



THE HUMANIST SOCIETY

# CELEBRANT TRAINING MANUAL



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome .....	2
Questions to Answer Before Engaging Clients .....	2
Weddings .....	5
Elements to Consider for Wedding Ceremonies.....	5
Examples: Introduction/Welcome, Remembrance Language, Parent Appreciation.....	7
Example: Love Story .....	9
Example: Readings .....	10
Examples: Statement of Intention .....	26
Examples: Personal Vows.....	28
Examples: Ring Ceremony .....	30
Examples: Unity Rituals .....	31
Examples: Family Ritual/Vows .....	33
Examples: Statement of Community Support.....	35
Examples: Reflection/Wishes for the Couple .....	36
Examples: Declaration of Marriage .....	38
Examples: Introduction of Couple .....	39
Examples: Invitation to Kiss .....	41
Weddings Appendices: .....	42
Appendix W1: Links to additional Humanist Celebrant resources.....	42
Appendix W2: Sample Interview Form.....	43
Appendix W3: Sample simple Couple Questionnaire .....	47
Appendix W4: Ethical Union Wedding Ceremony Sample .....	49
Appendix W5: Small Sound System Information and Links.....	52
Appendix W6: Wedding Ceremony Music Options.....	52
Memorial Services .....	56
Elements to Consider for a Memorial Service.....	56
Examples: Processional.....	57
Examples: Welcome .....	58
Example: Rituals.....	59
Examples: Reflection on Life and Death.....	62
Examples: Readings.....	63
Examples: Biographical Sketch .....	69
Examples: Tribute(s)/Eulogy(ies).....	71
Examples: Musical Interlude (Video option).....	74
Examples: Closing .....	75
Examples: The Recessional .....	77
Memorial Service Appendices.....	78
Appendix M1: People Who Are Facing Loss .....	78
Appendix M2: Memorial Music .....	82
Appendix M3: Ethical Union Memorial Service Sample .....	85
Appendix M4: Sample Memorial .....	98
Naming Ceremonies or Child Welcoming Ceremonies.....	99
Elements of a Naming Ceremony .....	100
Examples: Naming Ceremony 1 .....	101
Examples: Naming Ceremony 2 .....	106
Examples: Unique Rituals.....	111

Coming of Age.....	113
Designing a Coming of Age Ritual.....	113
13 Coming of Age Traditions around the World.....	114
British Humanist Association: Coming of Age.....	115
The Norwegian Humanist Association.....	115
What Scandinavia Can Teach U.S. Teens About Coming of Age.....	115
Example: Unitarian Universalist Communities Coming of Age Ceremonies.....	116
Invocations.....	119
Secular Invocation and Graces, Secular Celebrations.....	119
& Humanist Ceremonies.....	119
Secular Invocations.....	119
Secular Graces.....	121
Invocations for Government Meetings.....	125
Business Practices.....	129
Business Practices Appendices:.....	131
Appendix B1: Contracts.....	131
Appendix B2: Elevator Speech Examples.....	140
Tips from Experienced Humanist Celebrants.....	141

## WELCOME

Welcome to the Humanist Celebrant Training Course. This is designed to be a very informal, interactive session so please ask questions as they occur to you. The goal of this course is to provide resources and perspectives to assist you in establishing or refining your celebrant practice.

In most cases there are not “right” or “wrong” answers to questions, simply answers based on experience and guided by Humanist principles. Feel free to use the resources provided as is, to adapt them to your style and language, and to modify them to meet the needs of your clients.

### Questions to Answer Before Engaging Clients

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, but you need to set the limits and parameters of the services you will offer. You also need to know that you are ready to deliver on the services you agree to perform and can do so in a legal and professional manner.

#### 1. What is the scope of the services I will offer?

- Will I offer weddings, memorials, baby welcomings, coming of age, milestone birthdays, house warmings, other ceremonies?

For weddings:

- Will I run rehearsals?
- Will I offer a “day of walk through” in lieu of or in addition to a rehearsal?
- Will I document and organize processions? Including parents and other non-bridal party members?
- Will I provide sample vows and sample ring vows?
- Will I write personal vows for the couple, or provide editing services for vows they write?
- Will I provide copies of readings and personal vows the couple has written on the wedding day?
- Will I offer elopement style ceremonies? Custom ceremonies, certificate signings?
- Will I offer commitment ceremonies where a legal marriage is not possible or not desired? What words will I use (marriage, wedding, bride, groom, spouse, husband, wife, pronouncement wording)? Do guests need to know?
- Do I know what my state requires to legally perform weddings, and what my responsibilities are regarding logging and returning legal paperwork?

For all kinds of ceremonies:

- Will I provide a keepsake copy of the ceremony (hard copy or soft copy)?
- What materials do I provide at an initial meeting? How are they packaged?
- Will I provide the ceremony draft to the client for review, comment, approval? Will I iterate more than once on the ceremony script?
- What is my role regarding selection of ceremony music (define where needed, select, offer options, up to clients)?
- How will I engage with other vendors (DJ, musicians, venue managers, wedding planners, photographers, funeral directors, etc)?

- How flexible will I be as I'm starting my practice (services, fees, location, etc)?
- Do I seek to be the low cost provider, the high end provider, or somewhere in between?
- Who is my ideal client?
- Will I serve only identified Humanists, or anyone seeking a secular ceremony?
- How will I handle requests for religious content in the ceremony?

2. What are the situations where I will choose not to provide services?

- Same sex couples, transgender couples, poly groups, bikers, hipsters?
- Religious couples?
- Couples wanting to include religious content in their ceremonies?
- Inebriated/incapacitated bride or groom?
- No license provided on the wedding day?
- Dangerous weather (hurricane, heat, cold, tornado)?
- Distance limitations?

3. How will I communicate with clients?

- How many times do I commit to meeting with the client in person?
- How far will I travel to meet with potential clients? Is there a cost?
- Will I offer Skype or Facetime meetings if in person meetings are not possible?
- How will I be available to clients? Phone, text, email, in person meetings?
- Will our agreement be documented in a contract or ceremony agreement?

4. What will I charge for my services?

- Will fees be set or variable?
- How/when will I communicate my fees (website, price sheet, verbal, via email, via contract)?
- Will I require a deposit for my services? When is it payable? Is it refundable?
- When will all balances be due? What happens if they aren't paid on time?
- What forms of payment will I accept? Cash, check, credit card, PayPal? Square?

5. What terms will I document in a Ceremony Agreement (contract)?

- Names, date, time, venue, bad weather location
- My deliverables, their responsibilities
- Payment terms (how much, when, what happens if they don't pay?)
- What happens if I cannot perform the ceremony due to illness, emergency?
- What happens if they cancel in terms of monies due or refunded?



## Weddings

### Elements to Consider for Wedding Ceremonies

Prelude Music

Separating/Finding

Processional

Introduction/Welcome

Remembrance Language/Ritual

Parent/Family Appreciation

Love Story

Reading(s)

Transitioning

Statement of Intent

Personal Vows

Ring Ceremony

Unity Ritual

Family Ritual/Vows

Returning

Statement of Community Support (ritual option)

Reflection/Wishes for the Couple

Declaration of Marriage

Introduction of Couple

Invitation to Kiss

Recessional

Postlude Music

Examples follow for each of the ceremony elements identified above. A list of popular music options for ceremonies is listed in Appendix W6.

## Examples: Introduction/Welcome, Remembrance Language, Parent Appreciation

The opening is usually a greeting to guests, combined with some sentiment of the occasion - either generic or more personal. In some weddings, the opening is directed to the couple rather than the guests, and the focus of the opening is more along the lines of inspiration to the couple, for the commitment they make.

\*Dear friends and family, we are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the union of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. In the years they have been together, their love and understanding of each other has grown and matured, and now they have decided to live their lives together as husband and wife.

\*Dear friends and family, we are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the union of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. Through their time together, they have come to realize that their personal dreams, hopes, and goals are more attainable and more meaningful through the combined effort and mutual support provided in love, commitment, and family; and so today, they will begin their life together, as husband and wife.

\*To all present I say: We are gathered here, not to witness the beginning of what will be, but rather what already is! We do not create this marriage, because marriage is created in the hearts of two loving people. We can and do, however, gather to celebrate with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the wondrous and joyful occurrence that has already taken place in their lives, and the commitment they make today.

\*Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, we are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the joining of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage. With love and commitment, they have decided to live their lives together as husband and wife.

\*Welcome everyone. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen you, those special and important to them, to witness and celebrate the beginning of their life together. Today, as they join in marriage, they also create a new bond and new sense of family - one that will undoubtedly include all who are present here today.

\*We are here today to join \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in a life of mutual commitment. It is fitting and appropriate that you, the family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, be here to witness and to participate in their union. For the ideals, the understanding, and the mutual respect which they bring to their life together had their roots in the love and friendship and guidance you have given them. The union of two people makes us aware of the changes wrought by time. But the new relationship will continue to draw much of its beauty and meaning from the intimate associations of their past.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, today you are surrounded by your friends and family, all of whom

have gathered here to witness your marriage and to share in the joy of this special occasion. Today, as you join yourselves in marriage, there is a vast and unknown future stretching out before you. The possibilities and potentials of your married life are great; and now falls upon your shoulders, the task of choosing your values and making real your dreams. Through your commitment to each other, may you grow and nurture a love that makes both of you better people. A love that continues to give you great joy, and also a passion for living that provides you with energy and patience to face the responsibilities of life.

- - -

\*Good afternoon everyone. (name) and (name), you have gathered us together to celebrate with you as you cross the threshold into marriage. Today we reflect on the love you have found together, honor the commitment you are making to each other in marriage, and celebrate the bright future that is in front of you.

\*Good afternoon everyone. (name) and (name) have gathered us today to witness a significant moment of transition in their lives. They come today to profess their love and devotion to each other, their trust and confidence in their future together, and their intent to celebrate each day in the loving commitment called marriage.

\*Good afternoon everyone. (name) and (name) have gathered us together to take part in the most time honored celebration of the human family. Today we honor the love they have found together, and the commitment they are making to each other in marriage.

\*We are gathered here today to take part in the most time honored celebration of the human family, uniting this man and woman in marriage.

\*Family and friends, you have shared and contributed to (name) and (name)'s lives in the past, and by witnessing their marriage ceremony today, you are invited to share in their future as well. (name) and (name) are happy to share this day with you, and wish to express special love and appreciation to their parents for all they've done for them through the years and in preparation for this day. (Note: This paragraph can be added to any of the above Welcome statements.)

\*There is a quote that says, "Life moves pretty fast and if you don't stop to look around for a while, it could pass you by." (name) and (name), that is especially true of a wedding day. So I invite you to stop and look around right now. Pause for a moment and take a breath. Wedding days are such a whirlwind that it's important to slow things down and savor this experience. Look into each other's eyes – it is the love you have found together that has made this day possible. Look out at your family and friends who have shared in and contributed to your lives in the past. Many have traveled long distances to share this day with you, and they all stand ready to support you going forward. And finally, look into your own heart – and see there the love you feel that brings you such happiness, such peace, and such confidence in the future you will share.

\*While a wedding ceremony is all about the couple, (name) and (name) would like to take a moment here at the beginning of their ceremony to express special love and appreciation to their parents. Thank you parents, for all the love and support you've offered (name) and



(name) through the years and in preparation for this day. (Note: This paragraph can be added to any of the above Welcome statements.)

\*(name) and (name) are so happy to share this day with you, and carry in their hearts those not able to be with us today. They are remembered with love and appreciation. (Note: This statement can be added to any of the above Welcome statements and can be modified to name relatives/friends, or expand on the reasons people are absent – military service, hospitalized, etc. Usually no need to specify that some have died as that is understood.)

- - -

\* We have gathered here today to celebrate the love of (name) and (name) for one another, and their intention to share their lives in marriage. This intention can only be fulfilled in an atmosphere of acceptance and continuing growth. It requires that the partners enhance each other's individuality, and seek always to share the sorrows and mistakes of their lives, as well as their successes and joys. The intention of marriage can be realized only by the passage of time, as intimacy, knowledge and understanding deepen through the years. (name) and (name) choose this day to make a formal statement of their intention, which is not a light thought or casual whim, but a serious, life-long commitment. What greater thing is there for two human beings than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labor, to support each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent, unspeakable memories? Today we rejoice with (name) and (name) as they claim their human heritage of love in labor and sorrow and gladness, and in all the silent, unspeakable memories through the years to come.

\*We are assembled here to rejoice at the wedding of (name) and (name). A wedding is a formal and symbolic statement of a relationship, which bonds people together throughout their lives. It signifies that this couple intends to establish themselves as a household, and as a family into which their children can be welcomed. Marriage is the outward token of an inward union of minds and hearts which a ceremony may honor, the state may legalize, but which neither can enforce or destroy. It is a union created by living purpose and kept by abiding will, which becomes what the partners make of it, day by day. It should be undertaken only where a lifelong bond exists, and entered into freely, thoughtfully, and without reservation. In this spirit, these two people come now to be married.

\*We gather here today in this place because of what we share; a desire to affirm and support the relationship of (name) and (name). Marriage is an act of will, a promise to work for a communion with another person. It is not simply a spontaneous emotional reaction, nor the sudden grip of an irresistible feeling. Marriage requires a commitment to care for another person, to show concern for the life and growth of those whom we love. Marriage requires a commitment to respond to another person, to help meet their needs. Marriage requires a commitment to respect the unique individuality of that person, to help them grow and unfold for their own sake. Marriage requires a commitment to transcend our own egos, to use reason and humility to understand another person; and by doing this, we discover ourselves. All these commitments require that we give ourselves to another person; by this giving we experience our strength, our vitality, our power. We experience ourselves as overflowing and alive. Today we affirm and celebrate the wedding of (name) and (name).

\*We come together not make the start of a relationship, but to recognize a bond that already

exists. This marriage is one expression of the many varieties of love. Love is one, though its expressions are infinite. We live in a world of joy and fear and search for meaning and strength in the seeming disorder. We discover the truest guideline to our quest when we realize love in all its magnitudes. Love is the eternal force of life. Love is the force that allows us to face fear and uncertainty with courage.

## Example: Love Story

The Love Story element is totally unique to each couple. It tells part of their story, may highlight values and experiences, may share what they love about each other and hope for their future. The Love Story element can be as long or short as you and the couple want it to be. It is suggested that you share the Love Story element with the couple before the ceremony to ensure that they are comfortable with this level of personalization. Due to the length and personal nature of the Love Story, only one example is included here.

\*Sally and Michael, while we've all come together to celebrate with you today, the two of you have been coming together in different ways for nearly four years. You each first came to <city name> and to <medical facility name> for professional reasons - to pursue your nursing careers. But since the fall of 2013 you've also been coming together on a personal level.

While you met for the first time at a party thrown by your mutual nursing friends that year, it was months later, when you discovered each other again, that the time was right, and you had your first date. Sally, you weren't too sure what Michael's intentions were when he first suggested you join him to hang out with a group of his friends, but when he eventually asked you out for dinner at Osaka, his intentions were clear. You called that invitation, "an obvious romantic interest date."

And so you came together over sushi. That date was a roaring success. Sally you shared, "I remember that day like it was yesterday... even little details like, he forgot his credit card on the table, and when the date was over we didn't want it to be over so we awkwardly drove around trying to find something to do. We finally ended up in my very messy apartment (that I really didn't want him to see). I don't remember what we watched, but I do know the date lasted 12 plus hours. I definitely liked him and couldn't wait until the next time we would hang out!"

Michael, you were equally positive about that first date, remembering, "Our conversation rolled on as if we had known each other for years. It was not forced. It just seemed so natural from the beginning. Like the two of us were meant to be together in some way. Like I had finally found something I had been looking for all my life."

Over the next six months both Michael and Sally realized that they had found love with each other, but Michael wanted to have the first time he said the words to Sally to be special. He searched high and low for the perfect gift for her, and finally, on their six month anniversary, Michael told her he had a present for her. He said, "What I got you is the key to my heart. It is not just a necklace. Sally, I love you. And this represents how you are the ONLY one that holds a key to my heart." Sally returned the sentiment, marking a new phase in their relationship.

Nurses are known to be intelligent, hard working, caring, reliable, and compassionate, and those are just some of the characteristics you've come to love in each other. Sally, Michael had the following to share about his love for you. He said "Sally is someone I can put my

utmost trust in. I know that she makes good life choices. Her good nature and sense of responsibility have also driven me to be a better person. She has helped me grow and always strive to do better, to be the man I want to be – one who always tries his best.” And, he continued, “I find it very attractive when a woman is smart. I could tell the first time Sally spoke that she was no ordinary woman. We also have many similar strengths and weaknesses. Many similar interests and opinions. She is strong and independent, and has a stable career. She continues to impress me.” And Michael finished his observations sharing, “Sally's humor is also much like mine. We both have our serious side, but, from the beginning, we haven't been afraid to just be ourselves around each other.”

Sally noted that same ability to be herself around you, Michael, when she shared, “I love that I can be my goofy self around Michael. I don't ever feel judged. I love that he always makes me feel beautiful, even when I don't have makeup on, or I just woke up and my hair's a mess. Michael genuinely loves me for who I am and never tries to change me. He's extremely caring and empathetic, almost to a fault as he sometimes doesn't take needed time for himself, but I would never want that quality to change. Michael is not quick to judge others; is very understanding of others. He's very polite to everyone he meets, and is just genuinely a good guy.”

With your love acknowledged and growing, it didn't take long before you were joking about what kind of dog you wanted to get together, and about what your future would be like. Then you decided to buy your house together, and closed on it exactly two years ago today. You even ring shopped together, but Michael, you secretly purchased the ring and then planned the big proposal moment.

Sally, in fall of 2015, you were planning a trip to Mexico with Michael, but before you left, Michael planned a special dinner for you at <restaurant name>. You were immediately suspicious, and even asked Michael if he was going to propose that night. But Michael was prepared, and gifted you with a pair of Morganite earrings at the end of the meal to throw you off. It worked, but you were a little disappointed, too.

Back at the house, Sally went inside and Michael, you went to, supposedly, check for the mail. Instead you ran around to the back of the house, and lit candles coming down the stairs from the deck and in a heart shape around where you were standing. Meanwhile, Sally was discovering your carefully set up scavenger hunt inside the house – complete with roses, love letters and a rose petal path that led her to you.

Sally, you walked down the stairs to Michael as the sun was setting - the ultimate romantic moment, and Michael could tell by the look on your face that you would say yes. The only glitch in that otherwise perfect proposal is that Michael was so nervous that he forgot to put the ring on your finger right away, so you simply took the ring out of the box, and with a big smile, slipped it onto your finger! Mission accomplished.

You first came together as nurses, then friends, and then lovers. Today you will come together in yet another way. With your vows you will voice your commitment to each other, and your promise to always come together as husband and wife, for the benefit of your marriage and the future you want to build together.

## Example: Readings

Usually one or two readings are included in a wedding ceremony, unless the couple prefers not to have any. Sources include poetry and prose, serious, romantic, lighthearted or profound sentiments, and focus on various aspects of love and/or marriage. Inviting a guest to offer the reading(s) is a great way to include someone special to the couple, and to vary the voices being heard throughout the ceremony. Readings and readers should be introduced by the celebrant and should acknowledge the author, if known. Sample introductions for readings are followed by sample readings.

\*There are nearly as many readings for weddings as there are couples being married. This is a good thing as each couple is unique. The reading that Name and Name have selected for today ... They have invited Name to read for us Title by Author.

\*The reading Name and Name have chosen for today describes ... . They have invited Name to share with us "Title", by author.

\*Many things have been written about love and marriage – across time and cultures. But the writings have in common the desire to recognize and value the many faces of love and commitment. The selection Name and Name have chosen for today .... They have invited Name to share with us "Title" by author.

### LOVE

~ By Roy Croft ~

I love you, Not only for what you are,  
But for what I am When I am with you.

I love you, Not only for what  
You have made of yourself, But for what  
You are making of me.

I love you For the part of me  
That you bring out;  
I love you For putting your hand  
Into my heaped-up heart  
And passing over All the foolish, weak things  
That you can't help Dimly seeing there,  
And for drawing out Into the light  
All the beautiful belongings  
That no one else had looked  
Quite far enough to find.



I love you because you Are helping me to make  
Of the lumber of my life  
Not a tavern But a temple;  
Out of the works Of my every day  
Not a reproach But a song.

I love you Because you have done  
More than any creed Could have done  
To make me good,  
And more than any fate To make me happy.

You have done it Without a touch,  
Without a word, Without a sign.  
You have done it By being yourself.

### **Marriage is love**

by Gloria Matthew

If two are caring as they are sharing life's hopes and fears.  
If the music of laughter outweighs sadness and tears.  
Marriage is togetherness.  
If both derive pleasure from the mere presence of each other, yet when parted, no jealousies  
restrict, worry or smother.  
Marriage is freedom.  
If achievements mean more when they benefit two and consideration is shown with each  
point of view.  
Marriage is respect.  
And if togetherness, freedom and respect are combined with a joy that words can never fully  
define,  
then marriage is love.

### **I belong in your arms**

by Deborah Bridea

I belong in your arms  
Finally, I have found a place  
Into which I fit Perfectly, Safely  
And securely with no doubts,  
No fears, No sadness, No tears.

This place is filled with happiness and laughter  
Yet it is spacious enough, to allow me  
The freedom to move around,  
To live my life and be myself.  
This wonderful place, which I never believed really existed,

I have found Finally  
Inside your arms, Inside your heart, inside your love.

**From “The Prophet”**

~Kahlil Gibran

Love one another,  
But make not a bond of love.  
Let it rather be a moving sea  
Between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other’s cup  
But drink not from the same cup.  
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.

**My Love**

~ Linda Lee Elrod

When I met you, I had no idea  
how much my life  
was about to be changed...  
but then, how could I have known?

A love like ours happens  
once in a lifetime.  
You were a miracle to me,  
the one who was everything  
I had ever dreamed of,  
the one I thought existed  
only in my imagination.

And when you came into my life,

I realized that what I  
had always thought  
was happiness  
couldn't compare to the joy  
loving you brought me.

You are a part of everything  
I think and do and feel,  
and with you by my side,  
I believe that anything is possible.  
this day gives me a chance  
to thank you for the miracle of you...  
you are, and always will be,  
the love of my life.

### **The Colour Of My Love**

~David Foster and Arthur Janov

I'll paint a sun to warm your heart, knowing that we'll never part.  
I'll draw the years all passing by so much to learn, so much to try.  
I'll paint my mood in shadow blue, paint my soul to be with you.  
I'll sketch your lips in shaded tones, draw your mouth to my own.  
I'll trace a hand to wipe your tears and trace a look to calm your fears.  
A silhouette of dark and light to hold each other oh so tight.  
I'll paint the stars in the evening sky, draw the light into your eyes,  
A touch of love, a touch of grace, to softly fall on your moonlit face.  
And with this ring our lives will start, let nothing keep our love apart.  
I'll take your hand to hold in mine, and be together through all time.

### **To Love**

~Vlady Peters

To love is to remember and keep alive forever all those unique qualities that drew you to one another in the beginning.... Those first halting phrases...the thrill of discovery.... That wonderful feeling of oneness when your eyes met.

To love is to constantly search for new ways to bring each other to happiness, to make the most of every moment you share together, and marvel at how your feelings for one another keep rising to new dimensions.

To love is to create an oasis of tranquility for one another and a quiet place, apart from others, where you need not pretend...where you can be yourselves.... And know within your hearts, you will be accepted by one another.

To love is to greet each day with anticipation...Always eager for another opportunity to share new adventures...And gather up new memories TOGETHER!

To love is to follow the rainbow through the rain, to be able to laugh at yourselves and be willing to say...."I was wrong, I'm sorry"...To forgive, and more importantly, to FORGET, and to always believe and trust in one another.

To love is to watch with wonder all the miracles of creation, to find beauty in all the simple things of life, and to find, within ourselves, a deeper appreciation and a new awareness of how wonderful it is to be alive...To be happy...To be...TOGETHER.

To love is to come together from the pathways of our past and then move forward...Hand in hand, along the uncharted roads of our future, ready to risk, to dream, and to dare.... And always believe that all things are possible with trust and love.

### **Untitled**

Author unknown

You are the cheese to my macaroni.

You are the bacon to my eggs.

You are the peanut butter to my jelly and the peanut butter to my chocolate.

You are the chicken to my gravy.

You are the fancy flavored creamer to my coffee.

You are the ketchup to my French fries.

You are the little crunchy onion things to my green beans.

You are the icing to my cupcake.

You are the milk to my cookie, and like an Oreo with extra filling, my life is just more delicious with you in it.

### **Life has its Beginnings**

~ James Kavanaugh

Life has its beginnings,

Each with its own

Special promises,

Each a new door opening

To some new wonder,

Each a unique melody fashioned

in our hearts,

Each a personal adventure.

Such beginnings are a renewal

of our very being,

A sometimes fragile gift

That must be tended and loved

Nourished and understood,

Until all that can be, will be,

And life continues to be

A joyful creation

Of promises and original melodies  
And endless new beginnings.

### **It Seemed Like Forever**

Mary Miro

It seemed like forever that I longed for a soul mate.  
I can remember staring out at quiet star-filled nights,  
whispering prayers that someday, somewhere,  
I would find that one special person who was meant for me.

I imagined us laughing at silly things,  
sharing tears over sad things.  
We would lapse into comfortable silences as we read each other thoughts.  
We would love each other passionately and totally,  
heart to heart and soul to soul.

I waited and dreamed  
and dreamed and waited.  
After a while, I began to think my dream was exactly that -  
only a dream.

Then I met you, my wonderful partner  
and all my dreams came true.

### **Love Is The Greatest Gift of All**

~Author Unknown

To love is to share Life together,  
To build special plans just for two,  
To work side by side,  
and smile with pride  
As one by one, dreams come true.

To love is to have someone special  
On whom you can always depend  
To be there through the years,  
sharing laughter and tears  
As a partner, lover & friend.

To love is to make special memories  
Of moments you love to recall.  
Of all good things  
that sharing life brings,  
Love is the greatest of all.



## **Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog**

By Taylor Mali

First of all, it's a big responsibility,  
especially in a city like New York.  
So think long and hard before deciding on love.  
On the other hand, love gives you a sense of security:  
when you're walking down the street late at night  
and you have a leash on love  
ain't no one going to mess with you.  
Because crooks and muggers think love is unpredictable.  
Who knows what love could do in its own defense?

On cold winter nights, love is warm.  
It lies between you and lives and breathes  
and makes funny noises.  
Love wakes you up all hours of the night with its needs.  
It needs to be fed so it will grow and stay healthy.  
Love doesn't like being left alone for long.  
But come home and love is always happy to see you.  
It may break a few things accidentally in its passion for life,  
but you can never be mad at love for long.

Is love good all the time? No! No!  
Love can be bad. Bad, love, bad! Very bad love.  
Love makes messes.  
Love leaves you little surprises here and there.  
Love needs lots of cleaning up after.  
Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.  
Sometimes you want to roll up a piece of newspaper  
and swat love on the nose,  
not so much to cause pain,  
just to let love know Don't you ever do that again!

Sometimes love just wants to go for a nice long walk.  
Because love loves exercise.  
It runs you around the block and leaves you panting.  
It pulls you in several different directions at once,  
or winds around and around you  
until you're all wound up and can't move.  
But love makes you meet people wherever you go.  
People who have nothing in common but love  
stop and talk to each other on the street.

Throw things away and love will bring them back,  
again, and again, and again.  
But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.

And in return, love loves you and never stops.

### **Perfect Love**

By: Renée Duvall

Because you are my love,  
I know the joy that comes from feeling closer to someone  
than I've ever felt before.  
Because you are my love,  
I know the passion of wanting to share everything I have,  
everything I am with you and only you.  
Because you are my friend,  
I know that I can count on you to hold my hand through the rough times  
and to be there to share the good times, too.  
Because you are my friend,  
I'll always have someone to make me smile just when I need it most,  
to encourage me when I'm feeling confused or doubtful.  
And I know that I must be one of the luckiest people in the world  
to have someone like you.  
The perfect love and the perfect friend.

