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## WEDDING CEREMONY PLANNING GUIDE



## Planning a Wedding Ceremony

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Planning your wedding ceremony is a happy task! It is also a task to be approached thoughtfully, for it is a ceremony in which you seek to express your deepest convictions about your relationship and about the marriage you intend to build together.

Your meeting with the Unitarian Universalist minister or lay chaplain has two main purposes:

1. for you to tell the officiant about your present relationship and your vision and goals for your marriage and
2. to help you make specific plans for the wedding ceremony.

This booklet is designed to help you plan your ceremony, so please study it carefully in advance. There are several choices for each part of the service. Although you can simply choose items from the various sections in the booklet, please feel free to:

- take multiple readings from a single section,
- skip sections,
- modify and/or merge readings/ meditations/ prayers,
- include materials and symbols which have personal meaning for you, perhaps from a different religious tradition,
- consider how to include children or friends or family members as participants in the ceremony.

Internet searches can give you much material and ideas for your wedding that you might like to incorporate into the service.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the minister or lay chaplain who will officiate at your wedding.

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# Welcoming

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<the officiant welcomes friends and family and talks about use of cameras>

The procession will begin shortly.

# Procession

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<wedding party enters>

# Opening Words

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1.1 Love consists of this, which two solitudes protect and touch and greet one another.

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

1.3 To see the sun  
to reach for the fire  
to hear behind all the clamor  
the song of life.  
There's time for laughing and  
there's time for crying  
for hoping for despair for  
peace and for longing  
a time for silence and a day  
for singing  
but more than all (as all your  
more than eyes  
tell me) there is a time for timelessness. (e.e. cummings)

1.4 Marriage is an institution ordained by the province, sanctioned by the church, and made honourable by the faithful keeping of good people through the ages. It is, therefore, not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but following due consideration and with reverence. This celebration is the outward symbol of a sacred and inward union of hearts, created by loving purpose and kept by abiding will. Into this estate, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come now to be joined.

1.5 Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God and in the face of this company to join together \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. These two shall make a vow to each other, loving and loved, testifying before us of the blending of their ways and the wedding of their hearts. Before us they shall come together into that estate of marriage which has been treasured and made honourable by faithful keeping, and which, in the presence of God, before whom the secrets of all hearts are disclosed, couples enter reverently, thoughtfully, and in the joy that comes to those who truly love.

To be true, this outward ceremony must be but a symbol of that which is inner and real- a union of hearts, which religion may bless and the province make legal, but which neither can create. Marriage partakes of the mystery of creation. It grows through the joy of life fully shared, and grows again through pains given and forgiven. While it can be a fount of great happiness, it is not meant for happiness alone, but also for the growth of new qualities of life. Two separate people become more complete because of being together. To this end, there must be a consecration of each to the other, and of both to the noblest purposes of life.

1.6 We have been called together as witnesses to the happiness which this couple has found together, and to the pledges they will make, each to the other, for the mutual service of their common life. We rejoice with them that out of all the world they have found each other, and that they will henceforth find the deeper meaning and richness of human life in sharing it with each other.

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

1.8 We are gathered here to join \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. It is fitting that you, their families and friends, are 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. Marriage makes us aware of the changes wrought by time, but this relationship will continue to draw much of its beauty and meaning from intimate associations with the past.

## Query

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<Both 2.1 and 2.2 are required by the Marriage Act unless the declarations are explicitly made elsewhere in the ceremony; i.e., in the vows...>

2.1 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ , have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage in the presence of all here present? If so, please respond, “We have”.

Couple: We have.

2.2 Do you now declare that you have no knowledge of any impediment to your being lawfully joined in matrimony? If so, please respond, “We so declare”.

Couple: We so declare.

## Blessings

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3.1 (parents) I now address \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's parents. Will you please stand.

As our sons and daughters find partners and found the homes of the next generation, each family is enlarged. Do you, who have nurtured these two, give your blessing to their union and their home? If so, please respond, "We do".

Parents: We do.

Please remain standing.

3.1a (family) I now address \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's immediate family/<specific relatives such as sisters, brothers, children,>. Will you please stand.

As \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ join together in marriage, each family is enlarged. Do you, who have loved these two for all of their lives or all of your lives, give your blessing to their union and their home? If so, please respond, "We do".

Family: We do.

Please remain standing.

3.2 (family and friends) I now address all of \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's family and friends. Please rise.

