

# BUILDING YOUR WEDDING CEREMONY

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# OUTLINE

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## Introduction

Designing your wedding ceremony is not exactly rocket science but it can be complicated. To help move the process along and to save some time I have created this “kit” for building your wedding ceremony. This system is not perfect and it does not cover all the possible options – but it is a nice beginning place.

You can now work your way through the “kit” section by section, making decisions and selections that reflect your personal wedding wishes. I have worked hard to give you as many options as I could. If you do not find exactly what you want – you can work with the me to fine tune or create something just right for you.

When you have finished this you will need to bring your selections to me and walk through them. At this point any negotiations will be made, any conflicts resolved, and any other options explored.

Good luck!

Pastor John Burton

# Section 1 – Preliminaries

PRELUDE (ORGAN, PIANO, CD, OR OTHER)

SEATING OF GUESTS

LIGHTING OF CANDLES (OPTIONAL – YOU DO NOT HAVE TO HAVE CANDLES)

SPECIAL SEATING OF GRANDPARENTS (OPTIONAL – THEY CAN SEAT THEMSELVES)

SPECIAL SEATING OF PARENTS OF THE GROOM (TRADITIONAL IN MOST WEDDINGS)

SPECIAL SEATING OF THE MOTHER OF THE BRIDE (TRADITIONAL IN MOST WEDDINGS)

PROCESSIONAL

## **Option #1**

*Option of Minister, Groom and Groomsmen entering from the side. Then the Bridesmaids and Maid/Matron of Honor come down the center aisle followed by the ring bearer and flower girl (if any) and then the Bride on the arm of her escort (usually her Father).*

## **Option #2**

*Option of Minister and Groom entering from the side, then the Groomsmen and Bridesmaids enter arm in arm down the center aisle, followed by the ring bearer and flower girl (if any), and then the Bride on the arm of her escort (usually her Father).*

## **Option #3**

*Option of Minister entering from either the side or center aisle. Then the Groomsmen and Bridesmaids enter down the center aisle arm in arm, followed by the ring bearer and flower girl (if any), and then the Bride and Groom enter arm in arm down the center aisle.*

## Section 2 – Introduction and Message

### Option One

#### INTRODUCTION

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God to unite \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in holy matrimony – and then to have a party to celebrate! The Bible teaches that marriage should be a permanent relationship of one man and one woman freely and totally committed to each other as husband and wife. Jesus himself declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and be united with his wife in an attitude of total commitment, and the two shall be as one flesh.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, if marriage is to last a lifetime, it must be built upon love. Love strong enough to share all and bear all; love beyond limits. Love like this can bring honor to God in our homes. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, my most sincere prayer is that your marriage will always be blessed with an abundance of this kind of love.

Let us pray: O Lord, we ask that you look with favor upon \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, who come this day seeking your blessing upon their marriage. Shower them with your love, keep them faithful to the covenant they will make today, and enable their love for one another to continue to grow. Bless all the members of their family. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Who brings this woman to marriage, today?

### Option Two

#### INTRODUCTION

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here as the people of God to witness the marriage of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

We come to share in their joy and to ask God to bless them.

Marriage is a gift of God, sealed by a sacred covenant.

God gives human love.

Through that love, husband and wife

come to know each other with mutual care and companionship.

God gives joy.

Through that joy,

wife and husband may share their new life with others

as Jesus shared new wine at the wedding in Cana.

With our love and our prayers,

we support \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

as they now freely give themselves to each other.

Who brings this woman to marriage? (*Father or escort replies "I do" or "Her mother and I do." Then father/escort, congregation and children sit - especially good for young children to be seated.*)

## CHARGE TO THE COUPLE

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,

I require and charge you both,  
as you stand in the presence of God,  
before whom the secrets of all hearts are disclosed,  
that, having duly considered the holy covenant  
you are about to make,  
you do now declare before this company  
your pledge of faith,  
each to the other.

Do you now pledge your love and faith to one another? (**Say "I Do."**)

Be well assured that if these solemn vows are kept inviolate,  
as God's Word demands,  
and if steadfastly you endeavor to do  
the will of your heavenly Father,  
God will bless your marriage,  
will grant you fulfillment in it,  
and will establish your home in peace.

