



LOVE WEDDINGS

Required Elements in a Wedding Ceremony

The Marriage Act of Ontario requires that certain formalities be observed between the parties, as marriage is a legal agreement enacted during a wedding ceremony, whether the couple is getting married in their backyard for a small ceremony, or in a banquet hall for a large one. Wedding ceremonies may be informal or formal, simple or elaborate, but the following parts must be included if the couple wants their marriage to be legal in Ontario.

1. Officiant Introduction

The Officiant introduces self by name, as a licensed representative of the government, and announces the reason for assembling together for the wedding of the couple getting married.

2. Affirmations of Intent to Marry

The Officiant asks the partners if they are there willingly, that they know of no legal impediment to being married, and that they are ready to enter into a legal marriage at this time with each other. Partners must publicly affirm their willingness to be married and their acceptance of their partner as their spouse.

3. Declaration of Marriage

The Officiant publicly states that a contract has been entered into by these two people and that and by the power vested in them by either the Province of Ontario, or the Registrar General, the couple is officially declared married.

4. Signing of the Documents

The Officiant, the couple and their two witnesses, must sign these official marriage documents as follows: • MARRIAGE LICENCE (obtained by the couple from any Ontario city hall in order to get married) • MARRIAGE REGISTER (the book the Officiant brings to record every marriage solemnized) • RECORD OF SOLEMNIZATION (the portion of the licence that the couple keeps after marriage)

Optional Elements in a Wedding Ceremony

The exchange of wedding rings and the inclusion of music, poems, candles, flowers, readings, and other rituals, although traditional, are in fact, optional.

You may write and read your own vows—either in print format or after being read by the Officiant, or just say “I Do” after being read by the Officiant.

At any point during the ceremony, you may address the assembled guest themselves, or ask a friend or family member to offer readings, sing or play music, or make any another meaningful contribution.

The tone can be formal, informal, humorous, romantic, family-oriented, or anything you wish, as long as the required elements are included.

I have included samples of introductions, vows, rituals, readings and other ideas, to assist you in choosing optional elements to personalize each ceremony and making each unique to you.

Officiant Introduction (required)

Here are examples of introductions that can be stated by the Officiant. Feel free to use any of these introductions, or write your own, or mix and match them.

Introduction 1

Good afternoon, we are here for the wedding ceremony for _____ and _____. My name is _____ and I am a Marriage Officiant certified with Humanist Canada and licensed by the Province of Ontario to legally solemnize marriages. “Humanism is... .. an ethical and secular philosophy based on reason, equality and freedom.” ... an ethical, secular life stance based on rational thought, a strong moral sense, compassion, fairness and respect for all.” ... any other statement about humanism...

Introduction 2

Good afternoon, we are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the marriage of _____ and _____. My name is _____ and I am a licensed Officiant, certified by the Province of Ontario and Humanist Canada to solemnize marriages. Humanism is... (insert statement here)

Introduction 3

Today is the day chosen by _____ and _____ to tie the proverbial knot and to celebrate the blending of their two lives. _____ and _____ (names of partners) no one but you can truly marry you. No matter the words spoken or papers signed, it is your

commitment to honour and protect one another above your own interests. It is your commitment to treat each other with the highest regard, to foster each other's dreams, and to unconditionally love each other, that will strengthen your marriage. Yours is a partnership freely chosen and founded on love, friendship, trust and respect. My name is _____ and I am a Humanist Officiant, licensed by the Province of Ontario and certified by Humanist Canada to solemnize marriages.

Introduction 4

Today will always be a special day for _____ and _____ as today is the day they choose to tie the proverbial knot. Of course, in many respects, tomorrow will seem no different as they have treated and honoured each other as _____ (husband and wife, life partners, married partners, etc.) for the last _____ (number) of years already and that is what true marriage is all about. Marriage is a relationship that embodies the warm and precious values that grow out of human companionship and love. We enter it joyfully and in the knowledge that love is both our highest achievement and life's most precious gift. Into this relationship with deep commitment and high expectations, _____ and _____ now officially pledge themselves to one another. 2019 Humanist Canada Officiant Training Manual 9

Introduction 5

_____ and _____ have decided to seal their relationship with this wedding ceremony. On their behalf I welcome you today. They see this commitment as a serious occasion and they approach it with a sense of reverence, but also with hope and happiness. Real love between two people is perhaps the highest experience that is possible for humankind. Such love reduces selfishness, strengthens character, but above all: gives life new purpose and meaning. My name is _____ and I am a Humanist Officiant, licensed by the Province of Ontario and Humanist Canada to solemnize marriages. Humanism is... (insert statement here)

Introduction 6

We are here today to see _____ and _____ joined in marriage. The experience of their love touches all of us and it is fitting that we should celebrate their happiness. Marriage means the greatest possible intimacy between two people. This closeness, however, should not diminish each partner, but stimulate and encourage the other to grow as an individual. A responsibility of each partner is to support the other in developing their own talents and skills in their own way. It is from the balance of individuality and union that love sustains. _____ and _____ know that a relationship of real love should never be taken for granted and can only survive and grow when both partners openly communicate and treat each other as equals. It is in this spirit that they now stand before us. My name is _____ and I am a licensed Humanist Officiant, certified by the Province of Ontario to solemnize marriages.

Introduction 7

Marriage means companionship, help, consideration, and love, with which two people ought to have for one another. Within this framework of commitment and loyalty, marriage enables the establishment of a home where, through caring, patience, and courage, the love and affection of two people may develop into a deep and lasting relationship. What _____ and _____ mean to each other is obvious: Their commitment to each other has developed over time and their choices are responsible, free, independent and happy. Of all the people they know, they have chosen each other to journey through life together.

Introduction 8 (for vow renewal)

Friends, family, we are here today with _____ and _____, not to witness the beginning of what will be, but rather to celebrate what already is. In so doing, we are participating in the celebration of a love that they have nurtured for the past ____ years (number of years together). Optional addition to any introduction Feel free to take photographs during this ceremony, as these pictures will be the fond memories that will remind _____ and _____ (names of partners) of their wedding day.

Opening Words

Opening words are optional, but are often used to set the tone for the rest of the ceremony. These are usually read by the Officiant, however, a friend, or relative may do so. Poems, quotes, or book excerpts are often chosen as opening words.

