

SPECIAL TOUCHES AND CROSS-CULTURAL RITES

What does "unity rite" represent? A unity rite is a physical manifestation of a joining with the use of an artifact. When lovers or entities or families or friends pledge mutual long-lasting care, they create a union that, while composed of them, is also greater than the sum of its parts. Sociologists understand this best: people learn from each other: as they learn, they both retain the inner core of themselves and grow layers.

Ringling of Bells

Traditionally, bells ring at least three times to ward off evil spirits and as a sign the bride and groom will soon be ushered into marriage. Bells may also be rung at the conclusion of the ceremony.

Blessing Altar with Holy Water or Incense

Incense smells amazing; it comes in herbal mixes or in more perfumed forms. Setting the herbs or crystals on charcoal works best. If you like, as your officiant, I can enter with incense, which will infuse the space with intoxicating smoke with a sweet or earthy scent, which cleanses the air as well.

Chuppah/Mandap/Kappa/Bridal Sky

Indians and Jewish couples typically marry underneath some kind of bridal canopy. I once met a woman in Ireland just after marrying a couple in Central Park who also noted that in Ireland, all couples must be covered in some way, even if outside, as they exchange their vows for the marriage to be legally binding. The canopy is at once a sign of modesty and hospitality, as the open sides naturally invite family and friends. They also look fabulous in photos. Some make their own, someone use an heirloom, and others rent one. You can even buy a simple tent online cheaply and then decorate it for outdoor weddings. Jewish couples may want to take note that traditionally four friends hold the poles.

Option 1: We gather under this chuppah to honor the past and celebrate the possibilities the future may bring. Long after tents vanished from the landscape, wedding ceremonies continued to be held outside so the marriage would receive as many blessings as stars exist. The covering marks the place in which the couple would gather with their closest family to be united in marriage: the canopy created a sacred space....The chuppah also symbolized the importance of treading modestly, carefully, and thoughtfully on this earth (the need to be protected by garments, and even the intimacy of the bedroom). At the same time, the canopy is open on all sides to represent how welcome family, friends, and new acquaintances will be in the couple's home. Although the chuppah cannot keep outside storms away, just as love, hope, and promises cannot, it will be the couple's anchor, just as their loving commitment will be, for all the days of their lives.

Option 2: Welcome family and friends to this special occasion. X and Y, together you will build a foundation for your future. You have come to be joined in marriage under this bridal canopy with the blessings of those closest to you. In the Hindu tradition, the canopy represents shelter and peace. It marks a sanctified space. The four poles correspond to the four directions, as your love will span the four corners of the earth. The sides of this canopy are open, as your home and arms will always welcome those you love. May you always find refuge and strength in your home. May you be brought together forever.

Badeken (unveiling & veiling)

This custom dates back to a story in the Old Testament. Short Version? Guy meets girl and falls in love. He works for years. On the day of his wedding, thought, the girl's father tricks his soon-to-be son-in-law by veiling another daughter and marrying her to him. Guy works for many more years to be able to marry his first love. Morale of the story? Groom should veil his bride before entering the sacred space to get married.

Modernized or Traditional Giving Away

Traditional: Who gives this woman in marriage?

Modern: Who gives this couple in marriage?

"Peace be with you" welcoming

This is a Catholic and more generally, Christian, tradition, although I am sure other cultures use it as well. The celebrant says "Peace be with you" to open the ceremony, and the congregation replies: "and also with you." At this point, folks may turn and greet each other with hugs and handshakes while saying them same. It's an act of neighborliness – a means to identify the group as an inclusive community.

Tribute to Pregnant Bride

Name and Name, very shortly your union will no longer only consist of two: you are about to be parents. Therefore, as much as we celebrate the creation of a new marriage today, we also honor you for bringing the gift of a new being into this world. As parents, you will grow and mature even more deeply: you will learn as much from your child as you will teach your child. Such virtues as patience, kindness, and compassion will become especially valuable to your new family. We hope you enjoy this quieter period in your lives as a time of joyful meditation upon your new responsibility. But we also hope that you will carve out date nights and mini vacations to tend to each other as much as you will nourish your child.

Vow to Children

Name(s) of child(ren), do you give your consent to this marriage?....

X and Y, since child(ren) have blessed your lives, you must work to give them a loving home: they will help you to grow as individuals and as a family. Just as you impart lessons to them, they will teach you. Cultivate a relationship in which you and these children have a unique, mutually respectful bond. You must act responsibly and thoughtfully to help them grow into the best individuals they can be. You must give them space and yet guide them gently. Know that you should give all of yourselves, but that you cannot expect your children to precisely reflect your identities. With laughter, affection, patience, and encouragement, you will be able to fulfill your family's intellectual, physical, spiritual, emotional, and creative needs and dreams.....To honor this child(ren), I ask you: Do you pledge to show this child / these children the same respect, patience, and thoughtfulness shown to you and that you offer each other? Optional Addition: As a token of their promise, Name and Name offer you this gift.

Option 2: [Name or names of child(ren)], you mean the world to X and Y. In marrying today, X and Y not only promise to care for each other. They also promise to care for you.....X and/or Y, do you promise to love and nurture ____'s children no matter what life brings, to support them in all they do, and to act patiently with them at all times?.....Likewise, to create a strong, loving family, you must also promise to care for each other. I will now ask all of you to listen closely to these questions, which ask you each to help hold together this family. Do you promise to listen and act thoughtfully and considerately with one another during times of joy and difficulty? Will you remain true and honest from this day forward?

Option 3: As a token of their love, appreciation, and endless care for you, child(ren), X and Y have chosen to give you a small gift with a flower from the bride's bouquet. They ask that you carry your gift with you as you travel along the paths life offers you as a constant reminder of how abundantly you are lovingly cherished. The flower symbolizes the beauty you bring to X and Y's life. In return, they pledge to bring beauty into the home they will share with you. In a corner of this home will be a place for flowers. Know that this place is a safe haven: you can tell your family anything without fear of feeling judged. Instead, you will be given insightful advice and a compassionate hug.

Prayerful Invocation (Unitarian Universalist)

We invoke your gentlest blessings, O God, on all true lovers. We thank you for the revealing power of love which divines in the one beloved the mystic beauty and glory of humanity. We thank you for the transfiguring power of love which ripens and ennobles our nature, calling forth the hidden stores of tenderness and strength, and overcomes selfishness by the passion of self-surrender. May the love of Name and Name be strong, that no misunderstanding loosen the bond and no passing of the years have power to dim the light that now glows in them. Early in their bond may they gain wisdom to discern the true values of life, and may no circumstance take from them the wholesome peace and inward satisfaction which only love can give. Grant them vision to look beyond this moment to the generations yet to come, and to know that the home they create will be part of the sacred body of humanity in which you dwell, that they may have reverence for others and for themselves and drink the cup of joy

with awe. Amen.

