



ceremonies for life

Ceremonies for Life

Honoring the human state.

Common Elements of a Wedding Ceremony

- Processional
- Opening words of the officiant
- The giving in marriage (optional-- parents, close friends or relatives)
- Prayers (officiant)
- Definition of marriage (officiant)
- Reading (officiant or anyone)
- Special ceremonies (officiant or anyone)
- Vows (officiant and couple)
- Exchange of rings (officiant and couple)
- Closing (officiant)
- Declaration of marriage (officiant)
- Introduction of couple (officiant)

Fees

The following options describe the Foundational Ceremonies and include pre-written prayer and reading options from which to choose to make a couple's ceremony their own. Any variance outside the foundational options, text added to these ceremonies, or a newly architected order constitutes a Custom-written ceremony. I am happy to consult with couples to create a unique solution to an individually customized wedding service.

*Foundational weekday ceremony (M-Thurs)	\$200.
*Foundational weekend ceremony (Fri-Sun)	\$250.
**Custom-written weekday ceremony (M-Thurs)	\$300.
**Custom-written weekend ceremony (Fri-Sun)	\$350.

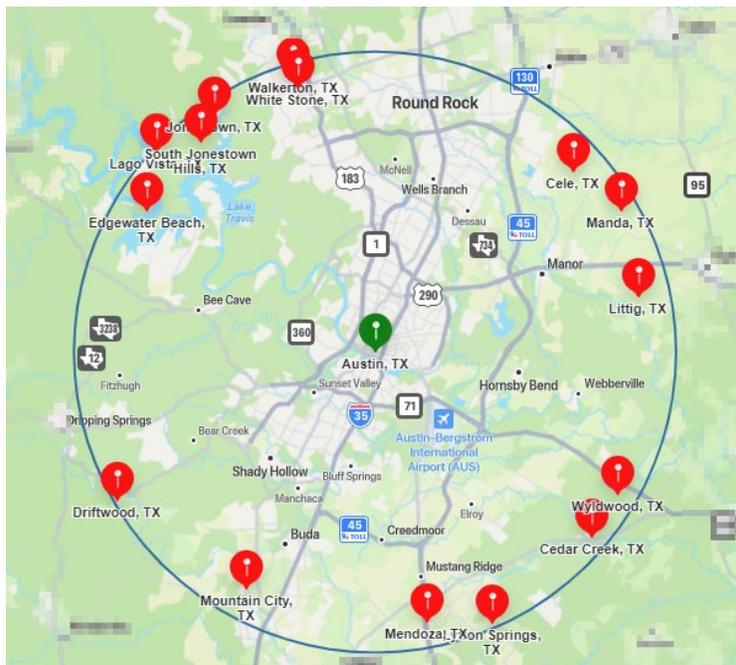
* A foundational wedding ceremony includes a 1-hour consultation to help you choose from a collection of unique, meaningful content I've written over the years, a 1-hour rehearsal, and the actual marriage ceremony (1 hour). See "Travel" & "Holidays" below for surcharges.

** A custom-written wedding ceremony includes a 1-hour consultation to discuss special wording, order, and customization *outside* of my current content offerings, template, and order, a 1-hour rehearsal, and the actual marriage ceremony (1 hour). See "Travel" & "Holidays" below for surcharges.

Surcharges

Travel

Due to rising gas costs, a .50 per mile fee will be assessed for Rev Benae's total (round-trip) driving mileage for rehearsal and day-of when the location is more than [20 miles beyond downtown Austin](#).



Holidays

Kindly add \$50 if your nuptials/event will take place on any of the major U.S. holidays.

Locations which require air travel & accommodations will need to be arranged and funded by the couple. Please call or [email](#) for details.

Foundational Ceremony Options

Choose a ceremony template, then 1 item from opening and closing prayers. Readings and poems are optional.

-  **Simple Civil Ceremony**
-  **Non-denominational Protestant Ceremony**
-  **Interfaith**
-  **Gender-Neutral Union**
-  **Renewal of Vows**
-  **Handfasting**

Opening Prayers (Minister)

1. God of Love...
2. God, you have made the bond of marriage...
3. Loving Creator, bless and consecrate...
4. God, please bless this marriage...
5. "A Marriage Prayer"

Optional Readings (Anyone can read.)