Opening 1

"Friendship" by Judy Bielicki "It is often said that it is love that makes the world go round. However, without doubt, it is friendship that keeps our spinning existence on an even keel. True friendship provides so many of the essentials for a happy life-it is the foundation on which to build an enduring relationship, it is the mortar which bonds us together in harmony, and it is the calm, warm protection we sometimes need when the world outside seems cold and chaotic. True friendship holds a mirror to our foibles and failings, without destroying our sense of worthiness. True friendship nurtures our hopes, supports us in our disappointments, and encourages us to grow to our best potential. _____ and _____ came together as friends. Today, they pledge to each other not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly, the fun of true friendship." Today, they pledge to each other not only their love, but also the strength, warmth and, most importantly, the fun of true friendship.

Opening 2

The miracle of love is like the miracle of a flower—it thrives upon the sunshine of a smile and it entwines itself around the heart. Its roots are secured in the memories of yesterday and its petals breathe the promise of joy-filled tomorrows. To be loved is to know happiness and contentment. To give love is to know the joy of sharing oneself. It is through the miracle of love that we discover the fullness of life.

Opening 3

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to face together all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent memories?

Opening 4

Marriage is the joining of two people—the union of two hearts. It lives on the love you give each other and never grows old, but thrives on the joy of each new day. Marriage is love. May you always feel excitement in your hearts with the wonder of this special day. May you always be able to talk things over, to confide in each other, to laugh with each other, to enjoy life together, and to share moments of quiet and peace when the day is done. May you enjoy a lifetime of happiness... because... according to Dr Seuss: "You know when you are in love, when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams

Opening 5

It is one of life's richest surprises when the accidental meeting of two life paths lead them to the common path of marriage, and it is one of life's finest experiences when a relationship grows into permanent bond of love. This meeting and its growth bring us together today.

Opening 6

What greater thing is there for two human beings than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to face together all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness and memories? To be loved is to know happiness and contentment. To give love is to know the joy of sharing oneself. It is through the miracle of love that we discover the fullness of life. Marriage joins two people together who trust the love they have found. It is a partnership, in which each can grow and be their true selves, while sharing in the development of each other. It is a statement to all those around them of what the two of them know; namely, that they have found such love, friendship and support that they wish to share the rest of their lives. This marriage ceremony provides _____ and _____ the opportunity to reaffirm and celebrate their true marriage, which for them, already dwells within.

Opening 7

Today you have chosen to be joined in marriage. We are here, not only to witness your commitment to each other, but to also wish you every happiness in your life together. Within its framework of commitment and loyalty, marriage enables the establishment of a home, where through trust, patience, respect, and the love and affection you have for each other, may develop into a deep and lasting relationship. We hope that despite the stresses inevitable in any life, your love and respect for each other, your trust and understanding of each other, will increase your contentment and heighten your joy in living.

Opening 8

In the quiet of this special moment, we pause so we may fully appreciate all of the rich experiences of life that have brought _____ and _____ to this point in their lives. We are especially grateful for the values they have acquired by the example set by those who loved, nurtured and pointed them along life's way. We are grateful today that within them is the dream of a great love and the resources to use that love in creating a home that shall endure. We are thankful for these values they have found by their own strivings. In addition, as they make their vows to each other, may they make them with true insight into their meaning and sincerity. May this be the beginning of a relationship that grows deeper with each passing year.

Opening 9 (for couples from different cultures)

_____ and _____, although you come from two different traditions, complement each other because your aims are the same: kindness, respect, and a love of family. Marriage need not be a melting pot in which differences cease to exist. As you join in marriage, you bring together two pasts and two cultures. With the support and encouragement you give to the other, you will be able to develop new personal dimensions, adding new memories and new hopes into your union and your future together.

Opening 10

When two individuals 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 forlornly wondering 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 darkness. 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 to them. For what is given remains to honour the giver when that gift is love.

Opening 11

_____ and _____, you love each other deeply and sincerely. This love has given you the desire to unite in marriage. In this ceremony, you are dedicating yourselves to give happiness and well-being to each other. Your marriage is an act based on love and rational thinking. It must not be based on the vain hope of might become or might not become. It must be based on the firm belief in your own individual worth and that of the other. Your pledge today is an expression of your devotion. The words spoken in this ceremony will validate your marriage only if your love and commitment to one another are strong enough to sustain it.

Opening 12 (for couples with children)

_____ and _____, you have come to this celebration with awareness that your marriage will have its rewards and its joys, as well as sorrows. Your lives will be intertwined with your children (children may be named here), and it would be unrealistic to assume that everyone will always live in harmony. As you have already established a strong foundation for a family life, however, you will be able to meet future challenges with humour, understanding, and compassion. May you, by example, help your children to grow into self-reliant adults, and in turn, may you learn from them, fully appreciating their youthfulness.

Opening 13 (for blended families with children)

As you all know, _____ and _____, are special people with wonderful individual tastes. This ceremony is going to be no different and it will be sincere, just as their love for each other is also sincere. They have been together now for a few years and have had exciting times together. They have also experienced family life and today this is more than just a wedding ceremony, this is also a coming together of _____ and _____ and their children (children's names may be added here) as a family. When we look at this family, we see the energy and the love they have for each other.

Opening 14

Marriage is a relationship, which embodies all the warm and precious values that grow out of human companionship and love. We enter it joyfully and in the knowledge that love is both our highest achievement and life's most precious gift. Into this relationship with deep commitment and high expectations, _____ and _____ come now to join themselves.

Acknowledgement of Guests and Family

It is usually appropriate and considerate to acknowledge the guests during a wedding ceremony. Here are some sample statements that may be used for this purpose.

Acknowledgement 1: Parents (may be used if parents are present)

Parents are always so important in our lives, and in recognition of this, I now ask the parents of _____ and _____ parents to stand. The two people before you are living expressions of your love; they have been nurtured in your affections, and guided by your personal council. As you have brought them this far in life, they ask for your blessing, and for the future they have chosen. Do you give this blessing? Response from parents: "We do".