Closing Prayer/Blessing (Unitarian Universalist)

Out of this tangled world, O God, thou hast drawn together these two souls and bound them firmly with the swift sure bonds of love. Their destinies shall now be woven of one design and their perils and their joys shall not be known apart. As they increase in mutual understanding may their joy stand victoriously against the storm of circumstances which comes impartially to all our doors. From the rich encouragement of their affection may they complete the unfinished pattern of their true selves. They have chosen each other from the world's multitudes. May the days and years, now veiled by time, deepen the joy of that choice and make it abidingly true. Amen.

Giving Flowers to Parents (or other loved ones)

Option 1: Will the parents please rise? Name and Name come out of your family circles. They are living expressions of your love; they have been nurtured in your affections and guided by your counsel. It is now their desire to broaden their family circles, yet all the while maintaining their heritages. They will explore new directions, but keep also the tried and tested lessons of their earlier years. To acknowledge the ongoing, future relationship they will share with you, Name and Name publicly thank their parents for the support bestowed upon them by pledging to give you, their parents, the same tender care shown to them from this day onwards. The flowers they give to their parents represent feelings of gratitude and love in their hearts. This moment marks a major change in their lives, but the ties of loving friendship with their parents will continue.

Option 2: Family and friends, you have formed a circle of love where members care for each other during hardships and celebrate achievements. Name and Name have joined their lives to make a new circle of love made stronger by those from which it has emerged. Therefore, they would like to give their nearest and dearest a flower with a note of appreciation for all the gifts offered them attached.

Bride Offers Flower from Bouquet to Loved Ones

In recognition of how much those women nearest and dearest to our Bride's life shaped who she has become and how much help given to her as she prepared for this day, our Bride would like to present a flower from her bouquet to her mother / grandmother / sister / aunt / cousin / closest friends.

Moment of Quiet Reflection

Before this ceremony commences, let us take a moment of quiet reflection to concentrate on the beauty of this day, to acknowledge how the strenuous efforts of those in our past made this day possible, and to remember in reverence those whose lives contributed to our own,

even though they could not be here today.

Lavender Circle/Path

Lavender is an herb for the fortunes that come with healing. Be reminded that your future will be sculpted by both luck and your efforts; aided by industrious toil and hope, your views carry the power of prescience. May past grievances be healed with forgiveness and atonement; may you help bring lasting vitality to one another's life; may you care for each other in sickness as in health; may you ease your partner's burdens and enhance your partner's joy; may you shield your partner from external and internal traumas; may your labor to beget wealth of all types into your home; and may life grant you the same.

Lighting Candle as Memorial

Option 1: Name and Name will now light this candle to represent the presence of Name in their lives. Anywhere they call home shall have a special place where they will pay tribute to the gifts given to them by the loved ones who are present with them always in spirit.

Option 2: Let us also honor those sages who came before us for the great lessons they taught, for their valuable examples of behavior, and for their work and faith, which made this day possible. Please light this candle to signify the enlightenment brought by our ancestors.

Placing Flowers at Altar to Represent Loved Ones

X flower was the favorite emblem of natural beauty for Name, which is why this couple has chosen to decorate this center table with a bouquet.

Community Pledges Support

Welcome family and friends! And especially Name and Name. Thank you for inviting me to participate in this celebration of your love. Your nearest and dearest know you best. And so I now ask them for their consent to your union... Family and friends, do you each pledge your support for this marriage? Will you encourage this couple to realize their potential as individuals and as a new family?

And to our lovely couple, I ask: once you are newlywed, do you promise to show heartfelt consideration to all your friends and family when they need you?

Khata

A "khata" is a ceremonial scarf offered to the couple as a sign of affection in Buddhist cultures. I can provide one for a "hand-fasting" -- a binding together of hands as a symbol of the couple's united hearts and lives.

Recognizing Marriage Equality

Name and Name, I believe I am obligated to remind you (even though you are not religious), that as, Lynn Lavner discovered, "the Bible contains three hundred sixty-two admonishments to heterosexual couples." Echoing her notes, I must remind you that the Bible only contains six such warnings to same-sex couplings. While I will not recount all these policies to you, I do ask you to heed the advise of your gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer brethren when it comes to relationships; studies reveal, for example, that GLBTQ folks generally have families with greater tolerance for differences and handle arguments better due to their more ample use of humor. When lawmakers finally realize the error of their assumptions, surely they too will learn how much more supervision hetero couplings need.

Let us share a moment of quiet reflection to send thoughts through osmosis to those suffering from false assumptions about the GLBTQ community, as we also pledge to always support any responsible couple truly in love whose society denies them the right to legally marry. Let us hope that some day our culture feels "more comfortable seeing two men or two women holding hands than seeing anyone holding a gun"(derived from quote by Ernest Gaines).

Ring Warming

I respectfully request that every guest to briefly hold the rings and silently "warm" them with supportive, loving prayers and well-wishes for this marriage. Through your blessings these rings will transform into sacred emblems of Name and Name's union.

Unity Candle

Option 1: (Name) and (name) come into their marriage relationship as individuals: they do not lose their identity in this union. Rather their uniqueness shall strengthen the relationship of marriage. Therefore, the three candles remain lit, one for each of them and one for their marriage...The Unity Candle symbolizes the new family you are now forming from your past lives. The flames you light it with both burn brighter when joined together. Now you both are charged with keeping this flame bright for the rest of your days.

Option 2: *Optional Prelude: As a tribute to the past, you have asked your mothers to kindly step forward to light your individual taper candles...Thank you so much for your patience, generosity, and knowledge through the years....*These separate candles represent the two nourishing roots that make this day exciting. Today, though, you have united your lives under the umbrella of One Love: you will work towards producing a new, even stronger tree from your two roots. Just as you embrace each other as individuals, the separate flames will now embrace.The light of your unity candle will burn undivided because your thoughts shall be for each other as well as for your individual selves, family, and friends. It represents the brilliance of wisdom, hope, and passion that will enlighten the pathway you will walk together as one family. This brighter, longer single light is a testimony to your willingness to share all you are, all you have, and all you will be. May its warmth shelter always the new family you create together.

