

# The Celebration of Union

## A Planner and Resource Guide for Weddings and Commitment Ceremonies



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**General Information:**

- The Sanford Unitarian Universalist Church building was erected in 1918 and we will celebrate our centenary in 2018.
- Our church is a Welcoming Congregation and a Green Sanctuary.
- The center aisle length is 48 feet; it is approximately 46 inches wide (pew end to pew end).
- There are 10 rows of pews on the left side (with wheelchair accessibility) and 11 pews on the right side with a total seating capacity for approximately 168 people.
- The church has heat, but does not have air conditioning. There are free standing fans and the church stays relatively cool in the summer months.
- The minister's office may be used for the bridal party to do last minute touch-ups and process from.
- A restroom is located in the parlor, which is handicapped accessible. There are two additional restrooms located downstairs.

**Fees:**

The Minister's fee for a wedding is \$400.00. If a rehearsal is held, the fee is \$425.00. These fees include all premarital planning sessions. The fee is payable at or before the time of the wedding. Please know that the Minister would never refuse to marry a couple due to lack of funds. If the fee is a hardship, please let her know.

**Additional Fees:**

Sanctuary rental fee:

Up to 4 hours \$250.00

Suggested donation for use of the vestry and kitchen for reception:

Up to 4 hours \$250.00

Up to 6 hours \$300.00

Required Sexton fee for all weddings is \$40.00

There is no fee for members of the congregation

**Music:**

- The church has a piano and a basic sound system
- Ruth Leipold is our pianist. If you would like Ruth to play at your wedding, please let the minister know. There is an additional charge for the pianist, which you would need to discuss with Ruth.

### **Flowers and Other Decor:**

- The church does not provide flowers or pew decorations.
- Wax candles may not be used for decoration. You may use fuel cell or flameless battery operated candles. You may use a ceremonial candle, such as a unity candle. It is important to choose a person to care for your candle after the wedding if you have the Unity Ceremony.
- Do not use tape or tacks to fasten pew decorations, or anything that can leave a mark.
- We request that your guests refrain from throwing anything inside the church.

### **Parking**

- The church does not have a parking lot. There is limited free street parking on Lebanon Street in front of the church. Plenty of parking is available at the Midtown Mall (one block southeast). If you need to park closer to the church you may park on Twombly Road; please note, there is no parking in the Sweetster or Salvation Army lots.

### **Introduction**

A wedding is an event for the people who attend, but for you, the people who are marrying one another, it is a process. The wedding ceremony provides you with an opportunity first to tell your story privately – to each other, and to the minister – and then to decide what you want said publicly about your relationship. The ceremony should reflect what you stand for as individuals and as a couple; it should express your goals, expectations, hopes and beliefs. This preparation for marriage is hard work. You might have trouble pleasing all the people involved, so try to define precisely who and what this wedding is for. How might it change your relationship? How do you envision it changing your relationship to parents, siblings or professions? What do you envision your lives being like when you are married? Who will be responsible for what aspects of your household? Do you anticipate children?

Thinking seriously about these questions will make designing your wedding ceremony easier. What do you want the wedding to be like? As you plan for your wedding, take the time to consider the following questions:

- Time and place of the wedding
- Names to be used in the ceremony
- What kind of clothing will participants in the ceremony wear
- Who will be in your wedding party
- What kind of music do you want
- Will there be a rehearsal
- Who are your guests
- Where will the reception be
- Will children be welcome
- Do you need special seating for elderly or handicapped guests
- Do you have a photographer

Any of these issues which you have difficulty resolving may be discussed with the Minister.

It is my intention that your wedding be meaningful to you, and that you have a large role in shaping your ceremony. This booklet will help you choose the components of your wedding. The following pages suggest a structure for the wedding, from Opening Words through Readings and Vows, to a Closing Benediction. Read through the booklet and choose a structure and content that meet your particular needs.

An Order of Service and Readings are provided only as suggestions. Feel free to write your own Vows and use Readings other than those provided there. Also, it is fine to use bits and pieces of things – if you like one line, but not the whole Reading.

You may wish to consult with your family members; sometimes there is one particular event which would “make” the wedding for your family such as wearing a veil or breaking a wine glass.

You will find a worksheet in this booklet, which will help you organize your wedding. You may make notes on the worksheet and return it along with any changes or additions in Readings you wish to make. You may return the entire booklet or the worksheet only, as suits your needs. Feel free to call on me for consultation in creating your wedding. Ordinarily, after you have gone through the booklet and chosen the elements of your wedding, I would like to meet with you again to make sure you know that I know what you want. I then put the ceremony together and review it with you.

A sample wedding ceremony is included at the end of the workbook.