Acknowledgement 2: Parents – Mother Appreciation (if both mothers are present)

Marriage is the coming together of two lives and a celebration of the love between them. But it is also more than that. The love you feel for one another is the flowering of a seed your mothers planted in your hearts many years ago. Their love for you has brought them great happiness and great challenges, and their love did not diminish as they met these challenges. That is the great lesson you bring into your marriage. As you embrace one another in your love, you also embrace the families that have been brought together today. As a token of your gratitude for your families, I would like to ask you to offer symbols of eternal love, these roses, to your mothers. The couple offers roses to their mothers. * Although typical wedding tradition acknowledges mothers for this ritual, fathers or other parental figures, may be mentioned instead of, or in addition to, mothers.

Guests 1

As guests you have an important responsibility here today: to act as witnesses for this ceremony. It is your task to witness everything that needs to be said and done, gets said and done. So I ask you, are you willing to support this couple today and for the rest of their married life? If so, please respond with, "We Do"

Guests 2 : Acknowledgement of Family and Friends

_____ and _____ would like to thank everyone for being here today, especially _____ (names of relatives or friends) who came a long way to be with us today.

Guests 3

It is appropriate that you, the family and friends of _____ and _____ are here to witness and celebrate their wedding, for the ideals, understanding, and mutual respect, they bring to their marriage, have roots in the love, friendship, and guidance you have given them.

Affirmations of Intent to Marry (required)

Here are some sample statements of intention to marry. The Affirmation of Intent to Marry is also called the Statement of Intent

Statement 1

_____ and _____, today you are celebrating the bond that exists between you. Knowing that both of you will change over time, you are assuring each other that your marriage will be strong enough to weather/grow with these changes. _____, do you choose _____ as your _____ husband/wife/partner/spouse from this day forward affirming that there is no reason why you should not be wed? Each partner responds with: "I do."

Statement 2

_____ and _____, you have invited us to witness the happiness that you have found in each other. Did you come here freely and are you ready to make the pledges to which you commit yourselves to each other in love? (Answer: "Yes, or "We do")

Statement 3

_____ and _____, you have carefully considered the beauty and obligations assumed when lives are wed. Do you come here freely and willingly, and are you now prepared to enter into this covenant of love (or marriage)? (Answer: "Yes")

Statement 4 (2 questions)

_____ and _____, do you come before us to be joined in marriage out of your own free will? (Answer: "Yes" or "We do") Do you solemnly affirm that you know not of any lawful impediments to you getting married? (Answer: "Yes")

Statement 5 (I am; I do)

_____ are you ready to enter into this marriage, with _____, confident that the love you share and the trust you have in each other will endure? Each partner responds with: "I am." Do you _____ declare your willingness to have _____ as your _____ (wife/husband/life partner/partner...) affirming that you have no knowledge of any legal impediment to the two of you being joined in marriage? Each partner responds with: "I do."

Ceremonial Readings

Readings are optional, but can help personalize the ceremony for the couple. One or more of the following samples, or any other of your choosing, may be used. Readings may be performed by the Officiant or any other person chosen by the couple. Consider asking someone in attendance to do a reading. Readings may be included throughout the ceremony.

Reading 1

We are gathered here to join this couple in marriage. This is an act as ancient as the history of the human race and as new as each new morning; for it speaks of the past and of the future, of the life of the individual and the existence of the community. Because marriage is concerned with the most fundamental of human relationships, it must not be regarded lightly. Those who enter into this relationship shall cherish for each other a mutual esteem and love, bear each other's infirmities and weaknesses, comfort each other in sickness, trouble and sorrow, encourage each other in trials of the spirit, and live together as the heirs of life. Marriage is to be entered into with devotion, respect and discretion. Love and loyalty will be the foundation of a happy and enduring home. And if the solemn vows you are about to make be kept with honour and integrity, your life will be full of peace and joy, and the home you are establishing will be one of warmth and understanding.

Reading 2

We are gathered together in front of family and friends, to join you in marriage. You shall give to each other a vow, lovingly and with love, you will testify before us the blending of your ways and the wedding of your hearts. You have come before us to enter into that estate of marriage, which is a time-honoured tradition. People must enter into it freely, sincerely, and soberly, and in the joy that comes to those who truly love.

Reading 3

When you love someone you do not love him or her all the time, exactly the same way from moment to moment, it is impossible. It is even a lie to pretend to. Yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little trust in the ebb and flow of life, of love, and of relationships, we leap at the flow of the tide, and resist in terror its ebb. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity, when the only continuity possible, in life, as in love, is in growth, in fluidity, in freedom—in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern. For relationships, too, must be like islands. We must accept them for what they are here and now, within their limits— islands, surrounded and interrupted by the sea, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life and the ebb and flow of intermittency.

Reading 4 (with children)

_____ and _____, you have come to this celebration with awareness that your marriage will have its rewards and its joys, as well as sorrows. Your lives will be intertwined with your children (names of children can be included) and it would be unrealistic to assume that everyone will always live in harmony. However, as you have already established a strong foundation for a family life, you will be able to meet future challenges with humour, understanding and compassion. May you, by example, help your children to grow into selfreliant adults, and in turn, may you learn from them, fully appreciating their youthfulness.

Reading 5

Marriage is in many ways a simplification of life and it naturally combines the strengths and wills of two people so that, together, they seem to reach farther into the future than they did before. Above all, marriage is a new task and a new demand on the strength and generosity of each partner. The point of marriage is not to create a quick commonality by tearing down all boundaries; on the contrary, a good marriage is one in which each partner appoints the other to be the guardian of his solitude, and thus they show each other the greatest possible trust. Those who love must act as if they had a great work to accomplish: they must be much alone and go into themselves and gather and concentrate themselves; they must work; they must become something.

Reading 6

The quiet thoughts of two people a long time in love touch lightly like birds nesting in each other's warmth, you will know them by their laughter. However, to each other they speak mostly through their solitude. If they find themselves apart, they may dream of sitting undisturbed in each other's presence, of wrapping themselves warmly in each other's ease. As each autumn, when the trees shed their leaves to prepare for the next spring's growth and fruit, may each year also bring closure, shedding the spent and bringing rebirth to the spirit of your marriage. Look toward the future, for in it lies the creative power for your own lives. May you grow together like flowers and grass, and may your life be a dance to the music of love.

Reading 7 "On Marriage" ~ Khalil Gibran

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 piece 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.