## INVOCATION

Let us pray:

O gracious and ever living God,  
You have created us male and female in your image;  
Look mercifully upon this man and this woman  
Who come to you seeking your blessing,  
And assist them with your grace,  
That with true fidelity and steadfast love  
They may honor and keep the promises and vows they come to make today;  
Through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen

## SCRIPTURES

Here are some scriptures which have been used in weddings. These are not your only choices but hopefully these might get you started.

## **Old Testament**

Genesis 1: 26-28, 31 (Then God said, Let us make man[mankind] in our image...)

Genesis 2: 18-24 (The the Lord said "It is not good that the man should be alone...)

Ruth 1: 16-17 (Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you ...where you go I will go...)

Psalms 128 (Happy are those who fear the Lord and who walk in his ways...)

Song of Solomon 2: 8-13 (The voice of my beloved – behold he comes...)

Song of Solomon 8: 6-7 (Set me as a seal upon your heart...for love is strong as death...)

## **New Testament**

Matthew 5: 1-12 (Beattitudes)

Matthew 7: 24-27 (Build your house upon a rock.)

Matthew 19: 4-6 (For this reason a man shall leave his father...So they are no longer two but one flesh)

John 15: 9-17 (As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you...This is my commandment, that you love one another...)

Romans 12: 9-18 (Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good, love one another...)

I Corinthians 13 (If I speak in the tongues of mortals and angels but do not have love...)

Colossians 3: 12-17 (As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe with yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility...)

I John 3: 18-24 (Let us love not in word or speech, but in truth and action...)

I John 4: 7-16 (Beloved, let us love one another...)

## **THE MESSAGE**

*The Message will come from the scripture selected by the Bride and Groom...so chose your scripture wisely! The Message is not long – only about 4-5 minutes in most cases – and will generally focus on marriage and specifically on you and your marriage.*

## Section 3 – Vows and Rings

*Please select a set of vows and a set of ring readings. If one does not perfectly fit then select the one closest and make note about how it could be improved.*

### WEDDING VOWS

#### Option #1

By the grace of God  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband,  
To have and to hold  
From this day forward,  
For better, for worse,  
For richer, for poorer,  
In sickness, and in health,  
To love and to cherish,  
Until we are parted by death.  
This is my solemn vow.

#### Option #2

\_\_\_\_\_, today I give myself to you as your husband/wife.  
I have nothing to offer but my hopes for us,  
My dreams for our future,  
My strength to invest in our marriage,  
My all.  
Today I give you the heart and soul of who I am,  
Not because I think I will lose who I am,  
But because I know I can be more truly myself with you than without you.

#### Option #3

\_\_\_\_\_ today I take you as my wife/husband.  
I pledge to share my life openly with you,  
To speak the truth to you in love.  
I promise to honor and tenderly care for you,  
To cherish you and encourage your fulfillment.  
To this I pledge you my solemn vow before God.

#### Option #4

\_\_\_\_\_, I promise before God that I will be with you  
no matter what happens to us and between us.  
If we argue and are angry, as we inevitably will be,

I will work to bring us together.  
If we seem totally at odds and neither of our needs are fulfilled,  
I will persistently try to understand and restore our relationship.  
If our marriage ever seems utterly sterile and going nowhere,  
I will believe it can work,  
I will want it to work,  
And I will do my part to make it work.  
And when all is wonderful and we are happy,  
I will rejoice over our life together  
And strive to keep our relationship strong and growing,  
So long as we both do live.

### **Option #5**

\_\_\_\_\_, I want to be your husband/wife.  
I want this freely, willingly, passionately and madly.  
I love you and wish to spend my life giving – to you and for you.  
I give myself to you today.  
All that I am and hope to be,  
All my aspirations and hopes, I give to you.  
I do this not as an act of reluctant surrender,  
But because in giving I find myself fulfilled.  
And I promise to receive what you offer:  
Your goals and dreams, your pain as well as your joy.  
I am willing and eager to receive and accept you  
And to offer myself for your acceptance and love.