## **Worksheet**

### **Prelude**

### **Processional**

**Opening Words and Welcome** Some opening words are Readings, which would then be followed by another choice of opening words. In those instances, you would choose two from this section.

A \_\_\_\_\_

**Family Recognition** (Optional) Some opening words include recognition.

B \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration of Intent** This is almost a mirror of the vows, except that rather than stating it, you simply answer “yes”. At one time this was a legal requirement to prevent shotgun weddings, but this is no longer true.

C \_\_\_\_\_

**Readings Usually** there are two or three. This is often the place where you might have others participate, with readings or music.

D \_\_\_\_\_

**Homily/Address to the Couple**

E \_\_\_\_\_

**Vows**

F \_\_\_\_\_ or write your own.

**Rings**

G \_\_\_\_\_

**Exchange of Rings**

H \_\_\_\_\_

**Unity Candle/Wine**

I \_\_\_\_\_

**Blessing/Prayer**

J \_\_\_\_\_

**Pronouncement**

K \_\_\_\_\_

**Recessional**

L \_\_\_\_\_

## Opening Words

### A1

Here all seeking is over,  
the lost has been found,  
a mate has been found,  
to share the chills of winter-  
now Love asks  
that you be united.  
Here is a place to rest,  
a place to sleep,  
a place in Heaven.  
Now two are becoming one,  
the black night is scattered,  
the eastern sky grows bright.  
At last the great day has come.

From *Hawaiian Song*, translated by Handy and Pukui

### A2

Man and woman are like the earth that brings forth flowers  
in summer, and love but underneath is rock.  
Older than flowers, older than ferns, older than foraminiferae,  
older than plasma altogether is the soul underneath.

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

From *Fidelity* by D. H. Lawrence

### A3

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life –  
to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each  
other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories.

George Eliot

### A4

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

*The Yueh-Fu*

### A5

Your world began the day you were born.  
It can grow until you die,

if there are to be stars in your sky,  
you must put them there.  
If there are to be gods,  
you must find them.  
If there is to be love,  
you must give it.  
The call of friendship is always the same,  
Come walk with me, and you may have my stars.  
Be my friend, and we will share our worlds.

## A6

Dear friends, we have been called together as witnesses to the happiness which this couple, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have found together, and to the pledge which they will now make each to the other for the common union they will now share. We rejoice with them that out of all the world they have found each other, and that they will henceforth be together creating an enduring bond from the love that has blossomed between them. What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life, to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all the pain of life, to be with each other in silent, unspeakable memories.

Love is a great thing. The love we celebrate today has known time, burdens and troubles, and yet this love has grown and endured and remained as active as life itself. The love we celebrate today must be one which respects the preciousness and worth of a person; one which has mutual commitment and sharing at its center. A love which can give you the courage to guide your lives together into a fuller strength and into greater freedom. Your statement of love today must finally be an expression of faith; faith in God, the source of all love; faith in yourselves, and faith in your future together. Your love is an ever-renewing creation; nurture it with care and respect. May you ever find meaning and joy in this high adventure of life long loving and learning together.

## A7

Dear friends, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have asked that you, family and friends who have been an important part of their lives, join in rejoicing in their love for each other. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have grown up far from each other, met by chance, and in meeting saw in the other a flicker of themselves. This flicker proved greater than any distance or difficulty and brought them together as you see them now. Their interest in each other has grown into love, a love which they have sought in a spirit of truth and honesty to themselves and to each other.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have told me that their love has given them an understanding of each other, an understanding that each is a complete person, that each has his and her own needs and wants, and own way of doing things. Yet, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have shared joys and laughter, likes and dislikes, frustrations and inspirations, proximity and distance. And it is because of this understanding and ability to share, graced by a deep love for each other, that they wish to continue their relationship and this day proclaim it to you.

## A8

Dear friends, we are gathered this day to join together this man and this woman in marriage, a commitment which embodies all of 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 humankind's highest achievement and life's most precious gift. In this estate, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come now to join themselves.

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 marriage. It is one of life's finest experiences when a casual relationship grows into a permanent bond of love. It is fitting and appropriate that you, the families and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ be here to witness and to participate in their wedding; for the ideals, the understanding and the friendship and guidance you have given them. Marriage makes us aware of the changes wrought by time, but the new relationship will continue to draw much of its beauty and meaning from the intimate associations of the past.