### **Ever Increasing Circles**

By Helen Marsh

Joining hands, we become a circle,  
Complete, connected and timeless,  
We are whole, but not exclusive,  
We are one and we will live as one,  
But with endless others encircled around us,

Our marriage is neither beginning or end,  
But a natural progression of our union,  
Which finds us bound but not restricted,  
All that was separate yields and flows,  
Softly, towards the shared path of our future,

On the foundation of past knowledge,  
We build modern family, a space of love,  
An expanding community of new and old,  
Emitting love, light and sublime acceptance,  
We find all things reflected back at us,  
Everything is provided for,

Together we hand-craft our next life phase,  
It is all embracing, welcoming and generous,  
The sensuous safety of our self made space,

Helps us to live bravely and without boundaries,  
Here we nurture, thrive and multiply,

All history is ours now, set down by us, made by us,  
Strong roots continually feed us, everything is possible,  
We grow, we build, we share eternally/forever now,  
And holding hands, we look up, prepare,  
For there is still far to go...

## **Possibility**

by Ralph Marston

In the seed, there is a forest waiting to grow.  
On the artist's canvas, a masterpiece is waiting to be painted.  
In the engineer's workstation,  
a technical breakthrough is waiting to be developed.  
Everywhere there is possibility.  
Every moment of every life is filled with possibilities,  
and the next moment as well.  
Every problem has a possible solution.  
Every goal has a possibility of achievement.  
Right now, right this moment,  
your life has possibilities that you never even considered.  
Possibilities you can follow to overcome the challenges you face.  
Possibilities that can bring joy and fulfillment.  
There is a pathway leading to wherever you want to go.  
All you need to do is find it and start the journey.  
Today does not have to be like yesterday.  
There are plenty of other possibilities.  
Consider your possibilities. Follow your possibilities.  
Open yourself to what could be, and make it so.

## **Love Is The Most Incredible Of All The Experiences**

~Author Unknown

Love is the most incredible  
of all the experiences that touch our lives.  
It creates for us the world that we want to live in.  
From the beginning of our lives,  
we know that love is the power that comforts and protects us;  
It is the one feeling that we can depend upon  
to help us through life's ups and downs.  
Love is the understanding and security that never changes;  
It allows us to be ourselves and feel self confident.

Today, as the two of you join together and commit your love to each other, remember the lessons of love that you have always known.  
Let your love comfort, support and encourage you.  
Let your love be the best part of your lives;  
Always know that it will make everything better  
and it will make your world a place of happiness.

## **BLESSING FOR A MARRIAGE**

~ James Dillet Freeman ~

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.

May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another, but not out of weakness.

May you want one another, but not out of lack.

May you entice one another, but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another, but not bind one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than emotional, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.

May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.

(Note: This can also be used as a Closing Reflection)

## **The Art Of Marriage (adapted)**

by Wilferd A. Peterson

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens.

A good marriage must be created.

In the art of marriage the little things are the big things...

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other for granted;

the courtship should not end with the honeymoon,

it should continue through all the years.

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.

It is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.  
It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.  
It is not looking for perfection in each other.  
It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humor.  
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.  
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.  
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.  
It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.  
It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.  
It is discovering what marriage can be, at its best.

### **From Gift From the Sea**

by Anne Morrow Lindberg

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 its 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.

### **Another From Gift From the Sea**

by Anne Morrow Lindberg

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 looking back to what 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. Relationships 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.

### **Reading adapted from Captain Corelli's Mandolin**



by Louis de Bernieres

Love is a temporary madness, it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides. And when it subsides you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your roots have so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is.

Love is not breathless, it is not excitement, it is not the promulgation of promises of eternal passion. . . . That is just 'being in love' which any fool can do. Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident.

May your roots grow towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms fall from your branches, you find out that you are one tree, and not two.

### **Reading from "Letters to a Young Poet"**

by Rainer Maria Rilke

It is . . . good to love: because love is difficult.  
For one human being to love another human being:  
that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us,  
the ultimate task, the final test and proof,  
the work for which all other work is merely preparation. . . .  
Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering,  
and uniting with another person . . .  
it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen,  
to become something in himself,  
to become world,  
to become world in himself for the sake of another person;  
it is a great, demanding claim on him,  
something that chooses him and calls him to vast distances

### **Excerpt from the Bridge Across Forever**

by Richard Bach

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

### **From The Irrational Season**

~Madeleine L'Engle

But ultimately there comes a moment when a decision must be made. Ultimately two people who love each other must ask themselves how much they hope for as their love grows and deepens, and how much risk they are willing to take...It is indeed a fearful gamble...Because it is the nature of love to create, a marriage itself is something which has to be created, so that, together we become a new creature.

To marry is the biggest risk in human relations that a person can take...If we commit ourselves to one person for life this is not, as many people think, a rejection of freedom; rather it demands the courage to move into all the risks of freedom, and the risk of love which is permanent; into that love which is not possession, but participation...It takes a lifetime to learn another person...When love is not possession, but participation, then it is part of that co-creation which is our human calling, and which implies such risk that it is often rejected.

### **On Love**

~Robert G Ingersoll

Love is the only bow on Life's dark cloud. It is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the babe, and sheds its radiance on the quiet tomb. It is the mother of art, inspirer of poet, patriot and philosopher. It is the air and light of every heart — builder of every home, kindler of every fire on every hearth. It was the first to dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody — for music is the voice of love. Love is the magician, the enchanter, that changes worthless things to Joy, and makes royal kings and queens of common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower, the heart, and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts; but with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods.

### **Marriage and Morals**

~Bertrand Russell

It is therefore possible for a civilized man and woman to be happy in marriage, although if this is to be the case a number of conditions must be fulfilled. There must be a feeling of complete equality on both sides; there must be no interference with mutual freedom; there must be the most complete physical intimacy; and there must be a certain similarity in regard to standards of values. Given all these conditions, I believe marriage to be the best and most important relation that can exist between two human beings.

If it has not often been realized hitherto, that is chiefly because husbands and wives have regarded themselves as each other's policemen. If marriage is to achieve its possibilities, husband and wife must learn to understand that, whatever the law may say, in their private lives they must be free.

### **TITLE UNKNOWN**

~ By Carl Sandburg ~

I love you for what you are, but I love you yet more for what you are going to be. I love you not so much for your realities as for your ideals. I pray for your desires that they may be great, rather than for your satisfactions, which may be so hazardously little. A satisfied flower is one

whose petals are about to fall. The most beautiful rose is one hardly more than a bud wherein the pangs and ecstasies of desire are working for a larger and finer growth. Not always shall you be what you are now. You are going forward toward something great. I am on the way with you and therefore I love you.

### **Comments on Marriage**

~Paul Kurtz

A successful marriage is one where each partner discovers that it is better to give love than to receive it. To truly love another person is to wish that person to develop and flourish in his or her own terms.

In a long marriage there will be joy and laughter, but also sadness and sorrow, harmony and discord, as you strive to overcome adversity and fulfill your dreams.

The key value of wedlock is that it allows for intimacy between a woman and a man, who can enjoy each other's company, share ideals and expectations, confess failures and admit defeats to each other, and yet realize in union the qualities of the good life.

As you build your home, embark upon careers, and raise a family, your marriage can become a work of art in which both of you together give it line and form, color and tone. You will be challenged every day and in every way to make your marriage work. If you do, it can become a thing of beauty, a joint creation of aesthetic splendor and enduring value.

### **A Lovely Love Story**

by Edward Monkton

The fierce Dinosaur was trapped inside his cage of ice. Although it was cold he was happy in there. It was, after all, his cage.

Then along came the Lovely Other Dinosaur.

The Lovely Other Dinosaur melted the Dinosaur's cage with kind words and loving thoughts.

I like this Dinosaur thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur.

Although he is fierce he is also tender and he is funny.

He is also quite clever though I will not tell him this for now.

I like this Lovely Other Dinosaur, thought the Dinosaur. She is beautiful and she is different and she smells so nice.

She is also a free spirit which is a quality I much admire in a dinosaur.

But he can be so distant and so peculiar at times, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur.

He is also overly fond of things.

Are all Dinosaurs so overly fond of things?

But her mind skips from here to there so quickly thought the Dinosaur. She is also uncommonly keen on shopping.

Are all Lovely Other Dinosaurs so uncommonly keen on shopping?

I will forgive his peculiarity and his concern for things, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. For they are part of what makes him a richly characterized individual.

I will forgive her skipping mind and her fondness for shopping, thought the Dinosaur. For she fills our life with beautiful thoughts and wonderful surprises. Besides, I am not unkeen on shopping either.

Now the Dinosaur and the Lovely Other Dinosaur are old.

Look at them.

Together they stand on the hill telling each other stories and feeling the warmth of the sun on their backs.

And that, my friends, is how it is with love.

Let us all be Dinosaurs and Lovely Other Dinosaurs together.

For the sun is warm.

And the world is a beautiful place

### **Oh the Places You'll Go (excerpt)**

by Dr. Seuss

Congratulations!

Today is your day.

You're off to Great Places!

You're off and away!

You have brains in your head.

You have feet in your shoes.

You can steer yourself any direction you choose.

You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

You'll look up and down streets. Look'em over with care. About some you will say, "I don't choose to go there." With your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet, you're too smart to go down a not-so-good street.

And when things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. Just go right along. You'll start happening too.

Oh! The Places You'll Go!

You'll be on your way up!

You'll be seeing great sights!

You'll join the high fliers who soar to high heights.

You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact and remember that Life's a Great Balancing Act. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft. And never mix up your right foot with your left.

And will you succeed?

Yes! You will, indeed!

(98 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  percent guaranteed.)

You're off to Great Places!  
Today is your day!  
Your mountain is waiting.  
So...get on your way!

**Sonnet #116**

by William Shakespeare

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 star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height 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 proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

**love**

~e.e. Cummings

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

it is most mad and moonly  
and less it shall unbecome  
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 littler than forgive

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

## **A Marriage**

~Mark Twain

A marriage ---  
makes of two fractional lives a whole,  
gives to two purposeless lives a work,  
and doubles the strength of each to perform it;  
It gives it two questioning natures  
a reason for living and something to live for;  
It will give a new gladness to the sunshine,  
a new fragrance to the flowers,  
a new beauty to the earth,  
and a new mystery to life.

## **I carry your heart**

~e.e. 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  
not 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)

## **Sonnet XVII**

by Pablo Neruda

I don't love you as if you were the salt-rose, topaz  
Or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:  
I love you as certain dark things are loved,  
Secretly, between the shadow and the soul.  
I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom and carries  
Hidden within itself the light of flowers,  
And thanks to your love, darkly in my body

Lives the dense fragrance that rises from the earth.  
I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,  
I love you simply, without problems or pride:  
I love you in this way because I know no other way of loving  
But this, in which there is not I or you,  
So intimate that your hand upon my chest is my hand,  
So intimate that when I fall asleep it is your eyes that close.

### **Song of the Open Road**

~Walt Whitman

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.  
Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
strong and content I travel the open road.  
I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.  
I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.  
Comrade, 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?

### **From the ancient Sanskrit**

Look to this day  
for it is life  
the very life of life.  
In its brief course lie all  
The realities and truths  
of existence,  
the joy of growth,  
the splendour of action,  
the glory of power.  
For yesterday is  
but a memory.  
And tomorrow is  
only a vision.  
But today well lived  
makes every yesterday  
a memory of happiness



and every tomorrow  
a vision of hope.  
Look well, therefore,  
to this day.

### **See Clearly**

A passage from The Couple's Tao Te Ching  
By Lau Tzu, Interpreted by William Martin -

Your love is a great mystery.  
It is like an eternal lake  
whose waters are always still and clear like glass.  
Looking into it you can see  
the truth about your life.

It is like a deep well  
whose waters are cool and pure.  
Drinking from it you can be reborn.

You do not have to stir the waters  
or dig the well.  
Merely see yourself clearly  
And drink deeply.

### **Do you not see**

by Tsu Yeh (Tsin Dynasty, CE 265-316)

Do you not see  
That you and I  
Are as the branches of one tree?  
With your rejoicing  
Comes my laughter;  
With your sadness  
Start my tears.  
Love,  
Could life be otherwise  
With you and me?

### **Excerpt from "The Hymn of the Universe"**

by Teilhard de Chardin

Only love can bring individual beings to their perfect completion, as individuals, by uniting them one with another, because only love takes possession of them and unites them by what lies deepest within them. This is simply a fact of our everyday experience. For indeed at what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they

say that they are lost in one another? And is not love all the time achieving - in couples, in teams, all around us - the magical and reputedly contradictory feat of personalizing through totalizing? And why should not what is thus daily achieved on a small scale be repeated one day on world-wide dimensions?

Humanity, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, of the one with the many: all these are regarded as utopian fantasies, yet they are biologically necessary; and if we would see them made flesh in the world what more need we do than imagine our power to love growing and broadening, till it can embrace the totality of human beings and of the earth?

### **Selection**

by Victor Hugo

You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving. The great acts of love are done by those who are habitually performing small acts of kindness. We pardon to the extent that we love. Love is knowing that even when you are alone, you will never be lonely again. And great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved. Loved for ourselves. And even loved in spite of ourselves.

### **Sonnet 18**

by William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as man can breath, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

### **from The 14th Dalai Lama:**

Take into account that great love  
and great achievements involve great risk.  
And that a loving atmosphere in your home  
is the foundation for your life.  
Be gentle with the earth, be gentle with one another.  
When disagreements come remember always  
to protect the spirit of your union.

When you realize you've made a mistake,  
take immediate steps to correct it.  
Remember that the best relationship is one  
in which your love for each other  
exceeds your need for each other.  
So love yourselves, love one another,  
love all that is your life together and all else will follow.

### **The Greatest Adventure The Ballad of a Hobbit**

~JRR Tolkien

The greatest adventure is what lies ahead  
Today and tomorrow are yet to be said  
The chances, the changes are all yours to make  
The mold of your life is in your hands to break  
The greatest adventure is if you are bold  
Let go of the moment that life makes you hold  
To measure the meaning can make you delay  
It's time to stop thinking and wasting your day  
The man who's a dreamer and never takes leave  
Who thinks of a world that's just make believe  
Will never know passion, will never know pain  
Who sits by the window will one day see rain  
The greatest adventure is what lies ahead  
Today and tomorrow are yet to be said  
The chances, the changes are all yours to make  
The mold of your life is in your hands to break.

### **"Daily Afflictions" - Loving the Wrong Person**

-by Andrew Boyd

We're all seeking that special person who is right for us. But if you've been through enough relationships, you begin to suspect there's no right person, just different flavors of wrong. Why is this? Because you yourself are wrong in some way, and you seek out partners who are wrong in some complementary way. But it takes a lot of living to grow fully into your own wrongness. And it isn't until you finally run up against your deepest demons, your unsolvable problems--the ones that make you truly who you are--that we're ready to find a lifelong mate. Only then do you finally know what you're looking for. You're looking for the wrong person. But not just any wrong person: the right wrong person--someone you lovingly gaze upon and think, "This is the problem I want to have."

I have found that special person who is wrong for me in just the right way.

## **I love you because**

~Author Unknown

I love you because you're my future,  
my present and part of my past.  
My world has been turning so quickly,  
and time just keeps moving so fast.

I love you because you have something,  
no ordinary person could give.  
Warmth that I will cling to forever,  
and hold onto as long as I live.

I love you because your devotion,  
is tender and wonderfully rare.  
And no-one could ever imagine  
the magical moments we share.

I love you because you are truthful,  
your eyes hold a key to my heart.  
I know that you share my commitment,  
and I know that we never shall part.

I love you because you are wonderful.  
and you give me all that I need.  
A hug when I seek reassurance,  
and a smile when we've disagreed.

I love you because – I just love you,  
for too many reasons to say.  
And I'll always be right here beside you,  
a breath and a heartbeat away.

## Examples: Statement of Intention

The Statement of Intention (also called the Consent) gives the couple the opportunity to voice their choice to join together in marriage before exchanging their vows. Some the examples below are limited to that purpose, while others use this part of the ceremony to lay out the significance of the marriage commitment before asking for their consent.

\*The vows you are about to speak will bind you in a new way to each other, so that you may continue to grow as individuals and a couple. Name and Name, you will know that you always have someone to depend on, to lean on, to confide in, and someone who loves you unconditionally. But you will also know that you have a responsibility to support each other as you reach for your goals, to nurture each other when one of you is feeling vulnerable, to encourage each other when doubts arise, and to love each other – always. You will invest yourselves in creating your future together; compromising when necessary for the benefit of your marriage, and working to keep your love strong and visible in your daily life. Understanding and accepting these responsibilities to each other, if it is your intention to join your lives in marriage, please respond together, I do.

\*Each of us knows that a marriage is not created by a law or a ceremony – instead, it occurs in the everyday actions that two people take, their ongoing dedication to love, their willingness to care for, and share themselves with each other. This commitment you are making is not a new one, because the promises you will make, in front of your family and your friends, are ones that you have already made in your hearts. You have shared so much in the time you have been together, – you've laughed together, comforted and supported each other in difficult moments, encouraged each other, and celebrated successes together. In fact, you have already been to one another everything you are committing to be here today: friend and beloved, consoler and confidant, partner and ally. Understanding both the benefits and responsibilities inherent in this commitment, if you come today, freely and without reservation to join your lives in marriage, please reply together, I do.

\*Nothing is easier than saying words, and nothing is harder than living them day by day. The promises you will make today must be remembered and made anew each day. You will be legally married from this day forward, but you will decide each day and each month of each year, that you want to be married. Real love is something beyond the excitement and romance of being “in love”. It is caring as much about the welfare and happiness of your partner as about your own. But real love is not total absorption in each other; it is looking outward in the same directions – together. Love lightens your burdens and increases your joys because both are shared. Love makes you stronger, allowing you to reach out and engage the world in ways you dared not risk alone. Love is essential for a good marriage, but it is not sufficient. Loyalty, patience, understanding, optimism and forgiveness must join with love to create a lasting marriage. Understanding the responsibilities you will be accepting, if you choose today to join your lives in marriage, please respond together, I do.

\*Name and Name, have you come here today with the intention to be legally joined in marriage? Do you pledge to choose respect, kindness, and compassion toward one another,

to listen deeply to one other, and to speak to one another truthfully, today and always?

\*Nothing is easier than saying words, and nothing is harder than living them day by day. The promises you will make today must be remembered and made anew each day. You will be legally married from this day forward, but you will decide each day and each month of each year, that you want to be married.

To make your marriage work will take more than love. It will take trust, to know in your hearts that you want only the best for each other. It will take dedication, to stay open to one another, to learn and grow, even when it is difficult to do so. And it will take faith, to go forward together without knowing what the future holds for both of you. These qualities are not always easy to come by. They are not a destination but a journey.

Understanding the responsibilities you will be accepting, if you come today, freely and without reservation, to join together in marriage, please reply together, "I do."

\*Name, will you have this man/woman to be your husband/wife? Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honor and keep him/her, in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, so long as you both shall live?

\*Do you, Name, take Name to be your husband/wife; to love and cherish, to honor and comfort; in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, in hardship and in ease, from this day forward?

\*Do you (name), take this man/woman, (name), to be your husband/wife, to live together in marriage, to love him/her, comfort him/her, honor and cherish him/her in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, from this day forth?

\*Do you, (name), take (name) to be your wedded husband/wife? Do you give this pledge to him/her, in all love and tenderness, in good faith and high resolve, to live with him/her, and cherish him/her, in the bond or marriage?

\*Do you, (name), choose (name) to be your husband/wife, to share life openly with him/her, to speak the truth to him/her in love, to honor and tenderly care for him/her, and to cherish and encourage him/her through all the changes of your life together, for the rest of your days?

\*(Name), do you make of your love a free, honest, and lawful gift to (name)? Will you promise before this gathering to share your life with him/her, and to honor, comfort and cherish him/her through whatever adversity or fortune your lives may bring?

## Examples: Personal Vows

The exchange of vows by the couple is the pinnacle of the ceremony. Vows can be offered in “repeat after me” format with the couple echoing the celebrant phrase by phrase. They can also be written by each person and offered paragraph form (recommendation: have the couple read their vows. It is much too much pressure to memorize these personal and emotional thoughts for such an important moment.) The final way vows can be offered is to have the celebrant read the vow in a “Do you...” form with the couple each responding, “I do”. This last version is least common and least personal in current ceremonies, unless English is not their first language. For more vow options, simply Google “wedding vows”, and you can read for a very long time.

\*I, (Bride/Groom), take you (Groom/Bride), to be my (wife/husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward.

\*I, \_\_\_\_\_, promise to you, \_\_\_\_\_, before family and friends, to commit my love to you, to respect your individuality; to be with you through life’s changes; and to nurture and strengthen the love between us, as long as we both shall live.

\*I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you \_\_\_\_\_, to be my spouse, my friend, my love, and my lifelong companion. To share my life with yours, To build our dreams together, to support you through times of trouble, and to rejoice with you in times of happiness. I promise to treat you with respect, love and loyalty through all the challenges and successes of our lives together. This commitment is made in love, kept in confidence, lived in hope, and daily made new.

\*I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife / husband. I promise to love and honor you. I promise to laugh with you in the good times and struggle along with you through the bad; and to stand by your side and cherish you always.

\*From this day onward, I choose you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband. To love together and laugh together; To work by your side and dream in your arms; To fill your heart and challenge your mind; To always seek out the best in you; To savor the years as we grow old together; Always loving you with all my heart, until the end of our forever.

\*\_\_\_\_\_, you’re the one I want to be with, the one I want to spend my life with. I am at home with you. I promise to always have faith in our love, to encourage you in your goals and dreams; to comfort you and cry with you in sadness; and to take the time to laugh with you and savor our lives together. Together, we can accomplish anything.

\*All that I am and all that I have, I offer to you in love and in joy. From this day forward I will love and comfort you, hold you close, value you above all others, and remain faithful to you all the days of our lives.

\*From this day forward I promise you these things. I will laugh with you in times of joy and comfort you in times of sorrow. I will share in your dreams, and support you as you strive to achieve your goals. I will listen to you with compassion and understanding, and speak to you with encouragement. I will help you when you need it, and step aside when you don't. I will



remain faithful to you for better or worse, in times of sickness and health. You are my best friend and I will love and respect you always.

\*Where there has been cold, you have brought warmth; where my life was dark, you have brought light. \_\_\_\_\_, I pledge before this assembled company to be your (husband/wife) from this day forward. Let us make of our two lives, one life, and let us always honor and respect each other.

\*Today I will marry my friend, the one I will live with, dream with and love. I take you to be my husband/wife. From this day forward I will cherish you, I will look with joy down the path of our tomorrow's knowing we will walk it together side by side, hand in hand and heart to heart.

\*I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband, knowing in my heart that you will be my constant friend, my faithful partner, and one true love. You are my best friend and I will love and respect you always.

\*I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my beloved (wife/husband), to have and to hold you, to honor you, to treasure you, to be at your side in sorrow and in joy, in the good times, and in the bad, and to love and cherish you always. I promise you this from my heart, for all the days of my life.

\*I \_\_\_\_\_, accept you \_\_\_\_\_, as my constant companion and my loving (wife/husband). I promise to care for you, honor you, and cherish you, for as long as we both shall live.

\*I take you to be my spouse, in equal love, as a mirror for my true self, and as a partner on my path, to honor you and to cherish you, in sorrow and in joy, till death do us part.

\*I take you as my wedded [wife/husband], to share my life with you, and pledge that I will love, honor, and care for you in tenderness and affection, in all the many circumstances of our lives.

\* \_\_\_\_\_, I acknowledge my love and respect for you and invite you to share my life as I hope to share yours. I promise always to recognize you as my equal and always to be conscious of your development, as well as my own. I shall seek through kindness and understanding to achieve with you the life we have envisioned.

\* \_\_\_\_\_, I promise to always be there for you, to shelter and hold your love as the most precious gift in my life. I will be truthful and honor you, as I embrace as the most important part of my life. I will care for you always and stand by you in times of sorrow and joy, forever nurturing the love I feel for you.

\*In the presence of our family and friends, I offer you my solemn vow to be your faithful partner in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, and in joy as well as in sorrow. I promise to love you unconditionally, to support you in your goals, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you and cry with you, and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

\*I (name), take you (name) to be my (husband/wife), my partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish our union and love you more each day than I did the day before. I will trust you

and respect you, laugh with you and cry with you, loving you faithfully through good times and bad, regardless of the obstacles we may face together. I give you my hand, my heart, and my love, from this day forward for as long as we both shall live.

\*Do you \_\_\_\_\_, take \_\_\_\_\_ to be your lawfully wedded wife/husband, promising to love and cherish, through joy and sorrow, sickness and health, and whatever challenges you may face, for as long as you both shall live?

## Examples: Ring Ceremony

Most ring ceremonies begin with a request by the celebrant for the rings (usually held by the best man, but sometimes by best man and maid of honor, and sometimes by the couple). After a brief introduction to the ceremony, reflecting on the significance of the rings, the couple exchanges rings while repeating after the celebrant a brief vow.

\*Rings have a long tradition as the outward sign of wedded love, and are rich in symbolism. They are made of precious metals, as the love they represent is precious. They are circular – with no beginning and no end. The ring is round, like the repeated cycles of the year, for in a marriage you must weather all seasons. It is made of strong and enduring metal as your love will be strong and enduring,

\*The wedding ring is the enduring symbol of the promises we have just heard. The ring is round, like the repeated cycles of the year, for a marriage must weather all seasons. It is made of strong and enduring metal as your love will be strong and enduring, and it announces to the world, “I love, and I am loved.”

\*Words are powerful, but fleeting, and the sound of them is soon gone. Therefore, the wedding ring becomes the enduring symbol of the promises we have just made to each other. The ring is round, like the repeated cycles of the year, for a marriage must weather all seasons.

\*The wedding ring is a visible symbol of the unbroken circle of your love, so that wherever you go, you may always return to your shared life together. May these rings always call to mind the power of your love and the promises you have shared today. May they announce to the world, “I love, and I am loved.”

\*You have for each other special rings – symbols that love is the most precious element in your life together. The ring has no beginning and no ending, which symbolizes that the love between you will never cease. You place these rings upon each others fingers as a visible sign of your vows this day, which will make you husband and wife.

## Examples: Unity Rituals

Unity rituals can be placed either before or after the exchange of vows and rings. A unity ritual serves as an overt action or ritual demonstrating in some way the couple's joining in marriage.

### **Unity Candle (not recommended for outdoor ceremonies)**

\*As together you light one candle from the two smaller candles, you acknowledge your union as husband and wife. By allowing the flames of the smaller candles to remain lit, you accept the individuality of each other as a means of fulfilling your oneness. The result is a synergy – the cooperation in which the whole is great than the sum of the independent efforts.

\*As these separate candles together light a new flame, losing nothing, but increasing the brightness, so may you as individual people create a lasting radiance of love. May the candle's warmth be a symbol of the daily affection that will warm your home. May that home be bright with the laughter of children and of many friends; may it be a haven from the tensions of our time and a wellspring of strength; and in all the world may it be the one place you most want to be. May your love shine as a beacon to all who seek the fullness of life.

\*The flames on the two tapers represent their single lives – all that they have been up to this moment – full and complete in their beauty, strength and character. Together, they will merge the flames to light the new candle that represents their marriage and the life they will build going forward. Name and Name, as you light this candle today, may it be a symbol of your commitment to each other; may the flame of love in your hearts continue to burn brightly and to grow, and may its energy fill your hearts with strength and joy.

### **Sand Ceremony**

\*Before us stand two vessels of colored sand. These represent Name and Name's lives as separate individuals. Each one holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. They can stand on their own and be whole, without need of anything else. However, when these sands are blended together, they create an entirely new and extraordinarily more intricate entity. Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will their marriage be a melding of two individuals and two cultures and a sharing of life's experiences, coming together to form one heart and one life.

### **Wine Sharing**

\*The sharing of wine is a universal rite of covenant, whose origins are lost in time. This wine is a symbol of home and table and the fruits of a generous earth, in which these two people will partake together. It is a token of the occasions of celebration that they hope for, and of the consolation and sustenance they will offer one another. The secret of wine teaches patience and the need for sweet, fine things to ripen over time.