A marriage is, above all, an intimate relationship between two persons. But it also has its wider ramifications into the lives of relatives and friends, and into the community at large. Do you who are here assembled pledge your support to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the commitment that they celebrate today? If so, please respond, "We do".

Family and Friends: We do.

Please be seated.

3.3 (family and friends) I now address all of \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's family and friends. Please rise.

Do you, who have known \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for many years and have seen them through times of joy and sorrow, now give your blessing to their union? If so, please respond, "We do".

Family and Friends: We do.

Please be seated.

3.4 (family and friends) I now address all of \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's family and friends. Please rise.

As \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ publicly declare their love for one another and the commitment they freely make to one another this day, we can express our support for this union. I ask all of you who are gathered here today, do you who know and care for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ now give them your blessings as they commit to this relationship? If so, please respond, "We do".

Family and Friends: We do.

Please be seated.

## Readings

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4.1 How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach when feeling out of sight  
For the end of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints, - I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears of all my life! - and if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death. (Elizabeth Barrett  
Browning)



4.2 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 grown not in each other's shadow. But let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of heaven dance between you. Love one another, but make not a bond of love. (Khalil Gibran)

4.3 May your marriage bring you all the deep joy a marriage can bring. And may life also grant you patience, tolerance, and understanding. May you always need one another, not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you know your fullness. May you want one another, but not out of lack. May you entice, but not compel one another. May you embrace, but not encircle one another. May you succeed in all important ways with one another and not fail in the little graces. May you look for things to praise, and often say "I love you." And take no notice of small faults. If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you have good sense enough to take the first step back. May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence, physical and spiritual together, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even in distant cities. May you have happiness, and may you find it in making one another happy. May you have love, and may you find it in loving.

4.4 Awed by the many meanings of this hour and overjoyed by its promises, we hope that the spirit of trust, understanding, and love may be with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ through all the years that lie ahead. Whatever the trials and testings that may come, may they trust each other wholly, for, without such faith, marriage is a mockery; may they understand each other, for without

understanding, there is neither acceptance nor forgiveness; and may they truly love each other, for without love, marriage is an empty shell.

As they build together a new life and a new home, may that home be bright with the laughter of children and 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.

So may this shining hour be an open door through which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will go forth to build a happy, harmonious marriage. May the years deal gently with them; walking together, may they find far more in life than either would have found alone; and may they come to know their love for one another even more fully.

4.5 If I speak with the tongues of men and of 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 all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

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

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

## Introduction to the Vows

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5.1 The pledges you will now repeat are a statement of present intent and commitment. They cannot endure unless you make them endure. The spoken word holds no hidden power within itself, for human ingenuity has never yet devised a vow which cannot be broken. We have developed law and conscience, even pride, as keepers of our sacred pledges, but we have also found ways to mitigate each one. So it is not simply to words or to institutions that we appeal at this moment of commitment, but to the resources upon which you can draw from within yourselves.

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

5.3 In the quiet of this very special moment, we pause to give thanks for all the rich experiences of life that have brought \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to this significant point in their lives. We are grateful for the values which have flowed into them from those who have loved them, nurtured them, and pointed them along life's way. We are grateful that within them is the dream of a great love and the resources to use that love in creating a home that will endure. We are grateful for the values which they have found by their own strivings.

And now, as they make their promises to each other, may they make them with the deepest insight into their meaning and with their fullest sincerity. May this be but the beginning of a relationship that will grow and mature with each passing year, so that the later days become even more wonderful than the early ones.

# Vows

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<The Marriage Act requires that the vows must include a declaration by each that she/he takes the other as her/his lawful wedded wife/ husband/ partner/ spouse.>

Please hold hands as you make your vows.

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , repeat after me:

- 6.1 In the presence of these witnesses,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , take you, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
to be my lawful wedded \* ,  
to have and to hold from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness or in health,  
in sorrow or in joy,  
to love and to cherish,  
as long as we both shall live.
- 6.2 \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , I take you to be my lawful wedded \*  
to be the mother/father of my children,  
to be the companion of my days.  
We shall bear together  
whatever of sorrow and adversity  
life may lay upon us.  
We shall share together  
whatever of joy and fulfillment  
life may hold in store.
- 6.3 I \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , pledge to you, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
a life of giving and of hoping,  
a life of growing and of loving.  
I shall dedicate to you  
both my work and my play.  
I shall be with you in your tears and in your laughter,  
just as I shall bring to you my joys and my sorrows.  
I take you to be my lawful wedded \*  
and I pledge to you honour, faith, and love.

