fuller in consequence. Do you bring thanksgiving and rejoicing to this relationship, laughter and abandon?

Response: "We bring all that we are."

7. In the presence of these witnesses I, _____ now take you
To be my (wife/husband/spouse/partner),
To have and to hold,
From this day forward,
For better or for worse,
For richer for poorer,
In sickness and in health,
In sorrow and in joy
To love and to cherish,

(as long as we both shall live, till death do us part, now and always)
This is my solemn vow.

8. _____, I take you to be my (wife/husband)
To be the (mother/father) of our children,
To be the companion of my days
We shall bear together
Whatever of sorrow and adversity
Life may lay upon us
We shall share together whatever of joy and fulfillment
Life may hold in store
9. From this day forward
_____, you shall be my (wife/husband)
Together to love, to work and to share, to grow and understand,
To discover a fuller life.
10. In reaffirming the relationship we have been building together,
I _____ now take you, _____
To be my (wife/husband/spouse/partner)
11. Minister: _____, please repeat after me:
(either one at a time, or together)
I promise to share my life openly with you,
To speak the truth to you in love,
I marry you just as you are.
Accept me for who I am.
I will express my love for you in all ways possible to me.
I will share in your pleasure and your pain, and let you share in mine.
I will help you and comfort you;
I will trust you and deserve your trust.
_____, I choose you to be my (husband, wife, spouse, partner).

Preface to the exchange of rings: (choose one)

1. Minister: A circle is the symbol of the sun and of the earth and of the universe. It is a symbol of wholeness, of perfection, and peace. The Rings you give and receive this day are symbols of the circle of shared love into which you enter as (husband and wife/partners for life/married).
2. Minister: The rings are an ancient symbol, blessed and simple. Round they are, like the sun, like an eye, like the arms that embrace. Circles they are, for love that is given, comes back around again. Therefore, may these symbols remind you that your love, like the sun, illuminates; that your love like the eye, must see clearly; and that your love, like the arms which embrace, is a grace upon the world.
3. Minister: May god bless these rings which you give to each other as a sign of love and fidelity.
4. Minister: 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 be to that ideal and may you be fulfilled abundantly.
5. Minister: May your ring always be a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no separate giver and receiver. You are each the giver and each the receiver. May your ring always call to mind the freedom and the power of this love you share publicly today.
6. Minister: Everything the “power of the world” does is done in a circle. The sky is round and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. Life is a circle from childhood to adulthood. And so it is in everything where power moves --- Black Elk, Oglala Sioux
7. Minister: Round as the Earth, round as the circle of loved ones gathered round here, round as the cycle of life itself, these rings are to be a sign of the vows by which this couple commit themselves to one another.

Exchange of Rings

1. With this ring I thee wed.
2. Not as a bond, but as a pledge, I give you this ring. May it encircle your finger as my love does your heart.
3. This ring I give you as a token and pledge of my constant faith and abiding love.
4. Accept this ring as a sign of my love and constancy for all the years ahead.
5. _____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.
6. _____, I give you this ring in token and pledge of my abiding affection and love for you.
7. _____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love for you and my commitment to you throughout our lives.
8. _____, I give you this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our love.
9. _____, I give you this ring in token of the commitment we celebrate today.

Prayer of Aspiration (optional)

Unitarian Universalist views concerning the nature and form of prayer vary considerably. Some couples may wish a prayer here, while others may wish a prayer to be added to the pronouncement or to replace the prayer with a time of meditation or omit the time of prayer altogether.

1. We pray that the spirit of love may deepen and enrich the lives of those how here become husband and wife; that each may be enabled to see life from the other's point of view, that they may be tolerant and large-minded, sympathetic and kind, considerate of weakness and forgiving of faults. May the relationship in the days to come; and whatever changes time may bring, let what has been said and done here remain a treasured memory and a guide to life. Amen
2. In this hour, rich with meaning and hope and promise, we pray that the spirit of trust, understanding, and love may be with _____ and _____ through all the years ahead.

May their trust bring them strength and confidence, whatever trials and

adversities they may meet; may they understand, support, and accept each other amid all life's uncertainties; may their love be an avenue of insight into the deepest realities of life.