### **A9**

Welcome to the circle of love, to this quiet place where we have come to celebrate the marriage of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. The love that has grown between these two has its roots here, in this gathering of family and friends who now share this day as they have shared so much before: understanding, ideals, friendship, guidance, the very gift of life itself. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, we hope your love grows strong and sturdy as a maple tree, able to bend in the wind, sprouting branches of shade and shelter, casting off brilliant leaves of shared joy. This ceremony today marks your decision to grow together, to create one life from two, but the gift of this love is not yours alone. It belongs to the entire circle of those who have provided rich, nourishing soil and helped you to develop strong and stable roots. Look to this gathering of family and friends, look beyond them to the permanent, natural cycles of life and death, and encourage your love to take hold so that you may become part of that sacred cycle, returning life and restoring love. Respect and tend carefully all that each of you brings to this marriage, and your love will blossom with new and beautiful growth. Planting and harvesting together, you may nurture life more fully than either of you could alone. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, we celebrate this marriage knowing that the greatest gift in life is the ability to give and receive love. In the ritual of this moment, we seek the blessing of all that is sacred and holy, and pray that this marriage will be a source of joy and peace to you; to those who have nurtured you and let you go; and to all those whose lives may be entwined with yours. We hope that the love between you will always flow freely and fully, so that it spills over into a love for all life on this good earth.

### **A10**

If life has meaning to us at all, it possesses it because of love. It is that which enshrines and ennobles our human experience. It is the basis for the peace of family and the peace of the people of the earth. The greatest gift bestowed upon humans is the gift not of demanding but of giving love.

We are gathered here to join \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. It is fitting and appropriate that you, the families and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ be here to witness and to participate in their wedding, for the ideals, the understanding, and the mutual respect, which they bring to their marriage, have their roots in the love, friendship, and guidance you have given them.

### **A11**

Throughout the memory of humanity, the founding of a new home has been noted as an act of a high and holy order. It has been celebrated with a service of marriage - in sacred

grove, in humble meetinghouses, under vaulted arches, in temples with ancient rites. Yet a genuine joining in love is not created by church, state, or family relations, or by tradition, ceremony or expectation. True marriage comes only through love given freely and fully.

It is in your power, therefore, and your power alone, to bless this service. May you live this blessing by the sincerity of your purpose, the strength of your common devotion, and the enduring character of your dedication.

### **A12**

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here to unite these two in marriage, which is an institution founded in nature, guarded by the state, solemnized by the church, and made honorable by the faithful keeping of good men and women in all ages; a source of joy to those who enter into it and of great good for our common life. Solemn words and symbolic acts are but the outward sign of what is here meant; for a true marriage is a union of lives, established in respect, love, and devotion; a dedication of each to the other, and of both to the wider community of which their lives are part.

It is appropriate that you, the families and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ be here to participate in their wedding. The ideals, the understanding and the mutual respect which they bring to their marriage, have their roots in the love, friendship, and guidance with which you have provided them.

### **A13**

We have come here to join these two people in marriage. Society has encouraged and protected the institution of marriage through the sanction of its laws, but the relationship of marriage is more fundamental than any law. For marriage is the willing acceptance by two people 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. Each of us is brought into the world without any decision of our own; each 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 our partner with all the defects revealed, but beyond this we shall be faced with the anguish of having to accept our own weaknesses. In the eyes of our partner we shall see our own 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. And yet we are loved.

Marriage also offers us the condition for the supreme fulfillment of human life, for our acceptance of our spouse with all the strengths and weaknesses, our works of love for others, 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 the glory of existence.

### **A14**

We have come here together that these people might bear witness before you and to the world of the oneness that has grown up between them; that they might affirm this oneness and this dedication here, as they have affirmed it to each other. As they now exist in their

own eyes, so may they exist in your eyes. The mysterious union of two persons in marriage has already occurred in them in the giving and receiving of their love. In witness to this mystery, they do pledge their love and the sharing of their lives.

### **A15**

“Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to stay away from following thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge.”

*The Book of Ruth, Hebrew Bible*

Today \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen to unite themselves in marriage. And we are gathered here to witness the ceremony, rooted deep in the antiquity of humankind. This ceremony does not create a new relationship. It is an occasion at which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ reaffirm the love and respect that they have for each other, and declare their commitment to strengthen their relationship and develop it further. We who are here today rejoice with them and for them in the life they now undertake together.

Marriage is a supreme sharing of experience and an adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyous uniting of a man and a woman whose sharing and mutual understanding have flowered into love and respect. It is in this spirit and for this purpose that you have come hither to be joined together.

### **A16**

Now in the splendor of this place -- we come to celebrate your wedding. Now in the quiet of this hour -- we come to share your joy.

Now in the ritual of this moment -- we come to salute your future. Welcome to this circle of love's celebration.

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.

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 all 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.

We are assembled here today because love gathers us, and, especially, because love has found \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and woven them together into the great web of life.

We are gathered to remember and rejoice, to recount with one another that it is love, always love, that leads us to our true destination and to celebrate that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have finally arrived.

We have come together also to honor the paradox that the choosing of one is the leaving of all others, the destination is the beginning, that the joy shall bring tears to our eyes.

