

# *Wedding/Commitment Ceremony* *Workbook*



River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
6301 River Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817  
Phone: (301) 229-0400 Fax: (301) 320-3544  
E-mail: [office@rruuc.org](mailto:office@rruuc.org)  
Website: [www.rruuc.org](http://www.rruuc.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Opening Words.....	3
Addresses.....	12
Blessings .....	19
Vows .....	25
Rings.....	44
Unity Candle Ceremonies .....	52
Chalice Ceremonies .....	56
Readings.....	59
Prayers.....	80
Pronouncements .....	87
Benedictions.....	92

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Wedding and Commitment Ceremony Workbook of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation (RRUUC). It is our hope that the diverse material included here will provide you with all (or at least most!) of what you need to create a meaningful ceremony.

The material is organized in sections that follow the usual organizational structure of a Unitarian Universalist Wedding. Elements such as special music, vocal solos, or additional readings can, of course, be added in consultation with the minister you select to conduct your ceremony. If you have any special materials that would be meaningful to you, we encourage you to bring them to the attention of the minister conducting your ceremony; we always welcome your input. In addition, the enclosed readings and elements can be “mixed and matched.” For example, perhaps you like the first few lines of one vow, and the last few lines of another; they can easily be combined into a new vow used just at your ceremony. Most ceremonies constructed from this workbook run from 20 to 30 minutes in length, depending on whether music or additional materials are added. Please study these materials, pick readings and elements you like, and bring them to your interview with the minister who will be conducting your ceremony.

Should you decide to have your ceremony at our facilities at 6301 River Road, we will do everything we can to make your wedding/holy union a beautiful and memorable event with deep spiritual significance. Our beautiful sanctuary building was designed by Keyes, Lethbridge and Condon who received an Award of Merit from the American Institute of Architects in 1966 for their building design. The clean, simple lines and natural materials of stone, wood and brick create a lovely setting for religious ceremonies and celebrations. The newer Fellowship Hall building designed by MFTA features a large Fellowship Hall, kitchen and lecture halls. The two buildings, closely related in design, are connected by a glass enclosed bridge. The heavily wooded property gives a sense of a wedding in the country right in the middle of a bustling suburb. RRUUC’s location on a main thoroughfare makes access easy for all your guests.

Then, the ceremony itself can be what you want it to be. If our ministers or another Unitarian Universalist minister officiates, he or she will help you (with the marriage materials that follow, and with any additional readings or materials you would like to include) create a ceremony that will be beautiful, deeply meaningful, and will give expression to your spiritual values. If you prefer, you may use another clergy person by prior arrangement with our senior minister. Our staff will assist you with other matters such as music and the arrangement of the room. We will help you make your wedding an occasion you will cherish.

# INTRODUCTION

## ARRANGING THE CEREMONY

Setting the date and time and arranging for the facilities to be used should be done with the Administrator or Administrative Assistant and confirmed after conversation with the minister. The minister will arrange with the couple whatever appointments or conferences are deemed mutually necessary.

Please refer to our website at [www.rruuc.org](http://www.rruuc.org) for additional information on our facilities (including room sizes, seating capacity, etc.), rental fees, other building use information and regulations and minister's honorarium. Please click on Building Rentals (<http://www.rruuc.org/about-us/building-rental.html>) and Spirituality/Ceremonies (<http://www.rruuc.org/spirituality/ceremonies.html>).

## THE REHEARSAL

Rehearsal time is should be scheduled with the Administrator or Administrative Assistant after conversation with the minister.

## CEREMONY MUSIC

Clif Hardin, Director of Music, has had much experience playing for weddings and can be very helpful in selecting music. He can also make suggestions and arrange for instrumental or vocal soloists. He may be reached through the RRUUC office. Please refer to RRUUC's website for information on the associated fees:

<http://www.rruuc.org/spirituality/ceremonies/weddingcommitment/ceremony-fees>.

## MINISTER'S HONORARIUM/FEES

Please refer to RRUUC's website for information on the minister's honorarium:

<http://www.rruuc.org/spirituality/ceremonies/weddingcommitment/ceremony-fees>.

## MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Additional information related planning and arranging for your ceremony can be found on the website:

- <http://www.rruuc.org/spirituality/ceremonies/weddingcommitment/ceremony-fees.html>  
and
- <http://www.rruuc.org/about-us/building-rental/info-rules.html#c784>

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information, or to schedule an appointment, please contact the Administrator or Administrative Assistant, at:

Tel: (301) 229-0400

Fax: (301) 320-3544

E-mail: [Office@RRUUC.org](mailto:Office@RRUUC.org)

## OPENING WORDS

If life has meaning to us at all, it possesses it because of love. It is that which enshrines and ennobles our human experience. It is the basis for the peace of family and the peace of the peoples of the earth. The greatest gift bestowed upon humans is the gift not of demanding, but of giving love between (man and woman) *or* (2 people.)

- Martin Weitz

## OPENING WORDS

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

- George Eliot

## OPENING WORDS

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am but a sounding gong ... a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of all prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, yet have not love – I am nothing. And though I share all my goods among the poor, and though I give my body to be burnt, but have not love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not envious, boastful, nor vain; she does not behave herself unseemly, seeks not her own good, is not easily provoked, keeps no account of her wrongs, rejoices not in inequity, but rejoices in the truth. Always charitable, always trustful, always hopeful, always steadfast. Faith, hope and love – these three abide – and the greatest of these is love.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13

## OPENING WORDS

love is a place  
& through this place of  
love moves  
(with brightness of peace)  
all places

yes is a world  
& in this world of  
yes live  
(skillfully curled)  
all worlds

- *love is a place*  
e.e. cummings

## OPENING WORDS

Shine! Shine! Shine!  
Pour down your warmth, great sun!  
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Day come white, or night come black,  
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.

- *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*  
Walt Whitman

## OPENING WORDS

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

- *Sonnet 116*  
William Shakespeare

## OPENING WORDS

Love is not some accident we fall into. Falling in love should be suspect. But if we GROW in love, then there is the possibility that our tomorrows will be even more joyous, more tender, and caressing, more devoted to life flowing through us; tomorrows more full of the thrill of life even as each day is better than yesterday. Love has the capacity for that magic. Perhaps only love has such capacity.

Source Unknown

# OPENING WORDS

## In Patagonia

I said perhaps Patagonia, and pictured  
a peninsula, wide enough  
for a couple of ladder-back chairs  
to wobble on at high tide. I thought

of us in breathless cold facing  
a horizon round as a coin, looped  
in a cat's cradle strung by gulls  
from sea to sun. I planned to wait

till the waves had bored themselves  
to sleep, till the last clinging barnacles,  
growing worried in the hush, had  
paddled off in tiny coracles, till

those restless birds, your actor's hands,  
had dropped slack into your lap,  
until you turned, at last to me.  
When I spoke of Patagonia, I meant

skies all empty aching blue. I meant  
years. I meant all of them with you.