### **Option #6**

\_\_\_\_\_, God has brought us together  
As surely as God brought into being the very universe.  
I promise to love you alone,  
Selfishly and earnestly.  
I promise to stand beside you during the good and the bad,  
And to help you create a home with Christ as its center,  
Bringing glory to God as we bring our love to each other.

### **Option #7**

\_\_\_\_\_, The scripture tells us to love God  
With all our heart, soul, strength, and mind.  
Today, as I become your husband/wife,  
I make this covenant  
To so love God,  
And to so love you.  
With all my heart I love you,

With all that is in my soul I love you,  
With all my strength and energy I will love you,  
And with all the powers of my mind I will love you.  
Always and only you will I love,  
So long as we shall live.

**Option #8**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_,  
Just as you are,  
Above all others,  
And however you may change,  
To share my life.

**Option #9**

\_\_\_\_\_, I promise with God's help,  
To be your faithful husband/wife,  
To love and to serve you as Christ commands,  
So long as we both shall live.

**Option #10**

\_\_\_\_\_, I give myself to you to be your husband/wife,  
And I promise to love and sustain you,  
In the covenant of marriage,  
From this day forward,  
In sickness and in health,  
In plenty and in want,  
In joy and in sorrow,  
As long as we both shall live.

**Option #11**

\_\_\_\_\_, I take you to be my wife/husband,  
Together to love,  
To work and to share,  
To grow and to understand,  
To discover a deeper, fuller life.

**Option #12**

\_\_\_\_\_, to you I offer myself,  
I offer my life,  
I offer my strength,  
I offer my support, my loyalty and my faith.  
I offer my hope,  
I offer my love in all the changing circumstances of life,

For as long as we both shall live.

**Option #13**

\_\_\_\_\_, I do take you to be my wife/husband,  
And do in the presence of God  
And before this congregation,  
Promise and covenant  
To be a loving and faithful spouse,  
For as long as we both shall live.

**Option #14**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise you, \_\_\_\_\_  
That for the rest of my life  
I will be your husband/wife  
Friend and lover.

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

**Option #1**

These rings  
Are the outward and visible sign  
Of an inward and spiritual grace,  
Signifying to us the union  
Of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in holy marriage.

**Prayer:** Bless O Lord, the giving of these rings,  
That they who wear them may abide in your peace  
And continue in your favor  
All the days of their lives  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

\_\_\_\_\_, I give you this ring  
As a sign of my vow,  
And with all that I am  
And all that I have,  
I honor you,  
Before God Almighty.

**Option #2**

These rings  
Are the outward and visible sign  
Of an inward and spiritual grace,  
Signifying to us the union

Of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in holy marriage.

**Prayer:** Bless, O Lord, these rings to be a sign of the vows  
By which this man and woman  
Have bound themselves to one another,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In token and in pledge  
Of our constant faith and abiding love,  
With this ring I thee wed,  
In the name of the Father,  
And of the Son,  
And of the Holy Spirit.

### **Option #3**

These rings  
Are the outward and visible sign  
Of an inward and spiritual grace,  
Signifying to us the union  
Of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in holy marriage.

**Prayer:** By your blessing, O God,  
May these rings be to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
Symbols of unending love and faithfulness,  
Reminding them of the covenant they have made this day,  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

\_\_\_\_\_, I give you this symbol  
As a sign of my love and faithfulness.

# Section 4 – Prayers, Pronouncing and Concluding

## WEDDING PRAYER

The Pastor writes a unique prayer for each couple.

## PRONOUNCEMENT AND KISS

### Option #1

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,

You have committed yourselves to each other

In this joyous and sacred covenant.

Become one. Fulfill your promises.

Love and serve God, honor Christ and each other,

And rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, with the authority granted to me by God almighty and the State of Texas,

I pronounce you “Husband and Wife”

Sir: You may kiss your bride.

### Option #2

Now that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have given themselves to each other by solemn vows and the giving and receiving of rings, I pronounce that they are husband and wife.

Sir, you may kiss your bride.

### Option #3

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have committed yourselves to each other in this joyous and sacred covenant. Become one. Fulfill your promises. Love and serve the Lord.

By the promises made this day I declare you to be husband and wife.

Sir, you may kiss your bride.