\*The years of our lives are like cups of wine poured out for us to drink. The grapes as 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. Pour for each other now, and drink, and may the cups of your lives be sweet and full to running over.

\*As you share the wine from this cup draw contentment, comfort and joy from the cup of life. Drink now, and may your happiness be multiplied, may life's bitter hours be sweetened, and may your life together be hallowed by true companionship and love.

\*Life has many bright and happy moments, of which this sweet wine is a token. As you drink it together, seek to use all gladness and prosperity that come to you with gratitude and modesty and a bountiful sympathy for those less fortunate than you. But when hardship and sorrow come, of which this bitter wine is a token, seek for resolution to help one another with courage and compassion, neither blaming one another nor regretting the obligation of marriage to share and bear together the chances of life's changing weather. As you have shared this wine, so may you share together the sorrow and the joy of your lives.

\*You cannot have each other's lives or love, but you can create a new life of shared love to which you both contribute and from which you both receive; may the sharing of this cup be to you a token of your pledges for a lifetime of shared joys and duties, sorrows and satisfactions.

\*The wine from individual vessels will be joined and shared between Name and Name, as they will share of themselves and create a blended life. The wine contains two different properties – the sweet and the tart. The sweetness in the wine is symbolic of happiness, joy, peace, and love. The tartness or bitterness in the wine is symbolic of disappointment, sorrow, and life's challenges. Together the sweet and the tart represent the fullness of life's experiences. Name and Name, may your joys be multiplied and your sorrows halved for being shared.

A good wine, like a good marriage, is the result of many years of hard work. There is the unhurried nurturing of the vine and tender care of the grape, the thoughtful mix of ingredients and patient fermenting -- yielding the unique flavors of each passing year.

Let this first glass of wine that you taste together celebrate all that has brought you to this moment, and express your hope and confidence in the commitment you have made here today. Please share the blended wine, offering the cup to each other as you will strive to meet each other's needs throughout your marriage.

### **Love Letters (and Wine) Box**

\*Name and Name will place a bottle of wine and a love letter from each to the other into the box. The letters describe the good qualities they find in one another, the reasons they fell in love, and their hopes for their future together. The letters are sealed in individual envelopes and they have not seen what the other has written.

Next year, on their first anniversary, they will open the box, share the wine and read the letters they've written for each other. They will also write new letters, sharing their thoughts and memories of the first year of their marriage, and sharing again what they love about each other and hope for their future. The new letters and a new bottle of wine will be placed into the box, to await their next anniversary, when the cycle will repeat.

In this way, Name and Name will chronicle the growth and path of their love and marriage through the written word. This annual ritual will offer them the opportunity to reflect on their past, to recommit to their present and to focus on the future they want to build together.

Name and Name, please place your wine and love letters in the box and secure it now.

## Examples: Family Ritual/Vows

Family rituals can be included whenever there are children involved – either young children or adult children, the couple's children or children from previous relationships. The wording will need to be tailored to the age and circumstances of the children (living with the couple full time, part time or not at all, etc). It is important to be sensitive to the feelings of the children regarding this union. For that reason, it is recommended that the children not be asked to speak or to make promises to the couple. Rather the couple makes promises to the children and/or they all participate in a ritual.

### **Blended family promises:**

\*Today we celebrate not only Name and Name's love and commitment to each other, but also the family that is formalized with their marriage today. Just as it is appropriate for Name and Name to begin their married life by making promises to each other with vows, so too, is it appropriate for them to begin their new life as a family with promises to Child and Child. Children, please step forward and join hands with your mom and dad.

Name, I turn first to you as Child and Child's mother. Today you take Name to be your husband, and have promised to build a life with him, but Child and Child will always be a priority in your life. Will you continue to love and support Child and Child? Will you make time to listen to them, cherish and guide them? Will you treat Child and Child with love, care, concern, fairness and respect, while providing the direction and boundaries they need? Will you provide a safe, loving and caring home where they are encouraged to develop their own unique qualities, with the knowledge that they will always be loved and valued for themselves? Will you make these promises to Child and Child today, lovingly and freely?

Mother: I will.

Name, with your marriage to Name you are also taking on the role of father to Child and Child, with all the associated rights and responsibilities. So I ask you - will you love and support Child and Child in the coming years? Will you respect their relationship with their mother, yet be aware of your important place in their lives? Will you make time to listen to them, cherish and guide them? Will you provide a safe, loving and caring home where they are encouraged to develop their own unique qualities, with the knowledge that they will always be loved and valued for themselves? Will you treat Child and Child with love, care, concern, fairness and respect, while providing the direction and boundaries they need? Will you be a mentor and friend to them, showing them unconditional love as they grow into adults? Will you make these promises to Child and Child today, lovingly and freely?

Step father: I will.

To mark the promises made today, please share a family hug.

(Optional)Name and Name have gifts for Child and Child today. They are necklaces representing their new family. Child and Child can keep them close as a reminder of Name and Name's love for them, and their special bond as a family. Name, would you present the gifts to the children, please?



\*Today we celebrate not only Name and Name's love and commitment to each other, but also the family that is formalized with their marriage today. Just as it is appropriate for Name and Name to begin their married life by making promises to each other with vows, so too, is it appropriate for them to begin their new life as a family with promises to Child and Child. Children, please step forward and join hands with your parents.

Name and Name, today you have promised to build a life together in marriage, but Child and Child will always be a priority in your life. Will you continue to love and support Child and Child? Will you make time to listen to them, cherish and guide them? Will you treat Child and Child with love, care, concern, fairness and respect, while providing the direction and boundaries they need? Will you provide a safe, loving and caring home where they are encouraged to develop their own unique qualities, with the knowledge that they will always be loved and valued for themselves? Will you make these promises to Child and Child today, lovingly and freely?

Name and Name: I will.

To mark the promises made today, please share a family hug.

### **Family Sand Ceremony**

\*Before us stand five vessels of colored sand. These represent Child2, Child1, Child3, Name and Name's lives as separate individuals. Each one holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. However, when these sands are blended together, they create an entirely new and extraordinarily more intricate entity. Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination.

Name and Name, please blend some of the sand from your vessels creating the visual representation of your marriage which is the foundation for your family.

Now, building on top of the foundation provided by Name and Name, Child3, Child1 and Child2 will join in with sand representing their own unique personalities and contributions to the family. The five colors will join to represent the shared love and shared life of this very special family. Everyone, you may blend your colors.

## Examples: Statement of Community Support

The Statement of Community Support can be offered as part of the Opening, or later in the ceremony as the couple, now married, prepares to return to their community. Examples of wording for each are included below. For the ritual option: If the group of guests is small enough (approximately 30 or fewer) you can have the guests come forward to share their wishes for the couple during the ceremony. If the guest list is larger, the pebbles can be placed in a container near the couple as they greet their guests after the ceremony, and the pebbles and wishes can be shared at that time.

\*Will you, the families and friends of (name) and (name), on behalf of the larger community, pledge them your guidance and loving support, that they might grow in the covenant that they have made together? If so, please respond "We will".  
(We will).

\*(Name) and (name) come together out of a larger community of caring people. They ask our support as they begin together the adventure of married life. Will you, the community of their families and friends, dedicate yourselves to the continuing task of helping them in all ways to meet the challenge of marriage with open words and honest sharing, to live the most fully human life, to build a deep and abiding love, and to let their love for one another so shine that it touches all who know them? If you wish to offer them this support, please respond, "We will."  
(We will).

\*It is appropriate that (name) and (name) have asked you to share this day with them. As their family and friends you have taught them to give and to value the love and commitment that they offer now to each other. If you are willing, in the days and years ahead, to continue that example, and to support them, individually and together, in their efforts to increase that honesty and deepen that trust, that their love may be a blessing and a radiance among all those it touches, please respond "We will".  
(We will).

\*And will you who witness these pledges do what you may to uphold and nurture this marriage? If so, please answer "We will".  
(We will).

\*You who here witness this outward declaration of an inner union of love and purpose, can aid (name) and (name) by your delight in their happiness, by your understanding of their sorrows, and by your constant affection. Do you pledge to offer these supports as their future together unfolds?  
(We do).

\*Name and Name prepare now to return to you, their community, as a married couple. At this time, we ask all of you gathered here today to pledge your support to this marriage as Name and Name have pledged themselves to each other. Will you, family and friends promise to be more than mere witnesses to their lives? Will you love Name and Name? Will you respect them as a married couple? And will you support them in their desire to live a life of love, happiness, commitment and growth? If you are willing to take these roles in their life, please

respond "We will."  
(We will!)

\*Name and Name prepare now to return to you, their community, as a married couple. While a marriage takes place between two people, the support of their community can help it flourish and grow. So I ask all of you gathered here: Will you promise to be more than mere witnesses to Name and Name's lives? Will you surround them with love? Will you respect them as a married couple? And will you support them as they work to accomplish their goals and dreams? If you are willing to take these roles in their life, please respond "We will."  
(We will!)

\*To allow you to visibly demonstrate your support for Name and Name, I invite you all now to pick up the pebble you received when you arrived for the ceremony. Please hold your pebble in your hands for a moment and think about the wishes you have for Name and Name going forward. Do you wish them a long life and good health? Or an exciting life of adventure and exploration? Or a long and happy marriage? We each have wishes for them as they stand at the very beginning of their marriage, so take a moment to formulate your wish.

Now, keep your pebble nearby as our ceremony draws to a close, so that you can take it with you as leave the ceremony space. Then place the pebble in the basket, and share your wish with Name and Name as you greet them and move on to the rest of the day. Thank you for helping to create a visual reminder of all the warm wishes that surround Name and Name today and into the future.

## Examples: Reflection/Wishes for the Couple

The final reflection or wishes for the couple begins to wrap up the ceremony. It expresses good wishes for the couple in their married life. Examples of introductory comments for this element and final reflections themselves are included here.

\*Name and Name - the richness of your life surrounds you at this moment. You are wrapped in the love of your family and friends gathered here with you. You are cradled in the commitment you have declared to each other this afternoon. You are warmed by the love you share, and invigorated by the possibilities the future holds for you. I offer you this final reflection as you embark on your marriage journey:

\*Name and Name, pause now to reflect on this significant moment in your lives. Your love has gathered us here; your promises have been exchanged; your future now awaits, supported by your family and friends, strengthened by your love for each other, and buoyed by your hopes and dreams. I offer you this final reflection as you embark on your marriage journey...

\*May you always feel as close as you do this day.  
May your lives be graced with good health.  
May you always find happiness in your home,  
and may it be a refuge from the storms of life.  
May your love grow ever stronger as you share  
your lives together, and may your future be even  
more wonderful than you dream possible

\*Let love strengthen you in unity and commitment.  
Let love anchor you in the most important things in life.  
Let love carry you when the road is hard to walk.  
Let love shape your hearts as one.  
Let love hold you so close that nothing in the world can come between you.  
Let love be your guide in all things.

\*May your joys be as bright as the morning,  
your years of happiness  
as numerous as the stars in the heavens,  
and your troubles but shadows  
that fade in the sunlight of love.

### **\*BLESSING FOR A MARRIAGE**

~ James Dillet Freeman ~

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.  
May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.  
May you need one another, but not out of weakness.

May you want one another, but not out of lack.

May you entice one another, but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another, but not bind one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than emotional, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.

May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.

\*Hand in hand, heart with heart, may you walk the pathway of life in faith and hope and love.

\*May the vows that have been spoken here become a source of enduring joy, and may the love which has been pledged grow from this day into a fortress of courage, strength and security. May you so live and work together that your lives will be ennobled by a deepening comradeship of heart and mind, and your home be a place where wisdom is sought, where patience tempers adversity and charitableness is a source of true harmony. May you find in this union that way of life of which this joyous ceremony is but the first moment.

\*As your dreams are worn by daily usage, and reveal their grain, may you find them still lovely, and may your love take on deeper luster as it is polished by the passage of the year.

\*May your love prosper, to sweeten the lives of all who know you, and may the glad memory of this hour brighten all our days to come.

\*May we who share your joy learn from you, now and through all your days, the growing joy of commitment and the lasting hope for love which are the best ways of human living.

## Examples: Declaration of Marriage

This is the moment where you declare the couple officially married. You'll want to check your state marriage laws for any required wording, but other than that, you're free to use the wording you're comfortable with.

\*Name and Name, you have declared before us your intention to live as husband/wife and wife/husband, as friends, partners, and loving companions, and have demonstrated your union with the profession of vows and exchange of rings. I am honored to pronounce that you are married, and to introduce to all of you <place married name here>

\*Name and Name, it is my honor to pronounce that, with your exchange of vows and rings before the family and friends gathered here, you are now legally married.

\*Inasmuch as (name) and (name) have consented together in wedlock, and have pledged themselves to each other in the presence of this assembly by declaring vows, and by the giving and receiving of rings, they are entered into honorable matrimony, having undertaken its responsibilities, and being entitled to its privileges. I declare that by the authority of the state, the customs of our society, you are husband and wife. May your days together be long and your joys increase.

\*The purpose of our gathering here is fulfilled, in that we have witnessed the promises of mutual fidelity given by (name) and (name), and heard their intention to live together as husband and wife. Therefore we, and the society we represent, hold that you are now married, and I shall so certify. Henceforth we accord you the usages of that estate, and we wish you great happiness therein.

\*(Name) and (name), by exchanging vows and rings, you have affirmed your marriage to each other in the presence of this company. Henceforth, each of you will see your own experience in a new light as your life together unfolds. May you have the courage to love each other in truth today, and in the truth that is yet to be, the truth that shall be always new.

\*Inasmuch as (name) and (name) have grown in knowledge and love of one another, and have pledged to go forward in life together, meeting sorrow and joy as one family, and seeking always to enlarge and deepen their relationship, they shall now be recognized as husband and wife.

\*For as much as (name) and (name) have consented together in wedlock, and have witnessed the same before this company, and thereto have engaged and pledged themselves to each other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a ring and by joining hands, I pronounce that they are united.

\*By the power vested in me by the state of \_\_\_\_\_, I now pronounce you husband/wife and wife/husband.

## **Examples: Introduction of Couple**

A variety of options are offered here. The couple should select the one they are most comfortable with.

- \* Mr and Mrs John Doe
- \* Mr and Mrs John and Mary Doe
- \* John and Mary Doe
- \* Mr and Mr John and Joe Doe
- \* As a newly married couple, John and Mary.
- \*As a newly married couple, Mary and Sue
- \* As a newly married couple, John Doe and Mary Smith
- \*As a newly married couple, John Doe and Joe Smith
- \* The newly married, John and Mary
- \*The newly married, Mary and Sue
- \* The newly married, John Doe and Mary Smith
- \*The newly married, Mary Smith and Sue Jones



## Examples: Invitation to Kiss

This can be moved to immediately after the exchange of rings if you wish, but it can disrupt the ceremony as guests clap and celebrate and make it hard to return to a ceremonial tone, so you may choose to put it at the very end of the ceremony.

\* \_\_\_\_\_, You may kiss your bride.

\* \_\_\_\_\_, You may kiss your groom.

\* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, please share your first married kiss

\* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, please share a kiss

\* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, please celebrate your marriage with a kiss

\* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, please seal your vows with a kiss

\* Guests, as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ share a kiss, please join me in a round of applause. (Note, don't reverse these phrases or the guests will start to clap and won't hear the invitation to kiss).

## **Weddings Appendices:**

### **Appendix W1: Links to additional Humanist Celebrant resources**

1. Humanist Society website Celebrant resources:  
<http://thehumanistsociety.org/celebrants/resources/>
2. The Humanist Institute – online courses for celebrants:  
<http://cohe.humanistinstitute.org/trainings/>
3. Celebrant DG VanCuren's website including samples and snippets he encourages celebrants to use: <http://www.angelfire.com/id/vancuren/wedscript.html>
4. The Files section of the Humanist Celebrant Facebook Group has sample ceremonies, readings, contracts, etc. (Contact Rachael Berman for access to this closed group)

**Appendix W2: Sample Interview Form**

For first in-person meeting with the couple

**Wedding Consultation Information Sheet**

**Consultation Date:**

**The Couple (full names and nicknames; what they would like to be called during the ceremony):**

Name 1:

Name 2:

**Contact Phone Numbers:**

Day/Evening Phone:

Email address:

**Address:**

**Date of Wedding:**

**Ceremony Time:**

**Place of Wedding:**

**Bad weather plan (if outdoor ceremony is planned):**

**Rehearsal Plans:**

**Wedding Participants ~ adults & children:**

**Ushers?**

**Presenter ~ Name & phone number who will be presenting the Couple, if any, and Relationship:**

**Parents names:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 's father:

\_\_\_\_\_ 's mother:

\_\_\_\_\_ 's father:

\_\_\_\_\_ 's mother:

**Step-parents?**

**Honored guests to be included in the processional? (parents, grandparents, etc.)**

**Seating plan for parents/other honored guests:**

**Couple Position for ceremony?**

**Any cultural or family rituals or symbols you would like use?**

**Approximate number of guests:**

**Apparel/Formality:**

**PA system required? Who to provide?**

**Wedding Consultant/Contact info:**

**Music for Ceremony:**

Live, DJ, CD, Soloists?

**Photographer:**

**Videographer:**

**Marriage License and Legal Requirements:**

Remember to bring the marriage license to the wedding or rehearsal!

**Wedding Website?**

**How did discover you me?**

**THE COUPLE:**

When/How did you meet?

When/how did you decide to marry? Proposal story?

How do you spend time together?

What is a favorite memory of your relationship to date?

What do you love about each other?

Why are you choosing marriage? What does it mean to you?

**CEREMONY SCRIPT LOGISTICS:**

Optimal Length of ceremony:

**CEREMONY SPECIFICS:**

Entrance:

Parent Appreciation?

Honor ritual?

Reading(s)?:

Vows:

Ring Vows:

Unity ritual?

Family vows/ritual?

Community Statement of Support?

Closing Reflection:

Pronouncement (preferences):

Recessional:

**Additional Notes about the Wedding:**

## **Appendix W3: Sample simple Couple Questionnaire**

### **COUPLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**PLEASE ANSWER THESE SEPARATELY.** I will then use them to tell a personal story about your relationship during the Love Story section of the wedding, and to personalize other sections of the wedding.

1. What were your first impressions of one other when you first met?
2. Where was your first date? What were your thoughts after your first date?
3. When did you decide that you wanted to be together forever? Why?
4. How did you propose or accept the proposal?
5. What do you love about your partner? What qualities do you most admire in her or him?
6. What does your partner do that always makes you laugh?
7. What actions of your partner's say "I love you" to you?
8. When do you or did you feel closest to your partner?
9. Please share a story, experience or anecdote from your time together gives an insight into you as a couple (shows who you are, what you value, how you relate to each other, have fun together, whatever comes to mind...)
10. Are there any significant challenges you have dealt with as a couple thus far in your relationship that you are willing to share? How did they impact your relationship?
11. What are your hopes for your future together?

#### **About You**

- How would you describe yourself?
- What do you do for a living?
- What inspires you?
- What are your priorities in life?

## Appendix W4: Ethical Union Wedding Ceremony Sample

### ETHICAL HUMANIST WEDDING CEREMONY

#### WELCOME

Welcome. My name is Anne Klaeyesen, and I am Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture. As you know, Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate the wedding ceremony of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

As couples have done for some thousands of years, these two come before you, their wedding community, to make their pledges to each other. They come before you to make an ancient promise that binds the wedding couple across all previous boundaries. They come before you to join their two lives in marriage.

In the Ethical Culture wedding ceremony, we encourage the couple to find and share words that come, for them, as close as possible to the joint truths of this event. This \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have done.

#### READINGS

Poems, songs, essays, family sayings and writings, personal statements, etc. selected to give special meaning to the ceremony and/or to provide a family member or friend with a role. Many compilations of wedding readings have been published and are readily available. See the accompanying document for samples.

#### OFFICIANT'S WORDS

I am very pleased to be here today and would like to share some wedding thoughts with you. Why marry? Why not just live together and love each other without a public declaration? What makes today remarkable?

First of all, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ love each other. That much is obvious. No ceremony can create a human relationship; it can only recognize, and celebrate, an existing relationship. These are people who share the same values, who delight in each other's company more than any other's, who together are somehow more than they are apart, and who promise, at life's most critical juncture, to help each other deepen and heighten their own best selves.

You and I are also involved in that promise. We have the right and the responsibility to hold them to their vows, to help them struggle against the voices of modern distraction. What is it to marry because you love? What is it to stay loving because you have married? These things are mysteries. The work of questions such as these is also an obligation assumed by the heart and the will according to the promises made today.

Across many centuries, traditions, geography and generations, weddings take place at the heart of the world. In the smallest hamlet and the largest metropolis, people are getting married, and people who love them are in attendance. The best hope of the world is

represented in this community of beloved families and friends here gathered, perhaps at some sacrifice, to wish this couple well. Look around. Though we may not all know one another, still we are members now of the same wedding community, family in an extended sense, sharing our love for this couple and our hopes for the success of their life partnership.

Secondly, a wedding ceremony is a unique opportunity for a couple to openly declare their personal feelings and to share with us, the wedding community, what is most important to them. What is important to Name and Name?

[Shared thoughts from interview and meetings with the couple: what is most important and meaningful, how they experience and appreciate each other, etc.]

### **VOWS and EXCHANGE of RINGS**

Vows may be recited from memory, read, or repeated after the celebrant. This constitutes the legal contract and must be witnessed by those chosen to sign the marriage license.

#### **The Hands Passage**

Please face each other and hold hands, so you may feel the gift that you are to one another:

These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on your wedding day as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow and forever.

These are the hands that will work alongside yours as together you build your future.

These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch will comfort you like no other.

These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief racks your mind.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children.

These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

#### **Sample vows:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, for the rest of our days.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband. I give you my hand and my heart. I pledge to share my life openly with you and to speak loving truth to you. I promise to respect



and honor you, care for you in tenderness, support you with patience and love, and walk with you through all the seasons of our lives.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be no other than yourself, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not yet know, with respect for your integrity and faith in your love for me, through all the years and in all that life may bring us. I promise to try to be ever open to you and above all, to do everything in my power to permit you to become the person you are yet to be. I give you my love.

Rings are an ancient symbol,  
blessed and simple. Round like the sun,  
like the eye, like arms that embrace.  
Circles, for love that is given  
come back round again and again.  
Therefore, may these symbols  
remind you that your love, like the sun,  
illuminates; that your love,  
like the eye, must see clearly;  
and that your love,  
like arms that embrace,  
is a grace upon this world.  
(from "The Golden Rule")

With this ring, I thee wed, and bind my life to yours.

## **DECLARATION**

By the power of your choice and the words that you have spoken to each other, I do declare that from this moment forward you are married, husband and wife, wife and husband. You may now kiss one another.

We wish for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ such goodwill and respect towards one another, and such support from others, that they may grow stronger in their love and be able to turn every crisis and challenge into an opportunity for the renewal and deepening of their relationship.

In Ethical Culture we say, "The place where we meet to seek the highest holy ground."  
Today, in this place, at this time, we have truly sought the highest and together shared holy ground.

## Appendix W5: Small Sound System Information and Links

The following info and links are based on personal experience. Your mileage may vary. Some notes have been added to distinguish the various options to help you decide which option is best for you.

The hardware that you get with the Amazing Amp and from Hisonic are basically the same. The difference is that you get service and optionally, additional warranty from Amazing Amp. Brian at Amazing Amp has received universally positive testimonials from celebrants and officiants. If you're not technically savvy, you might benefit from the support and service from Amazing Amp. If you don't need that level of service, you can buy the equipment directly from Hisonic for half the price.

The Amazing Amp:

<http://empowersound.com/amazing-amp-bt.html>

\$299.00

Two body packs, one handheld (only two can be used at the same time)

Good support, additional warranty available

Hisonic:

<https://www.amazon.com/Hisonic-HS122BT-HL-Rechargeable-Microphones-Connection/dp/B00SU6E8WM/>

\$149.00

One body pack, one handheld (both can be used at the same time)

Both include BlueTooth in addition and wired inputs.

The other Hisonic systems are either a single channel which I would not recommend, or a version with two body packs, but no handheld.

Lightweight headset microphone:

Please note: the wearable mic that comes with the above systems is black, and pretty big, so is rather obvious. There are other more discreet wearable mics available for an additional investment. You can certainly get started with the mic options (black wearable, lavalier and handheld wireless) that are included in the amp packages provided, and upgrade to a mic like this at a later date.

<https://www.amazon.com/Samson-Microphone-Miniature-Condenser-Capsule/dp/B0042VUF30/>

\$91.99

## Appendix W6: Wedding Ceremony Music Options

A processional song is the music that the wedding party will walk down the aisle to – you can have one song for everyone, or choose separate songs for the seating of grandparents and parents, for the arrival of bridesmaids and groomsmen, and for the bride's grand entrance. At the end of the ceremony, the couple and attendants leave the venue to the recessional music, which tends to be more upbeat than the processional.

### Processional:

“Here Comes the Bride”/”Bridal Chorus” - Wagner  
“Canon in D” - Pachelbel  
“A Thousand Years” - Christina Perri  
“Glasgow Love Theme” - from Love Actually  
“Marry Me” - Train  
“Somewhere Over The Rainbow” - Israel Kamakawiwo’Ole  
“You and Me” - Dave Matthews Band  
“100 Years” - Five for Fighting  
“Your Song” - Elton John  
“A Moment Like This” - Kelly Clarkson  
“Stand by Me” - Ben E King  
“Turning Page” - Sleeping at Last  
“What a Wonderful World” - Louis Armstrong  
“Everything” - Lifehouse  
“Just the Way You Are” - Bruno Mars  
“Wonderful Tonight” - Eric Clapton  
“Love Someone” - Jason Mraz  
“Come Away With Me” - Norah Jones  
“Only Time” - Enya  
“Arioso” - JS Bach  
“Trumpet Voluntary” - J Clarke  
“The Wedding Song” - Peter, Paul and Mary  
“Yellow” - Vitamin String Quartet  
“A Thousand Years” - Piano Guys  
“Dawn” - Jean-Yves Thibaudet  
“Somewhere in Time” - John Barry  
“Something That We Do” - Clint Black  
“Can’t Help Falling in Love,” - Haley Reinhart  
“Your Everything” - Keith Urban  
“To Make You Feel My Love” - Garth Brooks  
“All You Need is Love” - The Beatles  
“Here Comes the Sun” - The Beatles  
“Island In the Sun” - Weezer  
“Is This Love” - Bob Marley  
“Rhythm of Love” - Plain White T's  
“Best Day of My Life” - American Authors  
“Hey Ho” - The Lumineers  
“At Last” - Natalie Cole  
“Love You Madly” - Cake

Recessional:

“Wedding March” - Mendelssohn  
“Arrival of the Queen of Sheba” - Handel  
“Don't Stop Believin' – Vitamin String Quartet (originally by Journey)  
“Signed, Sealed, Delivered” - Stevie Wonder  
“First Day of My Life” - Bright Eyes  
“Now That We Found Love” - Heavy D & the Boyz  
“This Will Be” - Natalie Cole  
“Happy” - Pharrell Williams  
“All You Need is Love” - The Beatles  
“Sh-boom” - The Chords  
“Happy Together” - The Turtles  
“I Feel Good” - James Brown  
“I Do” - Colbie Caillat  
“You Are the Best Thing” - Ray Montagne  
“Beautiful Day” - U2  
“Just Like Heaven” - The Cure  
“Do You Believe in Magic” - The Cure  
“Crazy in Love” - Beyonce and JayZ  
“Air on the G String” - JS Bach  
“Treasure” - Bruno Mars  
“Is This Love” - Bob Marley  
“Can't Take My Eyes Off of You” - Frankie Valli  
“Home” - Phillip Phillips  
“Sugar” - Maroon 5  
“You Make My Dreams Come True” - Hall & Oates  
“Everything” - Michael Buble  
“For Once in My Life” - Stevie Wonder  
“I Could Not Ask for More” - Edwin McCain  
“The Way You Make Me Feel” - Michael Jackson  
“The Circle of Life” - Elton John  
“All of Me” - John Legend  
“Make You Feel My Love” - Billy Joel  
“Ain't No Mountain High Enough” - Diana Ross  
“Crazy Little Thing Called Love” - Queen  
“Always Be My Baby” - Mariah Carey  
“Cowboy Take Me Away” - Dixie Chicks  
“I Like It, I Love It” - Tim McGraw  
“I Love You” - Martina McBride  
“How Forever Feels” - Kenny Chesney  
“Why Don't We Just Dance” - Josh Turner  
“Next To You Next To Me” - Rascal Flatts  
“Love You Out Loud” - Rascal Flatts  
“Ever Ever After” - Carrie Underwood  
“Our Kind of Love” - Lady Antebellum  
“I'll Be There” - Jackson 5  
“Hornpipe with Water Music” - Handel

## MEMORIAL SERVICES

A Humanist, non-religious memorial ceremony will:

- Focus sincerely and affectionately on the person who has died
- Allow friends, relatives and acquaintances to express their feelings and to share their memories
- Have warmth and sincerity: many bereaved people find them helpful and are pleased to have provided a ceremony their loved ones would have wanted
- Celebrate the life of the person who has died by paying tribute to them, to the life they lived, the connections they made and left behind.
- Be simply more appropriate for those who have not lived according to religious principles, or accepted religious views of life and death.