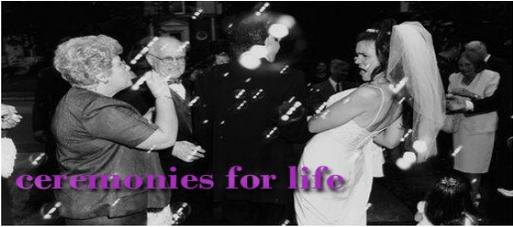
1. Why Marriage
2. First Corinthians 13, abridged
3. To My Friend
4. Native American Vows
5. Book of Ruth
6. Art of Marriage

Optional Marriage Poems (Anyone can read.)

1. "And What of Marriage" –Khalil Gibran
2. "Love isn't the work" –Rumi
3. "How Do I Love Thee?" –Elizabeth Barret Browning
4. "I Carry Your Heart with Me" –EE Cummings
5. "Your Feet" – Pablo Neruda
6. Hindu Marriage Poem
7. "This Day I Married My Best Friend" –author unknown

Closing Prayers (Minister)

1. Today, as your two hearts unite...
2. Dear God, look mercifully upon your children...
3. Gracious God, our hearts are filled...
4. We ask that the Holy Spirit of love...
5. Loving Creator, we ask that those who wear these rings...



Couple's Information

Partner 1 Full Name _____

Partner 2 Full Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

How did you find out about Ceremonies for Life/Rev. Benae? _____

Date and time of ceremony _____

Location _____

Number of guests _____

Rehearsal? If yes, date, time, location _____

Travel Cost (.50/mile when more than 20mi beyond DT Austin) _____

Type of Ceremony/Day of Week: (circle one)

*Foundational weekday ceremony (M-Thurs)	\$200.
*Foundational weekend ceremony (Fri-Sun)	\$250.
**Custom-written weekday ceremony (M-Thurs)	\$300.
**Custom-written weekend ceremony (Fri-Sun)	\$350.

Deposit Paid/Date	Amt. Due

Please fill in any additional information you'd like for me to know:

Foundational Ceremony Templates

Simple Civil Ceremony

Word of Welcome

My name is Reverend Benaé Colbert and I have the privilege of performing this ceremony today. On behalf of _____ and _____, welcome and thank you for being here. By your presence, you celebrate with them the love they have discovered in each other and you support their decision to commit themselves to one another for the rest of their lives.

Optional opening prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Please face one another and join your left hands.

Exchange of Vows

Do you _____, take _____ to be your lawful wedded Wife/Husband/Partner, to have and to hold, for better for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others so long as you both shall live? If so say *I do*.

Ring Exchange

May I have the rings, please? Wedding rings are an outward and visible sign of an inward grace and the unbroken circle of love, signifying the union of these two persons in marriage.

_____, repeat after me: "With this ring, I thee wed. Take it and wear it as a symbol of my unending love for you"

Optional closing prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, you have consented together in lawful marriage in the presence of your family and friends as witnesses. You have made special promises to each other, symbolized by the joining of hands, taking of vows, and the exchange of rings. With the authority vested in me by the State of Texas, I now pronounce you to be married.

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

Non-Denominational Protestant Ceremony

Word of Welcome

My name is Reverend Benae Colbert and I have the privilege of performing this ceremony today. On behalf of _____ and _____, welcome and thank you for being here. By your presence, you celebrate with them the love they have discovered in each other and you support their decision to commit themselves to one another for the rest of their lives.

Opening Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Please face one another and join your left hands.

Vows

_____, do you take _____ to be your Wife/Husband/Partner? Do you promise to love, honor, cherish and protect her/him/them, forsaking all others and holding only unto her/him/them? *(If so, say "I do")*

Exchange of Rings

May I have the rings, please? Wedding rings are an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace and the unbroken circle of love, signifying to all the union of these two persons in marriage.

With this ring, I _____, take you, _____ to be my Wife/Husband/Partner. To have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, and with God as my witness, I promise my love to you forevermore.

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Closing Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, you have consented together in lawful marriage in the presence of your family and friends as witnesses. You have made special promises to each other, symbolized by the joining of hands, taking of vows, and the exchange of rings. With the authority vested in me by the State of Texas, I now pronounce you to be married.