## ADMONITION (OPTIONAL)

Pastor to congregation:

By their promises, made before us this day, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Have united themselves as husband and wife in sacred covenant.

Those whom God has joined together let no one separate.

## BENEDICTION (OPTIONAL – SOMETIMES WE GO STRAIGHT TO THE PRESENTATION)

And now,

May the grace of Christ attend you

The love of God surround you,  
The Holy Spirit keep you,  
That you may live in faith, abound in hope, and grow in love,  
Both now and forevermore. Amen.

## PRESENTATION

Family and friends, it is now my privilege to present to you Mr. and Mrs.

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## RECESSIONAL

1. Bride and Groom
3. Best Man and Maid of Honor
4. Bridesmaids and Groomsmen
5. Ring Bearer and Flower Girl (if any)
6. Minister

## Section 5 – Music

*Music has several functions in a wedding. It:*

- *Adds beauty,*
- *Holds a special meaning to the Bride and/or Groom*
- *Breaks up the spoken word, which can get a bit long without breaks*
- *Allows the Bride and Groom time to catch their breath and to savor the moment.*

*Many weddings include 15-30 minutes of music (prelude music) before the service begins. This entertains the waiting people as well as adding to the beauty of the service.*

*During the wedding there are options for up to three selections. You do not have to have three!*

- *One can come immediately after the pastor's message – your friends and family will appreciate the break!*
- *Another can come between the Vows and the Exchange of Rings – this allows the Bride and Groom to savor those most special parts of the service rather than rush right on by. Note: this should be a short piece as the Bride and Groom will be standing face to face in front of the congregation – this can seem like an eternity if the song is more than about 2 minutes!*
- *And lastly there can be a final selection possible after the Unity Candle, if you do a Unity Candle*

*Not all music is appropriate for a worship service or a sanctuary – some fit better at the reception!*

*Discuss any selections you would like with the Pastor and the Director of Music – they may want to see a copy of the lyrics before making a decision.*

*The Director of Music has vast experience in weddings and can help you by suggesting options that you might not find on your own.*

*When vocalists are to sing they are expected to provide their own music and to arrange a time with the Director of Music to rehearse their selection.*

## Section 6 – Special Options

### UNITY CANDLE (USUALLY IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRAYER)

The ancient candle ceremony symbolizes the one-flesh principle in Christian marriage.

The two become one and treat each other as if they were a part of their own flesh.

The love that comes out of this unity is best described by Ruth's words to Naomi in the Old Testament:

"Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you!

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17)

In Christ the two become one.

[Light the candle at this point.]

### COMMUNION (USUALLY IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE PRONOUNCEMENT)

I hope that you will all bear witness that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen to invite God to be an active part of their marriage. They have chosen for their first act as husband and wife the partaking of Holy Communion.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, at the Last Supper, Jesus broke the bread and blessed the cup, giving it to his followers saying, "Do this in remembrance of me." In Christ's name I offer you these sacred symbols of life and love and hope. As he is now, let God always be a vital part of your life and your relationship.

### BLENDED FAMILY CEREMONY #1

Officiant Remarks: It is the desire of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to extend their commitments to each other by making some promises to the children of this family. As you all join hands to form a new circle of love, we will seal this union with spoken promises like the rings this bride and groom have exchanged.

Officiant to the Bride/Groom: Do you \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, promise to be faithful, loving, tender and nurturing parents, always there for \_\_\_\_\_ (child/children's name), not only providing their/her/his physical needs, but

their/her/his emotional needs as well, always a good listener, a loving counselor and a friend?

Bride & Groom: We do.

Officiant to the Mother/Father (Speaking to the Child/Children): (Repeat after me). \_\_\_\_\_, I want you to know that I love your mother/father very much. I will not and cannot replace a mother/father loved by you, however I can promise you that I will love you and care for you as if you were my own. I promise to be a committed listener. I promise you my trust, to be fair, my support, what knowledge I can share, to be your friend, and to provide a shoulder to cry on. I promise to be available to you as I am to your mother/father.

Bride/Groom to Child/Children: \_\_\_\_\_, I give you this \_\_\_\_\_ (gift) as a sign of my loving promises made this day.

Officiant to Child/Children: Do you accept the promises made by \_\_\_\_\_?