- 6.4 From this day forward, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
 you shall be my lawful wedded \*  
 together to love, to work and to share,  
 to grow and to understand,  
 to discover a deeper, fuller life.
- 6.5 I \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
 to be no other than yourself.  
 Loving what I know of you,  
 trusting what I do not yet know,  
 with respect for your integrity, and  
 faith in your abiding love for me,  
 I accept you as my lawful wedded \*  
 through all our years and in all that life may bring us.
- 6.6 I take you, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
 to be my lawful wedded \* ,  
 to share with me all the wonders life has to offer,  
 through good times and bad,  
 through laughter and tears,  
 as long as we both shall live.
- 6.7 I \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ commit myself to you, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
 as your lawful wedded \* ,  
 for all the risings and settings of the sun,  
 for all the days of fullness and in barren times,  
 in the foreknowledge of joy and pain,  
     strength and weariness,  
     direction and doubt.  
 I pledge myself to deepening in love as long as time is ours.  
 I take you as my lawful wedded \* .
- 6.8 I, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , take thee, \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
 to be my lawful wedded \* ,  
 to learn and grow with,  
 to come to in both happiness and sorrow,  
 to confide in and trust above all others,  
 to respect you in everything as an equal partner,  
 but, above all, to love you with all my being.

6.9 \_\_\_\_\_ , make your vows to \_\_\_\_\_ .

<\_\_\_\_\_ speaks the vows>

\_\_\_\_\_ , make your vows to \_\_\_\_\_ .

<\_\_\_\_\_ speaks the vows>

\* wife/ husband/ partner/ spouse

## Introduction to the Ring Vows

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Please drop hands.

May I please have the rings.

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

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

7.3 May your ring 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 the power of this love.

7.4 These rings are tokens of the covenant of love you enter into today. We bless them with the elements of **earth, air, fire, and water**, remembering the sacredness from which our lives and our world are formed.

By the power of **earth**, we consecrate these rings, that they may be a symbol of the unfailing steadfastness of your devotion. (*Dip the rings into salt.*) Just as the earth is round and supports you, so is love a circle with no beginning and no end and each point interdependent, upholding the whole. May your rings always call to mind the strength of the circle of love.

By the power of **air**, we consecrate these rings, that they may be a symbol of the communication that fuels the flame of love in your hearts. (*Pass the rings through the element of air with feather and incense.*) Air is the breath of our lives. It carries the freedom of communication and the power of purification. May the empty centers of your rings call to mind your willingness to speak honestly with one another, and to clearly hear each other with understanding.

By the power of **fire**, we consecrate these rings that they may be a symbol of your passion to be with one another. (*Pass rings above the candle flame.*) Just as one flame lights another and does not grow the less, so may your fires nourish each other. May the brightness of your rings call to mind your ardent desire to learn and create together.

By the power of **water**, we consecrate these rings, that they may be a symbol of the easy flow and sensitivity of right relationship. (*Dip the rings in water.*) Just as water shapes all things, may your love shape each of you with emotional integrity and harmony, so that your thirst to be known in love shall be satisfied and yet continue.

7.5 From the words of Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux: Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing and always come back again to where they were. Life is a circle, from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.

7.6 They marry each other with a ring, a ring of bright water, whose ripples travel from the heart of the sea. They marry each other with a ring of light, the glitter broadcast on the swift river. They marry each other with the sun's circle, too dazzling to see, traced in the summer sky, with a love that propels the orbit of the moon, and with the boundless circle of the stars. This is a marriage to set tides flowing and command the winds to travel or be at rest.

7.7 <may be combined with other readings from this section>  
We will now bless \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's rings with a warming ceremony in which each of you will hold the rings and bless them. When the rings are passed to you, please warm them in your hands for a few seconds while silently praying and giving your blessing to the couple. Then pass the rings to the person beside you.

<The ushers will take the rings from the officiant, pass them through the family and friends, and return them to the officiant.>

## Ring Vows

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\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , repeat after me as you put \_\_\_\_\_ 's/ \_\_\_\_\_ 's ring on her/his finger:

- 8.1 I give you this ring as a symbol of our love and unity.
- 8.2 With this ring, I marry you and pledge to you my faithful love.
- 8.3 This ring is a symbol of our union, a token of my faith and love. With this ring, I marry you (or I thee wed).
- 8.4 \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ , accept this ring as a token of my love and devotion.