Option 3: The unity candle you are about to light represents your marriage. Its fire is magical because it represents the light of two people in love. It is a candle reflecting commitment: the flame is bright and long-lasting because two people worked together to keep it so. It is also a candle of unity because two people produced it by giving sparks of themselves. May the illuminating flame shine throughout your lives, as you light your candle on each anniversary to renew your sacred vows. May the light give you courage and reassurance in darkness, as well as warmth and safety in the cold.

Option 4: Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the candle's flame will not shorten or cease. Likewise, happiness grows when shared. This is why you now light candles: you pledge to give all you are and will ever be to help one another attain a well-rounded, happy life. The warmth of the candles encircles you with the endless spirit of protection and transformation. The lighting of candles from a flame that will not diminish before its time also serves as a reminder that you can hold onto your individuality while supporting others in their journeys.

Option 5: Out of your love, commitment, and values will emerge a long-lasting, affectionate bond. Through acting fairly, forgiving, and understanding you shall be brought closer together in an enlightening journey. Yet do not lose sight of yourselves. In fact, please now light your distinct candles symbolizing your individual selves. Remember to cultivate your own talents, become more cognizant of the world as an individual, and endeavor to rectify your shortcomings to enhance this partnership... At the same time, however, you have promised to blend your lives. A more brilliant future shall crystallize as you guide each other gently and considerately, yet with deliberate desire. This center candle is more elaborate because it is a testimony to the myriad ways in which you will strengthen each other. Please remember to also share thoughtfully all you learn in your life with others.

Option 6: From every person there arises a unique spirit, a bright light, with the ability to help bring enlightenment. When the minds and hearts of two individuals complement each other, the two lights mingle in a dance that produces an even more brilliant light. The two distinct lights strengthen by encouraging each other to develop in all ways.....X and Y, by lighting candles today after you exchange your vows, you unite your lives in marriage. To honor each other's individuality, please exchange your separate candles....Once you exchange your vows, please light your partner's candle (from this votive candle) as your pledge to kindle the flame of creativity within each other.....Vows.....At the same time, you have promised to unite your separate lives. You have promised to remain devoted and to give each other the gifts of security, comfort, and trustworthiness. To honor your unity as a new family, you will now light a unity candle from your separate candles. Joined together, your separate flames nourish an even more amazing, stronger, and long-lasting light...May this light always guide you. May your marriage fill you both with as much illumination and passion as this flame. May you respect one another as much as we must respect the power of fire. May you remember to rekindle the flame every anniversary to remind you to shower each other with warm affection in the upcoming year. In this way, the flame will hold what you cherish the most in your lives.

General Unity Rite

We all know that two people can accomplish more than one because they support each other. If one feels downtrodden, the other offers encouragement. If one is ill or sad, the other provides help and comfort. Together, their willingness to work to enrich and empower each other in all ways gives them more shelter to keep warm and safe. In sum, two souls bound together in the spirit of divine love are stronger than the individuals themselves. This rite of unity is a symbol of that sacred union created on your wedding day.

Unity Candle: Light this unity candle now as a testimony to your promise to grow in knowledge to nurture your shared love and your love for others.

Unity Sand: This center vase of sand represents the enhanced possibilities you will create by joining your lives. As you pour your separate vials into the center vase, know that you now have someone who will work to help you realize all your potential.

Unity Cord: This cord represents the presence of unending love in your life. No matter where you go, even if you separate at times, your love will bring you back to each other.

Wine Ceremony

Option 1: Name and Name, before you enjoy this cup of wine, please spill a little in remembrance of those whose joys cannot be complete due to worldly problems: without full equality, complete happiness and peace is not possible yet....As you share the cup of wine, you undertake to share all that the future may bring. All the sweetness life's cup may hold for you will be the sweeter because you drink it together. Whatever drops of bitterness it may contain will be less bitter because you share them. May this cup be a symbol forever of your life-long communion in spirit, mind, and body. May your life be full of abundance.

Option 2: The blessing over the wine, known as the kiddush, is a part of many Jewish celebrations and holidays. The word kiddush means sanctification. By partaking in this rite of drinking from the same glass, you promise to undertake all the future may bring as a married couple. Because you enter a sanctified union, all the sweetness of life will be enhanced and the bitterness of life will be diluted....The years of the life you will share are like a cup overflowing with wine. The pressing of the grapes represent all the goodness you will bring forth as a couple. And the glass itself represents the table at which you will sit for ongoing, lively discussions as you renew your lives with nourishment....Family and friends, let us express appreciation for this wine as a symbol and aid of our rejoicing today: We acknowledge that even separate moments are part of the whole, of oneness...We give thanks for the gift of awareness that allows us to perceive and wonder at the power of love...We pray that our rejoicing resonate throughout the world to help give the homeless homes, cause oppression to cease, and improve overall harmony in the environment...We call forth an abundance of love to shelter this couple...We vow to pray often for the day that happiness, honor, and the sounds of feasting and singing echo across the universe...

Option 3: The goal of a married couple is to achieve a blending of hearts. While there will be spaces in your new life together, so that each may encourage and nurture the individual growth of the other, your separate lives, fortunes, and homes will become one. Future horizons will bring hours of brightness and shadows, for such is the nature of the world. This wine is a token of this sweetness and bitterness. And yet the overall experience is rich in happiness. As you drink, may this wine serve as a symbol of the overall joy that comes with sharing love. May you remember to balance your lives in gratitude, honesty, and modesty.

Hawaiian/Conch

Blowing of the pu. (conch)

O ke aloha ke kuleana o kahi malahini.

"Love is the host in this land."

He pilikani kakaou apau ma Hawaii nei.

"Here in Hawaii we are all family."

Aloha komo mai.

"Welcome with love."

Lei

In ancient Hawaii, when two people exchanged lei, they came together, touched noses and foreheads, and took a deep breath. This was called honi. They did this to share the breath of the Divine, Creation, and Universe, or Aloha. Aloha literally means the breath of Creation: Alo, meaning the Spirit radiating through the universe, and Ha, being the breath. Thus we have Aloha, or breath of the Universe.....A lei is given in a spirit of thankfulness and Aloha. Each blossom is picked from the Earth, then strung one by one so each will shine at its most brilliant. It is a symbol of beauty, as it was made with care and given with love....A lei is a circle of beauty, without beginning, without end. A lei encircles the head and touches the heart. A lei delights the senses and inspires wonder. A lei is as fragile as today, as enduring as memory. A lei is a Divine expression of the universe, fashioned by human hands....Now, as you present these lei to each other, first place the lei over the head, then touch your noses and foreheads and take a deep breath. Know that right here right now you are in the presence of the Transcendental. Since they were offered in the spirit of Aloha, may the attributes of these lei forever inspire your lives.