- Kate Clancy

## OPENING WORDS

### *A Third Body*

A man and a woman sit near each other, and  
they do not long  
At this moment to be older, or younger,  
nor born  
In any other nation, or time or place.  
They are content to be where they are,  
talking or not talking.  
Their breaths together feed someone whom  
we do not know.  
The man sees the way his fingers move;  
he sees her hands close around a book she  
hands to him.  
They obey a third body that they share  
in common.  
They have made a promise to love that body.  
Age may come, parting may come, death will come.  
A man and a woman sit near each other;  
as they breathe they feed someone we do  
not know,  
someone we know of, whom we have never seen.

- from *A Woman in Two Worlds*  
Robert Bly

# ADDRESSES

## STANDARD ADDRESS

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

Today you are surrounded by your family and friends – all of whom have gathered here to witness your marriage, and share in the celebration of life ... and I know that I speak for all of them when I express how very glad I am to be sharing this special moment with you.

We know that life has no singular meaning, so much as it is composed of many meaningful events – some of which can be specified and planned for – and one of these life-generating events is marriage.

As you know, no minister, no priest, no Rabbi, no public official can really marry you. Only you can marry yourselves. You can only become husband and wife by a mutual commitment to love each other ... by working toward creating an atmosphere of care, consideration, and respect between you... and by a willingness to face (together) the tensions and anxieties that underlie life.

On this joyous day of your marriage, you stand somewhat apart from all other human beings. You stand within the charmed circle of your PARTICULAR love for one another, and this is as it should be, for to love another as your spouse is one of life's deepest yet most private joys.

But I must remind you on this momentous occasion that love is not meant to solely be the possession of two people alone, for any such closed love eventually poisons us. Rather your love for each other should serve you as a source of common energy, as a center of love and nurturing from which you live your lives in this world with ever-greater responsibility and care.

(continued...)

## ADDRESSES

From this day onward \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you must come closer than ever before. You must love one another in sickness and health, for better and worse. But at the same time your love for one another should give you each the strength to stand apart, to seek your separate destinies, to make your individual contributions to our world.

As you begin your marriage adventure, I know that we assembled here wish for you many good and differing things. For my part, I simply wish you a love that makes you both better people, and that continues to give you joy and zest in living. I wish for you a home, not a place of stone and wood, but an island of sanity and serenity in a frenzied world. I hope that this home will not just be a place of private joy and retreat, but rather serves as a temple wherein the values of your lives are generated and upheld. May your home come to stand for all of us as a symbol of human beings living together, finding love and peace, seeking truth and wholeness.

And finally, I pray that at the end of your good and long life together, you will be able to say these two simple things each to each other:

- Because you have loved me, you have given me faith in myself.
- And because I have seen the good in you, I have obtained from you a faith in all of humanity.

May it be so for the two of you.

## ADDRESSES

In marriage, two persons turn to each other in search of a greater fulfillment than either can achieve alone. Marriage is a going-forth, a bold step into the future; it is risking what we are for the sake of what we yet can be. Only in giving of oneself and sharing with another can the mysterious process of growth take place. Only in loyalty and devotion bestowed upon another can that which is eternal in life emerge and be known. Two among us, who have stood apart, come now, in our presence, to declare their love and to be united in marriage.

Love is a living thing, waiting within each one of us for an awakening touch. In this ceremony we will celebrate love come life for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. May this love grow sure and straight and strong. We rejoice in its presence among us.

## ADDRESSES

Today we gather together family and friends to witness \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ pledge a covenant of sacred matrimony. Marriage embodies all the precious values arising from human companionship and love. It symbolizes the ultimate intimacy between a man and a woman. Therefore, it is not to be entered into lightly, but with certainty, with mutual respect; and with a sense of reverence that does not preclude beauty, humor and joy.

Our celebration is the external sign of a sacred and internal commitment. Such a union can only be created by loving purpose, maintained by abiding will and renewed by human feelings and intentions.

## ADDRESSES

We have come here together that this man and this woman might bear witness before you and to the world of the oneness that has grown up between them; that they might affirm this oneness and this dedication here, as they might have affirmed it to each other. As they now exist as one in their own eyes, so may they exist in your eyes. The mysterious union of two persons in marriage has already occurred in them in the giving and receiving of their love. In witness to this mystery, they do pledge their love and the sharing of their lives. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, today you are taking upon yourselves the potential of a great love already real between you. It is no casual thing to have entered into the inmost life of another person. To make the commitment of love is to risk the pain and grief. And so with this commitment and this risk, you are venturing forth with all the hope two persons can muster. Together you will discover the depths of life. No matter what happens – when you are happy or sad, hopeful or discouraged, close together or far apart – may you always be there for each other. And we friends who share this day with you – may we be there too, if you need us.

# ADDRESSES

Dear family members and friends...

We have come here together this day that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ may bear witness before you and to the world of the oneness which has grown up between them; that they might affirm this oneness and this commitment here, as they have affirmed it to each other. As they now exist as one in their own eyes, so may they exist in your eyes. The mysterious union of two persons has already occurred in them in the giving and receiving of their love for each other. In witness and celebration of this mystery, they come to pledge their lives to each other in marriage.

The essence of this commitment of marriage is the taking of another person in his or her entirety, as lover, companion, and friend. Marriage symbolizes the most intimate sharing of two lives, yet this sharing must enhance, not diminish, the individuality of each partner – a relationship in which each is individually developing, while growing in understanding of the other. We must give ourselves in love, but we must not give ourselves away. It is out of the beautiful tension between separateness and union that love, whose incredible strength is equal only to its incredible fragility, is born and reborn.

We are here today, then, to celebrate the love which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have for each other, and to give recognition to their decision to accept each other totally and unreservedly in marriage.

## ADDRESSES

We are gathered here in the presence of these friends and loved ones, to join these two, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, in the sacred experience of marriage. Marriage is an institution long hallowed in the life of our race and made sacred by the faithfulness of men and women in all ages. It is a sacred union of hearts in the bonds of love, blessed by our church, made legal by the state, but created or annulled by neither. Heart is knit to heart and soul to soul only through personal loyalty and sacrifice. Marriage is not meant for happiness alone, but for growth and fulfillment of character. To this end there must be a consecration of each to the other and of both to the noblest purposes of life.

You, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, are about to begin the old, old experience of making a home; for a home is made whenever two who love deeply and loyally unite themselves for life. As you make this home you will share many things. You will share troubles and sorrows. You will share also the deep joy and happiness which comes when two lives are united in a single love and for a single purpose. You will share that boon above all human reckoning, as you give of love and receive of love, and both are enriched thereby.