Reading 8

Love today, learn from yesterday and prepare for tomorrow. Nothing happens without a cause. The union of these two people has not come accidentally but came about through love, respect and caring. This tie therefore has been carefully forged and will not easily be broken or resolved. Although the future will bring difficult as well as happy times, their love their experience and their preparation for tomorrow will make it possible to meet challenges and joy together. Saying the words is easy, but to build upon respect, understanding, and learn from past experience, will make this marriage firm and lasting.

Reading 9 “Love – Definition And Philosophy”

In our long history, we have never discovered a better way of life than sharing it together in love in a lasting and responsible way. This arrangement seems to meet our deepest human needs for love and companionship for someone with whom we can share in an intimate and trusting way all the hopes and joy and dreams of life. Real love, however, _____ and _____ is something beyond the warmth and glow, the excitement and romance of being deeply in love. It is caring as much about the welfare and happiness of your marriage partner as about your own. Real love is not total absorption into each other—it is looking outward in the same direction together. Love makes burdens lighter because you divide them. It makes joys more intense because you share them. It makes you stronger, so you can be involved with life in ways you dare not risk alone. This ceremony is not magic. It will not create a relationship that doesn’t already exist. It is time for tying a knot in the rope of days and saying, “We will not slip backwards from here, but will go forward together.” It is a time for one thing of which _____ and _____ are certain, their love for one another and their desire for that love to last forever. Your love must be a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, and a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. Moreover, this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all—one known only by those who love.

Reading 10 “Marriage – A Promise of Love”

Marriage is a commitment to life and to the best that two people can find and bring out of each other. It offers opportunities for sharing and growth no other human relationship can equal—a physical and emotional joining that is promised for a lifetime. Within the circle of its love, marriage encompasses all of life's most important relationships. The two partners are each other's best friend, confidante, lover, teacher, listener, and critic. There may come times when one partner is heartbroken or ailing, and the love of the other may resemble the tender caring of a parent for a child. Marriage deepens and enriches every facet of life. Happiness is fuller, memories are fresher, commitments are stronger, even is felt more strongly, and passes away more quickly. Marriage understands and forgives the mistakes life is unable to avoid. It encourages and nurtures new life, new experiences, and new ways of expressing love through the seasons of life. When two people pledge to love and care for each other in marriage, they create a bond unique to themselves, which binds them closer than any spoken or written words. Marriage is a promise, a potential, made in the hearts of two people who love, and that love takes a lifetime to fulfill.

Reading 11 “What is Love?” ~ Susan Polis Schutz

Love is the strongest feeling known—an all-encompassing passion, an extreme strength, an overwhelming excitement. Love is trying not to hurt the other person, trying not to change the other person, trying not to dominate the other person, and trying not to deceive the other person. Love is understanding each other, listening to each other, supporting each other, and having fun with each other. Love is not an excuse to stop growing, not an excuse to stop making yourself better, not an excuse to lessen one's goals, and not an excuse to take the other person for granted. Love is being honest with each other, finding dreams to share, working towards common goals, and sharing responsibilities. Everyone in the world wants to love. Love is not a feeling to be taken lightly. Love is a feeling to be cherished, nurtured and cared for. Love is the reason for life.

Reading 12 “A History of Love” ~ Diane Ackerman

“Love. What a small word we use for an idea so immense and powerful. It has altered the flow of history, calmed monsters, kindled works of art, cheered the forlorn, turned tough guys to mush, consoled the enslaved, driven strong women mad, glorified the humble, fuelled national scandals, bankrupted robber barons, and made mincemeat of kings. How can love’s spaciousness be conveyed in the narrow confines of one syllable? Love is an ancient delirium, a desire older than civilization, with taproots spreading into deep and mysterious days. The heart is a living museum. In each of its galleries, no matter how narrow or dimly lit, preserved forever like wondrous diatoms, are our moments of loving, and being loved.”

Reading 13 What is Love? (modified version of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Love is always patient and kind. It is never jealous. Love is never boastful or conceited. It is never rude or selfish. It does not take offence and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s faults, but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope. It is always ready to endure whatever comes. Finally, true love does not come to an end.

Reading 14 Excerpt from “Captain Corelli’s Mandolin” ~ Louis de Bernières

Love is a temporary madness; it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides. And when it subsides you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is. Love is not breathlessness, it is not excitement, it is not the promulgation of eternal passion. That is just being in love, which any fool can do. Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident. Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches, they find that they are one tree and not two.

Reading 15

Today's reading will be recited by _____ (name of friend or relative) I am humbled by what you have asked of me, to craft from words the meaning of this day many greater intellects have filled volumes on this subject, and it was first to them whom I turned for inspiration but with no less than twelve well-thumbed works before me, I was still no closer to the truth So I think of you both, in my mind's eye standing beneath a brilliant sunshine, trembling, trying to grasp the moment and I remember you both as you were, before this moment and before you even knew each other can either of you remember who you were before you met? Perhaps, the mind will know but the heart will not like trying to remember a time of nothingness, the heart no longer has a recollection of the other's absence. There are no objects without subjects to perceive them and in each other, you have perceived something so secret, so special, that it is now all of us who tremble before you. Go forward, my dear friends, and create your history together and let love be your guiding belief.

Reading 16 Excerpt from "The Bridge Across Forever" ~ Richard Bach

A soul mate is someone who has locks that fit our keys, and keys to fit our locks. When we feel safe enough to open the locks, our truest selves step out and we can be completely and honestly who we are; we can be loved for who we are and not for who we're pretending to be. Each unveils the best part of the other. No matter what else goes wrong around us, with that one person we're safe in our own paradise. Our soul mate is someone who shares our deepest longings, our sense of direction. Our soul mate is the one who makes life come to life.

Reading 17

Although marriage is a pledge to the permanence of a relationship, it is actually a commitment to change. For the nature of life is change and so to participate fully in the continuing cycle of growth, maturity, death and rebirth, we must also adapt and change, shedding old skin and becoming new, again and again. It is in this way that marriage is a commitment to change—with purpose, understanding, and consideration. When two partners move forward they move in step with each other, sometimes extending out and away and other times merging. And thus, marriage is a dance, an ongoing process by which we learn how to be responsive to the rhythm of life and love, harmonizing our intentions and dreams, making melodies of our trials and tragedies, reveling in the music of our soul.

Reading 18

_____ and _____ would like to express the way they feel about one another as follows: I love you, not only for what you are, but also for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you because you have done more than anything else could have done to make me good and happy. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by being yourself. Perhaps that is what being a friend means, after all.