Water Blessing

On any island, water has miraculous power or Mana. Fresh water is seen as the symbol of life and the sharing of water is symbolic of the blending and sharing of two lives together.

Ancient Hawaiians used water in all ceremonies.

Aumakua, ke akua, aloha and mahalo.

"Higher Self, Divine Wisdom and Love,
we give love and thanks."

E ho'omaikai I ka wai keia."

Blessed be this water.

As you each take a wooden cup filled with water, I will step away giving you a private moment. And I ask you to share what is on your heart right now with each other. Please indicate when you are ready for me to return.....Now blend the water together by pouring it from cup to cup to symbolize the blending of your lives. When you are ready you can pour the water from your bowls into my bowl as you are now blending your lives together to become one.....Please place the palms of your hands facing up to the lani (heavens) and then stack them one on top of the other until they are stacked as one.Take a moment to release anything – old fears, false assumptions, and worries. At this time you may choose to forgive any grievances whether they are with yourselves or with others. However, you must not forget your past, as it is what made you who you are now and has brought you both together at this moment in time. ...Water is the great purifier, a cleanser. Yet it also symbolizes the pure flow of unconditional love and ideas, which shall lead to peaceful uniting of your two lives. So I will now pour some water over your hands to wash away, to release, any negative energy in order to pave the way for the future to freely flow.

'E hu ma ka 'ike mai luna mai 'e
(Grant me the knowledge from above.)
O na mea huna no'eau o na mele 'e
(Of secrets of wisdom, song & chant.)
'E ho mai
(Let it come, let it flow.)
'E ho mai
(Let it come, let it flow.)
'E ho mai 'e
(Let it come, let it flow.)

No keia la, no keia po, a mau loa.
"From this day, from this night, forever more."
Aloha 'e, Aloha 'e, Aloha 'e

Kiddush (blessing over wine in Jewish ceremony)

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam borei p'ri ha-gafen.
Blessed is the human capacity for joy, embodied in the symbol of wine.
Barukh ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ha-olam she-hechiyanu v'kiy'manu v'higianu la-z'man ha-zeh.
Blessed are we that we have been given life, and been sustained, and have lived to see this day.

Reading of Ketubah

On this day of great celebration and joy, Name and Name spoke the words and performed the rites which united their lives and affirmed their love. We promise to honor our vibrant love, to nurture and protect it. Our lives, enriched by our unique traditions and faiths, will embody trust, constancy, and compromise. We will cherish and sustain each other. We will meet life's trials with quiet courage, faith, trust, and hope, and embrace life's blessings with wonder, joy, appreciation, and laughter. We will grow as individuals and delight in an elegant freedom borne from mutual respect. May there be peace in our home, may we be blessed with good fortune, health, and happiness, and may our devotion to one another ennoble us. "With my beloved by my side, every day is good to awaken to, and every moment is a gift." Our sacred covenant is valid and binding.

Alms Giving (medieval) or Tzedakah (Jewish tradition)

Name and Name, as your first gift to this world as newlyweds, you have chosen to donate funds to a foundation dedicated to bringing about amnesty and equal rights throughout the world. Please bring forward this honorable contribution now. May your union grant you the hopeful ambition necessary to further grace this world. Let us now take a moment of silence to send prayerful wishes to those in need.

Salt Covenant (religious)

You have formed a covenant—a new family—and will now join these vials of salt (with children, if relevant). Season each other's independent lives as well as your marriage marriage; preserve it with the best of your unique gifts; and use this bond to help cure ills. As we read in St. Paul's letter to the Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone."

Communion

For our failure to feel the sufferings of others, and our tendency to live comfortably with injustice: God forgive us. For the self-righteousness which denies guilt, and the self-interest which strangles compassion: God forgive us. For our failings in community, and our lack of understanding: We ask your mercy. For the times when we are too eager to be better than others, when we are too rushed to care, when we are too tired to bother, when we do not really listen, when we are too quick to act from motives other than love: God forgive us and shower mercy upon us.

Let us pray: God, you promise a world where those who now weep shall laugh; those who are hungry shall feast; those who are poor now, and excluded, shall live in your kingdom. We want this promised world, too. We renounce despair and will act for change, for we choose to be included in heaven's graces. Now and forever we thank you for refreshing us at your holy table. We thank you for our brothers and sisters in this community and around the world. May we always be reminded to see the world through love and to work for a time when all may share together equally in happiness. Amen.

This bread we share in celebration; all those who give of themselves to others fully in spirit,

labor, and mind will live in honor.

Now before you share this wine, spill some to honor the continuing injustice in this world, as our happiness is incomplete while others suffer.

BENEDICTION: GOD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU. GOD'S COUNTENANCE SHINE DOWN UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS ONTO YOU. GOD LOOK UPON YOU IN KIND MERCY AND BRING YOU PEACE. AMEN.

Please take your first steps now as life-long partners into a new, common threshold (*optional jumping of broom here*) and kiss!

Loving Cup

This Loving Cup contains within it a wine with certain properties that are sweet and symbolic of happiness, joy, hope, peace, love and delight. This same wine also holds some bitter properties that are symbolic of disappointment, sorrow, grief, despair, and life's trials and tribulations. Together the sweet and the bitter represent "Love's Journey" and all of the experiences that are a natural part of it. For all who share the wine from this Loving Cup, so may you share all things from this day on with love and understanding. Those who drink deeply from the Loving Cup with an open heart and willing spirit, invite the full range of challenges and experiences into their being for this couple.

This cup of wine is symbolic of the cup of life. As you all share the wine from the Loving Cup, you undertake to share all that the future may bring. It represents the blessing given and passed on to each participant in this ceremony. All the sweetness life's cup may hold for each of you will be the sweeter because you drink it together. Whatever drops of bitterness it may contain will be less bitter because you share them. Drink now, and may the cup of your lives be sweet and full to running over.

((After family and friends have sipped wine from the Loving Cup, it is passed back to the Officiant. The Officiant holds up the Loving Cup and explains the following:))

This Loving Cup is symbolic of the pledges you have made to one another to share together the fullness of life. As you drink from this cup, you acknowledge to one another that your lives, separate until this moment, have now become one. Now drink to the love you've shared in the past. Drink to your love in the present, on this day, your wedding day. And drink to your love in the future and forever more! As you have shared the wine from this Loving Cup, so may you share your lives. May you explore the mysteries of the Loving Cup and share in the reflection of love in one another's soul. From love all things proceed and unto love they must return. May you find life's joys heightened and its bitterness sweetened. May all of life be enriched by blessings upon you and all of life enriched by the love of family and friends.