Child/Children: I do or We do.

Officiant: May a kind God now bless you all as family, and bless this marriage and this home, wherever you may be. And so it is.

## BLENDING FAMILY CEREMONY #2

Officiant: There are children who will share in this marriage. The gathering of this new family will have a deep influence upon them. It will both complicate and enrich their lives. They will also have much to contribute to this new family. We realize that in order for the home to be a happy one, it is essential that there be love and understanding between the children and the adults being married.

Officiant to Bride and Groom: Is your love for each other broad enough to include \_\_\_\_\_ (name the child/children) and deep enough to honor their/her/his presence in this marriage and to pledge yourselves to love and care for them/her/him?

Bride and Groom: We will.

Officiant to Child/Children: You are a vital part of this new marriage. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ give you their unconditional love and honor your presence in their lives. \_\_\_\_\_, you will have a share in this union, for your life/lives will be touched by the covenant being made here today. Your participation is requested to help develop the bonds of a new family.

As \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have exchanged their pledges in holy union, we ask from you also a pledge, that you will join together to weave a fabric of mutual help and comfort, of challenge and support, and that you will help create a home and a way of life in which all of you may grow into the fullness of the best people you can be. Will you now pledge to do your best to help make a happy and successful home for all of you by your love and cooperation?"

Child/Children: I will or We will.

Officiant: And so it is.

## THE EXCHANGE OF ROSES (AFTER THE PRONOUNCEMENT)

The Minister gives the couple each a rose and says:

Roses are a symbol of love. Whenever we see a single-stem rose, or a bouquet of roses, we remember the human love shared between two people. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as you prepare to give each other these roses, remember that they symbolize your love. In the future, when you wish to acknowledge your love because of your happiness, or when you want to remind each other of your love because of some temporary misunderstanding, place a rose in your presence. Let its fragrance remind you of the fragrance of the love you share. Let this rose be the first gift you give and receive as husband and wife. You may exchange your roses.

## BLENDING THE SANDS CEREMONY #1 - BRIDE AND GROOM

Minister:

(If you use two sea shells to pour the sand) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, may your love always be as constant as the never-ending waves, flowing endlessly from the depths of the sea. Just as there will never be a morning without the ocean's flow, may there never be a day without your love for each other.

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, today you are making a life-long commitment to share the rest of your lives with each other. Your relationship is symbolized through the pouring of these two individual containers of sand; one, representing you, \_\_\_\_\_ and all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be, and the other representing you, \_\_\_\_\_, and all that you were and all that you are, and all that you will ever be.

Each one holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. They can stand on their own and be whole, without the need of anything else. When the two are blended together they represent an entirely new and extraordinary love relationship. Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination.

(The Bride and Groom pick up the containers of sand)

As you each hold your sand the separate containers of sand represent your lives to this moment; individual and unique. As you now combine your sand together, your lives also join together as one. You may now blend the sand together symbolizing the uniting of the bride and groom into one. The life that each of you have experienced until now, individually, will hereafter be inseparably united, for

the two shall become one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your marriage be.

THE EMBRACE AND KISS (RIGHT BEFORE THE KISS)  
(The couple recites Percy Bysshe Shelly's poem.)

Groom:

The fountains mingle with the river,  
And the rivers with the Ocean;  
The winds of heaven mix forever  
With a sweet emotion;  
Nothing in the world is single;  
All things by a law divine  
In one spirit meet and mingle.  
Why not I with thine?

Bride:

See the mountains kiss high heaven,  
And the waves clasp one another;  
No sister flower would be forgiven  
If it distained its brother;  
And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:  
What is all this sweet work worth  
If thou kiss me not?

THE LASSO CEREMONY

(The Bride and Groom stand before the minister.)

Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen to incorporate the Lasso ritual into their wedding ceremony today. The Lasso is a wedding ritual in which the couple are bound together with a ceremonial rosary. Lassoing is a declaration of intent, where the bride and groom clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds. As you enter this state of matrimony you should strive to make real the ideals that to you, give meaning to this ceremony and to the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this Lasso you are not only declaring your intent to be bound together before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to God. The promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union and will cross the years and lives of each soul's

growth. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, I ask you to hold hands and look into each others eyes.