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

Interfaith Ceremony

Word of Welcome

My name is Reverend Bena Colbert and I have the privilege of performing this ceremony today. On behalf of _____ and _____, welcome and thank you for being here. By your presence, you celebrate with them the love they have discovered in each other and you support their decision to commit themselves to one another for the rest of their lives.

Opening Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Please face one another and join your left hands.

Vows

_____, you have chosen to marry _____. Will you love and respect her/him/them? Will you be honest with her/him/them always? Will you stand by her through whatever may come? If so, answer 'I will'.

Exchange of Rings

May I have the rings, please? Wedding rings are an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace and the unbroken circle of love, signifying to all the union of these two people in marriage.

I _____, take you, _____ to be my Wife/Husband/Partner. I marry you with this ring, with all that I have and all that I am, to have and to hold, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, and with the presence of our Creator, I promise my love to you forevermore.

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Closing Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, you have consented together in lawful marriage in the presence of your family and friends as witnesses. You have made special promises to each other, symbolized by the joining of hands, taking of vows, and the exchange of rings. With the authority vested in me by the State of Texas, I now pronounce you to be married.

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

Gender-Neutral Wedding

Word of welcome

My name is Reverend Benaé Colbert and I have the privilege of performing this ceremony today. On behalf of _____ and _____, welcome and thank you for being here. By your presence, you celebrate with them the love they have discovered in each other and you support their decision to commit themselves to one another for the rest of their lives.

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved, *loved for ourselves*. If there is anything better than being loved, it is giving love. Today we are here to celebrate this gift. We come together to witness and proclaim the joining together of these two persons in marriage.

This is the union of two individuals in heart, body, mind, and spirit; therefore, marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, honestly, and deliberately. And it is into this union that _____ and _____ come now to be joined.

Opening Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Vows

_____ and _____, now we come to your vows. May I remind you that saying these words are one thing, but nothing is more challenging than living them day-by-day. What you promise today must be renewed tomorrow and each day that stretches out before you.

Please face one another and join your left hands.

_____, you have chosen _____ to be your Wife/Husband/Partner. Will you love and respect him/her/them? Will you be honest with him/her/them always? Will you stand by him/her/them through whatever may come? If so, answer "I will."

Exchange of Rings

May I have the rings please? Wedding rings are an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual grace and the unbroken circle of love, signifying to all the union of these two people in marriage.

_____, I give you this ring, that you may wear it, as a symbol of the vows we have made this day. I pledge you my love, and my respect, my laughter and my tears. With all that I am, I honor you.

Affirmation of family and friends

Now in the spirit of joy and affirmation, do you, the families and friends of _____ and _____, give them your blessing and support this day, wishing them a wonderful life together? If so, answer "we do."

Closing Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, you have consented together in lawful marriage in the presence of your family and friends as witnesses. You have made special promises to each other, symbolized by the joining of hands, taking of vows, and the exchange of rings. With the authority vested in me by the State of Texas, I now pronounce you to be married.

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

Renewal of Vows

Word of Welcome

My name is Reverend Bena Colbert, and I have the privilege of performing this ceremony today. The greatest happiness of life is the gift from our Creator that we are loved, *loved for ourselves*. If there is anything better than being loved, it is the act of loving. Today we are here to celebrate this gift. We are gathered to honor the ____ years of marriage of _____ and _____, to witness as they re-affirm their vows, and to rejoice with them in the making of this important commitment at this point in their lives.

Opening Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Please face one another and join your left hands.

Vows

Will you, _____, reaffirm your love and commitment to _____? Will you continue to live your life openly with him/her, love him/her/them, support him/her, and comfort him/her/them throughout the years to come?

Exchange of Rings

there is no traditional ring exchange at a vow renewal but you can reaffirm your love with new rings or put your own spin on your classic vows. This can be a simple ring exchange with any of my content, or a gift exchange with your own promises.

Affirmation of family and friends

Now in the spirit of joy and affirmation, do you, the families and friends of _____ and _____, give them your blessing and support this day, wishing them a continued wonderful life together? If so, answer "we do."