Native American Vessel, Blanket, and Baskets

The wedding vase has two spouts coming from the same vessel. As individuals, you bring together different strengths and you come from different families and backgrounds. You have had different experiences. The two spouts of the wedding vase represent each of you as individuals. As newlyweds, as a married couple,, you will continue to be individuals, yet you will always drink from the same vessel of life. The common vessel represents all that you will share together...

Although this is your day, it is also a tribute to each guest here now. Knowing and interacting with them has helped to make you who you needed to become to realize your shared love. Each guest here represents a thread woven the tapestry of your lives. All are important pieces in the story told by this tapestry. Every thread adds to the colorful meaningfulness of the tapestry: they blend together in peaceful harmony. It is the fabric you will wrap around themselves to feel comforted by when the world seems cold. On days like today, when all is right with the world, that tapestry is proudly displayed for everyone to see as the best, most ideal symbol of your union -- of the home everyone here helped you to create.

Will the mothers kindly come forward to wrap their children in a blanket?

This cloth represents the shelter you will offer each other unconditionally and the new home you shall create together...

In your shared home, you bring all of yourselves and all you will become. Will the siblings kindly come forward to bring the baskets representing the unique talents and gifts you bring to this union?

Name and Name, these items are symbols of what you will use to protect, guide, and show love to each other and family espoused by this union.

Tea Ceremony

Name and Name will now serve tea to their new in-laws in respectful reverence.

Unity Sand Ceremony

Option 1: (Name) and (name), you have just sealed your relationship by the giving and receiving of rings, and this covenant is a relationship agreement between two people who agree that they will commit themselves to one another throughout their lives. The most beautiful example of this partnership is the marriage relationship. You have committed here today to share the rest of your lives with each other...This relationship is symbolized through the pouring of these two individual containers of sand with one representing you, (name) and all that you were, all that you are, and all that you will ever be, and the other representing you, (name), and all that you were and all that you are, and all that you will ever be....As these two containers of sand are poured into the third container, the individual containers of sand

will no longer exist, but will be joined together as one. Just as these grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your marriage be. Far more important than your individuality is now the reality that you are no longer two but one, never to be separated one from the other.

Option 2: Today, you have joined your lives. To symbolize the new unity you will experience from this day forward, you will pour together separate containers of sand. Each represents all you were, all you are, and all you will ever be as individuals. Each one therefore holds its own unique beauty, strength, and character. They can stand on their own without the need of anything else. However, when the two are blended together, they represent even more extraordinary possibilities. Each grain of sand brings to the mixture a lasting beauty that forever enriches the combination. Please now combine your sand together as a sign of the new family you create together. The life that you experienced until now as individuals will hereafter be inseparably united. Just as the grains of sand can never be sorted back into their separate vials, neither can your lives be disentangled.

Option 3 (for Families): X and Y, unity through marriage is most desirable, yet it frequently feels impossible to obtain. In arguments, you may feel frustrated at each other's inability to accurately anticipate your needs. In daily life, you may find each other's weird habits baffling in their unexpectedness. Somehow, you will wish to at once hold onto your independence and become unified as a couple.....As your children have blessed your life with joy, you both also face the demands of family as well: you are responsible for caring fully for these wonderful individuals. Yet balancing your individual needs with the demands of marriage and family is possible. All you need is hopefulness and trust. Today, to honor the synchronization of your lives, you will pour sand from their individual vials into this single keepsake vial of sand. Each individual vial reflects your uniqueness, creativity, needs, and desires as an individual. Placed together, the colors mingle to create something even more beautiful.....We now invite (child/ren) to pour sand into this vial to represent how much X and Y's love you and how much you all belong to each other. You have merged your separates lives into one family....May the pouring of this sand remind you each to respect each other as individuals. May this vial remind you to honor your shared commitment. And may the sand within always embody the unconditional love joining you together into a family.

Sembazuru: 1000 Cranes(*hung as bridal canopy or decorations—ideal for home wedding*)

In a world with great uncertainty, even the most mature, aware, and confident couples ponder in quiet concern about the longevity of the loving marriage they hope to undertake. The Japanese have resolved this query: if a couple may produce together one thousand cranes, then they may be assured of future happiness as one family. Like marriage, this job is not sinecure: it is not for those content with idle hands. Astounding patience, precision, and perseverance are mandatory to balance the delicate touches and sensitive feelings required to complete this task. Indeed, it takes about one hundred hours to endure the process. Yet, if the couple survives, they have built a lasting tribute to their new home. Cranes mate for life in sincere faithfulness: they honor their partners in loyalty; and they are therefore the ultimate sign of the shared, soaring longevity well above and beyond any hardships to the health and

happiness of wedded bliss.

Breaking of Bread & Sharing Wine

The breaking of bread and sharing wine will conclude our ceremony, as it does for many rites of passage today and in ancient times. Lovingly crafted by hand, bread is nourishing. It is necessary for sustaining life: it is through the taking of bread that we become nurtured to live each day. The sharing of bread is therefore a sign of longevity. Wine, which some refer to as the “nectar of the gods,” symbolizes the balancing of bitterness and sweetness in life; it is also a sign of abundance, for where wine flows, so does prosperity. All of us here wish you many years of comfort and joy.

Pebbles Ceremony

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When class began, wordlessly he picked up a large empty glass jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks right to the top, rocks about 2” in diameter. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They all agreed that it was. So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles, of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks. The students laughed. He asked his students again if the jar was full. They agreed that yes, it was. The professor then picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else.

“Now,” said the professor “I want you to see this is your life. The rocks are the important things – your family, your partner, your health, and your children – anything that is so important to you that if it were lost, you would be nearly destroyed. The pebbles are the other things in life that matter, but on a smaller scale. The pebbles represent things like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else, the smaller stuff. If you put the sand or the pebbles into the jar first, there is no room for the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your energy and time on the small stuff, material things, you will never have room for the things that are truly most important.

Blessing Stones

Before you met, your lives were on different paths with different destinations. But love has brought you together and joined these separate paths into one. Each one of your friends and family here today has been given a small polished stone that represents their unique individualities and their participation in your wedding today. You also each have a stone of your own that symbolizes your previous separate lives, separate sets of friends, separate families and the different life journeys you once traveled.