Introduction to Marriage Vows

Vow Introduction 1

The term “vow” means “solemn or legal promise”. What you are saying here today, are your formal promises to each other. Your vows will take you across a new threshold in life and things will never be quite the same between you. For after these vows, you shall say to the world, “This is my _____ (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse, etc.).”

Vow Introduction 2

_____ and _____, you have known each other from your first glance to this point of commitment. At some point, you decided to marry. From that moment of “yes” to this moment of “yes, indeed”, you have been making promises and agreements in an informal way. All those conversations that were held riding in a car, over a meal, during long walks... All those sentences that began with “when we’re married” and continued with “I will” and “you will” and “we will”, all those late night talks that included “someday” and “somehow”... And all those promises that are unspoken matters of the heart. All these common things, and more, are the real process of a wedding. The symbolic vows that you are about to make are a way of saying to one another, “you know all those things we’ve promised and hoped and dreamed? Well, I meant it all—every word.” Look at one another and remember this moment in time.

Vow Introduction 3 – Hand Ceremony (or Handfasting Ceremony)

Please join hands, palms up, so you may see the gift each of you has for the other. These are the hands of your best friend, holding yours on your wedding day, as you promise to love each other all the days of your lives. These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you will build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share your secrets and dreams. These are that hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years for a lifetime of happiness. These are the hands that will at times wipe the tears from your eyes—both of sorrow and of joy. These are the hands that will comfort you in illness, and hold you when fear or grief troubles your mind. These are the hands that will tenderly lift your chin as they raise your face to look into your eyes—eyes that are filled with love for you.

These are the hands of your best friend holding yours on your wedding day, as you pledge love and commitment to each other. These are the hands that will work alongside yours to build your future together, as you laugh and cry. These are the hands that will hold you in joy and excitement and hope. These are the hands that will hold you close as you struggle through difficult times. These are the hands that will comfort you when you are sick and console you when you are grieving. They are the hands that will love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness. These are the hands that will give you support as you pursue your

dreams. Together (reposition hands so that they are clasped together) as a team, your dreams can be realized.

Together, these four hands tell the world that you will love and support each other. Reaching first out to each other, then united towards the world, these hands will be your strength, your shelter, and your guide.

Optional: A rope or sash may be loosely tied around the couple's during a handfasting ceremony

Personal Wedding Vows

Personal vows can be said in three different ways:

1. The Officiant reads the vows and the partners each answer "I Do" (for those couples who are not fond of the "repeat after me" approach)
2. The Officiant reads the vows line by line and the partners repeat them to each other.
3. Partners read their vows to each other from a piece of paper or card (their own or chosen from vows supplied by the Officiant) Note: The vows do not have to be the same for both partners. They can mix and match.

Vows 1 (each partner simply says, "I do" after the Officiant reads the vows)

_____ (name of partner), do you take _____ (other partner), to be your _____ (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...) To have and to hold, from this day forward; For better or for worse, For richer or for poorer, In sickness and in health, To love and to cherish, For the rest of your lives? Answer: "I Do"

Vows 2 (each partner repeats their vows line by line after the Officiant)

I, _____ (name of partner), choose you _____ (other partner) To be my _____ (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...) For better or for worse, For richer or for poorer, In sickness and in health, To love and to cherish, For the rest of my life.

Answer: "I Do"

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 3 (with children mentioned)

I, _____, take you, _____, to be the _____ (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...) of my days, to be a parent of our children, to be the companion of our house. We shall keep together what share of trouble and sorrow life may lay upon us and we shall share together our store of goodness and plenty and love.

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 4

I, _____, choose you, _____, to be my (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...) to love you and to cherish you, to help you and to honour you, to give you understanding and comfort, in whatever the future may bring, in confidence that together, we are responsible for our destiny.

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 5

I, _____, take you, _____, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not yet know, with respect for your integrity and trust in your love for me, through all our years and in all that life may bring us.

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 6

I, _____ affirm my love to you, _____, as I invite you to share my life. I promise to always respect you And through kindness, generosity, and trust to achieve the warm and rich life we now look forward to. To this end, I call upon all present to witness that I take you, _____ to be my (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, while we both shall live.

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 7

I, _____, take you, _____ to be my partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish our friendship and love you today, tomorrow, and forever. I will trust you and honour you, I will laugh with you and cry with you, I will love you always through the best and the worst, Whatever may come, I will always be there. As I have given you my hand to hold, so too have I given you my heart to keep

<Repeat for second partner>

Vows 8 (This vow includes the exchange of rings)

_____, I give you this ring, Wear it with love and joy. I choose you to be my _____ (husband/wife/partner/life partner/spouse...) To have and to hold from this day forward, For better and for worse, For richer and for poorer, In sickness and in health, To love and to cherish, As long as we both shall live.

<Repeat for second partner>

Examples of Real Marriage Vows

You may be inspired to write your own personalized vows. Here are some examples for inspiration

Real marriage vows 1

(To Leanne)

I, Frank, take you Leanne, to be my wife. For a time I thought I would never know a deep and peaceful love. Then, you came along and offered me your heart. You restored my faith in love, and my own goodness and value, In the idea of good things coming to those who wait. You are all good things to me. I promise you my undying affection, support, respect and admiration. I promise you that I will lift you up, as you have lifted me. I promise that I will do my best and always try. May my heart be your shelter and my arms be your home

Real marriage vows 2

(To Owen)

Owen, you are the poetic calm to my constantly buzzing mind. You are my touchstone of support and love and my never-ending source of laughter. You are the person who grounds me. You push me to reach for the tips of my talents and to never stop dreaming my dreams. You are my biggest inspiration. You give words of comfort and warmth to my soul. You are my best friend. Owen, I promise to support you, to ground you, and to push you to dream your amazing dreams. I promise to be your touchstone, your inspiration, your comfort, your best friend. And I promise to love you.

Real marriage vows 3

Nicole, my love, my partner, my best friend, Today I promise, To love you, to care for you, and to dream with you, For all the years to come There will be tough times Along with much happiness, But whatever life brings, I want to live it with you

Real marriage vows 4

(From Al to Sherri)

Sherri, I take you as my friend, my spouse, my partner for life, and lover, just as you are, and however you may change. Let me blend all that is me with all that is you, so that we can bring new growth to one another. I promise in the midst of our loved ones, that I will love you and I will be true to you as long as I live.