In the tomorrows which, _____ and _____ will enter together, may they find far more in life than either would have found alone. May they find tolerances for prejudices, reverence for the beauties, and respect for the truths they will encounter as they go forward together. Amen

3. We cannot know what the future will bring into the lives of _____ and _____, but we pray that together they may be equal to the demands of all their tomorrows. May their marriage always be a shared adventure, rich with moments of serenity as well as excitement, vital with problems of personal freedom as well as mutual responsibility.
May they find in each other companionship as well as love, understanding as well as compassion, challenge as well as agreement. May their friends and kinsfolk, those present today and those unable to be present, continue to rejoice in the love that has united them.
May the home they build together shed its peace on them and all who find shelter within its walls. May it be a place where personal preoccupations do not tower over concern for others, and where the warmth of humor puts both crisis and dullness into perspective.
From their life together may they draw patience in the time of strain, strength in the time of weakness, courage in the time of discouragement, vision in the time of doubt, and above all, a growing love which radiates into the world around them. Amen

4. (This prayer may be used as a blessing after the pronouncement)
May the love which has brought you together continue to grow and enrich your lives bring peace and inspiration to each of you and to those who know you. May you meet with courage any problems that arise to challenge you; may meet with strength whatever troubles may beset you. May your marriage be one of ever-growing depth and meaning, because of the sympathy, understanding and love you give to one another in the life you share. Amen

5. Let us now join in prayer.

O Spirit of Life and Love;

We ask for your blessing on this union, on the family.

We ask that the blessings of those who truly love them surround them throughout their lifetime together. We praise you for the love which you make known to us in the world. We ask that each of us assembled here today may express whatever depth of love and friendship and goodwill is needed to support this couple on their journey through life together as a family. We pray for this couple and for all who bravely choose the path of peace, the path of life. Amen

Pronouncement (choose one)

1. _____ and _____ for as much as you both have committed yourselves to each other and in token have given and received rings, by the authority vested in me as a minister of this church, I recognized you as (husband and wife, married, spouses for life).
2. Inasmuch as _____ and _____ have declared their love before us and named their commitment aloud, we may all henceforth know that they are (married, husband and wife, duly wed), united in the presence of the one who is love, eternal and compelling. What spirit has blessed, let not the letter destroy; and let all present honor these two people with their support and encouragement.
3. Because you have spoken a covenant of love and trust to each other, and because you have symbolized that love by the giving and receiving and wearing of a ring, you have made for yourselves a marriage; and as a representative of this community, I am delighted to declare that your lives are now joined as husband and wife.
4. Since _____ and _____ have joined themselves, each to the other in marriage, and have signified their commitment to each other in the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of a ring, they are now and henceforward (married, spouses for life, husband and wife).
5. The circles are now joined-- this couple, their families and their friends. Because _____ and _____ have expressed their love and have formalized in our presence, their commitment to share their lives we bear witness to their marriage and recognize them as (life partners, husband and wife, (or the couple's own choice of terms).

Kiss (choose one)

1. Minister: I invite you to seal your marriage with a kiss.
2. Minister: I invite you to embrace.
3. Minister: I invite you now to show the greatest sign of your covenant one to the other, and kiss.

Benediction: (choose one)

1. May your house be a place of happiness for all who enter it, a place where the old and the young are renewed in each other's company, a place for growing, a place for music, a place for laughter.

And when shadows and darkness fall within its rooms, may it still be a place of hope and strength for all who enter in, especially those who are entrusted to your care.

May no person be alien to your compassion. May your larger family be the family of all humankind.

And may those who are nearest to you and dearest to you be constantly enriched by the beauty and bounty of your love for one another.

Amen

2. As a benediction, I offer these words which were adapted by a poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning
May these two souls
Find communion of ideal being and perfect grace
May their love reach the level of every day's most quiet need
By sun and candlelight
May they love freely as humans strive for right
May they love purely as humans turn from praise
May they find strength to meet adversities;
Tolerance for the prejudices, Reverence for the beauties
And faith for the uncertainties, which will come their way.
3. Above you are the stars; below you the stones
As time does pass, remember...
Like a star should your love be constant
Like a stone should your love be firm.
Be close, yet not too close.