I now request everyone to please take out the stone you have been given and pause to make a wish or blessing for happiness and good will for the couple for the future of their marriage...With the combining of these stones, you join your once separate lives. As these stones have been combined with love into one container, so now are your friends and family

joined, through you, into one. And your once solitary life's paths are also now one. All that was once separate now unites, and in this sharing you both will find new strength and joy as together you forge new paths and destinations.

Beach Pebbles Ceremony

Name and Name, as all individuals do, you may feel anxious, pain because you lose someone or something, frustration, fear, and even personal failures as the future unfolds. I ask you to now hold these pebbles in your hands and let go of your worries and burdens. Free yourself from emotions that may cause you personal grief or damage to your bond. Forgive each other and yourselves for any perceived faults.

Should such sentiments creep into your lives ever again in the future, visit a beach, allow yourself to feel your troubles, and then let them be carried away by the waves.

Family and friends, I now ask you to hold in your hands a pebble. Make a wish for this couple. Make a wish to grant more love in this world. Make a wish for peace. Make a wish for harmonious restitution. Now cast your stone into the waves to liberate more love and add balance to the earth.

Beach Time Capsule Ceremony

Family and friends, Name and Name have placed pieces of paper inside these bottles. These notes describe the meaning of love. They will now spread the bliss and insights they feel across this great body of water. May the waves carry these love notes to anyone who is feeling disheartened and needs inspiration to love again.

They also ask that you do the same.

Hand-fasting

Will you respect each other and never break that honor?
Will you pledge to have compassionate patience with one another?
Will you share each other's pain and seek to erase it?
Will you ease one another's burdens so you both may grow?
Will you work to enhance your partner's joys?
Will you offer comfort during trials?
Will you look always for the positive and best in each other?
Will you forgive with grace when you argue?
And will you become more wise and loyal partners as the years pass?

Your love unites your lives and spirits. And so the binding is made.

May the deep peace of the universe remain with you forever. Blessed Be.

Cord

Option 1: As this knot is tied, so are your lives now bound. Woven into this cord, into its very fibers, are all the hopes of your friends and family, and of yourselves, for your new life together. With the entwining of this knot do I tie all the desires, dreams, love, and happiness wished here in this place to your lives for as long as your love shall last, which shall surely be always if you remain committed to your relationship. In the joining of hands and the fashion of a knot, so are your lives now bound, one to another....By this cord you are thus bound to your vows. May it draw your hands together in love -- never to be used in anger. May the vows you have spoken never grow bitter in your mouth. You are two entwined in love, bound by commitment whether life bring fear and optimism, sadness and joy, by hardship and victory, or anger and reconciliation. Hold tight to one another through both good times and bad, and your union will mature gracefully. Remember that it is not this physical cord, but rather what it represents that keeps you together.

Anointing of Rings: dipped in oil or water

I anoint and bless these rings as outward tokens of the promises made in your souls--in the name of the divine graces of love and wisdom that reside within us all. May you protect each other by using your hands to work to create a better and world and your hearts to make the world rich in memories granting comfort.

Simple Hand-fasting

I single thread is lovely, strong, and unique by itself. But interwoven in harmony, threads may build a warmer fabric to offer an even more embracing shelter underneath which more possibilities exist. You have bound / will bind your lives in matrimony and pledge to grant blessings to your partner and forever honor your union.

Lover's Knot

This silken ribbon close entwines two hearts in love together. Friendship's dearest pledge is made in joy forever. United you will walk through life sharing Earth's pain and pleasure. Hand in hand you shall strive for achievement in life together. Should the path be rough and thorny let love sustain and guide you. Should the way be strewn with roses let the joy of life sustain you. Now I tie this lovers' knot you two are joined in oneness. Gentle are the bounds of this union, pull one way and the bonds are strengthened, pull the other way and they are loosened. Store the knot in a silken purse and it will remain tied forever.

Water Ceremony

(blessing over water to be poured over couple's hands and/or feet)

Option 1: Our gathering here, our sharing our words, our experiences, our joys and our sorrows, brings blessings to this water. Spirit that flows through all things, add your blessing to this water, and teach us its wisdom. Teach us the wisdom of water, that life will have its

falls, sometimes like a mountain stream tumbling over round stones, sometimes like threads of rain spun from clouds, sometimes in breath-taking cascades. Teach us the wisdom of water, that each fall is finite, each ends in contact with earth....May we remember that we in this community are as earth to each other. We cushion each other's falls, lessening the impact, supporting one another through hard times. We are the ground of blessed community. Teach us the wisdom of water, that we will rise again from each fall, sometimes like mist breathed from neighborhoods trees, sometimes like a geyser shouting from the earth, sometimes as imperceptibly as evaporation from the sea. Spirit of Life and Loving, may you be with us, as we move together through life. Nourish us in the dry times and flow into us the simple abundances of life, loving, patience, and compassion. May it be so. Amen, and Blessed Be.

Option 2: In the spirit of Buddhism, they cleanse their hands with the purity of water... From this moment onwards, you are not only obligated to yourselves and your own family and friends. As the water washes over you, feel renewed and energized to begin a journey in which you will be accountable to each other and to your new family and friends as well as to those in your past.

Option 3: Water cleanses; it rejuvenates. It is also necessary to sustain life. Indeed, may we remember always that life requires renewal to endure. By this prayer, you become united in an eternal bond. You create a new family responsible for helping to replenish all that is good in life...Officiant (or Parents or Children) pours water over hands of couple to symbolize the giving of the couple only onto themselves in faithfulness.

Wine Box & Love Letters

(pointedly called the "Time Machine" by one of my couples)

Option 1: Name and Name, you have found a box to fill with your favorite wine and two glasses. In this box, you will also place love letters in which you express when and how you felt as you fell in love, your favorite memories, anecdotes, what you appreciate about one another, and the reasons why you have decided to marry. Should your marriage encounter serious difficulties, I ask you to open this box, drink some wine, and then separately venture off to read these letters to recall with fondness the unity you feel at this time in your lives. With great sincerity, though, I do hope you will not need to do this until your twenty-fifth anniversary.

Option 2: Know that by marrying you will promise to support each other so much that your union becomes a gentle conduit for healing in which you feel enhanced fulfillment. Strengthen your bond by regularly celebrating the past, finding contented enjoyment in the present, and cultivating the future. To hold onto this premise, write each other notes about anything and everything and keep these in a box. Should troubles come your way, you will be able to rely upon this box to contemplate the loving memories you forge together as well as to design the contours of what happens next.