### **Elements to Consider for a Memorial Service**

Processional

Welcome

Ritual

Reflection on Life and Death

Reading/Music

Biographical Sketch

Eulogy(ies)

Musical Interlude (Video option)

Reading

Closing

Recessional

Examples follow for each of the ceremony elements identified above. A list of music options for ceremonies is listed in Appendix M2.

## Examples: Processional

### \* **No Processional Option:**

- Casket, Urn, and/or Picture of deceased are prominently placed in the front of the room.
- Optionally, music can be played for five to ten minutes to indicate ceremony is about to begin.
- Family members are seated in front rows.
- Guests are seated behind family.
- Celebrant steps to the front and offers ceremony.

### \* **Traditional Processional Option:**

- Guests are seated in the ceremony space, with empty rows for family.
- Music begins.
- Celebrant leads processional into ceremony space.
- Casket is in place at the front or urn is carried by family member or funeral home staff and placed near picture in front.
- Family members follow urn and are seated in front rows.

### \* **Personalized Processional Option:**

- Guests are seated in the ceremony space, with empty rows for family.
- Music begins.
- Celebrant leads processional into ceremony space.
- Casket is in place at the front or urn is carried by family member or funeral home staff and placed near picture in front.
- Selected family members and/or friends carry in mementos of honorees life. The celebrant helps place them prominently on a table in front.
- Family members follow and are seated in front rows.

Note: If no casket or urn is present, a picture is usually the focal point for the ceremony. Flowers and wreaths can also be placed at the front of the ceremony space.

## Examples: Welcome

\* Good morning. On behalf of Spouse Name, Childrens Names and the rest of the family, as well as the staff of Funeral Home Name, I welcome you to our celebration of Name's life and the commemoration of her passing. We each arrive today with unique feelings of sadness and loss, but gather together for three shared purposes: to recognize, honor and celebrate the life Name lived, to say our final goodbyes to her, and to support each other as we set our feet on the path toward healing. I encourage you to quiet your minds and open your hearts to receive the loving support of all those gathered here who share your loss.

\*Good afternoon. On behalf of Spouse Name, Children's Names, the rest of the Family Name family, and the staff here at Funeral Home Name, I welcome you to our celebration of Name's life and the commemoration of his passing.

We open our ceremony today with a piece of music that Name selected for this occasion himself. He asked that his celebration of life begin with John Lennon's *Imagine*. Please listen to the words of this beautiful song as they tell us so much about the man Name was, and about his deeply held beliefs.

Name had time to consider this gathering during his final weeks, and made his wishes for it known in his discussions with his daughter, Name. As part of her final tribute to her father, she has worked to ensure that this service follows his directives. We seek today to honor Name by honoring his wishes, and to hold true to the values by which he lived.

One way that Name defined himself was as a Humanist. Humanism is a progressive philosophy that, without theism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity. The lifestance of Humanism – guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience – encourages us to live life well and fully.

Humanists recognize that all people are part of our wonderful, natural world. They accept, and even embrace the natural cycles of life that allow us to move forward as a people and as a world. Name loved life. He lived it well and fully. Name loved to interact with people – people from many different places, with many different beliefs - both religious and political. Spouse Name shared with me how Name could engage in discussion and even disagreement with people, but remain respectful and maintain the friendships. This is truly a gift in our often contentious world, and a trait to be admired and respected.

\*

*This Heritage*  
*They are not dead,  
Who leave us this great heritage  
Of remembered joy.  
They still live in our hearts,  
In the happiness we knew,  
In the dreams we shared.*

*They still breathe,  
In the lingering fragrance windblown,*

*From their favorite flowers.  
They still smile in the moonlight's silver  
And laugh in the sunlight's sparkling gold.*

*They still speak in the echoes of words  
We've heard them say again and again.*

*They still move,  
In the rhythm of waving grasses,  
In the dance of the tossing branches.*

*They are not dead;  
Their memory is warm in our hearts,  
Comfort in our sorrow.*

*They are not apart from us,  
But a part of us  
For love is eternal,  
And those we love shall be with us  
Throughout all eternity.*

Good afternoon. I'm Celebrant Name. On behalf of Children's Names, the rest of the Family name family, and the staff here at Funeral Home Name, I welcome you to our celebration of Name's life and the commemoration of his passing.

Services like this will not remove the sense of loss and sadness that we feel with Name's passing. But they do give us the space and time to give and receive support from those gathered with us; to reflect on and appreciate the richness of John's life and the legacy he leaves; and to say our goodbyes to our father, grandfather, great-grandfather, companion, colleague and friend. And a special thank you to Name's grandchildren who carried in the mementos of Name's life for us to use as touchstones today as we consider the many aspects of Name's life.

As the opening reading says, Name's heritage is alive in all of us gathered here today and in the world around us, and so we want to make this gathering a true celebration of his life. Name lived a long, full and rich life in his 96 years among us, and we are grateful for all the time we had with him. We are grateful, too, that his life was little impacted by illness through the years; playing golf until the age of 92, traveling between his homes in Florida and Minnesota for many years, loving time with his family, and relishing his time outdoors on his little Ford tractor.

Today is truly an opportunity for us to celebrate Name's life and to remember the moments we shared with him. Some will be lighthearted, others profound. Some will be serious, while others may bring a chuckle, even on this sad day.

### **Example: Rituals**

\* We begin this morning with a candle lighting ceremony. Candles offer light and warmth,



even on the darkest days. Name offered light to all she touched, in all her roles – daughter, wife, mother and stepmother, sister, grandmother, friend, co-worker, neighbor and more. Candles also allow us to increase our focus and let the rest of the world slip away for a bit. We seek during this time together to increase our focus on Name and the light she brought to our world. Mother's Name, would you come forward now, please, and begin for us by lighting the center candle representing Name herself, and the life you gave her at birth. You watched her grow from infant to grandmother, and she always brought light and life to you and Father's Name.

- Mother and Husband step forward and Mother lights the center candle.

Husband's Name, would you please light a candle from Name's candle representing the love you and Name shared and the light she brought to your world. You blended your families and built a life together, treasuring having found each other.

- Husband lights a candle, then Mother and Husband return to their seats.

Son and Daughter would you please step forward and light candles. These represent the unconditional love your mom shared with you each day since you were born. She was a constant source of support and encouragement for you and took pride in the wonderful adults you have become.

- Son and Daughter step forward and light candles, then return to seats.

Stepdaughters Names, would you please step forward and light candles in memory of the love and warmth with which Name welcomed you when she and your dad married. Together you all created the best kind of blended family where love matters more than blood.

- Stepdaughters step forward and light candles, then return to seats.

Brother's Name, would you please step forward and light a candle representing the love of siblings, shared daily in childhood and cherished still as adults.

- Brother steps forward and lights candle, then return to his seat.

And finally, Daughter in Law Name could you please help the children light a candle representing the very special love of a grandma for her grandchildren. Name relished her role as Grammy in recent years and showered the grandchildren with love from afar – and from up close as often as it could be arranged.

- Daughter in Law and the children step forward and light candles, then return to seats.

We bask now in the warmth and light from the candles lit with love, in memory of love, and sustained by love. They provide light on this challenging day – calling us to remember the light and happiness Name brought to our lives. They bring warmth to this day – as we have been privileged to bask in the warmth of her embrace, her smile and her very being. And they draw us together today – as we gather to remember her with love and to support each other

on our journey forward.

\* As we began today, I lit a candle signifying the light Name brought to our world. I would like to invite two of Name's daughters, Name1 and Name2 forward now to light a candle for each of Name's children as their name is called. These candles represent the light and life Name gifted to them and in turn, to their families.

- Daughters step forward and light a candle from Mary's candle as each name is called.

Son1  
Daughter1  
Daughter2

.  
.  
.

Thank you ladies.

One of the ways Name has left her mark on the world is immediately obvious – through her 11 children, 24 grandchildren, 46 great-grandchildren and 11 great-great-grandchildren. The light from these candles is strong and sure, just as Name's light and impact on her family and our world is strong and sure, and lasting.

## Examples: Reflection on Life and Death

A reflection on life and death can provide context for the service, and expound on the Humanist view of life and death. Like all other elements, it is optional, but can serve to ground the rest of the service.

\* In embracing the natural world, Name also knew and accepted that his time on this earth would come to an end. He did not want to leave the family that he so loved, and the world he so loved to explore. But he accepted this as a part of the circle of life. He understood that there were a number of transitions over the course of life – birth, reaching adulthood, marriage, having children, retirement, and eventually death. He realized that there is, as the reading goes, "... a time for everything under the heavens." The Name family has experienced a number of these significant life passages very recently.

\* Name accepted the limitations of our natural world. She saw its beauty in the flower's bloom and the river's run. She recognized its majesty in the mountains high and the skies so vast. She treasured its people she lived with and loved. And she accepted the nature of the cycles and seasons of life. In embracing the natural world, Name also knew that her time on this earth would come to an end – but until recently she certainly never expected to face that moment so soon. She did not want to leave the family that she so loved, and the world she so loved to explore. But she accepted this as a part of the circle of life. She understood that there are a number of transitions over the course of life – birth, reaching adulthood, marriage, having children, retirement, and eventually death. She realized that there is, as the reading says, "... a time for everything under the heavens." After her surprising cancer diagnosis at the beginning of the year, Name fought a valiant fight to try to stay with us, but it was not to be. After multiple surgeries and very challenging periods of recovery, Name had some days and moments in the last month when she was able to enjoy time with the family. But Name's body simply could not go on any more. And on Friday, Name died.

While we accept Nature's cycles and the seasons of life, it is never easy to bear when we lose a loved one. While we are grateful that Name's suffering has ceased, we miss her. And while we cherish the time we had with her, we simply want more of it. But life and death are truly beyond our capacity to control. So we are left to remember Name as the vibrant, beautiful loving woman she was, and to gather strength from her and from each other in our time of sorrow.

\* At this moment the natural feelings of loss and sorrow are too fresh for us to fully celebrate Mary's life, but we can and should aspire to do exactly that. To recall who Name was – as a child and young woman in Arkansas; as a young mother relocating to Minnesota in search of opportunity for herself and her family; as the matriarch of her family without question, who loved and cherished her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; and as a successful activist and advocate who spoke clearly and often for the oppressed, the poor, the battered, and the invisible people in our society. She started her adult life as a young wife without a high school diploma. Over her life she completed her education, raised her family, served on non-profit boards, was actively involved in Democratic politics first in Arkansas and later in Minnesota, and was a person to be reckoned with on many levels.

Name packed more living into her 84+ years on this earth than many people do. And so,

today we will pause to reflect on Name's inspiring life, on the legacy that she leaves, and on how fortunate we all are to have been touched by her.

One way that Name defined herself was as a Humanist. Humanism is a progressive philosophy that affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives that aspire to the greater good of humanity. The lifestance of Humanism – guided by reason, inspired by compassion, and informed by experience – encourages us to live life well and fully. Humanists recognize the value of all people that are part of our wonderful, natural world. They accept, and even embrace the natural cycles of life that allow us to move forward as individuals and as a community. Name loved life. She lived it well and fully. She left her mark on her family, our community and our state. She touched many people's lives personally, and many more benefited from her work and advocacy without ever knowing Name as an individual.

## Examples: Readings

Readings can be used in various places in the memorial service to provide a perspective on the person being honored, on death, grief and loss, or on healing and recognition of the value of the life being honored. Use different readings at different points of the service to reinforce a point or to transition to a new concept.

### How do We Let a Mother Go

How do we let a mother go?  
How do we say "I'm ready not to go on without you"?  
How can we ever have a clue of what that really means?  
And of sudden the moment is upon us, and there's no turning back.  
And then we know grief is...and guilt and love and things undone.  
Try to prepare and we will fail in some way, be it subtle or looming...

But there is peace too. Peace and acceptance and overwhelming love that we maybe weren't aware of. Waves and waves of conflicting emotion,  
And laughter too, and memories we had't bothered lately to recall come flooding  
Back in shared company...and it's all about you mum...

And there's gratitude...so much of that, that we had you, such a wonderful mother  
Bright and shining, nobody's fool, independent, but humble too;  
Smart, and kind, and fun.  
Adventurous..  
A part of you has passed away, but much is carried everyday within us, and will as long as we are here.

This may be a final tribute,  
A day to celebrate your life and say goodbyes;  
But it's not final.  
Every day I'll celebrate in some way, just by the virtue of how you shaped my life,  
The absolute and incredible fortune that I knew you.  
As a mother, a friend and a woman.

### She is Gone (He is Gone)

You can shed tears that she is gone  
Or you can smile because has lived  
You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back  
Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left  
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her  
Or you can be full of the love that you shared  
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday  
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday  
You can remember her and only that she is gone  
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back  
Or you can do what she would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

*David Harkins*

### **Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep**

Do not stand at my grave and weep  
I am not there.  
I do not sleep.  
I am thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
Of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am there.  
I did die.

*Mary Frye*

### **Death Is Nothing At All**

Death is nothing at all  
I have only slipped away into the next room  
I am I and you are you  
Whatever we were to each other  
That we are still  
Call me by my old familiar name  
Speak to me in the easy way you always used  
Put no difference into your tone  
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow  
Laugh as we always laughed  
At the little jokes we always enjoyed together  
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me  
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was  
Let it be spoken without effort  
Without the ghost of a shadow in it  
Life means all that it ever meant  
It is the same as it ever was  
There is absolute unbroken continuity  
What is death but a negligible accident?  
Why should I be out of mind  
Because I am out of sight?

I am waiting for you for an interval  
Somewhere very near  
Just around the corner  
All is well.  
Nothing is past; nothing is lost  
One brief moment and all will be as it was before  
How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!

*Cannon Henry Scott-Holland*

### **We Remember Him (We Remember Her)**

When we are weary and in need of strength,  
When we are lost and sick at heart,  
We remember him.  
When we have a joy we crave to share  
When we have decisions that are difficult to make  
When we have achievements that are based on his  
We remember him.  
At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter  
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring,  
We remember him.  
At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer  
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,  
We remember him.  
At the rising of the sun and at its setting,  
We remember him.  
As long as we live, he too will live  
For he is now a part of us,  
As we remember him.

*Adapted from the Yizkor Service*

### **Parable on Immortality**

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch until at last she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the seas and the sky come down to mingle with each other. Then at my side says. "There she goes."

Gone where? Gone from my sight...that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There she goes", there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!"

*Henry Van Dyke*

### **Remember**

Remember me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel than or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

*Christina Rossetti*

### **Our Memories build a special bridge**

When loved ones have to part  
To help us feel were with them still  
And soothe a grieving heart  
They span the years and warm our lives  
Preserving ties that bind  
Our memories build a special bridge  
And bring us peace of mind

*Emily Mathews*



## Examples: Biographical Sketch

The Biographical Sketch can be viewed as an expanded obituary, and you can use the obituary as a starting point. But don't read the obituary – the mourners have likely already done that and it will all but announce that you didn't know the person you are honoring. Rather, use the obituary to formulate questions for the family. The goal here is to provide a fleshed out chronological perspective of the honorees life. If personal tributes are also going to be offered, review those to ensure that you are not repeating points that will be covered later.

### **\*Sample Biographical Sketch 1**

Even in our sorrow, we rejoice that Betti was and is a part of our lives. We rejoice that she lives on in her beloved children, stepchildren and grandchildren. Her influence endures in the unending consequences flowing from her character and deeds; it endures in our own acts and thoughts. We shall remember her as a living, vital presence. With time, that memory will bring refreshment to our hearts and strengthen us in times of trouble. These are reflections that we treasure; for there can never be too much friendship in the world, too much human warmth, too much love.

Betti's light entered the world in November 1949, in the Netherlands, but she was soon on the move as her family emigrated to Minnesota in 1957, when she was seven years old. One of the early traditions shared with her parents and brother, Riet, Jan and Arie, were summer vacation trips. Popping the tent all across America, they traveled their new country via the highways and campsites from coast to coast and north to south. Betti would continue this tradition with her own family, and they have fond and sometimes humorous memories of summer vacation driving trips, including the time Eric, with only his driving learners permit in hand, drove the family vehicle into the greater New York City traffic. A harrowing but memorable time, for sure. And family vacations didn't end as the children left home. Miriam was included as she joined the family, and of course Emmett and Nina as they came along. Betti continued to organize trips, striving for the perfect experience for everyone.

The children remember Betti as a structured mom and stepmom who valued family dinners and game nights – or “forced family fun” as they sometimes referred to them. She believed in enforcing curfews, required chores for everyone, and expected each of them to work to their potential. But Saskia also shared, “As I got older, my mom wouldn't tell me what to do, but would ask questions that helped me to think for myself.” And Betti was always there to help the kids through the myriad teenage trials and tribulations that popped up.

Betti loved starting traditions, with the annual trek to cut down the family Christmas tree among them. When the kids grumbled about going, she made the trip more fun by instituting the game of counting how many trees they could find tied to the tops of cars. And their own tree grew in size each year until they needed to build their new home to accommodate it. Not quite true, but they've had some serious trees in the new house which is lovingly referred to as the “family lodge”. Tom's comment summed up family life with Betti perfectly. He said simply, “Betti was very much about family and home was a well oiled machine.”

Eric and Miriam's children were one of Betti's focal points in recent years. She named herself “Grammy” and everyone learned to call her that. She was committed to regular visits - a challenge given that Eric's family lives in California. But they kept to that commitment even

during the last months when Eric and his young family made more trips to Minnesota as Tom and Betti were able to make to fewer to California. And Betti and Tom recently sold their Florida home in part with hopes that they would buy a home in San Diego where they could winter with the grandchildren.

Beyond her family, Betti shared her light on a professional level. After studying Geography in college, she taught Social Studies for awhile. Later she took a position in business as a Purchasing professional. She worked in Purchasing for over ten years, but really didn't like the work or the corporate world. Probably the most enduring legacy from her time in corporate America was the group of friends she developed along the way. She was happy when Tom started Medical Engineering Resources, and at one point worked with him, helping to build the business using her organizational skills, business experience and drive for perfection. Betti was happy to step back from the business, though, and focus on her family when that became an option.

When Betti's dad, Jan Boers, approached the end of his life just last year, Betti offered him and the family a final labor of love. She worked with her dad and the rest of the family to capture his life story in a moving Tribute which she asked Tom to read at Jan's memorial service. We laughed and cried together that day, thanks in large part to Betti's gift of storytelling. The family, with Eric as scribe, has now reflected that work and in turn created a Tribute for Betti. Sallie McLaughlin, a longtime friend of Betti's has agreed to be the voice of Betti's story today and share the tribute with us. Sallie, could you come forward, please?

### **\*Biographical Sketch 2**

Mary had a rich and varied life, but there are a couple of common threads that were consistently visible over the years. Those threads - love of family, and commitment to advocacy are at the center of our celebration of her life today.

Mary was born on April 9, 1931 in Helena, Arkansas, and shared her early years with her parents, Ray and Margaret, her brother, Donald, and sisters, Carolyn and Patricia. She attended Sacred Heart Academy.

Mary's childhood came to an end in 1948 when, as a senior in high school, she married Delos Kenneth "Swede" Overton. Through the years, he and Mary would have 11 children. As a young girl, Mary thought that having a big family would be glamorous, and she was excited about her first pregnancy. She reminisced that Kenny was a good baby, and there were lots of people around to help out. The children arrived regularly in the coming years, and Mary was proud of her babies. She did acknowledge however, that it was hard to keep up with diapers, and it was sometimes hard to figure out what to do as a parent. There were always birthday celebrations in the Overton home, sometimes large and sometimes small. Mary remembered when she baked a doll cake for Kerry's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. It took hours to make and decorate, and it was destroyed in moments. Mary decided not to spend that much time on birthday cakes after that.

In 1962 Mary decided that there would be more opportunities "up North", so picked up the children and moved to Swede's native Minnesota, settling first in Plainview. Mary worked at the Woolworths on Broadway in Rochester between her pregnancies. She was the short order cook and cashier at the lunch counter, and recalled one time when the store ran a

special on banana splits that generated such a crowd that she was mindlessly making split after split, only later realizing that she was serving up banana splits minus the bananas because she was working so fast. Mary also worked stints in food service at the Sheraton Hotel, and then at Methodist Hospital.

It was during this time, while she was juggling family responsibilities and work, that she decided she also wanted to go back to school. She enrolled at Rochester Junior College, taking a class or two at a time in Sociology, Psychology and Juvenile Criminology. She got mostly A's and proudly completed her Associate's degree in Sociology with a 3.76 GPA in 1975.

Mary said that being in the North “expanded her brain”. And in fact, Mary's experiences at school opened up a new world for her. She met some of the influential people in town, including Dorothy Krupp who had gotten a grant to open the first Women's Resource Center. Dorothy enlisted Mary to be part of the founding group for the center, along with Dorothy Barlow Gores. Mary was the group's low income representative, the first time she formally became an advocate – but far from the last.

Mary took crisis calls at night for the Rape Line, and facilitated a cooperative agreement between the Rape Crisis Line and Safe Home Network. She participated in writing the Articles of Incorporation for the Womens Shelter and testified on battering at the MN Legislature. She spoke to community groups and at churches and was on the Womens Shelter Board from 1978 through the early '80s. During this time Mary also served on the City Advisory Committee for housing issues. She brought code violations to light, and was an outspoken advocate and organizer for the less privileged people in town. Mary referred to herself as the “token poor person” on all these groups, but her impact was substantial, and her role as an advocate continued to grow.

In 1978 Mary took a position with Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services as a paralegal/community worker, working unemployment and government benefits cases. She did circuit riding throughout SE Minnesota before transferring to the Cities with Legal Aid in 1982, and continued working there until 1994. Mary was recognized in 1993, along with Jan Werness, with the BB Becker Award in recognition of their outstanding service in the provision of legal services for low income and disadvantaged persons. Mary left Legal Aid due to health issues, but her application for Social Security Disability payments was denied. True to her crusader self, Mary appealed the denial and won, being an advocate for herself this time.

Mary lived in the Roseville Senior House until June of 2009 when she moved back to Rochester. She continued to be active locally, serving on the Olmsted County Human Rights Commission, attending myriad Rochester City Council meetings, and being active in the Rochester Area FreeThinkers and DFL politics.

One of the more recent highlights in Mary's life was the surprise 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration her children organized for her. They conspired to plan the event and invite Mary's family and many of the friends from throughout her lifetime. Only two weeks before the event did they let Mary know it was going to happen, and then only so they could ensure she had a new outfit for the celebration. Mary was thrilled to see all the people that gathered on her special day, but was also honored and appreciative of all the notes and letters sent by those who were

unable to attend in person. This event, planned by her family, and honoring her life achievements brought together the two biggest priorities in her life – her family and her advocacy and activist efforts.

## Examples: Tribute(s)/Eulogy(ies)

Often at the heart of the service is the Eulogy or Tribute, the remembrance of the dead, the celebration of their life, and the recognition of the value of their life and ours. Eulogies or Tributes are often written and presented by close family members or friends. If you attempt to write and offer the Tribute or Eulogy make sure you have a close family member review it for accuracy.

This is what the former poet laureate had to say about the Eulogy:

*Eulogies are for everyone. They are a reminder that each of us leads a life of special interest and value, and that each of us is unique, with our own special gifts. These might be gifts of humor or kindness or energy, which we can all agree are admirable, or they might be quirkier things that are equally well worth commemorating. In every case, the eulogist's task is to bring the deceased into the mind's eye of the community –and to let us remember their voice and their manner, to let us share their interests, to let us appreciate their qualities, to let us enjoy their company a moment longer.*

*There will be times when the service is traditional, and others when it is more contemporary – arranged around a particular and relevant theme, for instance. In every case, this “formal” element can be trusted to carry a certain weight of emotion. The eulogy has a more flexible but no less focused job to do: it must be specific, particular, even intimate – and thereby seal the sense of occasion. This is the secret of the eulogy's power; it might move us to tears, but it will start to heal us too. It will help us get things in perspective, and to understand that we cope with loss not by forgetting whoever has been taken from us, but by finding out how we can best live with our memories of them.*

*Andrew Motion*

### **\*Sample Eulogy 1**

Malcolm and his wife, Margaret ‘retired’ into our neighborhood. Both were extremely quiet people who spent most of their time making their house and garden beautiful.

Malcolm was a little man physically but large in generosity. He had been a hard working builder, the ultimate ‘do-it-yourself’ guy. Over the years he transformed their little patch and we spent many happy times swapping gardening hints and cuttings.

Malcolm's serve respected his wishes. It was simple and non-religious.

*We Malcolm before we met him. And that was an irony as we later found out.*

*He and Margaret had scarcely moved into our street before the concrete mixer started growling. It went and went as Malcolm transformed his back yard into what would become a showcase for his flowers and begetables.*

*Our cat Ever-Ready engineered the introduction bringing us together. She was small, black and ever-ready for a feed or a cuddle. During that time there was no-one at home through the day and Every-Ready roamed. She inevitable found Malcolm and Margaret. It was true*

*love. She had a second home and was utterly spoiled. There were special treats of mile and more. They called her 'our little girl' and I got regular updates on her daily adventures.*

*When she became very ill, it was Malcolm and Margaret who accompanied me to the vet for her final visit.*

*But what I cherished most about Malcolm was his love of plants and in particular flowers. He spent growing them outside and embroidering them inside. His hands, so capable with a concrete mixer or a shovel, could also turn out fine needlework. I have several cross stitched blooms and treasure them.*

*To me they represent his patience, perseverance and quiet endurance. Toward the end, even in severe pain, he worked on creating these little beauties.*

*Malcolm called me the Flower-Fairy, a name given because when I went past their letterbox for my evening walk I often dropped in a flower from what ever was blooming in my garden.*

*In return I now call him the Flower-Elf. I know I won't sit down to embroider as he did so instead I offer up a thought posy.*

*Here's rosemary sweet and aromatic for remembrance.*

*A snip of pale pink rosebuds for friendship*

*A collection of pansies for loving thoughts*

*Some larkspur signifying a beautiful spirit*

*And lastly because, I know you'll remember the alstroemeria I gave you: how it invaded your garden and how hard you worked to get rid of it, some of that too. It stand for 'aspiring' and I know it will make you smile.*

*Thank-you Malcolm for your gentle love, friendship and kindness. We will remember.*

## **\*Sample Eulogy 2**

Rather than write a formal 'sentence by sentence' eulogy, I chose to take 'snapshots' of our childhood featuring the two of us.