Possess one another, yet be understanding.
Have patience each with the other
For storms will come, but they will go quickly.
Be free in giving of affection and warmth.
Make love often, and be sensuous to one another
Have no fear, and let not the ways or words of
The unenlightened give you unease
For the spirit is with you, now and always
-from the book of Pagan Rituals

4. Go in peace, live simply, live gently, at home in yourselves
Be just in your words and just in your deeds.
Move through the world compassionately.
Speak courageously in all you say:
Indeed, speak the truth, or speak nothing at all.
Remember your power in the days of your powerlessness;
And never stint your hand from charity.
Practice forbearance in all you do.
Take care of all those put in your charge, young and old alike,
And let not the demands of this relationship eclipse the friends who have
sustained you.
Crave peace for all peoples of this world, beginning with yourselves;
And go, as you go, in peace, of peace, to peace.
Amen
5. With abiding confidence and affection, we send you forth upon your
journey of life together: to laugh for joy, to suffer pain, to seek, to serve, to
find. So be it. Amen
6. We rejoice this day in your marriage.
We celebrate the love which has brought you to this moment.
With joy that deepens through many years, may you know its meaning
And mystery-- how we become truly one is sharing ourselves with one
another and in caring for one another, and yet in love, remain truly two in
our uniqueness.

May your home be a place of happiness for all who enter it, a place where
the old and the young are renewed in each other's company, a place for
growing, a place for music and a place for laughter.

And when shadows and darkness fall within its rooms, may it still be a place of hope for all who enter it, especially for those who are entrusted to your care.

May no person be alien to your compassion.

May your larger family be the family of all humankind.

Additional rituals:

Candle Lighting Ceremony (optional)

An unlit larger candle and two smaller ones (lit by parents at the start of ceremony) are placed on a table at the front of church. The bride and groom each light a taper from the two smaller candles (representing their families of origin) and together light the larger candle.

Minister: The candle flame has traditionally been a symbol of the light of the soul. Each candle burning here represents the light and love of one unique person. Today _____ and _____ come here to be united because of their love for one another.

In marriage two people are brought together into a single relationship. In union, they share many experiences as though they were one person. Yet, at the same time, each member of this relationship also retains their own identity.

To the couple: _____ and _____, may you always respect each other's uniqueness as you nurture the relationship of love that exists between you.

You may now light the candle (light union candle)

In this symbol of union, the flame of each individual life continues to burn bright and separate, creating its own circle of light and its own form.

And from two unique lives and two separate flames, a single flame of commitment and love is kindled.

May it remain in memory and be a flame of hope and love for your ongoing life together.

Let the light you have kindled together illuminate your lives and the lives of others through both sunshine and shadow in the days to come.

Wine Cup Ceremony (optional- choose one)

The use of the wine cup is an ancient Jewish tradition. It is particularly appropriate at a marriage where the background of one or both parties is in that tradition, but others may also find it significant.

1. Minister: This cup of wine is symbolic of the cup of life. As you share the cup of wine you undertake to share all the future may bring. All the sweetness life's cup may hold for you will be sweeter because you drink it together. Whatever drops of bitterness it may contain will be less bitter because you share them.
2. Minister: The years of our lives are a cup of wine, poured forth for us to drink, The grapes when pressed give forth their good juices for wine. Under the wine press of time our lives give forth their labour and honour and love. Many days will you sit at the same table and eat and drink together. Drink now, and may the cup of your lives be sweet and full to running over.

Rose Ceremony (optional)

Minister: It is now my privilege to present you a gift to celebrate your union. IN the language of flowers, a rose is the symbol of love.

Please exchange your roses.

In this exchange, you have give each other a gift as partner to partner., which of course is the gift of love. And it would be my ope that wherever you make your home, there be an especially appointed place in it for roses. And that each succeeding anniversary of this occasion you celebrate it, at least in part, by each of you bringing to the appointed place a rose, as a restatement of love and as a commitment to the vows you have made today.

In every union there are occasionally difficult issues that arise. When such times come in your union either of you will remember and bring to the appointed place a rose, the other will see it, understand it as a statement of love, and accept it, remembering as you do that love endures all things.

Sand Ceremony (optional)

Officiant: We now celebrate _____ and _____'s union with a symbolic sand ceremony. First, we will pour sand from this beautiful beach where _____ and _____ stand today as they commit their lives to each other, representing the strong foundation of their relationship.