The character of the home you make will be measured by many things. It will be measured by your growth in spiritual stature as you drink together the cup of happiness and beauty. It will be measured by your faithfulness, and by your honesty and trust in each other. It will be measured by the growing degree of understanding you achieve. It will be measured by the abiding love in your hearts and the deepening and enrichment of that love as years lengthen into decades.

# BLESSINGS

## **Congregational Blessing**

From time immemorial, weddings like this one have been public occasions where family and friends express the approval and joy they feel for the new Union. Let me ask you of the congregation this:

“Do you who know and care for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ give them your blessings as they enter into this new relationship... aspiring to give them your deepest love, understanding, and support during both good times and bad?”

(Congregation responds, “We do.”)

“So be it.”

# BLESSINGS

From time immemorial, weddings such as this one have been public occasions where family and friends gather to express the joy and approval which they feel for the new union.

Let me therefore first ask you parents this:

Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, who have nurtured and raised these two give your blessings now to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as they enter into this new relationship, and do you aspire (in the days and years ahead) to give them your deepest love, understanding and support during both good times and bad? If so, say, "We do." So be it.

Every marriage needs the love, nurture and support for friends and family – you! So on this wedding day, I ask you not only to be friends of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, but friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together; friends of this relationship.

Do you who know and care for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ give them your blessings now, and do you aspire, in the days and years ahead, to give them your deepest love, understanding and support during both good times and bad? If so say, "We do." So be it.

May the love you have found grow in meaning and strength until its beauty is shown in a common devotion to all that is compassionate and life-giving. May the glow of your love help brighten the face of the earth.

# BLESSINGS

## Children's Blessing (Older)

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

You will have a share in this marriage, for your lives will inevitably be touched by the covenant into which your (mother/father/parents) enter/s today, and your participation will be needed to develop the bonds of a new family. As this man and woman exchange their pledges in marriage, we ask from you also a pledge, that you will make room in your lives so that you may join together to weave a fabric of mutual help and comfort, kindness and support, and that you will help to 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. In this spirit, will you recognize and honor your new relationship with \_\_\_\_\_?

## BLESSINGS

From time immemorial, weddings such as this one have been *public occasions* where family and friends gather to express the joy and approval for which they feel for the new union. Let me therefore first ask you parents this:

Do you, (her/his parents) and (her/his parents), who have nurtured and raised these two give your blessing now to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as they enter into this new relationship, and do you aspire in the days and years ahead to give them your deepest love, understanding and support during both good times and bad?

If so, say "We do." ("I do," if the parent is divorced or widowed.)

So be it.

# BLESSINGS

This is a moment of celebration. Let it also be a moment of dedication.

The world does a good job of reminding us of how incredibly fragile we are. Individuals are fragile; relationships are fragile, too. Every marriage needs the love, nurture and support of a network of friends and family – you! So on this wedding day, I ask you not only to be friends of \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, but friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together, friends of this relationship.

In the moment of silence that follows, I ask each of you, in your own way, to confer a prayer, blessing, wish or hope upon this wedding.

(A moment for silence.)

May the love you have found grow in meaning and strength until its beauty is shown in a common devotion to all that is compassionate and life-giving. May the glow of your love help brighten the face of the earth.

May all our lives be graced with color and courage, and may the source of all love touch and bless us.

Amen!

# BLESSINGS

## **Recognition of Those Present and Not Present**

*(to precede vows)*

When people marry (later in life/in mid-life) as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ do today, they bring with them a keen awareness of all the earlier experiences which have shaped their present sense of self. They come to this moment grateful for all the peaks and valleys of those years,

For the first loves and the lost loves  
For the parents now gone whose memory we  
evoke in blessing on this day,  
For the fine grown sons and daughters of  
whom they are so proud,  
And for all the special relatives and friends,  
near and far, absent, and present here today.

May we all rejoice with them in the new happiness they have found together, and in their shared dreams for the future.

# VOWS

## **PREFACE TO THE VOWS**

As I have already said, it is a great joy for me to be standing here with you on this beautiful day, sharing in your marriage ceremony, and witnessing the life-long commitment you are making to one another this day.

I must remind you that the vows you are about to say to one another belong ENTIRELY TO YOU. The words I speak have no magical powers, and nothing that I can say or do on this day can ultimately make your marriage endure with beauty, fidelity, and joy.

Only you — by the integrity and diligence of your love — can make these vows last.

So it is not to lofty words — or institutions even — that we appeal at this hour of commitment, but rather to the resources which you two can draw upon from deep within yourselves ... the deep well of human need, the need to love united and loving and complete before a broken and imperfect world.

So will you now join hands, and repeat your vows, each to each.

# VOWS

*These words are spoken first by the groom and then by the bride:*

I promise to be your lover, companion and friend,  
Your partner in parenthood, [life]  
Your ally in conflict,  
Your greatest fan and your toughest adversary,  
Your comrade in adventure,  
Your student and your teacher,  
Your consolation in disappointment,  
Your accomplice in mischief,  
Your strength in your need and  
Vulnerable to you in my own,  
And most of all,  
Your associate in the search for enlightenment.

# VOWS

In the presence of (God and) these witnesses

I, \_\_\_\_\_,

Now take you, \_\_\_\_\_,

To be my wife/husband/partner,

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.

## VOWS

I take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my husband/wife/partner, loving you now and always. I will love you when we are together and when we are apart; when life is peaceful and when it is in disorder; when I am proud of you and when I am disappointed in you. I will honor your goals and dreams and help you to fulfill them. From my heart I will seek to be open and honest with you. I say these things believing that God is in the midst of them all.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
we have been building together,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you,  
\_\_\_\_\_, to be no other than yourself.  
Loving what I know of you,  
Trusting what I don't yet know,  
With respect for your integrity,  
And faith in your abiding love for me,  
Through all our years,  
In all that I am or shall ever be,  
Loving you as you are, from today unto all  
tomorrows.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
we have been building together,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you,  
\_\_\_\_\_, to be no other than yourself.  
Loving what I know of you,  
Trusting what I don't yet know,  
With respect for your integrity,  
And faith in your abiding love for me,  
Through all our years,  
We shall keep together  
What share of trouble and sorrow  
Our lives may lay upon us.  
We shall hold together  
Our store of goodness, plenty and love.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
We have been building together,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you,  
\_\_\_\_\_, to be no other than yourself,  
Loving what I know of you,  
Trusting what I don't yet know,  
With respect for your integrity,  
And faith in your abiding love for me,  
Through all our years,  
And in all that life may bring us,  
I accept you as my husband/wife.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
We have been building together  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, now take you \_\_\_\_\_,  
in marriage;  
Together in love,  
To work and to share  
To grow and understand  
To discover a deeper, fuller life.