*Elizabeth: an enormous capacity and will to live.*

*Our mother spent many of the months bearing her in bed in order that she stayed put and grew. Even so she was impatient and arrived early.*

*Elizabeth: 'Mrs Me Too'. I did the talking. She simply said "Me too.'*

*Elizabeth: a whirl of arms and legs, turning cartwheels on the lawn with her skirt tucked into her knickers.*

*Elizabeth: determined to be a marching girl and practicing up and down the path to the clothesline.*

*Elizabeth and I having been to see the movie : “Walky, Walky, Talky Holly Hocks, Talk about things you like to do...”*

*Elizabeth and I having elaborate doll’s tea parties under the buddlia trees their perfume still reminds me. We gave the dolls pink nail polish fingers and toes. A moment of inspiration later they had splendid sets of nipples too.*

*Elizabeth and I wearing hand knitted pale blue fluffy boleros and the other kids picking at the fluff.*

*Elizabeth and I in our ‘show’ dresses. Hers was white and red spots. When it rained the dye ran. She cried but later won a kewpie doll on a stick which brought back her smile.*

*Elizabeth and I playing music. She on the piano and me on the violin. Minuet in G getting faster and faster until the notes slid into each other and our Mother shouted for peace.*

*Elizabeth trying to teach me to handstand and I kept falling over.*

*Elizabeth: a tumult of passions, sensitivities, hopes, fears and abilities. The qualities I know to be true, despite the numbing rumble of daily life, were her deep desire to understand, her striving for peace, love and to honor and use her abilities creatively.*

*Elizabeth was and is highly intelligent, articulate, courageous and adventurous woman.*



## **Examples: Musical Interlude (Video option)**

Mourners are often emotional following the Tributes or Eulogies, so it's good to create space for them to deal with their emotions and to re-focus on some happier moments with the honoree. Many families choose to create a music backed video or slide show that fits this role perfectly.

Even if a video or slide show isn't available, this is a good time for a musical interlude. It can be positioned as a favorite selection of the honoree's, or a piece that allows us to reflect on some aspect of the honoree. This is also a time for quiet reflection or prayer as the mourners so choose. Example introductions to this element follow.

\* Keeping Betti alive in our memories and close in our hearts is the greatest honor we can bestow on her. Let us pause now and take a few moments for quiet reflection and silent goodbyes as we view some pictures of Betti's life among us and listen to one of her favorite pieces of music, the theme from "Romeo and Juliet"..

\* Keeping Jan alive in our memories and close in our hearts is the greatest honor we can bestow on him. Let us pause now and take a few moments for quiet reflection on Jan, our contact with him, his influence on us, and the wonderful world which we share as we listen to Louis Armstrong sing one of Jan's favorite songs, "What A Wonderful World".

\* It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. A picture can also represent a complete memory, a story of time shared with John, or a moment in John's life captured forever for reflection. Keeping John alive in our memories and close in our hearts is the greatest honor we can bestow on him. Let us pause now for a few moments for quiet reflection on John, our time with him, his influence on us, and the wonderful world which we share as we listen to Louis Armstrong and view pictures of John through the years.

\* But, as we recall the stories and milestones of Mary's life - her accomplishments, her joys, her quirks, her challenges, and her contributions to the world, we realize how much she was a part of the lives of all of us gathered here, and how much she will be missed. Let us pause now and take a few moments for quiet reflection on Mary, our contact with her, her influence on us and the wonderful world which we share as we listen to another song Mary selected for today, "What a Wonderful World".



## Examples: Closing

The Closing needs to achieve a number of goals. It serves as the final good-bye, it needs to provide hope and help the mourners see at least the beginning of a path forward, and it needs to cover the practical logistics of what comes next for the mourners. Samples that address each goal are provided.

\* On this occasion, as we reflect upon life and its meaning, it is for us, the living, to dedicate ourselves anew to those great ethical aims and ideals that have long been part of our heritage; to reaffirm our commitment to friendliness and sympathy toward all of humankind; to resolve anew to bend our minds and energies toward the pursuit of truth, the creation of beauty and the advancement of freedom. Beyond the welfare of our community, we look to the world at large and seek the happiness and progress of all humanity upon this fruitful earth – so that everywhere people may have life and have it more abundantly.

In honor of Name and the life he lived, and in the spirit of the continuing affirmation of life, I offer this final reflection and charge as we prepare to move back out into the world.

*The tragedy of life is not death, but what we let die inside us while we live.*

*Decide to be happy*

*Render others happy*

*Proclaim your joy*

*Love passionately your miraculous life*

*Do not wait for a better world*

*Be grateful for every moment of life*

*Switch on and keep on the positive buttons marked:*

*Optimism*

*Serenity*

*Confidence*

*Positive thinking*

*Love*

*Be grateful every day;*

*Meditate*

*Smile*

*Laugh*

*Whistle*

*Dance*

*Sing*

*Look with fascination at everything.*

*Fill your heart and lungs with liberty.*

*Be yourself fully and immensely.*

*Feel the greatness of your body, mind, heart and spirit and be convinced of your place in the world.*

We close our celebration of Name's life still with sorrow in our hearts, but also cognizant of the gift we have been given to have shared the world with him. We vow to carry him in our hearts, to let his values speak through our words and actions, to share him with each other

and with the next generation through stories, pictures and memories shared.

We leave now to share in community with each other as the family invites you to share lunch together – continuing to support each other, to honor Name, and to celebrate his life.

On behalf of the family, I thank you all for your presence here today, and for the many ways you have demonstrated your support for them in the past days and weeks.

Please follow the family out as we conclude our service with some of Name's favorite Dixeyland music.

\* On this occasion, as we reflect upon life and its meaning, it is for us, the living, to dedicate ourselves anew to those great ethical aims and ideals that have long been part of our heritage and that Name lived by; to reaffirm our commitment to friendliness and sympathy toward all of humankind; to resolve anew to bend our minds and energies toward the pursuit of truth, the creation of beauty and the advancement of freedom. Beyond the welfare of our community, we look to the world at large and seek the happiness and progress of all humanity upon this fruitful earth – so that everywhere people may have life and have it more abundantly.

In honor of Name and the life he lived, and in the spirit of the continuing affirmation of life, I offer this final reflection and charge as we prepare to move back out into the world. It is spoken in the voice of the one who has died. It is entitled, “Life Must Go On”

*Life Must Go On...A Navajo Prayer*

*Grieve for me, for I would grieve for you.  
Then brush away the sorrow and the tears  
Life is not over, but begins anew,  
with courage you must greet the coming years.  
To live forever in the past is wrong;  
can only cause you misery and pain.  
Dwell not on memories overlong,  
with others you must share and care again.  
Reach out and comfort those who comfort you;  
recall the years, but only for a while.  
Nurse not your loneliness; but live again.  
Forget not. Remember with a smile.*

We close our celebration of Name's life still with sorrow in our hearts, but also cognizant of the gift we have been given to have shared the world with him. We vow to carry him in our hearts, to let his values speak through our words and actions, to share him with each other and with the coming generations, and to remember him with a smile.

The family will be proceeding next to the cemetery for the committal service. You are welcome to join us there, or proceed directly to the City Country Club for a 19<sup>th</sup> hole reception

– where you can continue to support each other, to share stories and memories of Name and to celebrate his life. The family will arrive at the country club shortly.

On behalf of the family, I thank you all for your presence here today, and for the many ways you have demonstrated your support for them in the past days. Let us move forward now, carrying Name close in our hearts.

\* On this occasion, as we reflect upon life and its meaning, it is for us, the living, to dedicate ourselves anew to using our time here on Earth in the best ways we can. To seek to do good, to bring light and love into our circles and connections, to support and encourage our fellow travelers in life, and to keep alive the love and legacies of those who go before us.

In honor of Name and the life she lived, and in the spirit of the continuing affirmation of life, I offer this final reflection to lend perspective as we prepare to move back out into the world.

Untitled  
*by Cecil Day Lewis*

"Her laughter was better than birds in the morning, her smile  
Turned the edge of the wind, her memory  
Disarms death and charms the surly grave.  
Early she went to bed, too early we  
Saw her light put out; yet we could not grieve  
More than a little while,  
For she lives in the earth around us, laughs from the sky."

In recognition of her passing from this world, I now extinguish Name's candle.

While Name is gone, her light lives on in her family, her friends, in each of us she touched. We close our celebration of Name's life still with sorrow in our hearts, but also cognizant of the gift we have been given to have shared the world with her. We vow to carry her in our hearts, to let her values speak through our words and actions, to share her with each other and with the next generation through stories, pictures and memories shared.

We leave now to share in community with each other as the family invites you to share lunch together – continuing to support each other, to honor Name, to share her light and to celebrate her life. We will be gathering at Restaurant Name immediately following this service.

On behalf of the family, I thank you all for your presence here today, and for the many ways you have demonstrated your support for them in the past days, weeks and months. Please follow the family out as we conclude our service this morning.

## **Examples: The Recessional**

The Recessional is usually backed by music, and is simply the exit at the end of the ceremony. The important thing to remember is that the deceased is treated very respectfully.

If a casket is in front it may be moved to a hearse if there is going to be a graveside committal service immediately following the memorial service. The funeral director can tell you how they normally handle the removal. It may include pall bearers or the staff may move the casket. If there is not going to be a graveside service immediately following, the casket usually stays in the front of the ceremony space as guests leave.

If an urn is present in the ceremony space it is usually carried out at the beginning of the recessional – often by a pre-selected family member. If no one from the family is willing to carry the urn, it can be left in place and moved after the mourners have exited the room.

After the casket or urn is moved from the ceremony space, the celebrant leads the family out, with other mourners following.

# Memorial Service Appendices

## Appendix M1: People Who Are Facing Loss

### What Are Our Needs in Times of Loss?

Many people find themselves at a loss for words when speaking with people who are grieving the death of a loved one. Preparing oneself for your contact before picking up the phone, sending a message or making a visit can help you be a valuable support for those who are grieving.

### Understanding the grieving process

Robert and Jeanne Segal are the Co-founders of Helpguide, an organization that provides support services for people who are facing loss. They founded the organization following the suicide of their daughter, Morgan, who had a long battle with depression.

From: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief-loss/supporting-a-grieving-person.htm>

The better your understanding of grief and how it is healed, the better equipped you'll be to help a bereaved friend or family member:

- **There is no right or wrong way to grieve.** Grief does not always unfold in orderly, predictable stages. It can be an emotional rollercoaster, with unpredictable highs, lows, and setbacks. Everyone grieves differently, so avoid telling the bereaved what he or she "should" be feeling or doing.
- **Grief may involve extreme emotions and behaviors.** Feelings of guilt, anger, despair, and fear are common. A grieving person may yell to the heavens, obsess about the death, lash out at loved ones, or cry for hours on end. The bereaved need reassurance that what he or she feels is normal. Don't judge them or take his or her grief reactions personally.
- **There is no set timetable for grieving.** For many people, recovery after bereavement takes 18 to 24 months, but for others, the grieving process may be longer or shorter. Don't pressure the bereaved to move on or make them feel like they've been grieving too long. This can actually slow the healing process.

### What to say to someone who has lost a loved one

It is common to feel awkward when trying to comfort someone who is grieving. Many people do not know what to say or do. The following are suggestions to use as a guide.

- Acknowledge the situation. Example: "I heard that your \_\_\_\_\_ died." Use the word "died" That will show that you are more open to talk about how the person really feels.
- Express your concern. Example: "I'm sorry to hear that this happened to you."
- Be genuine in your communication and don't hide your feelings. Example: "I'm not sure what to say, but I want you to know I care."
- Offer your support. Example: "Tell me what I can do for you."

- Ask how he or she feels, and don't assume you know how the bereaved person feels on any given day.

Source: American Cancer Society

### **Helping a grieving person tip 1: Listen with compassion**

Almost everyone worries about what to say to a grieving person. But knowing how to listen is much more important. Oftentimes, well-meaning people avoid talking about the death or mentioning the deceased person, but the bereaved need to feel that his or her loss is acknowledged, it's not too terrible to talk about, and his or her loved one won't be forgotten.

While you should never try to force someone to open up, it's important to let the bereaved know he or she has permission to talk about the loss. Talk candidly about the person who died and don't steer away from the subject if the deceased's name comes up. When it seems appropriate, ask sensitive questions—without being nosy—that invite the grieving person to openly express his or her feelings. Try simply asking, "Do you feel like talking?"

- **Accept and acknowledge all feelings.** Let the grieving person know that it's okay to cry in front of you, to get angry, or to break down. Don't try to reason with him or her over how he or she should or shouldn't feel. The bereaved should feel free to express his or her feelings without fear of judgment, argument, or criticism.
- **Be willing to sit in silence.** Don't press if the grieving person doesn't feel like talking. You can offer comfort and support with your silent presence. If you can't think of something to say, just offer eye contact, a squeeze of the hand, or a reassuring hug.
- **Let the bereaved talk about how his or her loved one died.** People who are grieving may need to tell the story over and over again, sometimes in minute detail. Be patient. Repeating the story is a way of processing and accepting the death. With each retelling, the pain lessens.
- **Offer comfort and reassurance without minimizing the loss.** Tell the bereaved that what he or she is feeling is okay. If you've gone through a similar loss, share your own experience if you think it would help. However, don't give unsolicited advice, claim to "know" what the person is feeling, or compare your grief to his or hers.

### **Comments to avoid when comforting the bereaved**

- "I know how you feel." One can never know how another may feel. You could, instead, ask your friend to tell you how he or she feels.
- "It's part of God's plan." This phrase can make people angry and they often respond with, "What plan? Nobody told me about any plan."
- "Look at what you have to be thankful for." They know they have things to be thankful for, but right now they are not important.
- "He's in a better place now." The bereaved may or may not believe this. Keep your beliefs to yourself unless asked.
- "This is behind you now; it's time to get on with your life." Sometimes the bereaved are resistant to getting on with because they feel this means "forgetting" his or her loved one. In addition, moving on is easier said than done. Grief has a mind of its own and works at its own pace.

- Statements that begin with "You should" or "You will." These statements are too directive. Instead you could begin your comments with: "Have you thought about..." or "You might..."

Source: American Hospice Foundation

### **Helping a grieving person tip 2: Offer practical assistance**

**It is difficult for many grieving people to ask for help.** They might feel guilty about receiving so much attention, fear being a burden, or be too depressed to reach out. You can make it easier for them by making specific suggestions—such as, "I'm going to the market this afternoon. What can I bring you from there?" or "I've made beef stew for dinner. When can I come by and bring you some?"

**Consistency is very helpful, if you can manage it**—being there for as long as it takes. This helps the grieving person look forward to your attentiveness without having to make the additional effort of asking again and again. You can also convey an open invitation by saying, "Let me know what I can do," which may make a grieving person feel more comfortable about asking for help. But keep in mind that the bereaved may not have the energy or motivation to call you when he or she needs something, so it's better if you take the initiative to check in.

#### **Be the one who takes the initiative**

**There are many practical ways you can help a grieving person. You can offer to:**

- Shop for groceries or run errands
- Drop off a casserole or other type of food
- Help with funeral arrangements
- Stay in his or her home to take phone calls and receive guests
- Help with insurance forms or bills
- Take care of housework, such as cleaning or laundry
- Watch his or her children or pick them up from school
- Drive him or her wherever he or she needs to go
- Look after his or her pets
- Go with them to a support group meeting
- Accompany them on a walk
- Take them to lunch or a movie
- Share an enjoyable activity (game, puzzle, art project)

### **Helping a grieving person tip 3: Provide ongoing support**

**Grieving continues long after the funeral is over and the cards and flowers have stopped.** The length of the grieving process varies from person to person. But in general, grief lasts much longer than most people expect. Your bereaved friend or family member may need your support for months or even years.

- **Continue your support over the long haul.** Stay in touch with the grieving person, periodically checking in, dropping by, or sending letters or cards. Your support is more valuable than ever once the funeral is over, the other mourners are gone, and the initial shock of the loss has worn off.



- **Don't make assumptions based on outward appearances.** The bereaved person may look fine on the outside, while inside he or she is suffering. Avoid saying things like “You are so strong” or “You look so well.” This puts pressure on the person to keep up appearances and to hide his or her true feelings.
- **The pain of bereavement may never fully heal.** Be sensitive to the fact that life may never feel the same. You don't “get over” the death of a loved one. The bereaved person may learn to accept the loss. The pain may lessen in intensity over time, but the sadness may never completely go away.
- **Offer extra support on special days.** Certain times and days of the year will be particularly hard for your grieving friend or family member. Holidays, family milestones, birthdays, and anniversaries often reawaken grief. Be sensitive on these occasions. Let the bereaved person know that you're there for whatever he or she needs.

#### **Helping a grieving person tip 4: Watch for warning signs**

**It's common for a grieving person to feel depressed, confused, disconnected from others, or like he or she is going crazy.** But if the bereaved person's symptoms don't gradually start to fade—or they get worse with time—this may be a sign that normal grief has evolved into a more serious problem, such as clinical depression.

**Encourage the grieving person to seek professional help if you observe any of the following warning signs** after the initial grieving period—especially if it's been over two months since the death.

- Difficulty functioning in daily life
- Extreme focus on the death
- Excessive bitterness, anger, or guilt
- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Inability to enjoy life
- Hallucinations
- Withdrawing from others
- Constant feelings of hopelessness
- Talking about dying or suicide

It can be tricky to bring up your concerns to the bereaved person as you don't want to be perceived as invasive. **Instead of telling the person what to do, try stating your own feelings:** “ I am troubled by the fact that you aren't sleeping—perhaps you should look into getting help. ”

#### **Take talk of suicide very seriously**



## Appendix M2: Memorial Music

Music is a crucial and important part of most modern ceremonies or rituals and because of the undeniably powerful emotions evoked this means that music can be more significant for its role within the memorial service than many other types of ceremonies.

Choice of music can be purely subjective decision based on many factors, and given the importance of the occasion, there is one simple line of guidance, which is founded on experience and would be useful to consider.

*“There is an extremely thin line between that which is considered by people to be ‘appropriate’ music, for example, Meat Loaf or Bat Out of Hell may be considered extremely bad taste if played at a service of a person who died due to a motorbike accident, but Steppenwolf and Born to Be Wild may be absolutely perfect.”*

The tribute music that is the piece generally played after either the tribute or quiet moment of reflection, is usually judged to be the most significant, so with that in mind here are some questions you can ask and take into account when helping others to select music.

- Was it particularly requested by the deceased?
- Given the choice, would it be something the deceased might have chosen, or rejected?
- Would they have chosen this music for themselves, and if so, is that the motivation now?
- Is it a particular favorite of the deceased?
- Is it significant in any way to the deceased?
- Is it significant in any way that connects the deceased with surviving family or community?
- Do you want a particular piece of music to convey a certain sentiment or message?

Do you want it to reflect the personality or lifestyle of the deceased?

## Classical Music

Albanoni, Tomaso. [Albinoni's Adagio](#) (London Philharmonic; composed as Adagio in G Minor for Strings and Organ by Remo Giazotto, based on a fragment of a tune by Albinoni found in the ruins of the Dresden State Library, which was destroyed in World War II )

Bach, Johann Sebastian

- [Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring](#) (from Cantata BWV 147, “Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben”—performed by Barrymore Chamber Orchestra.
- [Prelude 1 from “The Well Tempered Clavier”](#)
- [Tocatta & Fugue in D Minor](#) (performed by U.S. Marine Band). There are two pieces by this name; ask for it by its Schmeider number, BMV565.
- [G Major Sarabande](#) (Suite No. 1 for Cello in G Major, BMV1007). Performed here, unaccompanied, by Yo-Yo Ma.

- [Sheep May Safely Graze](#) (Cantata No. 208, Lumiere String Quartet)

Barber, Samuel. [Adagio for Strings from the String Quartet, Op. 11](#) (moving)

Beethoven, Ludwig van

- [Symphony No. 3 in E-Flat Major, Op. 55, "Eroica," II. Funeral March. Adagio assai](#). The second movement of this long symphony is a funeral march)
- [Ode to Joy \(from Ninth Symphony\)](#) Check out various versions, orchestral and chorus

Brahms, Johannes

- [Welt, ich muss dich lassen \(Oh, World, I Must Leave Thee\)](#), from Op. 122, *Brahms' Chorale*, performed here by Soren Gleerup Hansen.
- [Symphony No. 3 in F Major, Op. 90, Third Movement: Poco Allegretto](#) (Philharmonic Promenade Symphony).
- [Symphony No. 3 in F Major](#), Third Movement (Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra)

Chopin, Frédéric

- [Prelude in E Minor](#), Op. 28, No. 4 (Artur Rubinstein)
- [Prelude in C Minor](#), Op. 28, No. 20 (performed by Tatiana Shebanova)
- [Piano Sonata No. 2 in B flat minor](#), 'Funeral March' Op. 35: III. Marche funèbre (Lento, performed by Simon Trpceski)

Delius, Frederick. [The Walk to the Paradise Garden](#) (Sir Thomas Beecham, Royal Philharmonic Society Orchestra)

Dupré, Marcel. [In Quiet Joy](#) (Chorales, Op. 28, No. 41, George Bacon playing organ)

Elgar, Edward. [Enigma Variations: Nimrod](#) (Sir Colin Davis, London Symphony Orchestra)

Fauré, Gabriel. [Requiem: In Paradisum](#) (John Rutter and Exultate Festival Choir and Orchestra)

Fauré, Gabriel. [Requiem: Pie Jesu](#) (John Rutter and Exultate Festival Choir and Orchestra, from the album [They Shall Have Rest: The Requiems Of Gabriel Fauré And John Rutter](#))

Gluck, Christophe Willibald. [Dance of the Blessed Spirits](#) (Act 2, Orfeo ed Euridice)

Grieg, Edvard. [The Last Spring](#) (Op. 33, No. 2, as sung by Anne Sofie von Otter) and [as arranged for a choir](#) (Janne Berglund)

Grieg. [Peer Gynt](#) (Suite No.1, Op.46 - 2. The Death of Aase, Berliner Philharmoniker)

Handel, George Frideric. [Largo from 'Xerxes'](#) (Latvian Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra)

Mahler, Gustav.

- [Kindertotenlieder \(songs on the death of children\)](#). A song cycle for voice and orchestra, with poems by Friedrich Rückert (performed by various artists):

- [Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n](#) (I. "Now the sun wants to rise as brightly")
- [Nun seh' ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen](#) (II. "Now I see well, why with such dark flames")
- [Wenn dein Mütterlein](#) (III. "When your mother")
- [Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen](#) (IV. "I often think: they have only just gone out")
- [In diesem Wetter](#)(V. "In this weather") "In this weather, in this windy storm, I would never have sent the children out.: You can find [lyrics on Wikipedia](#). Mahler. [Symphony No.2 in C Minor "Resurrection"](#) (I. Allegro maestoso, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra)

Mendelssohn, Felix. [String Quartet No. 6 in F minor, for Strings](#), , Op. 80 II (Aurora String Quartet II) and [IV. \(New Zealand String Quartet\)](#). Written for his sister Fanny, who died months before he did. This was his final composition.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus.

- [Dona Nobis Pacem](#) ("Coronation Mass" Mass in C, K.317) from Mozart's Requiem, performed here by Anna Tomowa-Sintow)
- [Missa brevis in C major](#) (K. 259, "Organ solo: Dona nobis pacem, performed by Lothar Stadler)
- [Requiem: Lacrimosa](#)

Pachelbel, Johann. [Pachelbel Canon in D Major](#)

Puccini, Giacomo. [E lucevan le stelle](#) ("When the stars were brightly shining"),

Plácido Domingo singing an aria from [Tosca](#), which is sung beautifully by many tenors, including [Jussi Bjorling](#) and [Luciano Pavarotti](#)

Purcell, Henry. [When I am laid in earth](#) ("Dido's Lament," from Dido and Aeneas, Act III), Leopold Stokowski and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Purcell. [Thou Knowest, Lord, the Secrets of Our Hearts](#) (The Choir of Christ's College)

Saint-Saëns, Camille. [Le Cygne](#) from [Le Carnaval des Animaux](#) (Carnival of the Animals)

Schubert, Franz.

- [Ave Maria](#) (sung by Mario Lanzo, in the version most of us are familiar with); listen also to [Leontyne Price](#). (Notes from JSR: Schubert never actually set the words of the Ave Maria to music. He wrote a piece called Ellen's dritter Gesang (Ellen's third song), to which others adapted the Ave Maria, years later.)
- ['Death and the Maiden](#) (String Quartet No.14 in D minor D810, performed here by Borodin Quartet)

Shostakovich, Dimitri. [Prelude & Fugue No.24 in D minor](#)

- Taverner, John, [Funeral Ikos](#) and [Song for Athene](#) (Christopher Robinson)
- Vaughn Williams, Ralph. [The Lark Ascending](#) (Sarah Chang and the London Philharmonic Orchestra). Listen also to [Nigel Kennedy](#).
- Verdi, Giuseppe. [Dies irae](#) and [Sanctus](#) from (Movements II and IV from Requiem, Robert Shaw & the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra)
- [Mild und leise \(Liebestod\)](#) (Jessye Norman singing Isolde's heartbreaking farewell to life in Tristan und Isolde)

### Popular Secular Music

- [Aquarius: Let the Sun Shine In](#) (Fifth Dimensions, from Hair—nostalgic)
- [Ain't No Mountain High Enough](#) (Diana Ross). But listen also to [Marvin Gaye's version](#)
- [All You Need Is Love](#) (The Beatles)
- [Aloha 'Oe](#) (The Brothers Cazimero, Hawaiian)
- [Amazing Grace](#) (Judy Collins, one of many versions available, including [one by Elvis Presley](#))
- [American Pie \(The Day the Music Died\)](#) (Don McLean)
- [And When I Die](#) (Blood Sweat & Tears)
- [Angel](#) (Sarah McLachlan)
- [Annie](#) (John Denver)
- [Ashokan Farewell](#) (Jay Ungar And Molly Mason –this is the beautiful song played on the PBS Civil War series)
- [Autumn Leaves](#) (Roger Williams Version). See also the versions by [Eva Cassidy](#)(from the beautiful album [Songbird](#)) and [Eric Clapton](#)
- [Back Home Again](#) (John Denver)
- [Bang the Drum Slowly](#) (Emmylou Harris)
- [Beautiful Boy \(Darling Boy\)](#) (John Lennon)
- [Big Rock Candy Mountain](#) (Harry McClintock)
- [Blackbird](#) as performed by Sarah McLachlan. Listen also to renditions by [Sarah Darling](#) and [Paul McCartney](#)
- [Blowin' In The Wind](#) (Bob Dylan); listen also to version by [Peter, Paul and Mary](#)
- [Bridge Over Troubled Water](#) (Simon & Garfunkel)
- [Bright Sunshiny Day \(I Can See Clearly Now\)](#) (Jimmy Cliff). I like this version from the film "[Cool Runnings](#)"
- [Bury My Body](#) (Al Kooper, Shuggie Otis)
- [California Dreamin'](#) (The Mamas and the Papas)
- [Candle in the Wind](#) (Elton John, written and performed for Princess Di)
- [Child of Mine](#) (Carole King)
- [Circle of Life](#) (Elton John)
- [Come on Up to the House](#) (Tom Waits)
- [Con te Partiro](#) (Andrea Bocelli)
- [A Day Without Rain](#) (Enya)
- [Death Is Not The End](#) (Bob Dylan)
  - [Death Letter Blues](#) (Son House, blues)
  - [Deliver Me](#) (Sarah Brightman)
  - [Do You Hear What I Hear?](#) (Andy Williams). Listen also to versions by [The](#)