8.5 (said by the officiant after each ring is exchanged) May \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ who gives it and \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ who wears this ring, honour in life the pledge for which it stands.



## Ring Ceremony Affirmation

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9.1 These rings are circles unbroken, just as your love for each other is unbroken and complete. May the love between you grow and strengthen through all the years it would take to travel around your rings and come to their ends.

9.2 In giving and receiving rings, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have taken unto themselves symbols of all that this marriage means to them, and in wearing these rings, they are joining those meanings with a public statement that they are married. Each of us knows the values of love and devotion, companionship and trust, honour and caring which come in any intimate relationship. Let us take this time to think on these things and share our hopes for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .

9.3 You have given each other these rings as special symbols of what you intend that your love and your marriage will mean to you. As you wear them, may your commitment to that ideal be fulfilled abundantly.

## Unity Ceremony

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Please retrieve your bouquet.

### Candle

10.1 (if mothers/parents have not lit family candles) As you each take a candle and together light the unity candle, you are symbolizing the union of your lives. There are two of you, yet there is only one life before you. May this life be blessed and ever richer, because of everything you bring to it as individuals.

10.2 Will the mothers/parents please come to the unity candle table.

I now invite \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's mothers/parents to light candles signifying the flame of their love for and pride in their children.

<mothers/parents light the family candles>

May the spirit of this love and pride glow forever brightly in their new life.

10.3 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, candles have been lit to signify the love and support of your families. As you together light a candle, you are symbolizing the union of your families and the creation of a new life for you. May this life be blessed and ever richer, because of everything you bring to it as individuals.

<\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ light tapers from the flames of the family candles. Together, the couple lights their unity candle and then individually greet their mothers/parents.>

10.4 (with children) We want you to share in the life and love of our family home. (All gather around the candles.) In the beginning, there is the light of life, and with it, the hope and promise of love. When each of us is born, we receive the light of life and love \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will now each light a candle to symbolize their lives and the love they bring to each other. (Couple lights candles.) As we live, our lives give light to others; so it is when we join into families. (The children light candles, or the parents light them for them.) And now your hearts are uniting to create new love as a family, with its hope and promise for the future. You are all part of the new light, the new family life which we recognize here today. I invite you to light the candle of unity. Let the light you have kindled together illumine your lives and the lives of others through both sunshine and shadow in the days to come.

## **Sand**

10.5 As you stand beside each other, may your love always be as constant as the ocean tide; waves flowing endlessly from the depths of the sea. Just as water is an eternal force of life, so is love. Love is the force that allows us to face fear and uncertainty with courage.

You have sealed your relationship by the giving and receiving of rings. But although you will be sharing one life, never forget that you are two separate people. Cherish and affirm your differences. Love each other. Keep your commitment primary. Together you will laugh and cry, be sick and well, be happy and angry, share and grow. Grow sometimes together, sometimes separately.

To symbolize your union and the importance of the individuals within your marriage, two separate colors of sand will be combined. Each one holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. Each can stand on its own and be whole, without need of anything else. However when these two are blended together, they create an entirely new and extraordinarily more intricate entity.

Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination. Please pour the sand into this common container to symbolize the union of your two lives.

<couple pours the sand into the container>

May this be a lasting memory of the vows you have made and of your unity.

## **Rose**

10.6 It is now my privilege to present to you a gift to celebrate your union. In the language of flowers, a rose is a symbol of love. Please exchange your roses. <couple exchanges roses> In this exchange you have given each other a gift as partner to partner, which of course is the gift of love.

And it would be my hope that, wherever you make your home, there be an especially appointed place in it for roses. And that on each succeeding anniversary of this occasion, you celebrate it, at least in part, by each of you bringing to the appointed place a rose, as a restatement of love and as a commitment to the vows you have made this day.

In every union there are occasionally difficult issues which arise. When such times come in your union, either of you will remember

and bring to the appointed place a rose. The other will see it, understand it as a statement of love, and accept it, remembering love endures all things.

<couple may bring the roses to place on the register table>

## **Water**

10.7 <pedestal covered in white cloth set to one side with two identical vessels for water either side of a third receptacle containing a water soluble dye of a bright colour>.