We are here to celebrate the marriage of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, to honor the beginning of their new life.

## **Family Recognition**

### **B1**

Members of both families are present to support \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in their decision to be married. As a symbol of the love and encouragement they feel, who accompanies these two on this day?

(WE DO)

### **B2**

The parents of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are present this day, and by their presence they signify that they too, rejoice in this relationship and welcome a new member into their family.

### **B3**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have spoken their wish. Will you, their families and friends, pledge them your love and acceptance, and do your utmost to uphold this marriage?

(Congregation responds "We will")

### **B4 (When there are children)**

The ties that are made here today are much more than those made between two individuals. Both families share in this marriage, and their lives are deeply affected by this union. These families are also a part of the process of being together, which is publicly affirmed this day and they have much to contribute to it. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ feel especially fortunate to have their families here today, and are grateful for their love and support. They are grateful for the love, patience and support that have flowed from them all. They realize the importance of family strength and solidarity in facing all the joys and sorrows of their life together. There are also children who will share in this marriage.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are here to publicly express their love for one another, but they also want to acknowledge how important these children are in their lives, and how much they love them as well. We pray that this newly created family will weave together a fabric of mutual love, understanding and help in the days and years ahead.

## **Declaration Of Intent**

### **C1**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have esteemed and loved each other, both when it has been easy and when it has been hard. Therefore, it is fitting that they should now express to us what has been expressed already between them.

\_\_\_\_\_, do you wish for this man to become your husband/partner?

(I do)

\_\_\_\_\_, do you wish for this woman to become your wife/partner? (I do)

### **C2**

\_\_\_\_\_, will you pledge to take \_\_\_\_\_ as your wedded husband/partner? To stand by his side through whatever life may bring, to share your life openly with him, to speak the truth to him in love, to be his strongest supporter, to honor and tenderly care for him, to feel his joy and sorrow as your own? As his wife, will you place him above all others? (I will)

\_\_\_\_\_, will you pledge to take \_\_\_\_\_ as your wedded wife/partner? To stand by her side through whatever life may bring, to share your life openly with her, to speak the truth to her in love, to be her strongest supporter, to honor and tenderly care for her, to feel her joy and sorrow as your own? As her husband, will you place her above all others? (I will)

### **C3**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have chosen each other as partners in your life together. I ask you together, are you ready to pledge your mutual love, respect and fidelity, and be joined together in marriage? (We are)

## **Readings**

### **D1 I Corinthians 13:1-13**

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect, and our prophecy is imperfect, but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

### **D2 From *Poetry and Marriage* by Wendell Barry**

The meaning of marriage begins in the giving of words. We cannot join ourselves to one another without giving our word. And this must be an unconditional giving, for in joining ourselves to one another we join ourselves to the unknown. We must not be misled by the procedures of experimental thought: in life, in the world, we are never given two known results to choose between, but only one result that we choose without knowing what it is.

Marriage rests upon the immutable givens that compose it: words, bodies, characters, histories, places. Some wishes cannot succeed; some victories cannot be won; some loneliness is incorrigible. But there is relief and freedom in knowing what is real; these givens come to us out of the perennial reality of the world, like the terrain we live on. One does not care for this ground to make it a different place, or to make it perfect, but to make it inhabitable and to make it better. To flee from its realities is only to arrive at them unprepared.

Because the condition of marriage is worldly 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 to 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 a way.

### **D3 From Theodore Parker**

It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even of the most loving and well assorted. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. Young persons think love belongs only to the brown haired and crimson cheeked. So it does for its beginning. But the golden marriage is a part of love, which the bridal day knows nothing of. A perfect and complete marriage, where wedlock is everything you could ask and the ideal of marriage becomes actual, is not common, perhaps as rare as perfect personal beauty. We humans are married fractionally, now a small fraction, then a large fraction. Very few are married totally, and then only after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment. Such a large and sweet fruit is a complete marriage that it needs a long summer to ripen in, and then a long winter to mellow and season in. But a real, happy marriage of love and judgment between noble men and women is one of the things so very handsome that if the sun were, as the Greek poets fabled, a god, he might stop the world and hold it still now and then, in order to look all day long on some example thereof, and feast his eyes on such a spectacle.

### **D4 From *The Divine Comedy* by Dante**

“The love of God, unutterable and perfect, flows into a pure soul the way that light rushes into a transparent object. The more love that it finds, the more it gives itself; so that, as we grow clear and open, the more complete the joy of loving is. And the more souls who resonate together, the greater the intensity of their love, for, mirror-like, each soul reflects the others.”

### **D5 A Marriage Credo**

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In the art of marriage the little things are the big things...

*It is never being too old to hold hands.*

It is remembering to say “I love you” at least once each day.