### Harry Simeone Choir |

- [An Ending](#) (Brian Eno, ethereal instrumental)
- [Falling in Love Again](#) • (Marlene Dietrich, nostalgic)
- [Father and Son](#) (Cat Stevens)
- [Fields of Gold](#) (Eva Cassidy)
- [Fire and Rain](#) (James Taylor)
- [500 Miles](#) (Roseanne Cash)
- [Fly](#) (Celine Dion)
- [For the Good Times](#) (Kris Kristofferson)
- [Funeral for a Friend/Love Lies Bleeding](#) (Elton John)
- [The Gift You Are](#) (John Denver)
- [Goin' Back](#) (Dusty Springfield)
- [Good Day Sunshine](#) (The Beatles)
- [Good Riddance \(Time of your Life\)](#) (Green Day)
- [Go Rest High on That Mountain](#) (Vince Gill)
- [Greensleeves](#) (The King's Singers) and another classic version, [Julianne Baird & Ronn McFarlane singing to a lute song](#)
- [Here Comes the Sun](#) (The Beatles, from Abbey Road)
- [Hey Jude](#) (Paul McCartney). See other versions, including [Best of the Beatles](#)
- [I Can See Clearly Now \(Bright Sunshiny Day\)](#) (Jimmy Cliff). I like this version from the film "[Cool Runnings](#)"
- [I Feel Like Going Home](#) (Muddy Waters)
- [I Heard It Through The Grapevine](#) (Marvin Gaye, nostalgic)
- [I'll Be Missing You](#) (Puff Daddy & Faith Evans)
- [I'll be seeing you](#) (Frank Sinatra). Listen also to versions by [Jo Stafford](#) and [Billie Holliday](#)
- [I'll Fly Away](#) (Etta James). Listen to quite different versions by [Gillian Welch](#)
- [Imagine](#) (John Lennon)
- [In Dead Earnest](#) (humorous song performed by Arlo Guthrie and Pete Seeger, to lyrics by [Lee Hays](#))
- [I Will Always Love You](#) (Whitney Houston)
- [I Will Remember You](#) (Sarah McLachlan)
- [Joy To The World](#) (Three Dog Night, upbeat rock, great for recessional)
- [Just One Of Those Things](#) (Frank Sinatra); listen also to renditions by [Ella Fitzgerald](#) and [Doris Day](#)
- [Ka Makani Ka'iili Aloha](#) (Hawaiian, The Brothers Cazimero). See versions by many others.
- [Keep Me in Your Heart](#) (Warren Zevon)
- [Leaving On A Jet Plane](#) (John Denver)
- [Let It Be](#) (Paul McCartney)
- [The Long and Winding Road](#) (Paul McCartney)
- [Loving Her Was Easier \(Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again\)](#) (Kris Kristofferson)
- [Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds](#) (The Beatles, nostalgia). Listen also to [Elton John](#)
- [Many Rivers to Cross](#) (Jimmy Cliff)
- [May It Be](#) (Enya)
- [Memory](#) (Barbra Streisand). Listen also to the version from [Cats](#) (with the cast from the Andrew Lloyd Weber musical)

- [Moon River](#) (Johnny Mercer's song from Breakfast at Tiffany's).
- [Morning Has Broken](#) (Cat Stevens)
- [My Way](#) (Frank Sinatra)
- [Only the Good Die Young](#) (Billy Joel)
- [Only Time](#) (Enya)
- [On the Road Again](#) (Willie Nelson)
- [Pilgrim](#) (Steve Earle)
- [The Porpoise Song](#) (The Monkees)
- [The Prayer](#) (Celine Dion and Andrea Bocelli)
- [Precious Child](#) (Karen Taylor-Good on YouTube). [Download free on her site](#) .  
Song has been adopted by The Compassionate Friends, The Shaken Baby Alliance, and other groups
- [Rocky Mountain High](#) (John Denver)
- [The Rose](#) (Bette Midler)
- [Sand and Water](#) (Beth Nielsen Chapman)
- [Scent of a Woman Tango \(Por Una Cabeza\)](#) (John Williams, Itzhak Perlman)
- [See That My Grave Is Kept Clean](#) (Blind Lemon Jefferson, blues)
- [Shebeg & Shemor](#) (Moonrakers, traditional Irish waltz)
- [She's Gone](#) (Daryl Hall & John Oates )
- [Slipped Away](#) (Avril Lavigne)
- [Someone to Watch Over Me](#) (Barbra Streisand)
- [Somewhere](#) (Barbra Streisand)
- [Somewhere Over the Rainbow](#) (Judy Garland's version) is classic, but be sure to listen to Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's marvelous [Somewhere Over The Rainbow/What A Wonderful World](#)
- [Sounds of Silence](#) (Simon & Garfunkel)
- [Spring Will Be A Little Late This Year](#) (Ella Fitzgerald, but many others sing this nostalgic song)
- [Stop All the Clocks](#) (W.H. Auden's poem set to music by Nemo Shaw, downloadable at [Songs of Grief and Loss](#))
- [Summer Rain](#) (Brenda Carlisle)
- [Take Me Home, Country Roads](#) (John Denver)
- [Tears in Heaven](#) (Eric Clapton, after the death of his son, who fell from window)
- [They Can't Take That Away from Me](#) (Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong), but you may prefer [Frank Sinatra's version](#)
- [Those Were the Days](#) (Mary Hopkins)
- [Till There Was You](#) (Barbara Cook with Robert Preston)
- [The Time of Your Life](#) (Green Day)
- [Time to Say Goodbye \(Con Te Partiro\)](#) (Sarah Brightman and Andrea Bocelli)
- [Turn, Turn, Turn \(To Everything There Is a Season\)](#) (The Byrds)
- [Unchained](#) (Johnny Cash)
- [Vincent \(Starry, Starry Night\)](#) (Don McLean, from the album • [American Pie](#))
- [Wayfaring Stranger](#) (Eva Cassidy)
- [The Way We Were](#) (Barbra Streisand)
- [We'll Meet Again](#) (Vera Lynn). That's the original, and [Johnny Cash's version](#) is good in a different way.
- [When The Saints Go Marching In](#) (Louis Armstrong)



- [When You're Gone](#) Avril Lavigne
- [Where Have All the Flowers Gone](#) (Peter, Paul and Mary, from the album [The Very Best of Peter, Paul and Mary](#))
- [What a Wonderful World](#) (Louis Armstrong)
- [Wind Beneath My Wings](#) (Bette Midler)
- [The Wings That Fly Us Home](#) (John Denver)
- [With A Little Help From My Friends](#)
- [You'll Never Walk Alone](#) (Renée Fleming, from "Carousel")
- [You Raise Me Up](#) (Josh Groban). Listen also to [Selah's rendition](#)

## **Appendix M3: Ethical Union Memorial Service Sample**

### **Ethical Humanist Memorial Service and Readings compiled by Leader Dr. Anne Klaeyesen**

This is a draft that I often share with families and friends who get together to plan a memorial service. It helps them to focus on the various parts of a service and think about how they want to present it. I am also available to meet with you and officiate at the service.

Welcome and Opening Words:

“We come together from the diversity of our grieving,  
to gather in the warmth of this community  
giving stubborn witness to our belief that  
in times of sadness, there is room for laughter.  
In times of darkness, there always will be light.  
May we hold fast to the conviction  
that what we do with our lives matters  
and that a caring world is possible after all.”  
(M. Maureen Killoran)

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Anne Klaeyesen, and I am Leader of the NY Society for Ethical Culture. I welcome you into this time and space that are made sacred with the spirit of love and friendship you bring as you gather to remember and mourn \_\_\_\_\_. We come together as family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues: co-creators of a community that includes those present but also family and friends who could not be here today.

A memorial service is an act of loving leave-taking and a celebration of life. We don't need protection from grief, but rather time and the means to express it, to experience it, and to live through it. A memorial service is for those who have loved and lost, who miss loved ones and must go on living without them. Shakespeare wrote in Macbeth: “Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak/Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.”

This morning/afternoon we will give sorrow words: some of you will share your memories; others will sit quietly and reflect; together we will invoke \_\_\_\_\_'s spirit and celebrate his/her life.

Memorial Portrait (Eulogy) and Readings:

This combines shared memories and readings by selected family and friends. See below for “Memorial Readings.” You can let the facilitator know who will speak or leave it open until the memorial service.

Shared Memories Circle:

During the next few minutes, I invite you to share something of what it has meant to you to experience \_\_\_\_\_'s companionship, wisdom or humor in your own lives. You may wish to share a memory or say something about how your life has been enriched by her/him.



In this way, we make \_\_\_\_\_ present among us. Please stand and tell us who you are. If there are silent spaces between speakers, we can use this time to nourish a silent memory.

Closing:

Felix Adler, founder of Ethical Culture, said “The dead are not dead if we have loved them truly. In our own lives we can give them a kind of immortality. Let us arise and take up the work they have left unfinished.” Take a moment to remember what you most admired about \_\_\_\_\_.

Remember what most endeared him/her to you. Have it? Good. Hold on to it. Now imagine incorporating that quality, that gift into your own life. Love him/her, honor him/her; give him/her immortality by taking up the work he/she has left unfinished.

The act is done. The words have been said.  
The gate of the coming hour now opens to us in peace.  
Let us go through with thanksgiving for all that we said and did in this hour.  
Blessed is the mystery of life and death, which is our own.  
And blessed be Love forever.

\* \* \* \* \*

Selected Readings:

“The dead are not dead if we have loved them truly. In our own lives we can give them a kind of immortality. Let us arise and take up the work they have left unfinished. . .”

“The good deeds we have done, the nobler traits of character we have developed - these are imperishable.”

“Let us learn from the lips of death the lessons of life. Let us live truly while we live, live for what is true and good and lasting. And let the memory of our dead help us to do this.”

“A great man helps us by the standard which he erects. He never really is level with his own standard, and yet we do not therefore reject him. He helps us by what he earnestly tries for, and by what he suggests to us that we should try for he helps us, not so much by what he achieves, as by what he reveals, by the insight which he gives us into the nature of good.”(from Felix Adler, “Life and Destiny”)

Invocation

This is the call to the living,  
To those who refuse to make peace with evil,  
With the suffering and waste of the world.

This is the call to the human, not the perfect,  
To those who know their own prejudices,  
Who have no intention of becoming prisoners of their own limitations.

This is a call to those who remember the dreams of their youth.  
Who know what it means to share food and shelter,  
The care of children and those who are troubled,  
To reach beyond the barriers of the past  
Bringing people into communion.

This is a call to the never-ending spirit  
Of the common man, his essential decency and integrity,  
His unending capacity to suffer and endure,  
To face death and destruction and to rise again  
And build from the ruins of life.

This is the greatest call of all  
The call to a faith in people.  
To believe in freedom, we have to believe in people.

(from Algernon Black in "Unburnt Offerings")

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die;  
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; . . .  
A time to break down, and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn and a time to dance; . . .  
For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

(from Ecclesiastes)

A long time I have lived with you  
And now we must be going  
Separately to be together.  
Perhaps I shall be the wind  
To blur your smooth waters  
So that you do not see your face too much.  
Perhaps I shall be the star  
To guide your uncertain wings  
So that you have direction in the night.

Perhaps I shall be the fire  
To separate your thoughts  
So that you do not give up.  
Perhaps I shall be the rain  
To open up the earth So that your seed may fall.  
Perhaps I shall be the snow  
To let your blossoms sleep  
So that you may bloom in spring.  
Perhaps I shall be the stream

To play a song on the rock  
So that you are not alone.  
Perhaps I shall be a new mountain  
So that you always have a home.

(Nancy Wood)

Hold on to what is good  
even if it is a handful of earth.  
Hold on to what you believe  
even if it is  
a tree which stands by itself.  
Hold on to what you must do  
even if it is a long way from here.  
Hold on to life  
even when it is easier letting go.  
Hold on to my hand even when  
I have gone away from you.

(Nancy Wood)

Let me die, working.  
Still tackling plans unfinished, tasks undone!  
Clean to its end, swift may my race be run.  
No laggard steps, no faltering, no shirking;  
Let me die, working!

Let me die, thinking.  
Let me fare forth still with an open mind,  
Fresh secrets to unfold, new truths to find,  
My soul undimmed, alert, no question blinking;  
Let me die, thinking.

Let me die, giving.  
The substance of life for life's enriching;  
Time, things, and self on heaven converging,  
No selfish thought, loving, redeeming, living;  
Let me die, giving.

( S. Hall Young)

You shall ask  
What good are dead leaves  
And I will tell you  
They nourish the sore earth.  
You shall ask  
What reason is there for winter  
And I will tell you  
To bring about new leaves.

You shall ask  
Why are the leaves so green  
And I will tell you  
Because they are rich with life.

You shall ask  
Why must summer end  
And I will tell you  
So that leaves will die.

(Native American Indian)

When I am dead  
Cry for me a little.  
Think of me sometimes  
But not too much.  
It is not good for you  
Or your wife or your husband  
Or your children  
To allow your thoughts to dwell  
Too long on the dead.  
Think of me now and again  
As I was in life  
At some moment it is pleasant to recall.  
But not for long.  
Leave me in peace  
And I shall leave you, too, in peace.  
While you live  
Let your thoughts be with the living.

(Native American Prayer)

"We come together from the diversity of our grieving,  
to gather in the warmth of this community  
giving stubborn witness to our belief that  
in times of sadness, there is room for laughter.  
In times of darkness, there always will be light.  
May we hold fast to the conviction

That what we do with our lives matters and that a caring world is possible after all."

(M. Maureen Killoran)

"Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it  
break." - Shakespeare in "Macbeth"

"A Litany of Remembrance" by Roland B. Gittelsohn

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.  
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them  
In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.  
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.  
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.  
In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.  
When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.  
When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.  
When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.  
So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us,  
as we remember them.

If I should die before the rest of you,  
Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone,  
Nor, when I'm gone, speak in a Sunday voice,  
But be the usual selves that I have known,  
Weep if you must:  
Parting is hell,  
But life goes on So . . .sing as well!

(from a poem by Joyce Grenfell)

Sing! Let us sing out,  
Sing out again so our hearts may burst into flame  
And our burning blood may finally melt these chains.  
So that in the depth of the blackest night  
The sun shines forever.

(Hien Luong)

Time is too slow for those who wait; too swift  
for those who fear; too long for those who grieve;  
too short for those who rejoice. But for those  
who live, Time is Eternity. Hours fly, flowers  
die, new days new ways pass by. Love stays.

(Inscription on a sundial at the University of Virginia)

"For death does not end life but is part of it, one of nature's transformations as we work our way through its cycles. Death informs life. It is not simply the mother of beauty; it is the mother of life itself for how could we conceive of life if there were no death? And it is only because we conceive of life that we know we must taste it lingeringly, try every flavor and nuance, drink in experience while we can. Death and life are dependent upon each other, like order and chaos, neither concept being possible without the other. So there should be no fear of death, which is omnipresent, part of life. Welcome it into your arms, for it is but rest; for you lie in nature like a heartbeat." - William Butler Yeats

I have loved and have been loved,  
The sun has caressed my face.  
Life, you owe me nothing,  
Life, we are at peace.

(Pablo Neruda)

This song of mine will wind its music around you like the fond arms of love  
This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.  
When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear;  
When you are in a crowd it will fence you in with aloofness.  
My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams;  
it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.  
It will be like a faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.  
My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.  
And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

(Rabindranath Tagore)

Sara Teasdale,  
"Barter"

Life has loveliness to sell,  
All beautiful and splendid things,  
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,  
Soaring fire that sways and sings,  
And children's faces looking up,  
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,  
Music like a curve of gold,  
Scent of pine trees in the rain,  
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,  
And for your spirit's still delight,  
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,  
Buy it and never count the cost;  
For one white singing hour of peace

Count many a year of strife well lost,  
And for a breath of ecstasy  
Give all you have been, or could be.

## CONSOLATION

Those whom we love  
are not given to us merely for our joy or our happiness.

Their truest ministry consists in being to us revealers of the divine.  
They quicken in us the seed of better thoughts,  
help us to estimate rightly the things that are worth trying for  
and the things that are not worth trying for;  
help us to become more equal to the standard of our own best insight,  
and grow into our truest selves.  
And this influence abides when they are gone.

Let us learn from the lips of death the lessons of life.  
Let us live truly while we live,  
live for what is true and good and lasting.  
And let the memory of our dead help us to do this.  
For they are not wholly separated from us,  
if we remain loyal to them.  
In spirit they are with us.  
And we may think of them as silent, invisible,  
but real presences in our households.  
(Felix Adler, Life and Destiny)

At the grave site:

We are here to return the elements  
that made up the body of \_\_\_\_\_ to the earth:  
earth, air, fire and water,  
joined by the ligaments of the spirit,  
the bindings of life and love.

Ashes to ashes,  
dust to dust,  
memory to memory,  
story to story,  
gratitude to gratitude,  
spirit to spirit,  
love to love.  
The wheel turns ever,  
and what came out of the earth  
returns to it now in peace.  
The wheel turns ever,  
yet whatsoever love and grace and gift  
we know from \_\_\_\_\_ is at  
the center of that wheel, the center which turns not, but remains as constant as the flow of  
time.

Earth, air, fire, water,  
receive your own. We stint you not.  
But leave us what is ours forever.

The act is done. The words have been said.

The gate of the coming hour  
now opens to us in peace.  
Let us go through with thanksgiving for all that we said and did in this hour.  
Blessed is the mystery of life and death, which is our own.  
And blessed be Love forever.

I Am Not There  
Do not stand at my grave  
and weep.  
I am not there.  
I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints  
on snow.  
I am the sunlight  
on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle  
autumn rain.  
When you awaken  
in the morning's hush.  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
of quiet birds  
in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars  
that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave  
and cry. I am not there;  
I did not die.

(anonymous)



## Appendix M4: Sample Memorial

### Sample Memorial

Good afternoon everyone, and thank you so much for joining us today.

We are here today, not to grieve or to mourn, but to remember and celebrate the life of (name) and to bring consolation to those his/her family and friends who are here. Our ceremony will be short and simple, in keeping with what (name) would have wanted.

Opening comments:

1: (Name)'s premature death is most tragic and is bound to bring shock and sorrow to those who loved and befriended him. When people we love are taken from our midst too soon, we struggle to deal with their absence. Those who feel deeply will grieve deeply. No philosophy or religion ever taught can prevent this wholly natural reaction of the human heart.

2: Though it is natural for us to grieve that (name) and (partner) will not now enjoy the satisfaction of growing old together, let us think today about the happy years and the good times.

3: It is natural that we should be sad today, because in a practical sense (name) is no longer a part of our lives. But we should not grieve—to live a good and fulfilling life for \_\_\_\_\_ years, with the last \_\_\_\_\_ marred by being bed ridden, and then to die in one's own home, is something to be thankful for.

Prelude to Eulogy

I don't think there is anyone here who does not feel enriched by having known (name). S/he will be remembered as husband/wife, father/mother, father/mother-in-law, grandfather/grandmother, and a friend. His/her influence lives on in the unending consequences that flow from his/her life and character.

Death is as natural as life: only nature is permanent. All that has life has its beginning and end...and life exists in the time span between birth and death. For those of us who do not have a religious faith, and who believe that death may bring the end of individual existence, life's significance lies in the experiences and satisfactions we achieve in that span of time; its permanence lies in the memories of those who knew us, and any influence we have left behind.

The wonder and love that packed (name)'s life will live in the memories of his family and friends.

While I didn't know (name), I feel through the stories her family has told that he would appreciate the following poem by A. Prince Hughes.

*If I should die and leave you here awhile,  
Be not like others, sore undone, who keep*

*Long vigil by the silent dust and weep.  
For my sake turn to life and smile,  
Nerving thy heart and trebling hand to do  
Something to comfort weaker hearts than thine.  
Complete these dear unfinished task of mine,  
And I, perchance, may therein comfort you..*

Inevitably you will find the world a poorer place without (name), but it will always be a richer place because he was once in it. There never has been and never will be anyone in the world like (name), and he will live in your memories always. (Name) leaves behind (list of family members).

## Eulogy

A personalized eulogy will go here. It will be tailored to the individual after meeting with family and friends.

Optional comments/remembrances from audience, family and/or friends  
Optional song may be sung

## Moment of Reflection

Let us now take a moment to reflect upon the life of (name) and how s/he has impacted our own lives.

## Closing Words

As fall is soon upon us it might be a good time to reflect on autumn. Those beautifully colored leaves are more useful than they seem. Although in final glory they fall to the ground in a wistful descent of death, the fertile earth pays them tribute. She embraces their forms and turns their hidden energies into the evolution of new life. In the drama of human life, a similar pattern prevails. The thoughts and ideals of those we admire survive death. They fall on the fertile earth of our minds and our hearts and renew our lives through inspiration.

## Conclusions

In sadness for her death but with appreciation for her life, we remember (name) and her talent for joy and love. Finally, as we leave to continue our own voyage of discover in the world, let us listen to these lines which I again feel reflect (name)'s spirit by Joyce Grenfell.

## NAMING CEREMONIES OR CHILD WELCOMING CEREMONIES

### Elements of a Naming Ceremony

Welcome

Opening words

Reading

Dedication (family, friends and/or community participation)

Ritual

Closing words

Celebrating the arrival of a new baby or child into your family and circle of friends is both a joyful and serious occasion. During the ceremony the baby or child is introduced by name, the parents may make promises to the child and/or be honored in their new role as parents. Grandparents, siblings, and aunts and uncles can be recognized as important in the child's life, and "mentors", "guideparents" or even "odd parents" can be named and charged with developing a special relationship with the child.

Naming ceremonies are usually shorter than weddings or memorials, and less formal. They often take place at the family home and are limited to family and a few close friends. Including the guests in the ceremony can make them feel connected to and important to the child being honored.

## Examples: Naming Ceremony 1

### Welcome!

You have been invited here today by (Name of Parent) and (Name of Parent) to celebrate the naming of their son/daughter, (Name of Child), to welcome her/him to the family and to pledge your support for his/her wellbeing as she/he grows.

I am (name), a Humanist Officiant appointed by the Humanist Society to conduct non-denominational rites of passage ceremonies. Humanism is a non-religious ethical philosophy that encourages each of us in our own way to work towards a more humane and responsible world.

In welcoming and naming a child with this ceremony, we celebrate one of life's continuing miracles, the birth of a human being and the continuation of humankind. We rejoice that this child has been born into the concern and care not only of her parents, but also of this gathering and community.

Above all else, a humanist naming ceremony is about the expression of joy, the joy of (Name of Child)'s life. It is also a time to consider our responsibilities towards him/her and all the children among us. In formally naming (Name of Child) we mark her/his individuality and uniqueness as a person.

The phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" is true. And you are here today representing the larger community in which this child will grow up, and be known by his/her name. It is through you that she will come to know her community and her world. By your support, example and encouragement you have a part to play in the development of this child to her fullest potential.

We therefore begin with serious questions -- for those who will take an active role in this child's life and those who will be part of her circle of support -- at the ready should the need arise ...

### Question to Everyone

First, to everyone, family and friends, gathered here today.

I will ask you all a question and we hope and trust that you will signify your commitment with one hearty affirmative response.

Will you all give this child a heart-warming welcome -- and will you accept the privilege and the responsibility of nurturing the freedom and spirit of this child?

All respond ... "We Will ..."

Question to the Grandparents, Aunts and Uncles

Being a grandparent, aunt or uncle is a joyful, tender and solemn duty. Will you agree to share your wisdom and will you respect, befriend and love (Name of Child)?

“We will”

### **Naming the Mentors**

(Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) have chosen two very special individuals whom they hope will help shape their son/daughter’s life. Children need role models who are not their parents.

(Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) recognize that there will be times when they do not have the answers. Their hope is that their daughter will be able to turn to (Name of Guide Parent) & (Name of Guide Parent) for guidance and support.

### **Questions to the Mentors**

A mentor is a wise and trusted guide, an advisor who has nurtured a special relationship with a protégé that allows for the free exchange of ideas and advice. A mentoring relationship is meaningful and deeply rewarding to both child and mentor.

{Name of Guide Parent) & (Name of Guide Parent) will you look upon this child with affection and will you give to her your guidance, friendship and inspiration?

“We will”

### **First Reading**

I now call on Name of Reader 1, who is Relation to Family, to do the first reading adapted from Dorothy Law Nolte’s poem, “Children Learn What They Live”,

*If a child lives with tolerance,  
he learns to be patient;  
If a child lives with encouragement,  
she learns confidence;  
If a child lives with praise,  
he learns to appreciate;  
If a child lives with fairness,  
she learns justice;  
If a child lives with security,  
he learns to have faith in himself and in those around him.*

### **Importance of the Name**

We give the child a name in this ceremony, and by doing so we declare that the child is an individual, a unique and a separate person with a dignity and a life of his/her own. A name once given will be associated forever with a face, a voice, a walk, a laugh and all the other idiosyncrasies our families and friends recognize that reflect this child’s individuality.

This child's name will be spoken, whispered, shouted, cried, sung and written – thousands of times, impersonally and meaningfully – by family, friends, neighbors, teachers, doctors, colleagues, loves, strangers, and maybe by children and grandchildren. It will define her/his identity.

(Name of Child) was given his name because (Parents to fill this in).

### **Commitment of the Parents**

To become responsible, productive and caring people, children need the freedom to develop their own unique talents, interests and capacities. Parents hope that their children will lead happy and satisfying lives, respecting the needs and interests of other people, and develop, to the extent they are able, an ability to see the two sides of every story, to think critically, to love passionately.

(Name of Child) will need a supportive environment in which he/she can learn to appreciate the value of love, friendship, compassion, and cooperation.

(Name of Child) will need a stimulating environment where he/she can develop the ability to ask questions, seek rational answers, and make thoughtful decisions.

(Name of Child) will need to be loved and respected for his/her unique qualities; not for what we think he/she should be, but for who he/she is. Creating a home where a child can develop a strong positive sense of self is one of the greatest gifts parents can give.

To (Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) :

Will you do all that you can to help \_\_\_\_\_ become a responsible, caring and thoughtful person?

“We will.”

Will you love and cherish his/her uniqueness and help him/her develop a strong sense of self?

“We will.”

Will you commit to recognizing \_\_\_\_\_'s feelings, giving him/her opportunities to be curious to explore the world and discover how he/she can make it better?

“We will.”

Will you commit to listening rather than lecturing; praising, rather than punishing; encouraging rather than criticizing?

“We will.”

## Second Reading

I now call on (Name of Reader 2), who is (Relation to Child), for the second reading, "The Gift," a poem by Rabindranath Tagore.

*I want to give you something, my child,  
for we are drifting in the stream of the world.*

*Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.*

*But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your  
heart with my gifts.*

*Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the  
love we bring you at one draught and turn and run away  
from us.*

*You have your play and your playmates. What harm is  
there if you have no time or thought for us?*

*We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the  
days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our  
hands have lost for ever.*

*The river runs swift with a song, breaking through all  
barriers. But the mountain stays and remembers, and  
follows her with his love.*

## Memory Box

(Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) have decided to start a memory box for Name of Child. Throughout his/her childhood they will place cards, documents, letters and other items, which will remain special memories for all of them. We initiate this activity today by placing in the box, the written wishes offered today by family and friends. They will add to this very special memory box throughout (Name of Child)'s early years. Later, she/he can add to the box himself.

## Closing Words

As (Name of Child) grows, may life be gentle with him/her. May he/she take his/her place as a useful, caring member of society, and appreciate all that is good in the world. We wish him/her good health, and a happy and fulfilled life and we wish for (Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) patience, understanding and perseverance as they try to be the best possible parents for him/her.

## Presentation of the Certificate of Naming

I now ask (Name of Parent) & (Name of Parent) and (Name of Guide Parent) & (Name of

Guide Parent) to join me at the table to sign the Certificate of Naming. Congratulations all of you!



## Examples: Naming Ceremony 2

### Introduction

Celebrant: On behalf of (Name of parents), I would like to extend a very warm welcome to this baby naming ceremony, which has been created with much planning, thought and love.

With great honor I have the pleasant duty of officially name (Child's name) and welcoming her/him into her/his community of family and friends. And we do so, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, (Name of parents) wish to express their joy about (Child's name) arrival on (month/day/year). They want to introduce her/him to the wider community of their friends and the world. They wish you all to share this joy. They would also like you to join with them in celebrating the official naming of their baby girl/boy. Your presence at this baby naming ceremony today is greatly appreciated.

### Reading

I will now read a poem called "Family"

*A family is a place to cry, laugh and vent frustrations,  
To ask for help, tease and yell,  
To be touched and hugged and smiled at.*

*A Family is people, who care when you are sad,  
Who love you no matter what, and share your triumphs;  
Who don't expect you to be perfect,  
Just growing with honesty, in your own direction.  
Family is a circle  
Where we learn to like ourselves  
Where we learn to make good decisions, and think before we do.  
Where we learn integrity and table manners,  
And respect for other people.  
Where we are special, and share ideas.  
Where we listen and are listened to.  
Where we learn the rules of life  
To prepare ourselves for the world  
The world is a place, where anything can happen,  
If we grow up in a loving family, we are ready for the world.*

### Parent Promises

Ladies and gentleman, I am now going to ask (Name of parents) to make promises as parents in front of you, their family and friends, and as such, those who mean the most to them in the world.