As you stand beside each other, may your love always be as constant as the ocean tide; waves flowing endlessly from the depths of the sea. Just as water is an eternal force of life, so is love. Love is the force that allows us to face fear and uncertainty with courage.

You have sealed your relationship by the giving and receiving of rings. But although you will be sharing one life, never forget that you are two separate people. Cherish and affirm your differences. Love each other. Keep your commitment primary. Together you will laugh and cry, be sick and well, be happy and angry, share and grow. Grow sometimes together, sometimes separately

The water \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are holding represents their individual experiences, values and the love and support they have received from family and friends. However, when these two are combined, they create an entirely new and extraordinarily more intricate entity. Each drop of water brings to the mixture an element of \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's lives that forever enriches the combination.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ , please pour the water into the common container to symbolize the union of your two lives.

The joining of \_\_\_\_\_ 's and \_\_\_\_\_ 's lives and experiences has created a new life together, which is stronger and more intricate than before. May this be a lasting memory of the vows you have made and of your unity.

## Signing of the Marriage Register and Licence

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11.1 We will now sign the register. (The marriage register and license must be signed before the officiant can legally pronounce the couple married.)

## Meditation or Prayer

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12.1 We ask that the holy spirit of love may deepen and enrich the lives of those who leave this place as a newly-married couple. We ask that each may be enabled to see life from the other's point of view that they may be tolerant and large-minded, sympathetic and kind, considerate of weakness and forgiving of faults. May the relationship which today has been publicly expressed and formalized continue to develop richly in the days to come. Whatever changes time may bring, let what has been said and done here remain as a treasured memory and a guide to life.

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

12.3 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, I wish you all happiness; but my wishes cannot give it, nor can it come from outward circumstances. It can only come from yourselves, from the spirit within you. You cannot choose what changes and chances are to befall you in the coming years, but you can choose the spirit with which you will meet them. Let it be the spirit of the noble vows in which you have just made your pledges, each to the other. If you take these vows not as a form, but as a bond of honour which you will keep with

unswerving loyalty, then, whatever may come, you will have inward happiness, which no pleasures of themselves can give, no sorrows take away. Then the whole of life which awaits you will be an abiding security to yourselves, and a welcome example to others.

12.4 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, may the love which has brought you together continue to grow and enrich your lives, bringing peace and inspiration to each of you and to those who know you. May you meet with courage the problems which arise to challenge you; may you meet with strength the troubles that beset you. May your marriage be one of ever-growing depth, meaning, and development, because of the sympathy, understanding, and love which you give to one another in the life you share.

12.5 We know not what the future may bring into the life of this couple, but we pray that together they may be equal to the needs of their tomorrows. May they have patience in time of strain, strength in time of weakness, courage in time of doubt, and above all, a growing love. And now may the love in your hearts and the greatness of life's possibilities give you joy; the assurances of your families' and friends' good wishes give you peace and strength.

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

12.7 God of love, we invoke the gentlest blessing upon all true lovers, and especially upon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, who have made their vows of marriage and exchanged rings. Grant to each of them a clear sense of self and of each other, and of the responsibilities to each other and to society. To keep these pledges, may they be filled with grace and understanding. May they be devoted, one to the other. May the happiness which they have brought to these moments never lose its freshness, and may it ripen into fuller flower and deepen, until it mingles with the very roots of their being. May they grow ever closer from this day forward, in work,

in play, in hope, in counsel, in laughter and tears. May they, in all the changes and chances of life, be true helpers, one to the other. Hand in hand, heart with heart, may they go forth on their journey in such confidence and trust and affection that no suffering or sorrow or loss can ever blight the joy of their comradeship. Amen.

12.8 We ask for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ a full life- a life rich in meaning, in purpose, in caring, and in joy. We ask not that they be “happy ever after,” although we hope that they will feel happy often. We ask what is perhaps a more realistic goal, though by no means a simple one: that they may continually strive to do and be what their inner voices urge them to attain, not a static contentment with each other and with their world, but an ongoing process of exploring the fullness of their own and each other’s personality, of helping and being helped by others, of working for the survival of our endangered planet. But let us not ask for them what we would not ask for ourselves. Let us join with them, let us play with them, and work with them, through many more years of friendship and love.

## **Pronouncement**

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Please hold hands.

13.1 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen one another from the many people of the earth. They have declared their love and purpose before this gathering, and have made their pledges, one to another. Now, by the authority vested in me by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the Marriage Act of the Province of Ontario, I declare that they are \*. Let all others honour them and the threshold of their house. May they find here the good beginning for the spending and fruitfulness of many years.