*It is never going to sleep angry.*

It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship shouldn't end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.

*It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives; it is standing together facing the world.*

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

*It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.*

It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.

*It is not expecting a partner to wear a halo or to have the wings of an angel. It is not looking for perfection in each other. It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.*

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

*It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.*

It is finding room for things of the spirit. It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

*It is establishing a relationship in which “the independence is equal, the dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.”*

It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.

*It is discovering that marriage at its best is described in the words Mark Twain used in a tribute to his wife: "Wherever she was, there was Eden."*

**D6 Sonnet 116 by William Shakespeare**

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
Oh no! It is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error, and upon me prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

**D7 Unlimited Friendliness by the Buddha**

This is what should be done by the man and woman who are wise, who seek the good, and who know the meaning of the place of peace. Let them be fervent, upright and sincere, without conceit of self, easily contented and joyous, free of cares; let them not be submerged by the things of the world; let them not take upon themselves the burden of worldly goods; let their senses be controlled; let them be wise but not puffed up, and let them not desire great possessions even for their families. Let them do nothing that is mean or that the wise would reprove. May all beings be happy and at their ease. May they be joyous and live in safety. All beings, whether weak or strong – omitting none- in high, middle or low realms of existence, small or great, visible or invisible, near or far away, born or to be born, may all beings be happy and at their ease. Let none deceive another, or despise any being in any state. Let none by anger or ill will wish harm to another. Even as a mother watches over and protects her only child, so with a boundless mind should one cherish all living beings, radiating friendliness over the entire world, above, below and all around without limit. So let them cultivate a boundless good will toward the entire world, unlimited, free from ill will or enmity. Standing or walking, sitting or lying down, during all their waking hours, let them establish this mindfulness of good will, which is the higher state.

**D8 Walt Whitman Song of the Open Road**

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 called riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve.  
However sweet the laid up stores,  
However convenient the dwelling, you shall not remain there.  
However sheltered the port, and however calm the water,  
You shall not anchor there.  
However welcome the hospitality that welcomes you,  
You are permitted to receive it but a little while.

Afoot and light-hearted, take to the open road.  
Healthy, free, the world before you.  
The long brown path before you.  
Leading wherever you choose.  
Say only to one another  
Camarado, 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 you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

**D9 Love Song by Rainer Maria Rilke**

How can I hinder or restrain my soul  
So that it does not yearn for yours? And how  
Can it be lured to life apart from you?  
Gladly would I (had I complete control)  
Transport it, a dark secret thing, to new  
And untried depths of silence. But I know  
How everything that stirs me, stirs you too:  
How you and I are like a bow that's bound,  
Though with two strings, to give a single sound.  
Upon what instrument have we been spanned?  
And what strange player plays us, heart and hand?  
O long, sweet song!

**D10 Kahlil Gibran, *The Prophet***

Then Almitra spoke again and said, "And what of marriage, Master?"  
And he answered saying:  
"You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.  
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.  
But let there be spaces in our togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.  
Love one another but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.  
Sing 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."

**D11 by Anne Morrow Lindbergh from *A Gift From the Sea***

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 endless

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.

### **D12**

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 – the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity- in freedom, in the sense that dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern. The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding or expecting, not in hoping even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what was in nostalgia, nor forward to what might be in dread anticipation, but living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. For relationships, too, must be like islands. One must accept them for what they are here and now within their limits – islands, surrounded and interrupted by the seas, continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of ebb and flow, of intermittency.

### **D13**

And the blessed one, the Buddha, spoke these words of truth: “The greatest happiness which a mortal being can imagine is the bond of marriage that ties together two loving hearts. But there is greater happiness still: It is the embrace of truth. Death will separate husband and wife, but death will never affect one who has espoused the truth.”

### **D14**

*All I Need to Know about Life I Learned From My Dog*

Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joy ride.

Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.

When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.

Run, romp, and play daily.

Be loyal.

Never pretend to be something you're not.

Eat with gusto and enthusiasm.

If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it.

When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

Thrive on affection and let people touch you - enjoy back rubs and pats on your neck.

When you leave your yard, make it an adventure.

Avoid biting when a simple growl will do.

No matter how often you're scolded, don't pout - run right back and make friends.

Bond with your pack.

On cold nights, curl up in front of a crackling fire.

When you're excited, speak up.

When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body.

Delight in the simple joy of a long walk.

If you stare at someone long enough, eventually you'll get what you want.

Don't go out without ID.

Leave room in your schedule for a good nap.  
Always give people a friendly greeting.  
If it's not wet and sloppy, it's not a real kiss.