That foundation includes their families, their upbringing, and all the important steps on their journeys that led them to be who they are today. This foundation will support them in their love as they grow and change together. *If you are not having a beach wedding, the foundation sand can be from your hometown, or just a neutral white sand.*

_____ and _____, today you are making a lasting commitment to share the rest of your lives with each other. That commitment is symbolized through the pouring of these two individual containers of sand; one that represents _____ (*who now pours in some of his/her sand*) and the other that represents _____, (*who pours some of his/her sand on top*).

Each of you comes to this relationship with unique strengths, vulnerabilities, and histories. As individuals, you are beautiful people all on your own. Yet when the two of you are blended together, you form something even more beautiful.

Those strengths can blossom, those vulnerabilities can be cared for, and those people can soar.

As the two containers of sand are poured into the vase, (both _____ & _____ simultaneously pour their remaining sand in the central vase) the separate colors of sand now blend into a new color. You have now blended your families into a new family, as you start your journey in marriage, loving and strong as husband and wife, as inseparable as these grains of sand.

Other additional ritual element ideas can be found at:

<https://weddingtips101.wordpress.com/2014/02/24/unity-ceremony-ideas/>

Readings

(Invite a friend or family member to read something of your choosing or write something of their own for you. Here are but a few ideas. Draw from your favorite things.)

O Tell Me The Truth About Love

Some say that love's a little boy,
And some say it's a bird,
Some say it makes the world go round,
And some say that's absurd,
And when I asked the man next-door,
Who looked as if he knew,
His wife got very cross indeed,
And said it wouldn't do.

Does it look like a pair of pajamas,
Or the ham in a temperance hotel?
Does it's odour remind one of llamas,
Or has it a comforting smell?
Is it prickly to touch as a hedge is,
Or soft as eiderdown fluff?
Is it sharp or quite smooth at the edges?
O tell me the truth about love.

Our history books refer to it
In cryptic little notes,
It's quite a common topic on
The Transatlantic boats;
I've found the subject mentioned in
Accounts of suicides,
And even seen it scribbled on
The backs of railway-guides.

Does it howl like a hungry Alsatian,
Or boom like a military band?
Could one give a first-rate imitation
On a saw or a Steinway Grand?
Is its singing at parties a riot?

Does it only like Classical stuff?
Will it stop when one wants to be quiet?
O tell me the truth about love.

I looked inside the summer-house;
it wasn't ever there:
I tried the Thames at Maidenhead,
And Brighton's bracing air.
I don't know what the blackbird sang,
Or what the tulip said;
But it wasn't in the chicken-run,
Or underneath the bed.

Can it pull extraordinary faces?
Is it usually sick on a swing?
Does it spend all its time at the races,
Or fiddling with pieces of string?
Has it views of its own about money?
Does it think Patriotism enough?
Are its stories vulgar but funny?
O tell me the truth about love.

When it comes, will it come without warning
Just as I'm picking my nose?
Will it knock on my door in the morning,
Or tread in the bus on my shoes?
Will it come like a change in the weather?
Will its greeting be courteous or rough?
Will it alter my life altogether?
O tell me the truth about love.

W.H. Auden

All Paths Lead to You

All paths lead to you
Where e'er I stray,
You are the evening star

At the end of day.
All paths lead to you
Hill top or low,
You are the white birch
In the suns glow.
All Paths lead to you
Where e'er I roam
You are the lark song
Calling me home.

Blance Shoemaker Wagstaff

The Third Body

A man and a woman sit near each other, and they do not long
At this moment to be older, or younger, nor born in any other nation, or time or place.

They are content to be where they are, talking or not talking.

There breaths together feed someone whom we do not know.

The man sees the ways his fingers move; he sees her hands close around a book she
hands to him.

They obey a third body that they share in common.

They have made a promise to love that body.
Age may come, parting may come, death will come.

A man and a woman sit near each other;
As they do breathe they feed someone we do not know
someone we know of, whom we have never seen.

Robert Bly

Loving a Woman in Two Worlds pg 19

i carry your heart with me

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 the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky
of a tree called life; which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)

and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart
(i carry it in my heart)

by e. e. cummings

“So Much Happiness”

By Naomi Shahab Nye

It is difficult to know what to do with so much happiness.
With sadness there is something to rub against,
A wound to tend with lotion and cloth,

When the world falls in around you, you have pieces to pick up.
Something to hold in your hands, like ticket stubs or change.