13.2 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have grown in knowledge and love of one another. They have agreed in their desire to go forward in life together, seeking an ever richer, deepening relationship. They have pledged themselves to meet sorrow and joy as one family. We rejoice to recognize their marriage, and now, by the authority

vested in me by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the Marriage Act of the Province of Ontario, I pronounce them \*.

13.3 Since \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have joined themselves in marriage and have signified their commitment to each other in the joining of hands and the giving and receiving of rings, I, by the authority vested in me by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the Marriage Act of the Province of Ontario, now pronounce them \*.

13.4 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, in a great sense the two of you were married long before you came here today. Today is merely the sharing of your wishes and hopes with these close friends and relatives who have gathered here this afternoon/evening. We all want you to know that our best wishes are with you at this time. We thank you for sharing this very personal moment with us. Now, by the authority vested in me by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa and the Marriage Act of the Province of Ontario, I pronounce you \*.

Please seal your vows with a kiss.

Please take back your bouquet.

\* husband and wife/ spouses/ married/ legally married/  
married partners/ partners in life/ wed to one another

## Closing Words

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14.1 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 there is no more loneliness.

Now you are two bodies, but there is only one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling place, to enter into the days of your togetherness, and may your days be good and long upon the earth.



14.2 Let us now, in a moment of silence, give our individual blessings to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, now married. May the blessing of each of us be felt by you. And may you also sense the blessing which is not ours to give, but which comes from the very heart of life and is known to those who seek it. Go now to walk the ways of the world together, and may your days be good and long upon the earth.

14.3 Go now to walk the ways of the world together. You, (names of children), you, too, have entered this circle of love, where you will be sheltered and warmed until you are grown and go to find your own world. May the days of all of you be good and long upon the earth.

14.4 May all that is noble, lovely, and true abide with you forever. Go now in peace, and may peace attend you all your days.

14.5 Now and forever, may both of you be united in love and harmony. May both of you share your moods and dreams with loving care.

May both of you keep trust in each other, constant and deep.

May you find joy in life, and warm contentment in your marriage.

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

14.7 We are happy to be sharing in the rejoicing of this hour. May all who love \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ continue to rejoice in the commitments they have made to one another. We ask for them that the meaning of these moments may abide throughout their lives, and that in pleasant ways or in the midst of trials, they may be a comfort and a joy to each other. May each bring intelligence and commitment as well as faith to the task this is set before them. May they maintain enduring respect and trust. May their home be a place of peace for them and all who enter it. May all who follow their lives with interest and affection have cause often to rejoice, not only in their happiness, but also in their brave and generous living. Amen.

14.8 And now may the glory which rests on all who love rest upon you and bless you and keep you. May it fill you with happiness and a gracious spirit. And despite all changes of time and fortune, may all that is noble and lovely and true abound in your hearts and abide with you and give you strength in your days together.

## Speaking to Your Children

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15.1 \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name1 to children**) and \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name2 to children**) are very excited/happy today. I hope you are excited/happy, too. You know how much they love you. They are starting life together today in a new way. This does not mean that your father/mother is less important or doesn't count. But it does mean that \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name1 to children**) and \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name2 to children**) are creating a home for you where you will always be welcome. It is a place where you can share your feelings and your dreams and your wishes. \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name1 to children**) and \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name2 to children**) love each of you. They want to be as open with their thoughts and feelings as you are.

Each of you brings a special warmth to this family that is just yours. For your part in making this family, \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name1 to children**) and \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name2 to children**) are deeply thankful, and they love you very much.

15.2 <children's names> do you share the hopes of \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name1 to children**) and \_\_\_\_\_ (or **name2 to children**) and wish them happiness in the years to come?

15.3 \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you bring a child (children) to this marriage. You are making a new family. Do you affirm that your child (children) are a sacred responsibility, and do you welcome them to this new family with love?

## Presentation

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Please link arms and turn to face your family and friends.

16.1 It is my honour and joy to present \_\_\_\_\_!

16.2 Friends, it is an honour and my joy to present to you the newly married couple/ husband and wife/ spouses, \_\_\_\_\_!

16.3 <Ask for the children to come or be brought forward to join the couple.> Friends, it is my joy to present \_\_\_\_\_ and **<names of children>**.

<wedding party leaves>