Will you honor and respect one another, and seek to never break that honor?

Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it?

Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union?

Will you share each other's laughter, and look for the brightness in life and the positive in each other?

Bride & Groom: We will.

Minister drapes the Lasso in the form of an "8" around the shoulders of the Bride and Groom.

Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as you are bound together now, so too your lives and spirits are joined in a union of everlasting love and trust. Above you are the stars and below you is the earth. Like the stars your love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow.

Minister offers a prayer:

Bless the marriage of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, O God, as they begin their journey down the road of life together. We know not what lies ahead for the road has many turns and bends. We are grateful to you for helping them to make the best of whatever comes their way. We are thankful that they can continue to enjoy each other as they did when they first met and for helping them to realize that nothing nor no one is perfect and to look for the good in all things and all people including themselves. Thank you for helping them to respect each other's likes and dislikes, opinions and beliefs, hopes and dreams and fears even though they may not always understand them. Thank you for helping them to learn from each other and to help each other to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Thank you for helping them to realize that no matter what happens to them they will hold on to each other and know that things have a way of working out for the good. Thank you for helping them to create for their children a peaceful, stable home of love as a foundation on which they can build their lives. But most of all, dear God, thank you for helping them to keep lit the flame of love' that they now share so that by their loving example they may pass on the light of love to their children and to their children's children forever and ever. Amen.

Minister then removes the lasso, presents it to the Groom who will later give it to the Bride.

## THE BLESSING OF A COIN OR COINS

This is an Orthodox Christian tradition.

The minister says: O Lord, sanctify these coins, offered as a symbol of the settlement between this man and this woman. This is a spiritual not material settlement, an agreement of the heart and mind, not of paper or currency. Let this spiritual bond keep them and instruct them in the ways of life everlasting. Amen.

## BREAKING OF A GLASS

This is an old Jewish tradition. There are several ancient meanings, such as it being a reminder of the destruction of Jerusalem. In modern time it is also a reminder that marriage is fragile and cannot always be mended – so be careful lest you break something you cannot mend.

## JUMPING THE BROOM (USUALLY JUST BEFORE THE BRIDE AND GROOM RECESS)

An old tradition that comes mostly from Africa but also has some Celtic roots. The "Jumping the Broom" is a ceremony in which the bride and groom signify their entrance into a new life and their creation of a new family by symbolically "sweeping away" their former single lives, former problems and concerns, and jumping over the broom to enter upon a new adventure as wife and husband

## HANDBASTING CEREMONY

The Bride and Groom kneel before the minister.

Minister: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are also including hand-fasting in their wedding ceremony to emphasize their eternal bond and reinforce the feeling that they never wish to be parted from one another. Handfasting is an ancient Celtic tradition symbolizing the binding together of two people in love.

(The Bride and Groom join hands, right to right, left to left. Minister places a golden cord (or other color of your choice) over their hands and his hand over their joined hands.)

Minister: (Holding up Cord) This is the Cord of Handfasting. It will bind \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together with bonds of love. For such bonds to be strong, they need support - not only from the couple themselves, but most of all, they will need the support of their community of family and friends. When I bind their hands together, please focus on this Cord and let your support flow as loving strength into it.

Minister: Trust is the very foundation of a healthy love relationship. There can be no trust without conversation; no genuine intimacy without trust.

Minister to the Bride: \_\_\_\_\_, please repeat after me.

Bride: My Love for you is a bond made in perfect trust. Love given in trust brings freedom; let us be free to love.

Minister: \_\_\_\_\_, please repeat after me.

Groom: My Trust in you is a bond made in perfect Love. Trust given with love brings freedom; let us be free to trust.

Minister: Bless these hands that will hold one another in passion and Love. Let these hands that will bake bread for one another, and build shelter for one another be blessed. Bless these hands that will hold their children and grand children, and that will comfort them in grief, and hold them in affection. May this couple be blessed with empathy and understanding; honesty and justice; vision and wisdom; beauty and eloquence. Your union will be the heart of a new family, joining and extending and blending both families into one.