But happiness floats.
It doesn't need you to hold it down.
It doesn't need anything.
Happiness lands on the roof of the next house, singing,
And disappears when it wants to.
You are happy either way.
Even the fact that you once lived in a peaceful tree house
and now live over a quarry of noise and dust
Cannot make you unhappy.
Everything has a life of its own,
It too could wake up filled with possibilities
Of coffee cake and ripe peaches,
And love even the floor which needs to be swept,
The soiled linens and scratched records...

Since there is no place large enough to contain so much happiness,
You shrug, you raise your hands, and it flows out of you
Into everything you touch. You are not responsible.
You take no credit, as the night sky takes no credit
For the moon, but continues to hold it, and to share it,
And in that way, be known

From Poetry and Marriage
by Wendell Berry

The meaning of marriage begins in the giving of words. We can not join ourselves to one another without giving our word. And this must be an unconditional giving, for in join ourselves to one another we join ourselves to the unknown. We can join one another only by joining to the unknown.... Because the condition of marriage is world and its meaning communal, no one party to it can be solely in charge. What you alone think it ought to be, it is not going to be. Where you alone think you want it go, it is not going to go. It is going where the two of you—and marriage, time, life, history and the world—will take it. You do not know the road; you have committed your life to way.

Khalil Gibran

“On Love”

When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.

And when his wings enfold you yield to him, Though the sword hidden among his
pinions may wound you. And when he speaks to you believe in him, Though his voice
may shatter your dreams as the north wind lays waste the garden.

For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is
he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in
the sun,

So shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth.

Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself.

He threshes you to make you naked.

He sifts you to free you from your husks.

He grinds you to whiteness.

He kneads you until you are pliant;

And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's
sacred feast.

All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart, and
in that knowledge become a fragment of Life's heart.

But if in your fear you would seek only love's peace and love's pleasure,

Then it is better for you that you cover your nakedness and pass out of love's
threshing-floor,

Into the seasonless world where you shall laugh, but not all of your laughter, and weep,
but not all of your tears.

Love gives naught but itself and takes naught but from itself.

Love possesses not nor would it be possessed;

For love is sufficient unto love.

When you love you should not say, "God is in my heart," but rather, "I am in the heart of
God."

And think not you can direct the course of love, for love, if it finds you worthy, directs
your course.

Love has no other desire but to fulfill itself.

But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires:
To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your own understanding of love;
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.
To wake at dawn with a winged heart and give thanks for another day of loving;
To rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy;
To return home at eventide with gratitude;
And then to sleep with a prayer for the beloved in your heart and a song of praise upon
your lips.

The Rhythm of Free Partners by Anne Morrow Lindbergh

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but gay and swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart's. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand; only the barest touch in passing. Now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back — it does not matter which. Because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it.

The joy of such a pattern is not only the joy of creation or the joy of participation, it is also the joy of living in the moment. Lightness of touch and living in the moment are intertwined. When both partners love so completely that they have forgotten to ask themselves whether or not they are loved in return; when they know only that they love and are moving to its music-- then, and then only, are two people able to dance perfectly in tune to the same rhythm.

1 Corinthians 13 New International Version (NIV)

13 If I speak in the tongues[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5** It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. **6** Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. **7** It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. **9** For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. **11** When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. **12** For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

An excerpt from Song of the Open Road by Walt Whitman

Listen! I will be honest with you,
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you:
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
Come, we must not stop here,
However sweet these laid-up stores,
However convenient this dwelling,
However sheltered this port and however calm these waters,
We must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality surrounds us,
We are permitted to receive it but a little while.
Come I give you my hand.
I give you my love more precious than money
I give you myself before preaching or law
Will you give me yourself?
Will come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

A Wedding Blessing By Eliot Arnold

Now you will feel no storms, 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 is no loneliness, for each of you is companion to the other,
You are two persons, but there is one life before you, and one home.
Turn together to look at the road you traveled,
to reach this---the hour of your happiness.
It stretches behind you into the past.
Look to the future that lies ahead.
A long and winding, adventure-filled road,
whose every turn means discovery,
new hopes, new joys, new laughter, and a few shared tears.
May happiness be your companion,
May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead;
And through all the years to come.
Go this day to your dwelling place and enter into your days together.
May your days be good and long upon the earth.
Your adventure has just begun! -