(Unknown)

## **Homily/Address to the Couple**

### **E1**

Your task is to talk, to listen, and to grow: To talk because one must share and offer the self to the other; To listen, because what the other has to say matters deeply; And together, you will grow. May you grow in dignity, each following along the paths you must follow, each becoming all you are capable of becoming, each giving the other supporting love. May you grow in love. This is the crown of marriage, to grow in the love of life, the love of growth, and the love of becoming. This love gives the courage to trust, the freedom to choose each other, and the strength to endure through disappointment and sorrow. By walking together in dignity and in love, you have made a marriage.

### **E2**

Marriage is a great pledge of faith, expressed through love. It is this love, which will allow you to build your lives and find happiness in the years ahead. We rejoice with you that you have found each other, and that you will henceforth find the deeper meaning and richness of human life in sharing it with each other. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, this is a most solemn pledge which you are about to undertake. No other human ties are more tender, no vows more sacred than these which you now assume. Now from joys and sorrows shared, you shall grow in love and loyalty. From any pain given and forgiven, you shall grow in mutual understanding. What the church now celebrates, and the state makes legal, these two shall henceforth make real.

### **E3**

The essence of the marriage commitment is the taking of another person in his or her entirety. The solemn words and symbolic acts which we witness this day are outward signs of a deep spiritual union. This is only made possible by a joining of lives established in love and devotion, commitment and dedication. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ask God to bless their coming together and to sustain them through the years. They ask us to be present with them, to rejoice in their oneness, and to share in their joy. We give thanks for their coming together as one, and we pray that their relationship will be sustained in all the years to come.

### **E4**

Marriage symbolizes the ultimate intimacy between two people; yet this closeness should not diminish but strengthen the individuality of each partner. A marriage that lasts is always one that has a little more to grow. The poet Ranier Maria Rilke said "A good marriage is that in which each appoints the other guardian of his or her solitude ... Love consists in this: That two solitudes protect and touch and greet each other ... 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 which makes it possible for each to see the other whole against the sky.

Therefore be married to the truth and live with the truth in holy wedlock. The husband who loves his wife and desires for a union that shall be everlasting must be faithful to her so as to be like truth itself, and she will rely upon him and revere him and minister unto him. And the wife who loves her husband and desires a union that shall be everlasting must be faithful to him so as to be like truth itself; and he will love her and revere her and minister unto her.

But when Mara, the destroyer, comes to separate the visible forms of your being, you will continue to live in the truth and partake of life everlasting, for the truth is immortal.”

### **E5**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, may you know great love together, and may you live in the desire to attain that best which each may win more richly because of the other. May you strengthen one another in all sorrow, share with one another in all gladness, and be companions to each other in times of the silent and unspoken. May your home help to make the world more secure; and should you be lost in a maze of circumstance, may there be for you both a way back to the tenderness and beauty of a life together. Wherever you may be placed by changing fortune, may you be united not in word or outward form alone, but by the presence in your hearts of a deepening love. May the benedictions that rest on those who truly love rest on you, and fill you with love’s grace, both now and always.

By J. Donald Johnston

### **E6**

When two people meet, so do two private worlds. None of our private worlds is big enough for us to live a wholesome life in. 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 wandering through the nighttime, until we draw together and find the 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? We belong together. Love is what we need. To love and 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. By A Powell Davies

### **E7**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, remember, then, that this ceremony is an act of faith in each other. Your faith must not be vain of hope in what the other will do or will not do; might become or might not become. Yours must be the deeper faith that each of you will be acceptable in the other’s eyes, whatever turns your lives may take.

Such faith requires that you believe in yourselves, and that you be honest with yourself as well as attending to the needs of each other. The years will bring many changes, and this marriage covenant will endure only as you remember that your pledge to each is devotion in freedom.

### **E8**

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, on 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 formulas that made for a happy marriage. But now, instead of looking at formulas... 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, sustaining, a source of sustenance to each other's continuous growth.

I have come to believe that dumb luck has as much to do with a 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 was said succinctly by E. E. Cummings in the line, "Be of love a little more careful than anything."

By Ralph Stutzman

## **Vows**

### **F1**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you \_\_\_\_\_, to be no other than yourself. Loving what I know of you, trusting what I don't 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, I accept you as my partner/wife/husband.

### **F2**

\_\_\_\_\_, I promise to express my love for you, in all ways possible, to share in your pleasure and in your pain, and to let you share in mine. I promise to help you and to comfort you, to trust you, and to deserve your trust. I promise that with my heart, and with my mind, and with my body. I will honor and cherish you, all the days of my life, as if each day, were the first day of our love.

### **F3**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband/wife/partner, in equal love, as a mirror of my true self, as a partner on my path, to honor and to cherish, in sorrow and in joy, till death do us part.