## Section 7 – Special Readings

*These readings are optional and, if you like one, it can be inserted in the order of service. Discuss with the Pastor where in the service it might be appropriate. Sometimes the Pastor will include such a reading in the Message.*

### **Option One**

To laugh often and much;  
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;  
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;  
To appreciate beauty;  
To find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch,  
or a redeemed social condition;  
To know even one life has breathed easier because you lived.  
This is to have succeeded.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson (also attributed to Harry Emerson Fosdick)

### **Option Two**

Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses.  
Love is content with the present, it hopes for the future, and it doesn't brood over the past. It's the day-in and day-out chronicle of irritations, problems, compromises, small disappointments, big victories, and working toward common goals.  
If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you don't have it, no matter what else there is, it's not enough.

-Unknown

### **Option Three**

A bell is not a bell unless you ring it;  
And a song is not a song unless you sing it;  
And love isn't love in your heart to stay,  
For love isn't love, unless you give it away.

-Unknown

### **Option Four**

Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there often is in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, for they, too, have their story.

Keep interested in your career and in life...for it is a real possession in the changing

fortunes of time. And let not the problems or trickery of the world blind you to what virtue there is. Many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere, you will find life is full of beauty and heroism. So, be yourself. Never feign affection and do not be cynical about love. For in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass. Take kindly the counsels of the years, gracefully surrendering the thing of youth. Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. And do not distress yourself with imaginings. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself and with each other.

You are a child of the universe no less than are the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be, and whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace with your soul. With all of the problems, drudgery, and the broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world in its light and its love. Strive to be happy.

-The "Desiderata"

### **Option Five**

Doubt thou the stars are fire,  
Doubt that the sun doth shine,  
Doubt truth to be a liar,  
But never doubt I love.

- From Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

### **Option Six**

If ever two were one, then surely we,  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee,  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me ye women if you can.  
I prize they love more than whole mines of gold  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold...  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

-Anne Bradstreet, "To My Husband"

### **Option Seven**

...he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same...If all else perished and he remained, I should still continue to be, and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn a mite stranger...He's always, always in my mind; not as a pleasure to myself, but as my own being.

-Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

### **Option Eight**

"Sonnet XIV"

If thou must love me, let it be for naught  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
"I love her for her smile – her look – her way of speaking gently, – for trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought a  
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day" -  
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
Be changed, or change for thee, - and love, so wrought,  
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry, -  
A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*

### **Option Nine**

"Sonnet XLIII"

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 ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
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 grief, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I sowed 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, from *Sonnets from the Portuguese*

### **Option Ten**

Give all to love;  
Obey they heart;  
Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good-fame,

Plans, credit and the Muse,  
Nothing refuse.

Tis a brave master,  
Let it have scope:  
Follow it utterly,  
Hope beyond hope:  
High and more high  
It dives into noon,  
With wing unspent,  
Untold intent;  
But it is a god,  
Knows its own path  
And the outlets of the sky.

It was never for the mean;  
It requireth courage stout.  
Souls above doubt,  
Valour unbending.  
It will reward,  
They shall return  
More than they were,  
And ever ascending...

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, "*Give All to Love*"

### **Option Eleven**

My true love hath my heart and I have his, by just exchange one for another given;  
I hold his dear and mine he cannot miss; there never was a better bargain driven:  
My true love hath my heart and I have his.  
My heart in me keeps him and me in one; my heart in him his thoughts and senses  
guides;  
He loves my heart for once it was his own; I cherish his because in me it hides:  
My true love hath my heart and I have his.

- Sir Philip Sidney, "*My True Love Hath My Heart*"

### **Option Twelve**

*Why Marriage?*

Because to the depths of me,  
I long to love one person,  
With all my heart, my soul, my mind, my body...  
Because I need a forever friend to trust with the intimacies of me,

who won't hold them against me,  
Who loves me when I'm unlovable, who see the small child in me,  
and looks for the divine potential of me...  
Because I need to cuddle in the warmth of the night  
with someone I feel blessed hold...  
Because marriage means opportunity to grow in love in friendship...  
Because, knowing this, I promise my self to take full responsibility for my spiritual,  
mental and  
physical wholeness.  
Because with this understanding the possibilities are limitless...  
-Source Unknown