(From Sherri to Al)

Al, I take you as my friend, My spouse, my partner for life, and lover, just as you are, and however you may change Let me blend all that is me with all that is you, so that we can bring new growth to one another. I promise in the midst of our loved ones, that I will love you and I will be true to you as long as I live.

Real marriage vows 5

(From Doug to Michele)

Michele, I want you to know how much I love you and how happy you make me. It amazes me every day that I have found someone who can put up with me. On this very special day I have prepared a list of promises to present to you: I promise to take you to the Holiday Inn every Friday night for the Blues, EXCEPT when it rains or we are on a boat trip (which really means we will be there except when it rains) I promise to keep getting my white shirts dirty so you can show me how clean you can get them. I promise to continue cooking meals and doing the yard work as long as you promise to meet me in the hot tub when it is all done. I promise to share my Crown Royal when you run out of Smirnoff. On a more serious note: I promise to love, adore, and respect you for as long as we both shall live. And most of all, I promise to be your Best Friend, and to share your dreams for the 2 of us for the rest of our lives. Michele, I feel so lucky to have you, and everything you are makes me a better person. I take you to be my wife, and to share my name with great pride. Thank you for making my life so complete... I love you

[Exchange of Wedding Rings](#)

Although not required, exchanging wedding rings is a traditional part of most weddings. Statements about the significance of this ritual, or the rings themselves, precede the exchange.

Rings Introduction 1

The exchange of wedding rings is a centuries-old wedding tradition. It signifies the neverending love between two spouses and also serves as an affirmation of the vows exchanged between them during their marriage ceremony.

Rings Introduction 2

The wedding ring is the most ancient of all wedding customs. Nearly every civilization has used the wedding ring as a symbol of the marriage agreement. May these rings you give and receive today symbolize your love and always remind each of you of this special day.

Rings Introduction 3

A circle is the symbol of the sun, the earth, and the universe. It is a symbol of wholeness and perfection. The rings you give and receive this day are the symbols of the circle of shared love into which you enter together as _____ (husband and wife/spouses/wedded partners...)

Rings Introduction 4

These rings are a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love given freely has no beginning and no end, no giver and no receiver, for each partner is the giver and each the receiver. May these rings always remind you of the vows you have shared today.

Officiant then asks couple to take their rings and present them to each other while repeating:

Ring Exchange 1:

"With this ring I thee wed."

Ring Exchange 2:

"I give you this ring to wear as a symbol of my love for you."

Ring Exchange 3:

"With this ring, I marry you and shall be true as long as we both shall live."

Ring Exchange 4:

"_____, I never realized what was missing in my life, until I met you. May this ring I give to you be more than a symbol of our bond in marriage—let it be a promise of my love for you and my desire to share my life with you.

Ring Exchange 5:

“ _____, as you wear this symbol of our commitment, may it remind you that you are my Sun and Moon and everything I could expect in between.”

Ring Exchange 6:

“You are my friend, my true love, and my partner for life. ”

Ring Exchange 7:

“I give you this ring as a symbol of the unending union of my life with yours and as a symbol of my commitment to you. I shall always love, honour and cherish you.”

Declaration of Marriage (required)

The Declaration of Marriage is the statement the Officiant makes aloud to the couple and in the presence of their witnesses (and often the guests as well) to declare the couple legally married. Here are some samples:

Declaration 1

_____ and _____ have pledged themselves to each other and have declared this symbolically by their vows. I, _____ (name of Officiant) by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Marriage Act of Ontario, do pronounce them _____ (legally married/husband and wife/married/life partners...)

Declaration 2

For as much as _____ and _____ have declared their love for one another and their consent to marry, I, _____ (name of Officiant), by the power vested in me by the Marriage Act of Ontario, pronounce them husband and wife.

Declaration 3

For as much as _____ and _____ have grown in knowledge and love of one another, and because they have agreed to go forward in life together, and because they have pledged to meet joy and sorrow as one family, by the power vested in me by the Marriage Act of Ontario, pronounce them _____ (legally married/husband and wife/married/life partners...)

Declaration 4

For as much as _____ and _____ have thus pledged themselves to each other in the presence of friends and family, by the power vested in me by the Marriage Act of Ontario, now pronounce them _____ (legally married/husband and wife/married/life partners...)

[The Kiss!](#)

The Officiant may invite the partners to kiss after declaring them married. Here are some sample invitations to kiss:

Kiss 1

I invite you to now share your first of many kisses as

_____ (husband and wife/married spouses/married partners/life partners...)

Kiss 2

You may now seal your vows with a kiss.

Kiss 3

I invite you now to seal your vows with a kiss.

Kiss 4

You may now seal your marriage with a kiss.

Kiss 5

I invite you now to seal your marriage with a kiss.

Kiss 6

To start your life of wedded bliss, please seal your vows with a kiss.

Kiss 7

I invite you to now share your first kiss as married partners

Signing of the Marriage Documents (required)

Before the ceremony can be completed, the couple, their two witnesses, and the Officiant, must sign the legal documents. They all sign the Marriage Licence and the Marriage Register, and the witness and Officiant also sign the Record of Solemnization.

Partner A signs: Marriage Licence and Marriage Register

Partner B signs: Marriage Licence and Marriage Register

Witness for Partner A signs: Marriage Licence, Marriage Register, and Record of Solemnization

Witness for Partner B signs: Marriage Licence, Marriage Register, and Record of Solemnization

Licensed Officiant signs: Marriage Licence, Marriage Register, and Record of Solemnization

Please Note

The Officiant cannot leave the wedding site until all the legal documents have been signed by the couple and their designated witnesses.

Also, sometimes couples choose to sign the marriage documents after their ceremony. This is often due to a signing table not being available at a particular wedding spot, such as a boat dock or a cottage.

Closing Words

The Closing Words (also known as the Closing Address, or The Closing) is a reading or statement read by the Officiant after the couple and the witnesses sign the marriage documents. It concludes the ceremony in a manner that represents the couple and their guests.