### **F4**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you \_\_\_\_\_, as my wife/partner/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, I pledge to share my life openly with you, to speak the truth to you in love, I promise to honor and tenderly care for you, to cherish and encourage your own fulfillment, through all the changes of our lives.

**F5**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you to be my wedded wife/husband/partner, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part. With my whole heart, and my complete devotion, I pledge my love.

**F6**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you \_\_\_\_\_ to be the wife/husband/partner of my days; to be the 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.

I,

Choose you,

In the presence of this community,

To be my husband, { wife },

From this time forward.

To love you,

To be a comfort and safe haven in your life,

To hold you close,

To listen deeply when you are sad or angry,

To learn compassion with you,

To nourish you with my gentleness, to uphold you with my strength,

To love your body as it ages,

To weigh the effects of the words I speak and of the things I do,

To never take you for granted, but always give thanks for your presence.

As our lives unfold together,

I promise to be faithful,

To always express my emotional truth and embrace you as both teacher and student as we do what life calls us to,

Individually and in relationship.

Darling, I ask you to receive this ring as a symbol of my love and as a constant reminder that I have chosen you above all others to be the one to share my life.

**Rings****G1**

The circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of holiness and of perfection and of peace. In these rings it is the symbol of unity. Your two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return unto one another.

**G2**

Seal these promises now with a ring, sign and token of the life you enter together. This ring symbolizes your unity, the oneness you share, your togetherness that you may always return to.

**G3**

Rings are an ancient symbol, blessed and simple. Round like the sun, like the eye, like arms that embrace. Circles, for love that is given comes back round again and again. Therefore, may these symbols remind you that your love, like the sun, illumines; that your love, like the eye, must see clearly; and that your love, like arms that embrace, is a grace upon this world.

#### **G4**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, with hearts already joined in friendship, and with minds intent on love and the growth of affection, offer each other the outward signs of your inward and powerful commitment.

#### **G5**

May your rings always be the symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no giver and no receiver. You are each the giver and each the receiver. May your rings always call to mind the freedom and power of this love.

### **Exchange of Rings**

#### **H1**

With this ring, I thee wed,  
and with it I pledge, my honor,  
my love, and my life.

#### **H2**

I give this ring as a symbol of my love, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you in the name of God.

#### **H3**

I give this ring as a symbol of my love and faithfulness to you.

#### **H4**

I give you this ring, as a symbol of our love and unity.

#### **H5**

\_\_\_\_\_, you are my beloved and my friend. Wear this ring as a sign of my love for you.

### **The Exchanging of the Rings**

As a sign of my love  
and that I am choosing  
to share my whole life's journey  
with you, and of my knowing that in marrying  
you I shall become much more than I am,  
I give you this ring, with the pledge  
that with you, I shall become most truly myself  
and offer such gifts as I have  
and I am to the world.

## **Unity Candle or Wine Ceremony**

Some Christian and Jewish traditions use wine in wedding services. It may be shared by the bride and groom alone, or with all the assembled guests. In Jewish tradition, the bride or groom may break the glass after the wine has been drunk.

Unity candles have also been used in wedding services as a symbolic expression of two lives becoming one. We have used the candle with second marriages as a way of including children in the ceremony and demonstrating the creation of one family.

### **I1**

The years of our lives are a cup of wine poured out for us to drink. The grapes when they are pressed give forth good juices for the wine. Under the wine press of time, our lives give forth their labor, honor, and love.

### **I2**

As you will share from this cup, so may you draw contentment, comfort, and felicity from the cup of life. May you find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and all things hallowed by true companionship and love.

### **I3**

Throughout the ages of humanity, wine has been used for celebration. At many times and among many peoples, wine has signified life, and a life of plenty. At many times and among many peoples, drinking wine from a common cup has been the mark of a deeper sharing. May you be blessed by life, and a life of plenty. May this cup of wine be a symbol of your lifelong communion of spirit, mind and being.

### **I4**

Through their marriage, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ believe that they are entering a larger community, that their marriage will affect you as much as it affects them. Drink with them, just as they drink with you.

Lighting of the Two Candles by Parents (A larger candle and two smaller ones, tapered candles, are placed on a table or on other appropriate place. The tapered candles represent the two individuals, the bride and the groom, while the large candle represents the new relationship, the marriage. If the couple wishes to do the Unity Candle ritual later in the ceremony, I recommend that the two individual candles be lit by their parents at this point. If either bride or groom have child(ren), they can have their own, individual candles as well. When that is the case, I invite the children to join their grandparents in this lighting ritual.)

And now I invite the parents (or mothers or other relative) of \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ to please come forward. \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ in his book *The Prophet*, Kahlil Gibran wrote for parents these words: "Your children are not your children; they are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself... You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. The Archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and ... bends you with His might that [these] arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness; For even as He loves the arrows that fly, so He loves also the bows that are stable."