Optional Addition: Name and Name also invite their family and friends to add notes of

blessings, well-wishes, and advice to their box.

Rose Ceremony

In the past, the rose was considered a symbol of love and a single rose always meant only one thing - it meant the words "I love you." So it is appropriate that for your first gifts as newlyweds be a single rose...

Please exchange your first gift as husband and wife. In some ways it seems like you have not done anything at all. Just a moment ago you were holding one small rose - and now you are holding one small rose. In some ways, a marriage ceremony is like this. In some ways, tomorrow is going to seem no different than yesterday. But in fact today, just now, you both have given and received one of the most valuable and precious gifts of life - one I hope you always remember - the gift of true and abiding love within the devotion of marriage.

Name and Name, I ask that where ever you make your home in the future - whether it be a large and elegant home - or a small and graceful one - that you both pick one very special location for roses; so that on each anniversary of this truly wonderful occasion you both may take a rose to that spot both as a recommitment to your marriage - and a recommitment that THIS will be a marriage based upon love.

In every marriage there are times where it is difficult to find the right words. It is easiest to hurt who we most love. It is easiest to be most hurt by who we most love. It might be difficult some time to words to say "I am sorry" or "I forgive you"; "I need you" or "I am hurting". If this should happen, if you simply can not find these words, leave a rose at that spot which both of you have selected - for that rose than says what matters most of all and should overpower all other things and all other words.

That rose says the words: "I still love you." The other should accept this rose for the words which cannot be found, and remember the love and hope that you both share today.

Name and Name, if there is anything you remember of this marriage ceremony, it is that it was love that brought you here today, it is only love which can make it a glorious union, and it is by love which your marriage shall endure.

Giving Gift to Guests to Represent Couple

Name and Name would like to present you each with a small token of their appreciation. They have ordered delicate, exquisite truffles, chocolates, to represent how sweetly you enrich their lives.

Chocolate Ceremony

You have reminded me that humans are restless creatures on the whole. They desire. They want. Take the origins of chocolate, for instance. Our ancestors could have contented

themselves with the bitterness of cocoa. But they did not. Somewhere along the line, they added various sweeteners to enrich its flavor. They transformed a more bitter substance into something more heavenly. Instead of accepting mere existence, instead of rotating in the cycle of life passively, they choose to believe in the possibilities of the future.

At the same time, we must remember that the chocolate is rich because it contains equal parts of sweetness and bitterness. The sweetness does not dilute the bitterness; it compliments it. Experiencing such a natural balance helps us grow more courageous: if we learn from bitterness, we can change for the better, and in doing so, bring more joys to each other's lives.

Family and friends, each time you consume chocolate (or any luxurious food your dentist would advise against) remember this: if we can find in ourselves to have hope and to pursue opportunities as life unfolds, our regrets will be fewer and our committed love will be stronger.

Telling Love Story Through Objects or Photographs

Name and Name have chosen to tell their love story through artifacts from their lives.

Telling Love Story Through Songs, Dance, Art, or Prose

Name and Name, rather than a traditional ceremony, you will tell your love story through ... songs / dance / art / prose ... carefully selected to reflect the memories preceding this day.

Mural

Name and Name respectfully request that each of you take the time during their reception to add a drawing to a mural. Please feel free to sketch a drawing, write words of advice, express well-wishes. They will proudly display this mural wherever they call home to remind them of this day.

Oathing Stone

You have chosen to exchange your vows as you both place your hands on this stone, thereby joining your lives in a permanent bond than cannot be broken.

Planting Seeds/Flower/Tree

Name and Name will now plant a tree / flower / seedlings. They promise to nourish it with water, natural light, and enrich the soil surrounding it with new life. In the same way, they will nurture their new bond with encouraging words, tender gestures of appreciation, and affectionate deeds. Just as this new plant will bring more beauty into this world, so will this couple's marriage bring more hopeful love to others.

Salt Covenant

Salt is a necessary ingredient to enhance the flavoring of food and to preserve it. Therefore, salt is symbolic of enduring, constant commitments. In fact, Arabic expressions -- "there is salt between us" and "he has eaten of my salt" -- both invoke the close link between the meaning of salt in our lives and the significance of a covenant. Indeed, sharing meals celebrates and cements covenants. So long as you remember to hold sacred this vial of salt and your shared beliefs, you will be at peace.

Optional Reading: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6).

Adapted Crowning (Greek/Eastern Orthodox Tradition)

This crowning mirrors both the royal nature of your relationship, as you will head a new family lineage together, as well as the importance adapting the same values held by martyrs, as you will need to make sacrifices for your family...The servant of God, Name, is crowned for the servant of God, Name; and the servant of God, Name, is crowned for the servant of God, Name.

Arras/Arrhae

Option 1: God, bless these coins. Grant Name and Name not only material possessions, but abundant spiritual strength, so that they may bless others. Amen. Name and Name, take and hold the coins in your hands as signs that your blessings will no longer be held separately, but together. You will dedicate yourselves to building a prosperous life filled with treasures of the mind, heart, and spirit. You will work to enhance the welfare of one another, as well as your families. Know that the gifts you pledge today and on all days glorify the meaning of life and henceforward praise God. Amen.

Option 2: Will the coin bearer please come forward? X and Y, by taking these coins into your hands, you implicitly pledge to offer all of yourselves to this union. You promise to give abundantly the gifts of kind compassion to your life-long partner. As you take them into your joined hands, you recognize that the blessings and hardships of life will no longer be experienced by only one partner. Instead, you will share riches of the mind, life, and spirit with one another. The symbolic, joint holding of these coins acknowledges that you will treasure each other. Through patience, dedication, and acting responsibly you will build a loving family.

Honey

Honey is a symbol of the sweetness in life. And so, with this dish of honey, we proclaim this day as a day of great joy and celebration-a day to remember.

God (or Allah), we thank you for creating this divine substance, and ask you to bless it so this union may become consecrated forever. Amen.

Name and Name, please share this honey: may you, under God's guidance, in perfect love and devotion to each other, share your lives together, and thereby may you find life's joys doubly gladdening, its bitterness sweetened, and all things made blessedly holy by time, companionship, and love.

Yoruba Partaking of Spices

Option 1: We all now bear witness to see if Name and Name can handle all life may bring as they taste the four flavors representing the emotions of relationships. For the sourness of life, they taste lemon; for bitterness, vinegar; for heat and passion, cayenne pepper; and for sweetness, honey. Since you are clearly able to endure all hardships and joys, you are now ready to marry.