# VOWS

What does it mean to take a vow? If I take a vow I *bind* myself; I place an *a priori* limit on the way in which my future feelings may be acted upon. I pledge my future to a person or a cause without regard to how I may feel at the time. Is this wisdom or folly? Without a vow no depth of commitment, trust, or relationship may develop. Yet when a vow is taken, I must sometimes force myself to act in a way that does violence to my feelings of the moment ... however, delight comes and goes. It is mixed with anger, neutrality, boredom, jealousy, compassion and hurt. And how is the judgement to be made whether a relationship contains sufficient delight to justify its continuance? If the relationship is always contingent, on trial, the persons involved are too busy reassuring themselves for delight to develop. Seemingly, delight flourishes best in an atmosphere of trust, commitment, and nonchalance... that is, within a context which can only be provided by a vow. Is it the case that the deepest tenderness, the most profound ecstasy may develop only when a pledge has been given?

Is depth of relationship purchased only at the price of breadth? If not, those feelings which create the richest life require the sacrifice of acting upon many momentary desires. It would seem that we must choose the feelings we will nourish, perhaps even those we will allow.

To take a vow is an enormous risk... as is *not* taking a vow. We must choose where we will allow ourselves to tremble. We must decide which gods we will allow to be born. This is the burden of joy, and of human freedom.

# VOWS

In the sight of God  
And in the presence of this company here assembled  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, do take thee, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
To be my wedded husband/wife,  
To have and to hold from this day forward  
'Till death do us part.

# VOWS

*The officiant says to the groom/partner:*

\_\_\_\_\_, will you look into \_\_\_\_\_'s  
eyes, and into her heart,  
and repeat after me?

*Groom/partner:* I commit my life to our partnership in  
marriage. I promise to comfort you, to encourage you in  
all walks of life. I promise to express my thoughts and  
emotions to you, and to listen to you in times of joy and  
in times of sorrow. \_\_\_\_\_, I love you, and you  
are my closest friend. Will you let me share my life and  
all that I am with you?

*Bride/partner:* I will.

*The officiant says to the bride/partner:*

\_\_\_\_\_, will you look into \_\_\_\_\_'s  
eyes, and into his heart,  
and repeat after me?

*Bride/partner:* I commit my life to our partnership in  
marriage. I promise to comfort you, to encourage you in  
all walks of life. I promise to express my thoughts and  
emotions to you, and to listen to you in times of joy and  
in times of sorrow. \_\_\_\_\_, I love you, and you  
are my closest friend. Will you let me share my life and  
all that I am with you?

*Groom/partner:* I will.

- Michael Barlow-Sparkman

# VOWS

*The officiant says to the groom/partner:* \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
how do you pledge your love?

*Groom/partner:* \_\_\_\_\_, I promise to give you my  
love, to accept and cherish your love, to help you  
when you need me. I promise to be your faithful  
husband in joy and in sorrow, and in sickness and in  
health.

*The officiant says to the bride/partner:* \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
how do you pledge your love?

*Bride/partner:* \_\_\_\_\_, I promise to give you my  
love, to accept and cherish your love, to help you  
when you need me. I promise to be your faithful wife  
in joy and in sorrow, and in sickness and in health.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
We have been building together,  
I take you to be my husband/wife/partner,  
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.

# VOWS

I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_,  
As my husband/wife/partner.  
To be the father/mother of my children,  
To be the companion of my home,  
And the friend of my days.  
We shall keep together  
What share of trouble and sorrow  
Our lives may lay upon us.  
And we shall hold together  
Our store of goodness, and plenty, and love.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship we  
have been building together,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
Take you, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
As my husband/wife/partner,  
I respect you as my friend,  
Desire you as my lover,  
Need you as my companion,  
And depend on you to share the joys  
And sorrows of our life together,  
As long as we both may live.

# VOWS

I, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
Take you, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
To be the father/mother of my children,  
To be the companion of my house.  
We shall keep together  
What share of trouble and sorrow  
Our lives may lay down upon us.  
And we shall hold together  
Our store of goodness, and plenty, and love.

# VOWS

In the presence of (God and) these witnesses  
I, \_\_\_\_\_, now take you, \_\_\_\_\_,  
in marriage;  
Together in love,  
To work and to share,  
To grow and understand,  
To discover a deeper, fuller life.

# VOWS

I take you, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
To be my husband/wife/partner;  
Loving what I know of you,  
Trusting what I don't yet know.  
I will love you when we are together,  
And when we are apart.  
When life is peaceful,  
And as it challenges us.  
When I am proud of you,  
And when I am disappointed in you.  
In loving you,  
I will hold your family as part of my own.  
I will honor your goals and dreams,  
Always helping you to fulfill them.  
From my heart,  
I will seek to be open and honest with you.  
I will cherish our relationship,  
As it is from God a precious gift.

# VOWS

In reaffirming the relationship  
We have been building together,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
Take you, \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
As my husband/wife/partner.  
I respect you as my friend,  
Desire you as my lover,  
Need you as my companion.  
I chose you above all others  
To share life with me.

# RINGS

In the circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of holiness and of perfection and of peace. In this ring, 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.

*As each gives a ring, he says to the other:*

I give you this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our love.

# RINGS

Love freely given has  
No giver and no receiver.  
You are each the giver  
And each the receiver.  
May your rings always call to mind  
The freedom and power  
Of this love.

*Each says to the other:*

“I give you this ring,  
to wear upon your hand,  
as a symbol of our love.”

# RINGS

## Ring Ceremony

Everything the power of the world does  
Is one in a circle.  
The sky is round, and I have heard that  
The earth is round like a bell,  
And so are the stars.  
The wind, at 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.  
The life of a man or a woman is a circle  
From childhood to childhood,  
And so it is in everything where power moves.

- *"Black Elk Speaks"*

Black Elk  
Oglala Sioux  
Adapted S.A.

Each says to the other:  
"I give you this ring,  
To wear upon your hand,  
As a symbol of our love."

# RINGS

With these rings you will declare yourselves wedded to  
each other.

Round like the earth, birth as the skies,  
And worked by human craftsmanship,  
They bespeak a good foundation to your lives,  
And brightness in the days to come.  
They call from you  
The human craft of loving.  
As you give, receive, and wear these rings,  
Remember the vows between you made.

# RINGS

## *Exchanging of the Rings*

Love freely given has  
No giver and no receiver.  
You are each the giver  
and each the receiver.  
By the use of these rings,  
You express in visible form  
The unbroken circle of your  
Love, to which, wherever you go,  
You may always return to  
Your shared life together.  
May your rings always call  
To mind the power and freedom  
Of this love.

## *Each says to the other:*

“I give you this ring  
To wear upon your hand  
As a symbol of our love.”

# RINGS

From time out of mind such symbolic acts as the giving of a ring have been a part of the celebration of marriage. The ring as the circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe, of wholeness and perfection and peace.

The rings you give and receive this day are the symbols and the circles of the shared love into which you enter together as husband and wife (partners).

# RINGS

A circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It represents wholeness and peace. In the form of a ring it is the accepted token of marriage (commitment/union.)