"Do you promise to nurture and protect (Child's name) throughout her/his life, and do you

promise to support and offer her/him guidance in the choices that she/he will make?”

“We do.”

“Do you promise to teach (Child’s name) right from wrong to enable her/him to make her/his place in society as a kind and caring person?”

“We do.”

(Parents together repeat after me □

“We promise to be the best parents we can be.”

### **Guardian Introduction**

(Parent’s names) have chose two Guardians (or whatever term you decide on for your baby naming ceremony) for (Child’s name) today. A wonderful tradition in our culture on these occasions is the responsibility accepted by guardians. The Guardians will undertake a special and lifelong interest in the welfare of (Child’s name).

Today (Guardian’s names) have agreed to become involved in (Child’s name) life by promising to be there for her/him should she/he need support, wisdom, comfort or guidance.

They have been chosen by (Parent’s names) because of their connection with them, the family, because of their similar beliefs. The fact that they have been chosen by (Parent’s names), is an indication of their position of trust and respect within this family.

### **Guardian Asking**

Being mindful of this, I now ask of the guardians (Guardian’s names), do you accept this responsibility?

“We do.”

### **Bracelet Ceremony**

I will now call upon each Guardian as well as parents, (Parent’s names), to present their gift to symbolize them now becoming part of (Child’s name) life, and tell her/him their wish for her/him.

(You may substitute any gift of your choice for your particular baby naming ceremony)

First Guardian: My wish for you is –Success & Health

Second Guardian: My wish for your is Love & Happiness

Mother: Our wish is for you is to be the best you can be

Father: Our promise to you is protection and guidance

(one bracelet can be presented on child's wrist or each person can present a bracelet)

## Reading

Guardians to provide a poem (possibly "On Children" by Kahlil Gibran)

## Naming Ritual

(Parent's names) chose the name \_\_\_\_\_ (give reason why this name was chosen and what it means)

We all agree to call you (Child's name)

(Child's name), we hope that you will wear your name with pride, happiness and strength. We wish you long life and happiness, in a loving and peaceful world. May you bring joy to your parents, grandparents, your guardians and to us all.

## Reading

Father to provide a nice speech for (Child's name)

## Final Declaration

Celebrant holding child's hand: I now name you (Child's name), may life's richest joys and blessings be yours. May you grow in health of body and mind to full adulthood and it be your good fortune to play some worthy part in making life pleasant for those whose paths you cross.

(Mother's name) now has a special poem written by her for (Child's name)

*(Child's name), the day you entered the world, you became our world.  
We never knew we could love someone so much or feel so much joy with a single touch  
You have taught us both how great life can be  
Words cannot express what you have brought to your dad and to me  
Today we want to share with everyone just how much we love you,  
Everything about you, everything you do  
Your smile, your laugh, your beautiful eyes  
Your little ways and your little cries.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is the name we chose for you  
Wear it with pride with all that you do,  
We love you with all of our heart,  
We knew that right from the very beginning, right from the start  
Nothing will change that no matter what you do,  
Be all that you can and always be you.  
\_\_\_\_\_ you are the greatest fit of all,  
Than you for choosing us to be your parents,  
We wouldn't have it any other way  
We love you daughter and hope you enjoy your day.*



## Examples: Unique Rituals

**Plant a tree:** A tree planting can be a lovely way to mark a naming ceremony, and provide a meaningful symbol as both the tree and child grow. You could choose a tree based on its meaning, such as an olive tree for peace, or citrus for energy. A similar idea is to plant a section of your garden with plants that will bloom each year around your child's birthday, as a part of the ceremony.

**Advice for Life:** A nicely bound book in which naming ceremony guests can write advice for your child can be a lovely memento. Pass the book around to guest, and each one writes some words of wisdom, along with their name and their connection to the child.

**A lantern ceremony:** This one works best at a nighttime naming ceremony. Each person writes their wishes and hopes for the child, and ties them to a lantern. The lanterns are lit, and then floated on a lake or a stream.

**Patchwork quilt:** If you have crafty friends and family, each one can bring a square of fabric, and you can put it together into a quilt for the baby.

**Start of Library:** Each guest brings their favorite book, and as part of the ceremony, explains why it's important to them and why they are giving it to your child.

**Petal Ceremony:** Within the ceremony parents can make promises to care for their child as best they can for long as the child may need it, to thank grandparents and to acknowledge siblings in their new role as older brothers or sisters. Petals are sprinkled over the baby's head while the child's chosen names are announced and any reasons behind the choice can be shared.

\*Each color of the petals represents different qualities and aspirations: innocence, friendship to come, tender love, compassion, happiness and fulfillment in life.

**Time Capsule:** Similar to the wishing box, personal and significant items can be placed within the container by each of the guests and/or family members. It could contain small gifts, photos, letters or cards. The capsule is presented on the child's 18<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

**Sand Ceremony:** This ceremony can include children and other members of your family and creates a treasured unity vase filled with many colors. Family members can also recite special vows as part of the ceremony.

The sand ceremony is perfect when you would like to involve other children in the day. Using sand is a fun way to symbolize the loving union of the family with a newborn or a child's new Mom/Dad.

*Brown: the color of earth and wood, signifying a solid and reliable soul. Brown helps to create a comfortable and open relationship. It personifies credibility, solidity, strength and maturity.*

*Blue: the color of the ocean, symbolizing trust, loyalty and one's dedication and commitment. Blue generates calm, tranquility and a peaceful environment for an everlasting relationship.*

*Red: the color of love. Red ignites warm, loving and passionate relationship, which encourages excitement and intensity—emotions not to be forgotten!*

*Yellow: the color of the sun (meaning light), signifying consistency and joy! Yellow builds an optimistic, playful, positive disposition toward life, love and an ultimately a joyful relationship.*

*Green: the color of nature, renewal and vigor. Green balances the forces of compassion, energy and wealth, leaving a lasting impression and a sense of wonder for a realistic and natural relationship.*

*Pink: the color of happiness and tenderness. Pink is for the romantic softhearted soul, that has a calm inner-self. Pink inspires a playful and happy relationship.*

*Orange: the color of autumn and the sunset, orange represents contentment and wholesomeness. A relationship wrapped in orange will be safe, fulfilled and undeniably warm.*

*White: represents clean and sanctified soul. Uplifting and refreshing wisdom are emotions that are evoked in a white relationship. The color of innocence and peace.*

*Purple: the color of loyalty, dignity and sophistication. Purple has unbelievable drive and passion. A very inventive soul chooses purple, which leads to a successful and prosperous relationship*

**Photography/signature board:** *place a big photo of the child on a large board with a wide border near the front entrance of the venue, have one or two pens available and as guests arrive or at any time during the event, they can write their good wishes for the child anywhere around the photo.*

*Towards the end of the ceremony I would ask guest, if they haven't done so yet, to add a few kind words for the child. Later the board can be laminated. It becomes a beautiful reminder of the day and can be displayed in their room or house.*

## Coming of Age

Coming of Age Ceremonies traditionally recognize the passage from childhood to adulthood. They exist within both religious and cultural traditions around the world. Humanist Coming of Age ceremonies can be celebrated at any age, based on the wishes of the honoree and his/her family. The information provided in this section can be used to define a meaningful ceremony to mark this life passage.

Coming of Age ceremonies can also be used as a model for other age related ceremonies throughout life. For example, a ceremony marking a new decade (30, 40, 50, etc) can be created. Wise woman or croning ceremonies can be created to mark a specific age or the milestone of menopause for women. Milestone birthdays (60, 70, 80, etc) can be marked with a custom ceremony, too. These might recognize achievements and impacts to date, and focus on opportunities and goals yet in front of the honoree. Even retirement ceremonies can be created honoring the closure of one chapter in a person's professional life, and the opening of a new chapter with new challenges, opportunities and adventures to come.

### Designing a Coming of Age Ritual

By Nancy Brown, PhD, MA

Below are a few ideas about how to create a ritual. Make sure you discuss this with your teen beforehand. The ritual should not come as a surprise. One person's celebration is another's most embarrassing moment. Ideally, the young person should be involved with the planning.

Where

Who to Include

What

Activities

Ending

#### Where

Many rituals are performed in a circle because circles represent the flow of life. The never-ending circle of growth. The circle can be made of vines, a rope, or even chairs.

The circle should be large enough to include all the guests and have an opening that people enter and exit through. Once everyone enters, the opening is closed and then re-opened when everyone leaves.

#### Who to include

I suggest you invite the immediate family and a few close friends of the person becoming a

teen. Make sure everyone you invite will be supportive and open to your homegrown ritual. The immediate family should each have a role in the ritual. The roles can include:

- The person who opens and closes the entrance to the circle
- The person who starts and stops the ritual with the bell
- A narrator who explains what is going on
- A leader, who asks the youth to light the candles and then invites the guests to participate, where appropriate

## What

In most ceremonies there is an altar that you can cover with silk or cloth. On the altar, you can put flowers, candles, a bell, matches, a candle-snuffer, a picture of the child as a baby, or anything else that signifies the change you are celebrating.

I suggest two candles, one to represent childhood and one to represent adulthood. During the ritual you can ask the child to light one candle to represent the passing of the carefree joy of childhood. Then light the second to represent the path towards adulthood and other joys still to come, or ask the child to light the second candle accepting the responsibilities of adulthood.

Music is always nice – a song that the teen likes, or one representing the change everyone is facing.

## Activities

Here are some suggested activities:

The first activity is the lighting the candles, as mentioned above. As you light the candles, include any narrative you choose.

The second activity is a ribbon cutting. The teen and the parent, usually the mother, each have an end of a 6-foot length of ribbon tied (gently) to their wrist when they enter the circle and there is a pair of scissors on the altar. During the ritual, the mother might say something to the child like: *I brought you into this world and our spirits will be forever joined. However, up until this time, I have led you through life and you have listened to everything I said.*

*If you are ready, then today our relationship changes, and I offer my guidance and ever lasting love, but know that you have started down your own path, and may not always listen.*

*I do hope that our new relationship is one of trust, honesty, and warmth. You can cut away our old relationship today, but I will always be here for you.*

With that, the teen can snip the ribbon, and maybe hug the mother!

This might be a nice time for the song to be played/sung, or a prayer said, then the leader can invite everyone to come forward, take a flower from a vase, and give it to the teen (who is seated by now), and tell the teen their wishes for her future and adulthood. No need to



suggest what to say. There will be many blessings that are spontaneous and loving. Another variation of this is to ask all guests to share something about how they have changed from when they were 13 and what they wish for the young person's adulthood.

#### Ending

The ritual ends with the snuffing of the candles, the ringing of the bell, the opening of the circle, and the processing of guests out of the circle. Then everyone can share a meal, some cake, or whatever your family likes to do.

## 13 Coming of Age Traditions around the World

1. **Jewish Coming of Age Tradition:** Bar and Bat Mitzvah: Around the world, young Jewish boys and girls celebrate their Bar and Bat Mitzvahs at age 13 and 12 in order to demonstrate their commitment to their faith and recognize that they are now responsible for following Jewish law. After the religious ceremony, a reception typically ensues to celebrate the young person's hard work and accomplishment, as they have often spent weeks learning and preparing for this day.
2. **The Satere-Mawe Coming of Age Tradition:** Bullet Ant Initiation: In the Brazilian Amazon, young boys belonging to the indigenous Satere-Mawe tribe mark their coming of age when they turn 13 in Bullet and Ant Initiation. The tradition goes as so: they search the jungle for bullet ants which are sedated by a leader who submerges them in an herbal solution. The ants are then weaved into gloves with the stingers pointed inwards. An hour or so later, the ants wake up angrier than ever, and the initiation begins. Each boy has to wear the gloves for ten minutes. Enduring the pain demonstrates the boys' readiness for manhood—so few cry out as doing so would demonstrate weakness. Each boy will eventually wear the gloves 20 times over the span of several months before the initiation is complete.
3. **Amish Coming of Age Tradition:** Rumspringa: In Amish tradition, Rumspringa marks the time when youth turn 16 and are finally able to enjoy unsupervised weekends away from family. During this time, they are encouraged to enjoy whatever pleasures they like, be that modern clothing or alcohol. The purpose of this period is to allow Amish youth the opportunity to see and experience the world beyond their culture and upbringing. In this way, returning to their community and way of life thus is entirely their choice. Those who return are then baptized and become committed members of the Amish Church and community, marking the end of Rumspringa (but they must do so before turning 26).
4. **Hispanic Coming of Age Tradition:** Quinceañera: In many parts of Central and South America, young girls celebrate their Quinceañera when they turn 15 years old. The coming of age tradition typically begins with Catholic mass where the girl renews her baptismal vows and solidifies her commitment to her family and faith. Immediately following the mass is a fiesta where friends and family eat and dance.
5. **American Coming of Age Tradition:** Sweet 16: While less rooted in tradition, the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday is nonetheless an important one for American youth, as it marks the time when they are legally permitted to drive a car (and with driving comes big-time freedom). For some lucky teens the day is celebrated with an over-the-top party and potentially a new car.

6. **Inuit Coming of Age Tradition:** North Baffin Island: In North Baffin Island, Inuit boys have traditionally gone out to the wilderness with their fathers between the ages of 11 and 12 to test their hunting skills and acclimatize to the harsh arctic weather. As part of the tradition, a shaman would be called to open the lines of communication between men and animals. Nowadays, however, this tradition has been extended to young girls as well as “outcamps” are established away from the community in order for traditional skills to be passed down and practiced by the young men and women.
7. **Khatam Al Koran Coming of Age Tradition:** Malaysia: In Malaysia, 11 is a special birthday for some Muslim girls, as it marks the time when they can celebrate Khtam Al Koran, a prestigious ritual that demonstrates their growing maturity at their local mosque. Girls spend years preparing for this day, reviewing the Koran so they can recite the final chapter before friends and family at the ceremony.
8. **Maasai Coming of Age Tradition:** Tanzania and Kenya: The Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania have several rites of passage that carry boys into manhood. Boys between the ages of 10-20 come together to be initiated as the new “warrior class” of the tribe, placed in dozens of houses built for the occasion. The night before the ceremony the boys sleep outside in the forest, and at dawn they return for a day of singing and dancing. They drink a mixture of alcohol, cow’s blood, and milk, while also consuming large portions of meat. After these festivities they are ready to be circumcised, making the official transformation into a man, warrior, and protector. Similar to other rites of passage the boys cannot flinch, because doing so would shame their families and discount their bravery. For the next 10 years the boys will stay at a warrior’s camp where they learn various skills. After the ceremony takes place, marking their transition from warrior to senior warrior, they are entitled to marry the woman of their choice.
9. **Ethiopian Coming of Age Tradition:** Hamar Cow Jumping: In Ethiopia, some grooms-to-be have their own “bachelor party” of sorts-a rite of passage they must complete prior to being able to marry. Participants must successfully jump over a castrated, male cow four times while naked, symbolizing the childhood they are leaving behind them. If successful, they will now be considered one of the Maza-other men who passed the test and spend the next few months supervising these events in villages throughout the Hamar territory.
10. **Vanuatu Coming of Age Tradition:** Land Divers: Bungee enthusiasts will enjoy this: In Vanuatu, a small island nation in the middle of the South Pacific, young boys come of age by jumping off of a 98-foot-tall tower with a bungee-like vine tied to their ankles, just barely preventing them from hitting the ground. The catch? Unlike a bungee cord, the vine lacks elasticity, and a slight miscalculation in vine length could lead to broken bones or even death. Boys initially begin jumping at around 7 or 8, although they are permitted to jump from a shorter tower. In their first dives their mother will hold an item representing their childhood. As boys grow older they will jump from taller towers, demonstrating their manliness to the crowd.
11. **Japanese Coming of Age Tradition:** Seijin-no-Hi: In Japan, the second Monday of January marks a special day-the day in which 20 year olds get to dress up in their finest traditional attire, attend a ceremony in local city offices, receive gifts, and party to their hearts’ content amongst friends and family. It’s their Coming of Age Festival, otherwise known as Sijin-no-Hi. The tradition started nearly 1200 years ago and recognizes the age when the Japanese believe youth become mature, contributing members of society (it’s also the time when they get to vote and drink).

12. **Confucian Coming of Age Tradition:** Ji Li and Guan Li: In some parts of China, there has recently been a resurgence of the Confucian-style coming of age ceremonies Ji Li (for girls) and Guan Li (for boys). The ceremonies typically honor youth who have turned 20, and provide a fun opportunity to wear traditional dress. For the girls, this is also an opportunity to follow typical Ji Li practices such as making hair buns, attaching hair pins, and paying tribute to Huangdi, a Chinese ancestor.
13. **Apache Coming of Age Tradition:** Sunrise Ceremony: There's no room for shyness among young Apache girls. While this ceremony is rarely practiced today, traditionally all girls were required to complete the sunrise ceremony, also known as Na'ii'ees or the puberty ceremony, during the summer following their first menstruation. During the 4 day ceremony the girls must abide by certain rules, preventing them to wash or touch their skin, or drink from anything other than their drinking tubes. They must also reenact the Apache Origin Myth drawing each female participant closer to the first woman, known as White Painted Woman, Changing Woman, or simply Esdzanadehe. In doing so they obtain her power during this special time.

## **British Humanist Association: Coming of Age**

Many religions have ceremonies for young adults when they formally become members of that religion. Many cultures have initiation ceremonies for young people when they officially become part of adult life. In the Scandinavian countries where there is a strong tradition of coming-of-age ceremonies, humanist organizations offer alternatives to traditional religious ceremonies. In Norway, for example, special non-religious ceremonies are held in town halls for young people when they reach voting age. These non-religious confirmations, sometimes also called civil confirmations or coming-of-age ceremonies, together with the preparation for these ceremonies, are popular activities for teenagers in these countries. The form of preparation varies, from camps (in Finland and Sweden for example) to courses (in Iceland and Norway), but the main purpose is to think about and celebrate the new responsibilities that adulthood brings.

## **The Norwegian Humanist Association**

Every year in Norway over 10,000 youth aged 15 celebrate their Humanist confirmation. Keeping up an over 60 year old tradition they meet in concert halls and medieval castles, municipal cinemas and cultural centres, city halls and community houses. They gather in bigger and smaller towns all over the county. They celebrate from the southern "bible belt" of small towns with white painted wooden houses to the far north close to the border of Russia and in the Sami community of Karasjok. And of course, they celebrate in the bigger towns and regional centres as Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim as well. These Saturday and Sunday events take place from late April till late May every year.

Learning and Celebration

In 1956 any members of the “association for Civil Confirmation” helped in the foundation of the Norwegian Humanist Association, Human-Etisk Forbund (HEF), and the responsibility for civil confirmation passed to the new organization the next year. For many years it rested on Oslo phenomenon. In 1968 local branches of HEF started their own courses and their own celebrations and it exploded in the ‘80s, with 110 local braches celebrating it in 1990. Based on the confirmand book “Think about it!”, in the course proceeding the confirmation ceremony, the participants discuss life stances, humanism, human rights, critical thinking and ethical issues, often based on important issues for young people. In short, the questions: how shall we behave towards one another? Some issues are dealt with in every course whenever it is arranged. These issues are considered to be compulsory (life stance, humanism and human rights). Other issues are chosen by youths and leaders, often on the background of local circumstances.

The course is held in the evening through the winter period and the youths normally attend about ten evenings. Some arrange weekend gatherings, while others join an information camp, usually in the woods, mountain areas or at the sea side.

Growing up means making choices, and the aim of the Humanist confirmation is to help and to strengthen awareness of ones situation and the choices one must make, not as a teaching of dogmas, but as an acknowledgement of rights and responsibilities in society.

The celebration itself changes from locality to locality, but certain features recur: Music and poetry frame the ceremony and there are civic and cultural dignitaries taking part. A standard part of the ceremonial programme is the speech of the day: A speech addressing the confirmands in encouraging words, maybe telling them they are important, addressing them about making choices, getting more responsibility and about engaging in more than the little family circle. Even on a day dominated by family gatherings this might be the focus of the speech. Another standard part is the speech from one of the youths on behalf of them all, a speech often summing up what the course has been all about, what the time of coming together has been like, about the position to the young people of today. Often one sings the classical freethought song “Your thoughts are free”, sang in the Norwegian language, though, and the audience joins in the singing. The Norwegian poet Nordahls Grieg’s poem “To Youth” is read or sung by an artist contributing to the ceremony from the stage. In some ceremonies an artist sing “Imaging” by John Lennon, there is classical music, choirs, and orchestras or readings by local poets, depending on the availability of art and artists. When the confirmand is presented with the diploma for having taken part and finished the course in life stance and ethics, he or she is probably on the tensest point in the ceremony. Every confirmand is called forward to get this. After all in the confirmand group have got their diplomas, and are lined up on stage, the audience warmly applauds them. When the ceremony starts and ends the confirmands come in and leave in a procession accompanies with suitable music. Duration of a ceremony is about an hour.

## **What Scandinavia Can Teach U.S. Teens About Coming of Age**

**From “The Atlantic”**

The latest Pew survey, released last week, tells us that Millennials are as pigeonhole-

resistant as ever: individualistic yet networked, socially liberal yet mistrustful of others, pessimistic about the economy yet optimistic about the future.

Overlooked in most dissections of these findings, though, was a cruel fact: young people aren't so young anymore. The Pew report was titled "Millennials in Adulthood," and the cohort we once imagined as helicopter-parented kids now ranges from 18 to 33. That means not only that this massive generation is growing up but also that a new as-yet-unbranded generation of truly young folks is arriving.

Both generations come of age at a time of economic dislocation, which has upended expected sequences of educational, relationship, and career progress. This helps explain why so many Millennials simultaneously reject institutions and yearn to belong to something greater than self.

To be sure, "rites of passage" for young people still abound: hazing, bullying, and ritual humiliation of newcomers thrive in American high schools, [fraternities](#), gangs, pro [sports](#), and other professions. On the healthier side, many adolescents still learn a family religious tradition and mark their own transition out of childhood through rituals like bar and bat mitzvahs and confirmations.

But what if a rite like that existed for everyone in America, attached not to a specific faith tradition but to a national creed of values, political traditions, and pro-social character? What if we created a *civic* confirmation experience that was both constructive and common to all? It turns out something like this exists already in Scandinavia. As I learned when a friend recently returned from a trip to Iceland, at 14 or 15 Icelanders can sign up for a secular coming-of-age program akin to a Christian confirmation. Participants meet weekly for nearly a year and study national history, world affairs, ethics, ecology. "In the end," my friend reports, "they have a ceremony celebrating their accomplishment and the beginning of their 'adult' civic life."

This is brilliant. It is sorely needed in the United States, where civic knowledge is [dissipating](#) and national cohesion [fraying](#), where youth have ever fewer non-self-destructive ways to prove to society that they're growing up.

The program in Iceland, like similar [ones](#) in Norway, Denmark, and [Germany](#), is called a "civil confirmation." It grows out of the 19th-century humanist and "ethical culture" movements that self-consciously resisted organized religion and particularly state-established religion. The programs are meant to replace a church confirmation. In [Norway](#), nearly 15 percent of young people now choose to do it.

What we need in America, I think, is something slightly different. We need a *civic* confirmation that treats democracy as its own ethical and even spiritual experience. That follows a rich tradition—it's what Tocqueville first dubbed "civic religion" and what Lincoln invoked when he spoke of the "mystic chords of memory" that must bind the Union. A civic confirmation need not be a substitute for church confirmation. It can sit alongside it, or not.

Imagine a weekly experience framed up by a cross-partisan array of educators and parents in which young people at the age of 14 or 15 would spend a year in guided learning about the values, [power systems](#), and hard skills of citizenship in America. Instead of shying away from the controversial stuff, in the way that tentative public schools have, it would lean right into the arguments. Indeed, it would present American civic identity as a series of arguments over the meaning, application and priority of principles like freedom, equality, justice, and opportunity. There could also be elements of service and contribution, in the same way that in most religious rites of passage young people have to prove through good works that they have absorbed the lessons.

In light of the way the rising generations of young people learn, an American civic-



confirmation experience could be designed in the spirit of a wiki or TEDx: Provide a robust fixed frame, then let local learners and teachers flesh it out to make it continuously relevant and adaptive.

There would be no reward at the end for participating in a civic confirmation, no incentive beyond the simple recognition that unlike many of your age peers (and many people older than you) you've begun to reckon explicitly with the responsibilities as well as the rights of being a citizen.

Could a civic confirmation be misused and go awry? You bet. The religious right or the atheist left could hijack it. It could fall prey to political correctness or to establishment blandness. It could become a go-through-the-motions experience.

But every objection one might raise to a civic confirmation could be raised to our constitutional scheme itself. When it comes to figuring out how to live together in a sprawling diverse republic with little more than a creed to hold us together, there are no shortcuts. You just have to show up. If the rising generation can be confirmed in that knowledge, maybe we as a country will have grown up a bit.

## **Example: Unitarian Universalist Communities Coming of Age Ceremonies**

Within Unitarian Universalist communities, Coming of Age often happens over the course of the nine-month program year through a Religious Education class.

The idea is to have the class, or individual go through a series of programming that prompts them to think about themselves, the world around them, and their personal beliefs about their place in that world.

The culmination of that program is a Coming of Age Ceremony held on a Sunday morning in place the regular service at a Unitarian Universalist Congregation. During this service each youth reads their personal Credo statement.

This process could be adapted for a humanist community (and has been by several) or used for a smaller group or individual family as well.

The following sections about what a Credo is and writing a personal Credo comes from the book *Coming of Age: Handbook for Congregations* by Sarah Gibb Millspaugh and is available on Amazon.com.

### **Unit Two: Credos**

*Follow your heart, but be quiet for a while first. Ask questions, then feel the answer. Learn to trust your heart. –Anonymous*

Credo statements have been highly valued elements of Coming of Age programs in a large number of Unitarian Universalist congregations. *Credo* is commonly translated from the Latin as “I believe,” and participants’ credo statements have often focused on what they believe

religiously. In Unitarian Universalism, the ultimate source of religious authority is the individual and his/her conscience. Our congregations and our movement are formed by people and institutions of diverse beliefs. Therefore we have placed high value on the development of individualized beliefs among our young people. We have affirmed them in all their diversity: atheist, agnostic, theistic, pagan, Bible believing and more.

If we dig a little deeper into its Latin roots, we discover the *credo* literally means “what I set my heart to.” This definition opens up the credo-making process to something deeper than the affirmation and rejection of religious truth claims. Our personal credos are about what we ultimately value and what greater purpose we live for. Our credos are also deeply about what we have faith in, what ultimate meaning we bind our lives to.

*A credo is a snapshot of your values, faith, identity, and belief at one point in time. As Unitarian Universalists, we understand that your religious ideas will evolve throughout your life. It is understood by all that your credo is simply an expression of where you are now and not for all time. As a Unitarian poet in the 1800s wrote, “Revelation is not sealed,” meaning that religious revelations continue to happen.*

### **Sample Credos**

I believe in living life with integrity, character, honesty, compassion, grace, and commitment.

I believe that a person’s life doesn’t always begin with a purpose. Sometimes we are drawn into great deeds by the life that we choose, but at times that life chooses us. Being Unitarian Universalist allows us the chance to combine these two choices, to be people that choose to be chosen.

I believe that everyone has a gift; it is what we do with these gifts that make them special. Many people live a lifetime never knowing their potential. Finding your gift, and having the desire to share it with others, can lift the human spirit.

I believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every person and that you will touch the lives of many in living this belief. When I was little, if asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would answer, “A horse.” At the time I thought that is was a valid reply, as I was open to the possibility, and have always had the desire to guide my destiny. As I’ve grown older, I’ve continued asking why, and have felt a desire to pursue my own answers. It has led me to be an independent thinker, secure in my own authenticity.

I believe in making sure that my family feels the love that I have for them every day, and being the type of friend that lasts a lifetime. I am fortunate to have been born into my family. With each day I learn so much from them all, each one a fabulous person, each of whom I would be glad to call my friend if we were not related. They have given me a gift with their presence in my life. So to my mom for your humor and unconditional love, my dad for your consistency and patience, and my sister Laiken for your laughter and sheer joy, I give you all my gratitude.