\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as you brought forth your children in love and hope; as you gave warmth to their lives and light to their paths, I invite you now to also bring forth the living flame of these two candles, each one symbolizing the individual lives of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(If children are involved, I add these words :) And now I invite \_\_\_\_\_'s daughter/son \_\_\_\_\_ (or children \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_) to join her/his (their) grandparents around the candles.

As two separate candles have been lit to symbolize the lives of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, so, too, do I now invite each of you to bring forth the living flame of your very own candle from that of your father's to symbolize your individual lives. The flame of each of these four candles, reminds us that you are each unique individuals, too, and how very important you are to both your \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

And later in the wedding ceremony, this is what happens:

### The Unity Candle

I call your attention now to the candles on this table. The two candles lit earlier by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_'s parents (or mothers) serve to remind us that two unique individuals stand before us, yet we know that living in a committed relationship changes us. The unity candle, which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will now light, reminds us that a life shared by them is called into existence this day. Together, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are more than they are separately. We are reminded that within this new family, they do not cease to be individuals. For this reason, the separate candles remain lit.

### Lighting of the unity candle

Select: 1. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, remember, you do not light a candle to hide it, but to proudly light your entire home. Let the love you have for each other be freely known and generously shared. or, 2. 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.

### The Unity Candle

### **Blessing/Prayer**

#### **J1**

In this place today, two people have pledged themselves to each other in marriage, as those before them have done throughout the ages. Yet theirs is a new beginning, the foundation of a new home. Upon them we invoke all blessings with our spoken words and in our hearts. May understanding love guide their days and years, in times of heartbreak and sorrow, may they support and uphold each other, in times of happiness and rejoicing, may they especially appreciate the great blessings of life. May the eternal spirit of love, which guides us all, be with them always. Amen.

**J2**

We cannot know what the future may 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 that test as well as achievements that lift, marked by a sense 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 families, those present today, and those unable to be present, continue to rejoice in the love that has united them.

**J3**

We pray for concord and creativity as well as for love and laughter in the life together of these two; and when there is pain, may there be peace that passes not away. We pray for joy that they will share with other people; and for their home: may it be a temple for that which is beautiful and good and true. As they share the richer experiences of life, so may their minds and heart and souls be knit ever more closely together. And yet may their bonds of sympathy strengthen their separate personalities. We pray for courage for them when fortune favors them. May they carry the past gratefully with them in all the years of their sojourn, and with an equal measure of hope, ever face the future unafraid.

By Dana McLean Greeley

**J4 Navajo Indian**

Rising Sun! When you shall shine,  
Make this house happy,  
Beautify it with your beams;  
Make this house happy.

God of Dawn! Your white blessings spread;  
Make this house happy.  
Guard the doorway from all evil;  
Make this house happy.

White corn! Abide herein;  
Make this house happy.  
Soft wealth! May this hut cover much;  
Make this house happy.

Heavy rain! Your virtues send;  
Make this house happy.  
Corn Pollen! Bestow content;  
Make this house happy.

May peace around this family dwell;  
Make this house happy.

**J5**

May these two people keep this covenant, which they have made. May they be a blessing and a comfort to each other; sharers of each other's joys, consolers in each

other's sorrows, helpers to each other in all the trials of life. May they encourage each other in whatever they set out to achieve, and continue to love one another in all the years ahead. Amen.

### **J6 Native American**

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

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

Now there is no loneliness for you.

Now you are two people, 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.

### **Pronouncement**

#### **K1**

For as much as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have consented together in marriage, declaring their love for each other, they are now husband and wife/partners. May their days be long upon the earth, and may they dwell in love and joy together.

#### **K2**

For as much as you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have consented together in this sacred covenant, and have declared the same before God and this gathering, we now recognize you as husband and wife/married (kiss).

#### **K3**

Inasmuch as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have grown in knowledge and love of one another, because they have agreed in their desire to continue in life together, seeking an ever richer, deepening relationship, and because they have pledged themselves to meet sorrow and joy as one family, we rejoice to recognize them as husband and wife.

#### **K4**

This marriage is an event in the lifetime of a love. Neither all society nor I can join these two lovers today. Only they could do what they have chosen. They have joined themselves, each to the other. As they have found union with one another, they proclaim that union and pledge its future. We by our participation in this celebration do but recognize and honor their intention to dwell together as one family.

#### **K5**

Not from pride, but from humility as mortals, with human weaknesses and strengths, you stand-alone today and promise faith. Your faith you find as you live, each moment consecrated to a search for truth and for that good whose presence you have deeply felt. Now, from this time until that time when you must rejoin the earth from which you came, love the love in you that underlies your actions. And with each other, share your wonder at the beauty that you find as husband and wife. (Partners)