By the use of these rings you express in visible form, the unbroken circle of your love, in which wherever you go you will always return to your shared life together.

*The one giving the ring repeats after the minister:*

"I give you this ring  
To wear upon your hand  
As a symbol of our love."

# RINGS

Love freely given has no giver and no receiver.  
You are each the giver, and each the receiver.  
By the use of these rings,  
You express in visible form  
The unbroken circle of your love,  
To which, whenever you go,  
You may always return to your shared life together.  
May your rings always call to mind  
The power and freedom  
Of this love.

*The one giving the ring repeats after the minister:*

“I give you this ring  
To wear upon your hand.  
As a symbol of love.”

# UNITY CANDLE CEREMONIES

*This is a ceremonial element that some couples wish to include.*

A unity candle is usually a large pillar candle which is lit from two side tapers by the bride and groom (partners). Glass oil lamps are also becoming popular for unity candle ceremonies and can often be ordered personalized or with the text of your wedding invitation engraved on them. Many couples consider their unity candles to be special keepsakes which they light each year on their anniversary.

Stores specializing in wedding items, religious book stores, candle specialty stores, and mail order invitation companies will generally carry several styles of unity candles. As with most items, candles made especially for weddings tend to be more expensive. You can save money by using plain candles (which can be decorated or not, according to your tastes) or by making your own (ask around at craft stores for advice.) Your congregation or ceremony site may have holders or stands for unity candles, so you may want to ask before you buy.

The side tapers are the family or individual candles. The flames represent you and your ties to your family. The middle or unity candle represents your marriage and your new family. As the two flames merge into one and can no longer be separated, so are the bride and groom joined as one in marriage. The side tapers may be blown out to represent the start of your life as a couple or remain burning to signify the continuing ties to your family or the retention of your individuality.

Family representations for the bride and groom (partners), usually the mothers (or both parents) generally light the side tapers after the guests are seated, but before they themselves take their places. Often a special piece of music is played or sung at this point. The family candles are generally lit with the standard candle lighters which are used to light the altar candles.

*(continued)*

# UNITY CANDLE CEREMONIES

After the exchange of vows and declaration of marriage, the couple proceeds to the location of the unity candle. Each using their individual candle, they proceed to light the unity candle together. The individual candles are then extinguished and/or returned to their holders.

## *A Unity Candle Ceremony*

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ come into their marriage relationship as individuals, and they do not lose their identity, rather, they use their individuality to create and strengthen the relationship of marriage.

Therefore, the three candles remain lighted, one for each of them and one for their marriage, as symbols of their commitment to each other and to a lasting and loving marriage.

As \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ together light the center candle, they will extinguish their own candles, thus letting the center candle symbolize the union of their lives. As this one light cannot be divided, neither will their lives be divided.

# UNITY CANDLE CEREMONIES

## *A Unity Candle Ceremony*

### *When mothers go up:*

The two outside candles are lit by their parents to represent the lives of the couple to this moment. The lights, representing the faith, wisdom and love \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have received from their parents, are distinct, each burning alone.

### *As the couple goes up:*

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ light the center candle to symbolize the union of their lives. As one light burns undivided, so shall their love be one. From now on their thoughts will be for each other, rather than for their individual selves. Your plans will be mutual, your joys and sorrows will be shared alike. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "On this account, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined with his wife, and the two shall be one."

As this day you have made new light together, may you also continue to recognize that separateness from which your relationship has sprung. May the lights of your own special live continue to feed the new flame of love which can make your future, with its hopes and its disappointments, its successes and failures, its pleasure and its pains, its joys and sorrow, a future filled with love.

*(continued)*

# UNITY CANDLE CEREMONIES

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ , you now light this candle as a symbol of your union.

As the flames of your individual candles blend into one to create a new light, so may your individual lives be united to create a new life. May the light of love burn forever in your hearts and in your home.

May the brightness of the candle you light together shine throughout your lives, giving you courage and reassurance in the darkness. May its warmth give you shelter from the cold. And may its energy fill your spirits with strength and joy.

- Contributed by Chris W. Palmer

# CHALICE CEREMONIES

## *Chalice Ceremony*

The years of our lives are a cup of  
Wine poured out for us to drink.  
The grapes when they are pressed give  
Forth their good juices for the wine.  
Under the wine press of time our lives  
Give forth their labor and honor and love.  
Many days you will sit at the same table  
And eat and drink together.  
Drink now, and may the cup of your lives  
Be sweet and full to running over.

# CHALICE CEREMONIES

## *Jewish Wine Chalice Ceremony*

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

*Hold cup and say:*

“Blessed art thou,  
O Lord, our God,  
Ruler of the universe,  
Creator of the fruit of the vine.”

*Couple drinks ... glass is smashed.*

# CHALICE CEREMONIES

## *Wine Chalice Ceremony*

It is the goal of marriage to achieve a blending of hearts and lives – but let there be spaces in your new life together, so that each of you may encourage and nurture the individual growth of the other. Even so, your separate lives will become one life; your separate homes, one home; your separate fortunes, one fortune. Over the horizon of the future, there come toward you even now, hours of brightness and hours of shadow... for such is the nature of life.

*Officiant picks up the goblet of sweet wine.*

Life has, indeed, many bright and happy experiences, of which this sweet wine is a token. As you drink of it together, may it serve as a symbol of the joy that comes with loving and sharing, and may your happiness be tempered with gratitude and modesty, and a bountiful sympathy for those who are less fortunate than you.

*The officiant passes the goblet to bride (partner), who drinks and passes it to groom (partner), who drinks and passes it back to the officiant. The officiant returns the goblet to table and picks up goblet of bitter wine.*

But when hardship and sorrow and disappointment come, of which this bitter wine is a token, may you care enough to help one another with courage and compassion, neither one blaming the other one for folly or failure, or regretting the obligation of marriage to share and bear together the chances and changes of a life deeply lived.

## READINGS

love is more thicker than forget  
more thinner than recall  
more seldom than a wave is wet  
more frequent than to fail

it is more mad and moonly

and less it shall un-be  
than all the sea which only  
is deeper than the sea

love is less always than to win  
less never than alive  
less bigger than the least begin  
less little than forgive

it is most sane and sunly  
and more it cannot die  
than all the sky which only  
is higher than the sky

- e.e. cummings

## READINGS

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer  
Rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you  
earn or achieve ...  
However sweet that laid-up stores, however  
Convenient this dwelling, we cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters,  
we must not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us  
We are permitted to receive it but a little while.

Come, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

- Walt Whitman

## READINGS

If your love is to grow and deepen,  
You must find a way to move  
With each other;  
Perhaps in a slow and graceful dance  
(bare feet firmly feeling the ground).  
A dance that circles and tests  
And learns  
As it gradually moves closer  
To that place  
Where you can each  
Pass through the other  
And turn and embrace  
Without breaking  
Or losing any part of yourselves  
But only to learn more of who you each are  
By your touching  
To find that you are each whole  
And individuals and separate  
Yet in the same instant,  
One, joined as a whole  
That does not blur the two individuals  
As you dance.