Optional - Insert reading or poem from Ceremony Options, or your chosen musical interlude

Closing Prayer (choose from Ceremony Options)

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, with each one of us as witnesses, today you declared that you will continue living together in marriage. You re-confirmed your devotion to each other in this ceremony, and symbolized it by the joining of hands, the re-affirmation of your wedding vows, and by the exchange of (*rings, or special gifts*). Therefore, it is my pleasure to pronounce that you are, once again and still, husband and wife

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

Handfasting

The ancient Celtic ritual of Hand fasting is a perfectly viable option for wedding ceremonies today. Traditionally, in the British Isles it was performed by a priest or priestess, who would invoke the energies of the four natural elements to create a sacred circle in which the couple could be joined as embodiments of god and goddess. The cloth that binds their hands was usually the tartan plaid, representing the groom's clan or family group. One of the things we like about hand fasting is that it is also a declaration of intent, where the bride and groom clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will.

_____ and _____, know now before you go further, that since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds. As you seek to enter this state of matrimony you should strive to make real the ideals that to you, give meaning this ceremony and to the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this circle you are not only declaring your intent to be hand fasted before your friends and family, but you speak that intent also to your creative higher powers. 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.

Do you still seek to enter this ceremony?

Yes.

INVOKING THE FOUR DIRECTIONS

In many cultures it is believed that the human soul shares characteristics with all things divine. It is this belief which assigned virtues to the four cardinal directions; East, South, West and North. It is according to this belief that we align ourselves with these elements. Each of these blessings from the four cardinal directions emphasizes those things that will help you build a happy and successful union.

[Guests are invited to stand and face the four directions]

“Blessed be this union with the gifts of the East and the element of Air, for openness and breath, communication of the heart, and purity of the mind and body. From the east you receive the gift of a new beginning with the rising of each Sun, and the understanding that each day is a new opportunity for growth.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the South and the element of fire, for energy, passion, creativity and the warmth of a loving home. From the fire within you generate light, which you will share with one another in even the darkest of times.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the West, the element of water, for your capacity to feel emotion. In marriage you offer absolute trust to one another, and vow to keep your hearts open in sorrow as well as joy.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the North, the element of earth, which provides sustenance, fertility and security. The earth will feed and enrich you, and help you to build a stable home to which you may always return. “

[Guests are seated]

_____ and _____, I bid you look into each other's eyes.

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

“We will” [the first cord is draped over the couples' hands], “And so the first binding is made.”

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

“We will” [Second cord is draped over the hands], “And so the second binding is made.”

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

“We will” [third cord is draped over the couples' hands], “And so the third binding is made.”

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

“We will” [Fourth cord is draped over the couples' hands], “And so the final binding is made.”

[Rev Benae ties cords together]

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

Declaration of Marriage

_____ and _____, you have consented together in lawful marriage in the presence of your family and friends as witnesses. You have made special promises to each other, symbolized by the joining of hands, taking of vows, and the exchange of rings. With the authority vested in me by the State of Texas, I now pronounce you to be married.

Congratulations, you may seal your vows with a kiss!

It is my privilege to present _____ !

DO NOT COPY

Opening Prayers:

1. God of love, who gives us the longing for, and capability of loving, we give you thanks for _____ and _____, for their open hearts and willing spirits, and for the example of love that they embody here in our presence. Be with them on this joyous occasion of showing their love and making their vows; and be with us, their witnesses, that we may all be changed by what is said and witnessed here. Amen.
2. God, you have made the bond of marriage a holy mystery, a symbol of Christ's love for his Church. Hear our prayers for _____ and _____. With faith in you and in each other they pledge their love today. May their lives always bear witness to the reality of that love. Amen.
3. Loving Creator, bless and consecrate _____ and _____ in their love for each other. May today's ceremony be a symbol of true faith in each other and always remind them of their love. Amen.
4. God, please bless this marriage in warmth and strength. Give _____ and _____ guidance, love, and understanding for each to be the best partner they can be. Be with them through the difficult moments and the beautiful ones. Teach them that marriage is a loving process and challenge. But most of all, help them to remind each other daily of this moment when they chose to commit their lives to one another. Amen.
5. Bless this marriage, O God, as _____ and _____ begin their journey down the road of life together. We don't know what lies ahead for the road turns and bends. But help them to make the best of whatever comes their way. Help them to hug each other often, talk and laugh a lot.
Help them to continue to enjoy each other as they did when they first met.
Help them to realize that nothing or no one is perfect and to look for the good in all things and all people including themselves.
Help them to respect each other's likes and dislikes, opinion and beliefs, hopes and dreams and fears.
Help them to learn from each other and to help each other to grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
Help them to realize that there is design and purpose in their lives as in the world, and if they will hold onto each other, they will know that things have a way of working out for the good.
Help 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, help them to keep lit the torch of love that they now share in their hearts so that by their loving example they may pass on the light of love to their children and to their children's children forever. Amen.