Sample Closing 1 “Dreams”

Your wedding day is a day filled with emotion, friends, families, rings, and dances. Many people remember how fleeting their own wedding day was. So, I want you to take a few seconds to look into each other's eyes. Think about the happiness that you are feeling in this moment. Let that feeling register in your hearts and in your minds. Now I want you to think about your life together in 20 years. We all know that your visions of the future are not identical, but they are always complimentary. John Lennon once said, “a dream you dream alone is only a dream, but a dream you dream together, that is reality. And that new reality starts now.

Sample Closing 2 “The Art of Marriage” ~ Wilferd A. Peterson

The little things are the big things.

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 a day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other for granted.

The courtship should not 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 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 the 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, 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 what marriage can be, at its best.

Sample Closing 3

_____ and _____, marriage is the joining of two people--the union of two hearts. It lives on the love you give each other, never grows old, and thrives on the joy of each new day. May you always be enriched in your hearts with the wonder of this special day. May you always be able to talk things over, to confide in each other, to laugh with each other, to enjoy life together, and to share moments of calm and peace, when the day is done. May you enter into a lifetime of happiness.

Sample Closing 4

_____ and _____ believe that there should be equality partners. Although by marrying they are embarking upon a new and unique relationship in their lives, they nonetheless retain their own separate and unique identities and personalities. Marriage must be a cooperative venture in every sense. It is a relationship based on love, respect and a determination on the part of both partners to adjust to each other's temperaments and moods, in health or sickness, joy or sadness, ease or hardship. It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner. We, your friends and family, are here to share your joy and hope, and to speed you along the path that, from now on, you will tread together. May it be a path of fortune, a path of deepening and widening love, a path of taking responsibility for self and humanity that you shall travel arm in arm throughout your lives.

Sample Closing 5 “Our wish for your Marriage” ~ James Dillet Freeman

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

Sample Closing 6 (with future rose commemoration)

_____ and _____ (names of married partners), Your gift to each other on your wedding today has been your wedding rings that will always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love, respect, and commitment to each other.

As roses are considered a symbol of love and a single red rose usually means one thing: I love you, I would like to talk about roses and tomorrow for a moment.

In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But, in fact, today, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life—one that I hope you always remember: the gift of true and abiding love within the dedication of marriage. _____ and _____, I would ask that wherever you live in the future, that you choose one special location in your home for roses, so that on every anniversary of this wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage and a recommitment that this marriage is founded on love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. And, sometimes, we can be most hurt by the person we most love. During those times, it might be difficult to express the words, "I am sorry" or "I forgive you" or "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, and you simply cannot find the right words, leave a rose at that special spot. The rose then says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words: "I love you." Your partner should accept this rose and remember the love and hope that you both share.

_____ and _____, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today and it is only love that can make it a glorious union. And it is by this love in which your marriage shall endure.

Sample Closing 7

With abiding confidence and deep affection, We send you forth on life's journey together. May love and peace always be yours— A love that the world cannot destroy And a peace that the world can neither give nor take away. May you have courage, wisdom, and harmony in your future years together. And may the happiness you share today be with you always.

Sample Closing 8

I should like at this time, speak of some of the things that we wish for you both. We wish for you a home, not a place of stone and wood, but an island of peace, a place from which you will receive strength and support that carries you throughout your daily lives. We hope that your home encompasses the beauty of nature, which has within it the elements of simplicity, beauty, peace, and colour in concordance with your dreams and aspirations. We wish for you a home of books, poetry and music, a home with all the things that represent you. May your joys be sweet as spring flowers that grow, as bright as a fire when winter winds blow, as countless as leaves that float down in the fall, and as serene as ocean waves lapping the shore.

Sample Closing 9 (with rose offering)

_____ and _____ (names of married partners), your gift to each other on your wedding today has been your wedding rings. These will always be an outward demonstration of your vows of love, respect, and commitment to each other.

As roses, however, are also considered symbols of affection, and a single red rose usually means one thing: I love you, it is fitting that your second gift as a married couple should be a gift of a single red rose.

Please exchange these gifts of love with each other. (partners had each been given a red rose by a friend or relative, or by the Officiant.)

_____ and _____, I would ask that wherever you live in the future, that you choose one special location in your home for roses, so that on every anniversary of this wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage and a recommitment that this marriage is founded on love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. And, sometimes, we can be most hurt by the person we most love. During those times, it might be difficult to express the words, "I am sorry" or "I forgive you" or "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, and you simply cannot find the right words, leave a rose at that special spot. The rose then says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words: "I love you." Your partner should accept this rose and remember the love and hope that you both share.

_____ and _____, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today and it is only love that can make it a glorious union. And it is by this love in which your marriage shall endure.

Sample Closing 10

We delight this day in the marriage of _____ and _____. We celebrate the love that brought them to this day. With love that deepens through many years, may they know its meaning and its mystery—how we become truly one in sharing ourselves with one another, and yet, remain truly two in our own 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, 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 it, especially for those who may be entrusted to your care. May your larger family be the family of all humankind. And may those who dearest to you constantly be enriched by the beauty and the bounty of your love for one another.

Presentation of the Couple as Married (not required by highly recommended)

After the wedding ceremony has been completed, the Officiant announces the couple to their guests. The couple may be introduced in any way they choose.

Sample Presentation 1

It is now my honour and privilege to introduce to you, for the first time as a married couple, Mr. & Mrs. _____ (shared last name)

Sample Presentation 2

Friends, family, please join me in welcoming the newlyweds, _____ and _____ (first name of Partner A) (first name of Partner B), (shared last name)

Sample Presentation 3

Friends, family, I am pleased to introduce, _____ and _____, husband and wife

Sample Presentation 4

Friends, family, I am pleased to introduce the newlyweds, _____ and _____ (first names only)

Sample Presentation 5

Friends, family, I am pleased to introduce the newlyweds: _____ and _____ (first name of Partner A) (first name of Partner B), (shared last name)

Additional Rituals

The addition of a second sharing ritual is a part of some wedding ceremonies and may follow or, precede, the traditional exchange of rings.

Honey Tasting Ceremony **Officiant or guest states the following:**

“Honey is a symbol of the sweetness in life. And so, with this dish of honey, we proclaim this day a day of great joy and celebration—a sweet day to remember.”

One partner dips their finger (or a small spoon) into the honey and touches the lips of the other. The ritual is repeated with the other partner.