The music is there  
If you will listen hard,  
Through the static and noise of life,  
And other tunes that fill your heads.

You are here  
Marking time to music.  
The dance can only begin  
If you will take the first (and hardest)  
Tentative,  
Uncertain,  
Stumbling  
Steps.

- Paul L'Herrou

## READINGS

### “Gifts of the Sea”

When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid it will never return. 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.

The only real security is not in owning or possessing, not in demanding or expecting, not in hoping, even. Security in a relationship lies neither in looking back to what it was in nostalgia, nor forward to what it might be in dread or anticipation, but living in the present relationship and accepting it as it is now. For relationships too, must be like islands, one must accept them for what they are, here and now, within their limits – islands, surrounded and interrupted by the sea, and continually visited and abandoned by the tides. One must accept the security of the winged life, of the ebb and flow, of intermittency.

- Ann Morrow Lindbergh

## READINGS

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels,  
and have not love, I am but a sounding gong ... a  
clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of all  
prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all  
knowledge: and though I have all faith so that I could  
remove mountains, yet have not love – I am nothing.  
And though I share all my goods among the poor,  
and though I give my body to be burnt, but have not  
love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient and kind:  
love is not envious, boastful, nor vain; she does not  
behave herself unseemly, seeks not her own good, is  
not easily provoked, keeps no account of her wrongs,  
rejoices not in inequity, but rejoices in the truth.  
Always charitable, always trustful, always steadfast.  
Faith, hope and love – these three abide – and the  
greatest of these is love.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13

## READINGS

Love is possible only if two persons communicate with each other from the center of their existence. Only in this central experience is human reality, only here is aliveness, only here is the basis for love. Love, experienced thus, is a constant challenge: it is not a resting place, but a moving, growing, working together; even whether there is harmony or conflict, joy or sadness, it is secondary to the fundamental fact that two people experience themselves from the essence of their existence, that they are one with each other by being one with themselves, rather than by fleeing themselves.

There is only one proof for the presence of love: the depth of the relationship, and the aliveness and strength in each person concerned; that is the fruit by which love is recognized.

- Erich Fromm

## READINGS

“Solo for Saturday Night Guitar”

Time was. Time is. Time shall be.  
Man invented time to be used.  
Love was. Love is. Love shall be.  
Yet man never invented love,  
Nor is love to be used like time.  
A clock wears numbers one to twelve  
And you look, and read its face  
And tell the time precisely exactly.  
Yet who reads the face of love?  
Who tells love numbers precisely exactly?  
Holding love in a tight hold for keeps,  
Fastening love down and saying,  
“It’s here now and here for always.”  
You don’t do this offhand, careless-like.  
Love costs. Love is not so easy,  
Nor is it the shimmering of start dust  
Nor the smooth flow of new blossoms  
Nor the drag of a heavy hungering for someone.  
Love is a white horse you ride,  
Or wheels and hammer leaving you lonely  
Or a rock in the moonlight for rest  
Or a sea where phantom ships cross always  
Or a tall shadow always whispering  
Or a circle of spray and prisms –  
Maybe a rainbow ‘round your shoulder.  
Heavy, heavy is love to carry  
And light as one rose petal,  
Light as a bubble, a blossom,  
As remembering a bar of music  
Or a finger, or a wisp of hair  
Never forgotten.

- Carl Sandburg

## READINGS

Love is the wind, the tide, the waves, the sunshine. Its power is incalculable. It never ceases, it never slackens; it can move the globe without a resting place; it can warm without fire, it can feed without meat: it can clothe without garments, it can shelter without roof: it can make a paradise within which will dispense with a paradise without. In love we impart, each to each, in subtlest immaterial form of thought or atmosphere, the best of ourselves – such as commonly vanishes or evaporate in aspirations – and mutually enrich each other. Love tends to purify and sublime itself. It triumphs over the flesh, and the bond of its union is holiness.

- Henry David Thoreau

## READINGS

I thought of love as a crooked knife.  
As a soft and passionate lord;  
Born when the kings' beards dipped in wine  
And the gold cups clashed on the board.  
But my love came like a blast of cold.  
A straight, clean sword.

I thought of love as a secret thing.  
For an hour of incense ease,  
When beast and breast together cling  
Under sweet-scented trees.  
My love is all good-comradeship,  
More great than these.

I thought of love as a toy for a day,  
Soon to be over passed;  
Light and frail as a hollow shell,  
That into the brook is cast.  
My love holds while the earth endures,  
And the suns stand fast.

I thought of love as mixed with earth,  
One with the bloom of the sods.  
My love is air and wine and fire,  
Breaker of metes and rods.  
A slender javelin tipped with light,  
Hurled at the gods.

- from *Lucullus Dines*  
Stephen Vincent Benét

## READINGS

Love is the simplest of all earthly things.  
It needs no grandeur of celestial trust  
In more than what it is, no holy wings:  
It stands with honest feet in honest dust.  
And is the body's blossoming in clear air  
Of truthfulness and joyance when alone;  
Two mortals pass beyond the hour's despair  
And claim that Paradise which is their own.  
Amid a universe of sweat and blood,  
Beyond the glooms of all the nations' hate,  
Lovers, forgetful of the poisoned mood  
Of the loud world, in secret ere too late  
A gentle sacrament may celebrate  
Before their private altar of the good.

- Arthur Davison Ficke

## READINGS

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

- from *Gift from the Sea*  
Anne Morrow Lindbergh

## READINGS

### “Respect for One Another”

We are each a secret to the other. To know one another cannot mean to know everything about each other: it means to feel mutual affection and confidence, and, yes, to believe in one another. But we must not try to force our way into the personality of another. To analyze others is a rude commencement, for there is a modesty of the soul which we must recognize just as we do that of the body. No one has a right to say to another: “Because we belong to each other as we do, I have a right to know all your thoughts.” All demands of this sort are foolish and unwholesome. In this matter, giving is the only valuable process: it is only giving that stimulates. Impart as much as you can of your spiritual being to those who are on the road with you, and accept as something precious what comes back to you from them.

- from *Memories of Childhood and Youth*  
Albert Schweitzer

## READINGS

Marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond, is actually MANY bonds, many strands of different texture and strength making up a web that is taught and firm. The web is fashioned of romantic love first, then a slow-growing devotion, and (playing through these) a constantly rippling companionship. It is made of loyalties, of interdependencies, and shared experiences. It is a web of communication, a lack of language too. It is a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions (both physical and mental). It is a web of instincts and intuitions, known and unknown exchanges. The web of marriage is made in the day-to-day living (side by side, looking outward and working outward in the same direction). It is woven in space and time and the substance of life itself.