As we make our way forward, into this new period of our lives, we need to continue to listen with both our minds and our hearts, trust our instinct—they come from a place that is

authentic—remain true to ourselves, remember the importance of joy, and the value of love...

--Austin Gay, First Unitarian Church of Dallas

ART PROJECT –statement describing below....

My project is a representation of my belief that everyone has a path that they are to follow during their life. Everyone must deal with hardships and difficult times throughout their life, but those struggling always teach us more about ourselves. The doors represent these different aspects we learn and grow from. The end of the path does not symbolize an ending, but a continuation of growth and development into a bigger, more whole you.

The first door is Learning. The book symbolizes the fact that everyone has something they can share with you that you can learn from everyone around you. Being a part of a Community Unitarian Church for the first five years, I have had many teachers, and now a mentor, who have graciously shared their religious beliefs with me and influenced by own beliefs. They are the examples that I see every weekend of what UUs are. I am so glad that I have had the experience of being taught and listened to in the process of learning more about my religion and my life. When people share themselves and their feelings and beliefs with you, it's only natural to take parts from them and evaluate them so that they fit into your life and what you believe to be meaningful and important.

The second door is Compassion. It is a feeling that grows and blooms inside of your as life progresses and you experience new things. The heart symbolizes the love you feel and want to share with others, as you help them. Here at church, I feel like I have a home away from home. I feel connections with countless people here, and waking up on Sunday morning to bright, welcoming faces makes my day that much fuller and happier. My class has grown over the year from a small group of kids who see each other once a week because they have to, to a group of young adults with opinions and friendships that they look forward to sharing. Making the world a better place could not happen without change, and change would not be possible compassion for what you want to transform. It's also important to always leave your heart open, even when others have shut their hearts to you, because otherwise, they will never know the love you feel for them.

The third door is Reflection. You cannot move forward in life and learning without first looking back on the past. Sometimes, looking at yourself in a mirror, for example, is not enough. You need to look to others for help because they have the ability to see both the flaws and strengths you possess that you might not be able to notice yourself. At camp, Rowe, I have learned many things about myself from the close friends I have there. They bring out the best in me and help me notice the worst too. But they don't leave me at that; they help me change and become a better person. The countless midnight conversations and post-chapel hugs ever year help me reflect on the person I was, am, and am becoming. The mirror symbolizes that there is only one you, but there are parts which allow the whole world to see and then there are some other parts that are more personal, that you share with different people.

The fourth door is Unity. Unity means working together with everyone and developing a sense of harmony and balance with all that surrounds you. I work together with people every day. They may be my friends, parents, relatives, teachers, or mentors. Although we all share



a common ground for the most part, everyone is different. Working with people who are different from you in respect toward beliefs, social status, or emotional attachment helps you to develop a sense of harmony and balance within yourself because it teaches you how to work with everyone. The two hands represent making connections with people who are different from you and experiencing growth through new relationships.

The fifth door is Acceptance. Everyone in the world deserves the same amount of respect despite the fact that we are all different. Being accepting of others is the first step in making the world a better place to live in. It's very difficult to feel like you are not accepted, but that only makes you strive for bigger and better things for yourself and others. And eventually, I think everyone will find that one special place where they will always be accepted, no questions asked. The globe behind this door symbolizes a sense of everything coming together and changing from a state of many little pieces scattered about into a whole being.

As a whole, this project symbolizes growth and metamorphosis. The doors are just parts of life that you deal with every day, and it all leads up to a real evaluation and declaration of what is important about life to you. The globe is just a symbol of being whole and well-rounded. It also symbolizes balance and harmony, which is what I feel that Unitarian Universalism is helping me to understand.

--Catie Eichberg, Community Unitarian Church of White Plains, New York

## INVOCATIONS

### **Secular Invocation and Graces, Secular Celebrations & Humanist Ceremonies**

In addition to the major rites of passage, humanists and other nonreligious people often find themselves asked to contribute to other types of ceremonial event: a benediction before a banquet, an invocation at the beginning of a legislative session, or a toast at a retirement party. Sometimes the standard wording is religious, and secular participants struggle to find an alternative. Other times there is no standard wording. In either situation, you may find the following advice and examples useful.

#### **Secular Invocations**

Many groups and government bodies begin their meetings with prayers or other forms of religious invocation conducted by a chaplain or religious minister. Even when such religious commencements make an effort to include people of all faiths they may exclude people with no religion. Secularists argue that government should not hold religious events because they have the effect of endorsing religion and relegating the non-religious to second-class status. However, when governments and other groups refuse to stop all religious commencements and invocations, they may sometimes agree to a humanist benediction as an alternative.

Example: Herb Silverman

“Thank you for this opportunity to ‘invoke’ a minority point of view.

Each of us is a minority, with respect to something. It might be race, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, or any other way we may be regarded as different. Each of us is also part of some majority. It is when we wear our majority hats that we need to be most mindful of how we treat others. We must pledge our best efforts to help one another, and to defend the rights of all of our citizens and residents.

What divides us is not so much our religious differences in this diverse country, but the degree of commitment we have to equal freedom of conscience for all people. We are gathered today, both religious and secular members of our community, with the shared belief that we must treat our fellow human beings with respect and dignity.

I don’t ask you to close your eyes, but to keep your eyes constantly open to the serious issues that city government can and should solve or improve. I don’t ask you to bow your heads, but to look up at what you can accomplish by applying your considerable talents and experience the problems that confront us.

As you work together on behalf of all who live in this city, may you gain strength and sustenance from one another through reason and compassion.

I’d like to close in a bipartisan manner by quoting from two presidents I greatly admire—one Republican and the other Democrat.

First, the Republican:

When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad. That is my religion.

--Abraham Lincoln

And then, the Democrat:

It's remarkable how much you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit.

--Harry S. Truman

## Secular Graces

Many religions say a short prayer before a meal, in which a blessing is asked and thanks are given. In Christianity this prayer is called "Grace." Non-religious people may still want to give thanks before a big meal, such as Thanksgiving Dinner, or may be asked to do so at a formal event. Obviously people who don't believe in a god are not giving thanks to God but they can say more than just "Bon Appetit!"

In fact, a godless grace can be very moving: it allows time for reflection and thanks focused on this world, appreciating the value of nature and acknowledging the human effort which went into bringing food, family and friends together for a meal. Nor does a secular benediction need to be explicitly atheist, or exclude anyone because of their beliefs.

Giving thanks before a meal can be just a few words spoken from the heart and finished quickly before the food gets cold! Expressing gratitude for the food and appreciation of the company is all that is needed. Or this may be an opportunity to go around the table and have each person say what they are grateful for.

But there are also some longer or more formal wordings.

- A classic humanist alternative to a Christian Grace is:

For what we are about to receive  
Let us be truly thankful  
---to those who planted the crops  
---to those who cultivated the fields  
---to those who gathered the harvest.

For what we are about to receive  
Let us be truly thankful  
To those who prepared it and those who served it.

In this festivity let us remember too  
Those who have no festivity  
Those who cannot share this plenty  
By war, oppression and exploitation  
Those who are hungry, sick and cold

In sharing in this meal  
Let us be truly thankful  
For the good things we have  
For the warm hospitality  
And for this good company.

- There is also this from the humanist writer Nicolas Walter:

Let us think thrice while we are gathering here for this meal.

First, let us think of the people we are with today, and make the most of the pleasure of sharing food and drink together.

Then, let us think of the people who made the food and drink and brought it to us, who serve us and wait on us, and who clear up and clean up after us.

Finally, let us think of all the people all over the world, members with us in the human family, who will not have a meal today.

- For those who find these humanist graces too long, or don't want to be reminded of the suffering of others just before a celebratory meal, there are simple words of secular thanks and good wishes:

We are thankful for the food on this table.

We are thankful for this time together.

Our thoughts go out to family and friends;

We hope that they are safe and well.

- Or these words of humanist benediction:

For the meal we about to eat,

For those that made it possible,

And for those with whom we are about to share it,

We are thankful.

- George Rodger, of Aberdeen, Scotland, used this god-free grace at the start of a wedding meal:

Let us enjoy good food and good drink,

And let us thank all whose efforts have set them before us;

Let us enjoy good companionship,

And let us each one be good company to the others;

Let us enjoy ourselves, without guilt,

But let us not forget that many are less fortunate.

- Here's a beautiful Buddhist meal gathering that is entirely secular:

We receive this good in gratitude to all beings

Who have helped to bring it to our table,

And vow to respond in turn to those in need

With wisdom and compassion.

- Or how about this variation on a Native American thanks giving:

We give thanks for the plants and animals who have given themselves so that we can enjoy this meal together.

We also give thanks for our friends and family who have traveled here today.

May this meal bring us strength and health.

- A secular version of the famous “Serenity Prayer” can also work before a meal:

Grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
The courage to change the things I can,  
And the wisdom to know the difference.

- Another approach borrows from the Quakers

The Quaker tradition of “silent grace” before meals also works well for a dinner party with people of diverse religions and beliefs. All present join hands in a circle around the table, and are silent for half a minute or so as they collect their thoughts, meditate or pray. Then one person gently squeezes the hands of the people seated adjacent; this signal is quickly passed around the table and people then begin to eat and talk.

- Meal Meditation from Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

We pause for a moment  
in the joy of this day

to call to mind gratitude,  
thanks for life's bounty.

We remember those who grew our food;  
we remember those who prepared and bring us this food.

We remember the forms of life  
and the planet we all depend upon.

We say “thanks” as we work to ensure that all  
may enjoy life's bounty.

So may it be

- And finally there are these words of wisdom from William Shakespeare:

“...good company, good wine, good welcome, can make good people”  
--Sir Henry Guildford: Henry VIII, I, iv

## Invocations for Government Meetings

- From Minnesota Mayor's Prayer Breakfast, Oct 2014, Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

If you will join with me in a spirit of meditation . . .

The human religious impulse—the foundation of all religions—is compassion. It is the understanding that we are all one in fear and in hope; one in suffering and in joy.

May we find in our own hearts the grace to understand ourselves so that we may understand one another.

May we overcome fear so that we may respect one another.

May we have the courage to understand those we find different from ourselves; may we find the courage of mind and heart to say no to easy answers and easy prejudices.

May we open our hearts to the stranger; may we make room in our hearts for new ways of understanding.

May we live up to our values and our highest aspirations.

So may it be.

- Meditation before Minneapolis Downtown Council meeting, Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

Please join me in the spirit of prayer or meditation.

We pause to take a deep breath  
and focus our purpose, our faith,  
and our energies.

May we live into our own highest aspirations—  
to lead our community with vision and truth,  
to work for the public good.

May we work for the entire community,  
privileged and poor;  
weak and strong.

May we live into our highest aspirations,

to speak truth;  
to do justice.

To feed the hungry;  
to shelter the homeless.

To build a great city where  
we care for “the least of these.”

May we have the strength  
to live into  
our highest aspirations  
and come alive.

So may it be!

- Meditation for Anti-gun Rally, Minnesota State Capitol Rotunda, Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

Please join me in a spirit of prayer or meditation.

We come together today as witnesses against gun violence,  
especially the gun violence that takes place at the hands of domestic abusers.

May we have the strength to bear witness;  
may we have the strength to advocate and witness,  
may we change the hearts and minds of our elected officials who  
have the power to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers.

May we have the strength  
to live into  
our highest aspirations  
and come alive in the task before us.

So may it be

- Meditation (2) before Minneapolis Downtown Council meeting, Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

If you will join with me please in a spirit of prayer or meditation . . .  
We gather today in a spirit of common purpose to nurture our community,  
and to advance the public good.



We remember today the grieving;  
those suffering in oppression and war.  
May we remember the immigrant and the homeless.  
May we always remember our entire human family,  
especially those who are unseen or unheard in our community.  
May we remember always to welcome the stranger.

We call to mind the fragile web of our existence on this planet,  
thankful for those who grow our food and those who prepare our food.  
May we share our expertise;  
may we gain and share wisdom;  
may we grow in compassion.

So may it be

- Meditation for a Multi-faith Gathering, Rev. David Breeden, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis

We gather here in the spirit of understanding;  
in a spirit of compassion;  
in a spirit of hope.

We gather to celebrate diversity  
and to dedicate ourselves to justice  
in a world divided more by culture than distance.

As the great poet Yunus Emre said,  
Hate is my only enemy;  
I harbor a grudge against none,  
To me the wide world is one.

May we live in that spirit  
and it is in that conviction that

we gather to celebrate the breaking of fast  
and to celebrate the blessings of plenty.

So may it be

## Business Practices

Before opening your Humanist Celebrant practice, there are a number of business related items to consider, plan for and implement. Even if you do not intend to offer many ceremonies, you will want to present yourself (and Humanism) professionally, and be able to deliver on the commitments you make to clients.

### - Client Engagement

- Contact methods
- Initial Consultation (who, what, when, where, how)
- Contracts

### - Marketing

- Business name, logo, description of services – define and decide how to communicate: website, brochures, Facebook business page, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat...
- Business Cards (Vistaprint, Staples, Moo, local vendors) hand them to everyone you know.
- Make appointments at ceremony/reception venues. Ask if they host ceremonies, ask to see the space (look for electricity, entrance points, front of ceremony space, ask about capacity, set up for ceremonies vs receptions, indoor and outdoor ceremony options), explain what you do, and that couples sometimes ask for recommendations on venue options. Ask if you can leave some cards/brochures with them in case couples ask about secular ceremonies.
- Develop your “elevator pitches” to answer the questions, “What do you do?” and “What is a Humanist Celebrant?”

### - Business Management:

- Plan for work management: Files, online, hardcopy, checklists, spreadsheets, tables, records retention, templates...
- Ensure you have complied with state/county requirements to legally perform marriages, and understand the required tasks for officiants (returning certificate).

### - Business Structure/Legal

- Sole proprietorship, Limited Liability Corporation, Partnerships, other?
- Business name registration
- Local SCORE, SBA, or private legal advice may be helpful.

### - Taxes

- Small business accountant
- Expense tracking
- Income tracking
- Pre-paid quarterly taxes needed?

### - Insurance

- Personal choice to carry or not

## Business Practices Appendices:

### Appendix B1: Contracts

Sample contracts offered by Humanist Celebrants. Note, it is recommended that you have your local legal advisor review your contract for applicability to your business and location.

Contract Sample 1:

**Southern Indiana Ceremonies**  
Columbus, IN  
(812) 371-1738  
info@southernindianaceremonies.com

## Contract for Wedding Officiant Services

*This agreement is between the Parties to Be Married and Aaron Bettner, Humanist Celebrant*

Date of Wedding: \_\_\_\_\_

Ceremony Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name of Spouse-to-Be:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zipcode

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name of Spouse-to-Be:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zipcode

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Contact on Wedding Day:** \_\_\_\_\_

Contact's Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Ceremony Location Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zipcode

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Entire Agreement**

This agreement contains the entire understanding between Aaron Bettner, hereinafter “Celebrant”, and the parties to be married.

#### **Celebrant's Responsibilities:**

Services covered by fees include: ceremony, unlimited planning consultations and updates until the event, research and resource material, a keepsake certificate of marriage, and filing of the marriage license by mail or in person if possible by the first business day following the ceremony. Spouses to be have final say over the ceremony script and may edit and revise as needed before the day of the ceremony.

The Celebrant will arrive no later than 20 minutes before the ceremony start time.

#### **Responsibilities of the Parties to be Married:**

The Parties to be married must provide a valid marriage license to the Celebrant PRIOR to the scheduled start time of the ceremony. Witnesses must be provided by the parties to be married at the time of the signing of the marriage license.

#### **Limit of Liability:**

In the unlikely event that the celebrant cannot officiate because of illness or other emergency, the Celebrant will make every practical effort to find a replacement officiant for the ceremony. If the Celebrant cannot find an alternate officiant, liability is limited to a refund of any payments received, minus the initial deposit.

**Other:**

The Celebrant may use personal photographs, scripts, and correspondence for business marketing purposes, including but not limited to, publishing on their websites, blog posts, advertising material, and future weddings.

**Celebrant Services Fees:**

Total Fee:    Initial Deposit:

The deposit is due upon signing this contact, with the remainder of the agreed upon amount due before the day of the ceremony.

**Humanist Association of America:**

As a Humanist Celebrant, endorsed by the Humanist Society, we can offer you a FREE one year membership to the Humanist Association of America. This service is provided free for any couple married by a Humanist Celebrant. More information can be found at [americanhumanist.org](http://americanhumanist.org).

Would you like a FREE one year membership? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

***We understand the contents of this contract and agree to the terms therein.***

Signature of Spouse-to-Be: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Spouse-to-Be: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Celebrant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contract Sample 2:

**CELEBRATE HUMAN LIFE**

Andrew J. Vaughn, Celebrant  
2110 Hillside Drive  
Ely, IA 52227

**CONTRACT FOR WEDDING OFFICIANT SERVICES**

This Wedding Officiant Services Agreement ("Agreement") is entered between NAME and NAME ("Couple") and Andrew J. Vaughn ("Officiant"). WHEREAS the Couple wish to purchase the wedding services of the Officiant on the terms and conditions set forth herein; and WHEREAS, the Officiant agrees to provide such wedding services, NOW, THEREFORE, for good and valuable consideration of services, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties agree as follows:

**WEDDING OFFICIANT SERVICES.** The Officiant provides secular, non-religious ceremonies. The Officiant will not include any religious elements in his wedding service; however, couples are welcome to add these elements by delegating their responsibility to another party, such as a family member or friend. The following details regarding services are agreed upon by all parties:

**REHEARSAL.** The Couple request the Officiant conduct a rehearsal prior to the wedding ceremony. The rehearsal will be held on April 29, 2016, at 4:30pm in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The cost to conduct this service is \$100.00.

**WEDDING CEREMONY.** The Couple request a personalized wedding ceremony for themselves. The Officiant will create a customized ceremony tailored to the specifications of the Couple. The Couple are solely responsible for bringing the necessary paperwork and providing the necessary witnesses on the day of the wedding. The Officiant will file the necessary paperwork with the State of Iowa to solemnize the

marriage.

The wedding ceremony will be held on April 30, 2016, at 4:30pm in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The cost to conduct this service is \$300.00.

**TRAVEL EXPENSES.** Mileage is charged at a rate of \$1.00 per mile for travel to all locations further than 25 miles from the location of the Officiant, designated as 2110 Hillside Drive, Ely, IA 52227. All miles are charged. Mileage is charged one way only.

There is no mileage charge for these services as the rehearsal and wedding are within the 25 mile limit.

The Officiant reserves the right to adjust this charge if a venue change is requested by the Couple and is outside the 25 mile restriction.

**TOTAL COST.** The total cost ("Total Cost") for the wedding officiant services outlined above is \$400.00.

**CONFIRMATION.** A signed "CONTRACT FOR WEDDING OFFICIANT SERVICES" and a down payment of \$100 are necessary to confirm the wedding ceremony preparation and ceremonial services from the Officiant.

**CEREMONY PREPARATION.** The Officiant agrees to provide all required or requested preparation prior to the ceremony. The text and structure of the ceremony should be finalized no later than one week before the date of the wedding.

**TERMINATION.** This Agreement may be terminated by the Couple at any time or by the Officiant with at least 30 days' notice prior to the wedding, whether with or without cause. The Couple are responsible for Total Cost if they provide less than 72 hours' notice of cancellation. Upon termination of services by the Officiant, the Officiant shall have no further obligations or responsibilities to the Couple other than the refund of all payments received.

**LIMIT OF LIABILITY.** If the Officiant is too ill, or becomes injured, and cannot provide the wedding services specified above, the Officiant will attempt to book a

replacement wedding officiant. If no officiant is available, then liability is limited to a refund of all payments received. The Couple relieve the Officiant and his heirs of any liability in the event of his death prior to, during, or after the ceremony.

**DOWN PAYMENT.** In the event the Couple cancel the wedding for whatever reason, the down payment is non-refundable and will be considered liquidated damages to the Officiant.

**FINAL PAYMENT.** Full payment for services is due no later than 72 hours prior to the rehearsal, if one has been elected, or the wedding itself. Payments are to be made online through the Officiants website, [www.celebratehumanlife.com](http://www.celebratehumanlife.com). This will facilitate payment tracking.

**ENFORCEMENT.** If the Officiant prevails in any legal action undertaken to enforce this Agreement, including the restrictive covenants contained herein, the Officiant shall be entitled to recover reasonable attorneys' fees, costs, and expenses incurred in connection with such action.

**ASSIGNMENT.** This Agreement may be assigned by the Officiant without the consent of the Couple. The Couple may not assign this Agreement.

**ENTIRE AGREEMENT, AMENDMENT, AND WAIVER.** This Agreement supersedes in all respects all agreements, arrangements, or understandings, whether oral or written, between the Couple and the Officiant with respect to the Couple's acquisition of services by the Officiant. This Agreement shall be amended or modified only by a written instrument so designated and executed by both the Couple and the Officiant. The failure of either party hereto to enforce at any time any of the provisions of this Agreement shall in no way be construed to be a waiver of any such provision, or of the right to such party thereafter to enforce each and every such provision in the event of a subsequent breach.



**SEVERABILITY.** The invalidity of a portion or provision of this Agreement shall not invalidate the entire Agreement, it being the intent of the parties that the Agreement be construed as though the invalid portion or provision had been deleted by the parties. In the event a Court was to invalidate any portion of the restrictive covenants contained herein, the parties intend that the Court enforce the restrictive covenants to the fullest extent permitted by law.

**CAREFUL REVIEW AND UNDERSTANDING.** The Couple represent and certify that they have carefully read and fully understand all of the provisions and effects of this Agreement, that the Couple have been given the opportunity to discuss all aspects of this Agreement with counsel, that the Couple are voluntarily entering into this Agreement, and that neither the Officiant nor his agents, representatives, or attorneys made any representations concerning the terms or effects of this Agreement other than those contained herein.

**GOVERNING LAW. MEDIATION, VENUE.** This Agreement shall be construed, interpreted, and enforced in accordance with the laws of the State of Iowa. A cause of action related to this Agreement or to the Couple's purchase of services shall be brought in the Iowa District Court in and for Linn County, and the parties agree to submit to the jurisdiction of that Court.

**SEVERAL COUNTERPARTS.** The Couple and the Officiant acknowledge that this Agreement may be executed in several counterparts with the same effect as if all parties had signed the same document. Each counterpart shall deem to be an original and all counterparts together shall constitute a single, binding, and complete agreement. Faxed or emailed signature pages are valid as originals.

The parties execute this Agreement by signature below.

NAME

Date

NAME

Date

Andrew J. Vaughn, Officiant

Date

Contract Sample 3:

**CONTRACT FOR WEDDING OFFICIANT SERVICES**

This agreement is between the Couple and Scott Rhoades, Wedding Officiant

**Wedding Services Required**

**Date of Wedding:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ceremony Start Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rehearsal Required?**  Yes  No

**Wedding Colors:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Rehearsal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rehearsal Start Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name1:**

**Name2:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ceremony**

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Rehearsal**

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Name & mobile number for two people who can be contacted on the day of wedding**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mobile Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mobile Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Amount for Ceremonies:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Travel Expenses:**

**Total Amount Agreed:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Initial Deposit**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

The deposit is due upon booking, with the balance of the amount agreed due at, or before, the time of the ceremony.

**ENTIRE AGREEMENT:**

This agreement contains the entire understanding between Scott Rhoades hereafter "the Officiant" and the Couple (Named above).

**CONFIRMATION:**

A signed "CONTRACT FOR WEDDING OFFICIANT SERVICES" and payment of the booking fee are necessary to confirm the wedding ceremony preparation and ceremonial services from the Officiant.

**PRE-WEDDING CONSULTATION:**

The Officiant agrees to provide all required or requested preparation prior to the ceremony. The text and structure of the ceremony should be finalized no later than one week before the date of the wedding.

**LIMIT OF LIABILITY:**

If the Officiant is too ill, or becomes injured, and cannot supply the wedding services specified above, the Officiant will try to book a replacement wedding officiant. If no officiant is available then liability is limited to a refund of any payments received.

**BOOKING FEE/DEPOSIT:**

In the event of the Couple canceling the wedding for whatever reason the booking fee is non-refundable. It will be considered as liquidated damages to the Officiant.

**We have understood the contents of this contract and agree to the terms therein.**

**Signature1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of the Officiant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B2: Elevator Speech Examples**

Here are a few possible responses to the often asked questions of, “What is a Humanist Celebrant?” or “What church are you from?” or “What is Humanism?” It's a good idea to develop your own responses, memorize and practice them so you can comfortably respond when the questions pop up.

- Humanism is a non-theistic lifestance based on science, reason and compassion.
- Humanism is a lifestance or philosophy grounded in the natural world that encourages us to lead lives that leave the world a better place.
- Humanism teaches that we can be good without gods, and encourages us to be a positive influence in the world.
- A Humanist Celebrant is a representative of Humanism who works with people to recognize and honor the significant moments in their lives.
- I don't represent a church, I'm a Humanist Celebrant who works with people to provide meaningful ceremonies to mark the milestone moments in their life.
- As a representative of the Humanist lifestance I serve people by creating personal, meaningful ceremonies to mark the significant moments in their lives.

## TIPS FROM EXPERIENCED HUMANIST CELEBRANTS

The following tips were gathered from our Humanist Celebrant Facebook group. Remember, though, that everyone works differently, so some suggestions might not work for you. These tidbits of wisdom are offered by experienced celebrants as a welcome to our Humanist Celebrant Professional Community.

- Be responsive to ceremony inquiries – return phone calls, texts and emails as quickly as possible, ideally within an hour or two, especially when beginning your practice.
- Market yourself by making appointments and visiting local ceremony venues and funeral homes, leaving business cards with each contact.
- Give your business cards to everyone you encounter – family, friends, local Humanist/atheist groups, other vendors, etc.
- Decide who your ideal client is and use that to guide all aspects of your practice. If you seek to be the low cost provider, you'll price services separately, list prices on your website, and offer simple, pre-written ceremonies. If you seek to attract higher end clients, you'll lead with your comprehensive and personalized service value proposition.
- Always meet in person with the couple as soon as possible to discuss all ceremony related aspects and present the contract and receive deposit if they agree to proceed at that time. I always recommend the couple choose someplace convenient and comfortable to them. In cases where they are currently out of the general area, state, or country, I substitute several emails and phone calls in lieu of a face to face. Occasionally, Skype or FaceTime as time zones allow. The more "front loaded" the planning, the better the end result.
- Use a contract.
- ALWAYS require a deposit!
- if you have a website, put your fees on it. Couples hate having to contact for quotes and will often look elsewhere first if it's easier to find pricing. Alternatively, they are more likely to contact you over asking for quotes from various other Officiants. I've had many couples comment on their appreciation that I put my pricing right up front, including travel costs, so that they could calculate almost exactly what it would cost to have me officiate their wedding.
- Don't be afraid to ask for pronunciations of names that you are unsure of how to pronounce and immediately write them down phonetically. I actually have a place on my intake form for this
- I try to excuse myself from receptions, because I have been asked a couple of times to lead us in "prayer". I haven't figured out how to do a no religion prayer that doesn't offend religious people.
- Ask the couple what their wedding colors are and the groom what color suit he is wearing. The suit color info is just for male Celebrants. The reason for this is so that you don't exactly match their colors and end up looking like part of the wedding party but also so you don't clash with their colors for photos. I always wear a different color suit and pick a color combination that compliments but doesn't match the wedding

colors. For men, having a collection of ties and shirts of multiple colors will make things easy to do.

If you are starting out on a budget and can't afford multiple suits, shirts, and ties (I slowly built up my wardrobe over years) I suggest starting with a charcoal suit as this is a color hardly ever picked by a groom and looks different than the standard blacks, grays, tans, and blues that are commonly choices but goes with any color.

Also, a nice abbreviated collection of ties with multiple colors in them and a plain white shirt let you achieve this as well. With a charcoal suit and white shirt you can wear pretty much any tie and pull it off.

For women, I would suggest dresses with different color combinations to achieve the same effect. It's a little easier for women as bridesmaids dresses are almost always only one color and a small collection of dresses will suffice.

To summarize, you want to stand out as the Officiant and compliment but don't clash or match their colors.