“As you now share this honey, so may you now share the sweetness of a shared life together. May you find life's joys doubly heartened, any bitterness sweetened, and all things hallowed by time, companionship and love”

Sand Blending Ceremony (popular with families where children can participate)

Officiant says: _____ and _____ will now perform a sand blending ceremony. Today you join your separate lives together. These separate vessels of sand symbolize your separate lives, separate families, and separate sets of friends. They are all you are and all you will ever be as individuals and represent your lives before today.

As you pour your individual sands into this new vessel, they will be blended to form a new creation. Just as these grains of sand can never again be separated and poured back into their original vessels, so too will be your marriage be that of a new creation and a new life together—each respecting the uniqueness of the other but also appreciating the beauty of your new union.

Pebble Ceremony

If the wedding is to be held at a beach or by a stream or river, the Officiant may ask the guests to find a small pebble and make a wish on it for the couple.

(Alternately, small stones can be purchased from a building supply store).

The guests are then asked to place those pebbles in a large vase that the couple will keep to hold everyone's wishes for their marriage. The couple may choose to do this during the signing of their marriage documents.

The Officiant can also tell them that they can use this vase, with its special pebbles in it, to hold flowers on future anniversaries, which will remind them of their wedding day and the loving friends and family who shared it with them.

Variation of Pebble Ceremony:

Stones of Good Wishes Guests are given a flat stone at the start of the wedding ceremony along with a Sharpie marker. During the signing of the marriage documents, guests write encouraging comments or best wishes on their own stone. After the ceremony, the stones are gathered and placed in the garden of the couple's home or in a large vase. The signing of the stones may also take place during the reception, or during the time between the wedding ceremony and the reception if the couple leaves for a while to take photos.

Wine Cup Ceremony 1

The years of life are as represented in this cup of wine poured for you to drink. This cup of life contains within it the sweet wine of happiness, joy, hope and delight. The same cup, at times, holds the bitter wine of disappointment, sorrow, grief, and despair. Those who drink deeply of life invite the full range of experiences into their being. This cup is symbolic of the pledges you make to one another to share together the fullness of life. As you drink from this cup, you acknowledge to each other that your lives, until this moment separate, have become one vessel into which all your joys and sorrows and all your hopes and fears, will be poured, and from which you will find mutual sustenance. May you always eat and drink in peace, happiness, hope and delight.

Drink now, and may the cup of your lives be sweet and full to overflowing. (Present glass to one partner and then the other.)

Wine Cup Ceremony 2

This cup of wine symbolizes the cup of life; it can be bitter and it can be sweet. By sharing it, you undertake to share the sweet as well as the bitter moments life brings.

Officiant presents glass to one partner and then the other.

Handfasting Ceremony – with coloured ribbons:

_____ and _____ have chosen to symbolize their love and commitment with the ritual of handfasting. In ancient Celtic times, handfasting, which involved loosely binding the couple's hands together with a sash, rope, or coloured ribbons, was an important part of wedding ceremonies or betrothals.

_____ and _____, please join hands (as in a handshake yet holding the wrists).

For their hand fasting ceremony _____ and _____ have chosen coloured ribbons to represent the qualities they bring into their marriage and their dedication to these values. As each one is named, _____ (name of friend or family member) will place the ribbon over the couple's joined hands.

Red – for strength and courage, good health, prosperity, and longevity

Orange – for open hearts, sensitivity and understanding

Yellow – for enthusiasm, spontaneity and equality

Green – for compassion, affection and caring

Light Blue – for sincerity, easy self expression and honest communication

Purple – for clear vision and wisdom, peace and harmony

Gold – for unity and togetherness

As _____ is binding the couple's together, Officiant says the following:

We give thanks for the love of this moment. May your love be unending and be a source of wonder and delight. May your love be a firm foundation from which to grow and nurture your marriage. May your marriage be blessed with love, peace, and happiness.

In Celtic tradition these cords were sometimes kept in place on the couples hands for several hours or days. You can imagine the challenge this presented the couple - literally tied to one another 24/7! However, it was used to test and encourage them to fully cooperate and work together as a team.

Today, _____ and _____ will be spared this part of the tradition (ribbons are lifted off gently by the friend or relative) while honouring the intention of working together as a team and supporting each another through all that life may bring.

Four Elements Ceremony

In times past, it was believed that the human spirit was joined with all things temporal and spiritual. In this belief, the representative qualities, of AIR, FIRE, WATER and EARTH were assigned to the cardinal directions.

Now that _____ and _____ have entered into this space of marriage, we call upon this ancient tradition to prepare this space in support of their marriage.

Wedding party turns to face EAST.

Bless this union with the gifts of the EAST: AIR for communications of the mind and body, and fresh beginnings with the rising of the sun.

Wedding party turns to face SOUTH.

Bless this union with the gifts of the SOUTH: FIRE for the warmth of hearth and home and the heat of the heart's passion.

Wedding party turns to face WEST.

Bless this union with the gifts of the WEST: WATER for the deep commitment of a lake, the cleansing of the rain and the passion of the sea.

Wedding party turns to face NORTH.

Bless this union with the gifts of the NORTH: EARTH for a firm and stable foundation upon which to build their lives.

Candle Lighting Ceremony 1

For thousands of years, human beings have used candles as a source of light. Candles are also symbols of warmth, of hope, and of life itself. _____ and _____, you have entered into a union that is revered and valued, requiring of those who enter into it a complete and unreserved giving of self. It will bind you together in a relationship so close and so intimate that it will profoundly affect your future.

Officiant lights the candle representing the couple and says,

Would you now each, from your own candle, light a third as a symbol of your new relationship.

Couple lights candle.

Candle Lighting Ceremony 2

As this day you have made a new light together. May you also continue to recognize your own individuality from which your relationship has sprung. May the lights of your own unique lives continue to feed the new flame of love of your future—a future filled with hopes and disappointments, successes and failures, pleasures and pains, joys and sorrows: a future filled with warmth and love.

Candle Lighting Ceremony 3

You stand together today, not from pride but from humility as mortals, with human weaknesses and strengths, and promise trust as symbolized by this light. You will find your reward as you live each moment dedicated to a search for truth and aided by the love you have for one another.

Bonus: Sample Humanist “grace” before a meal:

May the gifts we receive that matter most— the food and drink before us, the cherished friends around us, and the time and space to enjoy them— Bring us the energy and inspiration to sustain us today, tomorrow, and beyond.