- Ann Morrow Lindbergh

## READINGS

Love is patient  
Love is kind  
It does not envy, it does not boast,  
It is not proud.  
It is not rude  
It is not self-seeking  
It is not easily angered.  
It keeps no record of wrongs  
Love does not delight in evil,  
but rejoices in truth.  
It always protects, always trust, always hopes,  
always perseveres.

- Corinthians 13:4-9

## READINGS

“Psalm to My Beloved”

Lo, I have opened unto you the wide gates  
of my being,  
And like a tide you have flowed into me.  
The innermost recesses of my spirit are full of you, and all the  
channels of my soul are grown sweet with your presence.  
For you have brought me peace:  
The peace of great tranquil waters, and the quiet of the  
summer sea.  
Your hands are filled with peace as the noon tide is filled with  
light; about your head is bound the eternal quiet of the stars,  
and in your heart dwells the calm miracle of twilight.  
I am utterly content.  
In all my spirit is no ripple of unrest,  
For I have opened unto you the wide gates  
of my being  
And like the tide you have flowed into me.

- Eunice Tietjens

## READINGS

You are joined together and together you shall be  
forevermore.  
You shall be together when the white wings of death  
scatter your days,  
Aye you shall be together even in the silent memory of  
God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.  
Love one another, but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup, but drink not from the one cup.  
Give one another of your bread, but eat not from the same  
loaf.

Since 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 had 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.

- Kahlil Gibran

## READINGS

“sweet spring is your time  
is my time  
is our time  
for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love”

(all the merry little birds are  
flying in the floating in the  
very spirits singing in  
are winging in the blossoming)

lovers go and lovers come  
awandering, awondering  
but any two are perfectly alone  
there's nobody else alive.

(such a sky and such a sun  
I never knew (and neither did you)  
and everybody never breathed  
quite so many kinds of yes)

not a tree can count his leaves  
each herself by opening  
but shining who by thousands mean  
only one amazing thing

(secretly adoring shyly  
tiny winging darting floating  
merry in the blossoming  
always joyful selves are singing)

“sweet spring is your time  
is my time  
is our time  
for springtime is lovetime  
and viva sweet love”

- e.e. cummings

## READINGS

“On Love”

When love beckons to you, follow him,  
Though his ways are hard and steep,  
And when his wings enfold you, yield to him,  
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may  
wound you.  
And when he speaks to you, believe in him,  
Though his voice may shatter your dreams  
As the north wind lays waste the garden.

But if, in your fear, you would seek only  
Love’s peace and love’s pleasure,  
Then it is better for you that you cover your  
nakedness  
And pass out of love’s threshing-floor,  
Into the seasonless world where you shall laugh,  
But not all of your laughter,  
And weep, but not all of your tears.

Love gives naught but itself  
And takes naught but from itself.  
Love possesses not, nor would it be possessed;  
For love is sufficient unto love.

When you love you should not say,  
“God is in my heart,” but rather  
“I am in the heart of God.”  
And think not you can direct the course of love,  
For love, if it finds you worthy,  
Directs your course.

- from *The Prophet*  
Kahlil Gibran

## READINGS

Men and women, and especially young people, do not know that it takes years to marry completely two hearts, even the most loving and well-assorted. Nature allows no sudden change. We slope very gradually from the cradle to the summit of life. Marriage is gradual: a fraction of us at a time. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. I know young persons think love belongs only to the brown-haired and crimson-cheeked. So it does for its beginning, just as Mount Washington begins at Boston Bay. But the golden marriage is a part of love which the bridal day knows nothing of.

A perfect and complete marriage, where wedlock is everything you could ask and the ideal of marriage becomes actual, is not common. Perhaps it is as rare as personal beauty. Men and women are married fractionally, now a small fraction, then a large fraction. Very few are married totally, and then only, I think after some forty or fifty years of gradual approach and experiment. Such a large and sweet fruit is a complete marriage that it needs a long summer to ripen in, and then a long winter to mellow and season it. But a real, happy marriage of love and judgement between noble man and woman is one of the things so very handsome, that if the sun were, as the Greek poet fabled, a God, he might stop the world, and hold it still now and then, in order to look all day long on some common example thereof, and feast his eyes on such a spectacle.

- The Rev. Theodore Parker (1810-1860)

# READINGS

“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 expecting the husband to wear a halo or the wife to have the wings of an angel.  
It is not looking for perfection in each other.

It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.  
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.  
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.

It is finding room for things of the spirit.  
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.  
It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.  
It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.

- Wilferd A. Peterson

## READINGS

An honorable human relationship – that is, one in which two people have the right to use the word “love” – is a process; delicate, often terrifying to both personas involved, a process of refining the truths they can tell each other.

It is important to do this because it breaks down human self-delusion and isolation.

It is important to do this because in doing so we do justice to our own complexity.

It is important to do this because we can count on so few people to go that hard way with us.

It isn't that to have an honorable relationship with you, I have to understand everything, or tell you everything at once, or that I can know, beforehand, everything I need to tell you.

It means that most of the time I am eager, longing for the possibility of telling you. That these possibilities may seem frightening, but not destructive to me. That I feel strong enough to hear your tentative and groping words. That we both know we are trying, all the time, to extend the possibility of truth between us.

The possibility of life between us.

- from *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*  
Adrienne Rich

# PRAYERS

We bless you and pray for you,

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

May that glory which rest on all who love rest upon you ... and bless you and keep you and fill you with happiness and a gracious spirit. May you always remain sweethearts, helpmates and friends. May the love which has brought you together continue to grow and enrich your lives. May your life together be full of kindness and understanding, thoughtfulness and rejoicing. May you meet, with courage, the problems and tensions which arise to challenge you. May you meet, with strength, the troubles and sorrows what beset you. And despite all the changes of time and fortune, may your marriage be one of ever-deepening joy and fulfillment – because of the sympathy, understanding, forgiveness and love which you freely give to one another in the life you will share. May all that is noble and lovely and true abound in your hearts, and abide with you, and give you strength and joy in your days together. Go now in great happiness, assured that all our hearts go with you.

## PRAYERS

\_\_\_\_\_ 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  
perfection, because of your sympathy, understanding  
and love which you give to one another in the life you  
share.

# PRAYERS

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 high point in their lives.

We are especially grateful for the values which have flowed into them from those who have loved them and 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 shall 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 until the latter days become even more wonderful than the first.

Amen.

- Robert Botley

## PRAYERS

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

- Dana Greeley

# PRAYERS

In this hour, rich with meaning and hope and promise, we pray that the spirit of trust, understanding and love may be with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ through all the years that lie ahead.

Whatever trials and testings 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 only an empty shell from which the white bird has flown.