Readings:

1. *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 unlikable, who sees the small child in me, and looks for the divine potential of me.
Because I need to the warmth of the night with someone who is thankful, with someone I feel blessed to hold.
Because marriage means opportunity to grow in love in friendship.
Because, knowing this, I promise myself to take full responsibility for my spiritual, mental and physical wholeness, I create me, I take half of the responsibility for my marriage together we create our marriage.
Because with this understanding the possibilities are limitless.

2. *An excerpt from the Bible by St Paul in First Corinthians, who writes:*

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs, but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, love never gives up... Three things remain: faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love.

3. To My Friend

The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills.
My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
'in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and your face is beauty.
My beloved is mine and I am his. Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm.
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods douse it.

4. Native American Vows (Apache)

Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter for the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there will be no loneliness,
for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons,
but there are three lives before you: his life, her life and your life together.
Go now to your dwelling place to enter into your days together.
And may all your days be good and long upon the Earth.

5. From the Book of Ruth 1: 16-17

Intreat me not to leave thee,
Or to return from following after thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go,
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge.
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God.
Where thou diest, will I die,
And there will I be buried.
The Lord do so to me, and more also,
If ought but death part thee and me.

6. The Art of Marriage

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens. A good marriage must be created. In the Art of Marriage: The little things are the big ones. 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. 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 cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor. It is having the capacity to forgive and forget. It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow. It is finding room for the things of the spirit. It is a common search for the good and the beautiful. It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal. It is not only marrying the right partner; it is being the right partner.

Poems:

1. "And what of Marriage?" --Khalil Gibran

To the question: 'And what of marriage?'
He says: 'You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.
But let there be spaces in 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 one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone.
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together, yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.'

5. **“Love isn’t the work”** --Rumi (Jalalu'l-Din)
Love isn’t the work of the tender and the gentle;
Love is the work of wrestlers.
The one who becomes a servant of lovers
is really a fortunate sovereign.
Don’t ask anyone about Love; ask Love about Love.
Love is a cloud that scatters pearls.”

6. **“How Do I Love Thee?”** --Elizabeth Barret Browning
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 every day'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 griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

7. **“I Carry Your Heart with Me”** --EE Cummings
I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)
I am never without it (anywhere
I go you go, my dear; and whatever is done
by only me is your doing, my darling)
I fear

No fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) I want
No world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)
And it’s you are whatever a moon has always meant
And whatever a sun will always sing is you

Here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
And this is the wonder that’s keeping the stars apart

I carry your heart (I carry it in my heart)

8. **“Your Feet”** – Pablo Neruda
When I cannot look at your face
I look at your feet.
Your feet of arched bone,
your lovely little feet.
I know that they support you,
and that your weight
rises upon them.

But I love your feet
only because they walked
upon the earth and upon
the wind and upon the waters,
until they found me.

9. **Hindu Marriage Poem**
You have become mine forever.
Yes, we have become partners.
I have become yours.
Hereafter, I cannot live without you.
Do not live without me.
Let us share the joys.
We are word and meaning, unite.
You are thought and I am sound.

May the nights be honey-sweet for us.
May the mornings be honey-sweet for us.
May the plants be honey-sweet for us.
May the earth be honey-sweet for us.

10. **This Day I Married My Best Friend**, *Author Unknown*
This day I married my best friend
...the one I laugh with as we share life's wondrous zest,
as we find new enjoyments and experience all that's best.
...the one I live for because the world seems brighter
as our happy times are better and our burdens feel much lighter.
...the one I love with every fiber of my soul.
We used to feel vaguely incomplete, now together we are whole.

Closing Prayers:

1. Today, as your two hearts unite, may God enter into your union and consecrate the love that brings you here. Any may you build together a lasting home, not of wood and stone and glass, but a mansion made of many rooms, filled with shared experience and furnished with shared love. And in your house of many rooms, remember to keep a place apart for thinking private thoughts, and dreaming private dreams; a place where each of you can grow and share with God a private you in contemplation and prayer. And from this day until forever may the Lord remain with you always, to keep your love eternally young, and your faith forever strong. Amen.