May the home that they build together be bright with the laughter of children and many friends; may it be a haven from the tension of our time and a wellspring of strength; and in all the world may it be the one place they most want to be, the place where they discover the ultimate human mystery – the secret of how two can be separate yet united.

In the tomorrows which \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will enter together may they find far more in life than either would have found alone, and ever more fully may they come to know this one supreme truth: that caring is sharing, that living is giving, that life is eternal, and that love is its crown.

# PRAYERS

May this moment gleam eternally in your lives. May it add glory to every achievement and cast a blessed light over any ill fortune that may appear. May you give vitality to each other in all undertakings. May you care for each other in sadness. May you give cheer to each other as you each care for the sacred passion of love. May all that is virtuous, beautiful, and trustworthy remain with you always.

Amen

- Roger Fritts

## PRAYERS

May these two find happiness in their union. May they live faithfully together, performing the vow and covenant they have made between them, and may they ever remain in sympathy and understanding: that their years may be rich in the joys of life, and their days good, and long upon the earth.

- Kenneth L. Patton

## PRONOUNCEMENTS

Inasmuch as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
have grown in knowledge and love of one another,  
having agreed in their desire to go forward in life  
together, seeking an ever-richer, deepening  
relationship which will draw together in love these  
children in a wider-family relationship, and having  
pledged themselves to meet sorrow and joy as one  
family, they have, in fact, wedded themselves, and we  
therefore rejoice now in recognizing them as husband  
and wife.

# PRONOUNCEMENTS

What love has brought together, let no one break asunder. For as much as you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have consented to live together in marriage and have pledged yourselves to one another, have declared the same by the giving and receiving of rings, with great pleasure and by the authority vested in me as a Minister, I pronounce you husband and wife. You may seal your marriage with a kiss.

# PRONOUNCEMENTS

*For use when children are involved:*

Since you, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
have joined yourselves in marriage, and have signified  
your commitment to each other in the joining of  
hands and exchanging of rings, I now pronounce you  
husband and wife. May the home you are creating and  
will share with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ be  
bright with laughter and love, and may it bring  
strength and happiness to the lives of all of you, and  
to those you touch.

# PRONOUNCEMENTS

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

You have told me,

And all those who have gathered here

To share this moment of joy with you,

That you deeply love one another

And wish to live together

Seeking an ever-deeper, ever richer relationship.

You have formed your own union,

In friendship,

In respect for each other,

In love.

And it is therefore now my joyful task to acknowledge  
you as husband and wife (partners).

## PRONOUNCEMENTS

*For use when children are involved; note that this can be added to any of the other selections in this section:*

May the home you are creating and will share with  
\_\_\_\_\_ be bright with laughter  
and love, and may it bring strength and happiness to  
the lives of all of you.

## BENEDICTIONS

And now, may that glory which rests on all who love, rest upon you and bless you and keep you, and 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 heart, and abide with you, and give you strength in all your days together.

Amen.

Go in great happiness, assured that all our hearts go with you.

## BENEDICTIONS

Out of this tangled world two souls have come together,  
drawn by mutual love and respect. May their days and  
years yet unborn deepen the joy of their choice and make  
it abidingly true.

- from *To Love, Honor and  
Shave Twice a Week*  
David A. Johnston

## BENEDICTIONS

And we send you on your way with this ancient  
Apache prayer...

"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 you will feel no loneliness,  
For each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two persons,  
But there is one new life between you.

Go now to your dwelling place,  
To enter into the days of your togetherness."

## BENEDICTIONS

Now may you depart in peace,  
May your love cast out small fears,  
May your hope endure.  
May your faith in each other,  
And to this radiant universe  
In which the mystery of love happens,  
Grow and flourish.

Amen.

- from *To Love, Honor and  
Shave Twice a Week*  
David A. Johnston

# BENEDICTIONS

“Love consists in this:  
That two solitudes protect, and touch, and  
greet each other.”

- Rilke

Go now to walk the ways of the world  
together, and may your days be both good and  
long upon the earth.

## BENEDICTIONS

By your free choice you have made a marriage.  
No matter what the demands on your lives and your time,  
The meaning of your living is now known through your  
love.

You must nurture each other to fullness  
And wholeness, renew yourselves  
In love and laughter, maintain the  
Capacity for wonder, spontaneity,  
Humor, sensitivity, and save time for  
Each other, to love each other more  
Deeply, and learn to love more fully  
The Creation in which the mystery of  
Love happens.

Amen.

- from *To Love, Honor and  
Shave Twice a Week*  
David A. Johnston

# BENEDICTIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Believe in what is yours,  
Believe in who you are.  
Believe in the richness and the power  
Of what lies in the depths you share.

And go in great happiness  
Assured that all our hearts go with you.  
Go now to walk the ways of this world together,  
And may your days be both good and long upon  
the earth.

## BENEDICTIONS

You are now wed.

May you always remain sweethearts, helpmates and friends.

May your life together be full of kindness and understanding, thoughtfulness and rejoicing.

May the years bring you happiness and contentment.

May you enter into each other's sorrow by sympathy,

Into each other's joy with gladness,

Into each other's hope with faith and trust,

Into each other's need with the sure presence of love,

Into each other's lives with enthusiasm and embracing.

Amen.

- from *To Love, Honor and  
Shave Twice a Week*  
David A. Johnston

You may kiss!

# BENEDICTIONS

No human relation gives one possession in  
another.

Every two souls are absolutely different.  
In friendship (or in love) the two (side by side)  
raise hands together to find what one cannot  
reach alone.

Go now to walk the ways of the world together,  
And may your days be good  
And long upon the earth.

# BENEDICTIONS

May God bless you and keep you.

May God make his face to shine upon you and  
be gracious unto you.

May God lift up his countenance upon you and  
give peace and happiness now and evermore.

## BENEDICTIONS

Now for you there is no rain  
For one is shelter to the other  
Now for you there is no sun  
For one is shelter to the other.  
Now for you nothing is hard or bad,  
For the hardness and the badness is taken, by one  
for the other.  
Now there is no night,  
For one is light to the other.  
Now for you the snow has ended always,  
For one is protection for the other.  
It is that way, from now on, from now on,  
Now it is good and there is always food, and now  
there is always drink.  
And now there is comfort,  
Now there is no loneliness,  
Now forever,  
Forever, there is no loneliness.

- Salish Indian Prayer

## BENEDICTIONS

Rising Sun! When you shall shine,  
Make this house happy,  
Beautify it with your beams,  
Make this house happy,  
God of Dawn! Your white blessing spread;  
Make this house happy.  
Guard the doorway from all evil;  
Make this house happy,  
Soft wealth! May this hut cover much:  
Make this house happy.  
Heavy rain! Your virtues send:  
Make this house happy.  
Corn pollen! Bestow content;  
Make this house happy.  
May peace around this family dwell:  
Make this house happy.

- Navajo Indian Chant