2. Dear God, look mercifully upon your children, _____ and _____, and be generous with them. Give them a sense of joy, excitement, possibility, and challenge about what they are undertaking here, the ever-unfolding and beautiful work of refining their spirits in the presence of each other's witness, of becoming the bearers of your love. Give them peace of heart and strength of spirit so they may honor the vows they make here today. And may the promises they make here today inspire and instruct each of us who celebrates with them. Amen.

3. Gracious God, our hearts are filled with great happiness on this the wedding day of _____ and _____. They come before you, pledging their lives and their hearts to one another. Grant that they may be ever true and loving, living together in such a way as to never bring heartbreak into their marriage. Temper their hearts with kindness and help them to be sweethearts, helpmates, friend and guide, and together, may they meet the cares and problems of life more bravely. May their home truly be a place of love and harmony where your Spirit is ever present. Bless their wedding day, we pray, and walk beside them, through all their life together. Amen.

4. We ask that the Holy Spirit of love deepen the lives of _____ and _____. May the relationship, which today has been expressed, continue to grow in the years to come. And whatever changes time may bring, let this wedding ceremony remain as a treasured memory and a guide to life. May they always experience that breathless wonder that exclaims: "Out of this entire world, YOU have chosen ME." When life is done and the sun is setting, may they be found then as now, still hand in hand, still thanking thee for each other. Amen.

5. Loving Creator, we ask that those who wear these rings live in love all their days. Now may the love which has brought these two people together continue to grow and enrich their lives. May they continue to meet with courage any problems which may arise to challenge them. May their relationship always be one of love and trust. May the happiness they share today be with them always. And may everything they have said and done here today become a living truth in their lives. Amen.

Additional Content

1. Unity Candle Ceremony [recommended for indoor ceremonies]:

_____ and _____, the two separate candles symbolize your separate lives, separate families and separate sets of friends. I ask that each of you take one of the lit candles and that together you light the center candle.

The individual candles represent your lives before today. Lighting the center candle represents that your two lives are now joined to one light, and signifies the joining together of your two families and sets of friends to one.

2. Affirmation of family and friends

Now in the spirit of joy and affirmation, do you, the families and friends of _____ and _____, give them your blessing and support this day, wishing them a wonderful life together? If so, answer "we do."

3. Methodist Addition to Vows:

"...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

4. Definition of Marriage:

The greatest happiness of life is the gift from our Creator that we are loved, *loved for ourselves*. If there is anything better than being loved, it is the act of loving. Today we are here to celebrate this gift. We come together to witness and proclaim the joining together of these two persons in marriage. This is the union of two individuals in heart, body, mind, and spirit, Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into lightly, but reverently, honestly, and deliberately. And it is into this union that _____ and _____ come now to be joined.

5. Ring Warming:

During this ceremony _____ and _____ will exchange rings. They have entrusted the keeping of the rings with Bryan & Dani, who will be passing them around to each of you.

These rings are the visible signs of their commitment to one another. And as this ceremony proceeds, we ask that you, their families and friends, take part in the warming of these rings as a sign of your love and support for this union. We ask that you wish them health and happiness, laughter and good fortune and all that is noble and good in life.

I ask that each person hold their rings for a moment, warm them with your love, and voice a silent wish or prayer for and _____ upon their marriage and their future together. Then pass the rings on to the next person. When these rings come back, they will contain in their precious metal your love and pledge of support.

6. Someone "Giving Away the Bride":

When the bride is escorted forward, the father, mother, parents, children, relative, etc. may give the bride away.

Rev. Benaë asks, "Who is it that brings this woman to this man?"

They answer "I do", "I do on behalf of her family and friends," etc. This person then steps back and the groom takes the bride's hand.

7. Minister's Homily to the Couple (can be included post-vows and ring exchange):

_____ and _____ as the two of you come into this marriage uniting you as husband and wife, and as you this day affirm your faith and love for one another, I would ask that you always remember to cherish each other as special and unique individuals, that you respect the thoughts, ideas and suggestions of one another. Be able to forgive, do not hold grudges, and live each day that you may share it together - as from this day forward you shall be each other's home, comfort and refuge, your marriage strengthened by your love and respect for each other.

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