Option 2: We have here four very different types of food, representing both the four corners of the earth – north, south, east, west – to which our couple hope to venture and the four elements of life that our couple will encounter along the way. Our couple will now taste this vinegar, lemon, cayenne pepper, and honey to see if they will be able to effectively and gracefully handle all the bitter tribulations, sour sorrows, heated passion, and sweetness of life.

Unity Wine Ceremony

Placed on the table are two glasses of wine (or juice) – one red (cranberry) and one white (orange) – alongside a beautiful single chalice. Each represent two important aspects of life.

The red wine (cranberry juice) embodies the dry bitterness often experienced in life. Obstacles, financial difficulties, emotional pain, and sickness are unfortunately harsh realities most couples must face at some point in their lives together. And all couples encounter misunderstandings and troubles....The white wine (orange juice) reflects the lush sweetness of this happy day, as well as all future joys you will share as a family. Laughter, luck, the fortunes that comes with hard work, and health will certainly become cherished memories you will treasure every anniversary.

Here are the sorrow and joy, the bitterness and sweetness, of life. Please pour them together....United, they remind you to remain practical and hopeful at the same time. Intelligently plan for the unexpected, new changes, and painful times. But also be hopeful. Together, the family you create with your marriage will give you the security to overcome all problems.

In some cultures, drinking from the same cup is taboo. Therefore, when a couple drinks from the same cup, they are making all aware of their plans to marry. The sharing of the first sips

of wine also mirrors the new life the couple will share. Where there is wine, there is great mirth and plenty for all.

Please toast each other!

Truce Bell

Keep this bell in your home to remind you of your wedding day. When arguments arise, and they will, put this bell to its best use. One of you should ring the bell to call a truce. Its sound will remind you of your wedding vows, conjure up the happiest memories from this day and therefore help you resolve differences with compassion.

7 Day Candle

The candle that Name and Name now shall light (from separate candles representing them as individuals) is breathtakingly unraveled. Its flame may last for seven days. Protected by a glass shield commonly referred to as a "hurricane candle holder," the light may shine undiminished for upwards of an entire week in honor of the seven virtues -- patience, kindness, sympathy, passion, comfort, tolerance, and loyalty. Name and Name, if you cherish each other every day of the week and put aside at least seven days each year on a honeymoon to celebrate your anniversary, then surely the light of your love will glow with bright illumination throughout your lives.

Seven Steps (Saptadapi)

Option 1: Together, we will acquire energy to share in the responsibilities of married life. Together, we will fill our hearts with strength and courage to accomplish all the needs of our life. Together, we will prosper and share our worldly goods and we will work for the prosperity of our family. Together, we will cherish each other in happiness and in sorrow. Together, we will build a strong, virtuous family. Together, we will fill our hearts with great joy, peace, happiness, and spiritual values. Together, we will remain lifelong partners by this matrimony.

Option 2: Now you will walk around the flame of the candle of enlightenment and passion. As you walk, consider these basic principles, which should guide your life activities and thoughts to help you attain dharma (trust, sincerity, and self-supervision in philosophical pursuits), artha (earning a living by truthful and honest means); and karma (bestowing equity and happiness in personal life); and moksha (eternal bliss in death).

Indian philosophy holds that if two people walk seven steps together, then they will be life-long companions in wedlock. Let these vows be your metaphorical steps. With each step, you promise to uphold the full meaning of your vow.

1. We shall stay together in joy and sorrow as life-partners forever.

2. We shall embrace each other's families as our own.
3. We shall remain life partners with love, purpose, and determination.
4. We shall assist each other in all circumstances, nurturing each other's potential and complimenting one another's hopes, by seeking to understand the underlying reasons for our shared and individual growth.
5. We shall share our minds, hearts, and spirits, thus keeping care not to swerve too far from being the best of friends.
6. We shall strive to grow our love through spiritual, worldly, and philosophical quests.
7. We agree to a life of equal rights and will perform our duties with mutual cooperation with the intent of dispensing peaceful thoughts, speech, actions, and feelings in our lives.

Universal spirit of life, mark and hear these words to confirm them as their sacred vow beckoning them in a perennial covenant for everlastingly recurrent kinship.

Offering of Sweets (Indian)

At this time, I invite witnesses shower rice (or present gifts or sweets) to the couple to convey their blessings for longevity and prosperity.

Please now feed each other these pristine sweets as a symbol of your promise to nourish one another in body, accommodate with charity, and administer to each other in acclaimed means. May these holy offerings be the first of many sweet things awaiting you in life.

May your days be honey-sweet for you. May your nights be honey-sweet for you. May others be honey-sweet to you. May the earth be honey-sweet to you. May all fortunes be honey-sweet for you. And may you be constant sources of honey-sweetness for each other.

Lasso/Lazo

Option 1: At this time, Name and Name would like to seal their promises with a tradition called the Lasso Ceremony. The Lasso is a wedding ritual in which the couple is bound together with a ceremonial rope. Lassoing is a declaration of intent, where the bride and groom clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will....Will the mothers / parents kindly come forward to bind this couple in marriage?...Name and Name, with full awareness, know that you must strive to make real the ideals that confer meaning to this ceremony and the institution of marriage.

Option 2: Will those who will wrap this cord around our couple please come forward?...This cord reflects the love binding you together. Love emboldens us to undertake new adventures and to learn more about ourselves, each other, and the world. It invigorates and inspires. It is your love, the tender passion you feel for one another, that will make your lives all the more meaningful and joyous. May you nurture your love so that it remains steadfast.

Veil (Catholic...Filipino)

Will the veil sponsors please come forward to drape the fabric around our couple?

Since birth, your parents and then your own hard-work clothed you in garments to keep you warm and protected: your parents taught you valuable life lessons and the importance of having a generosity of spirit; then you learned how to responsibly care for your own welfare. Today, as you enter a new stage of life, you pledge to adorn each other with a deep and precious sense of security. In faithful, you entrust your life to each other even as you promise to remain a trustworthy partner for all the days of your life no matter what burdens may come. As the years pass, consider this moment to reaffirm your commitment to remain a loyal spouse who is always willing to offer solace.

Libations

The lessons, values, and wisdom of the past remain with us even today. Thus, we pour this water / wine into the earth to honor our ancestors, whose strength and work made this day possible.

Anointing of hands and rings with special oil

Name and Name, the hands you now hold will cherish you with tenderness, remain attentive to your needs, encourage you to realize your dreams, and unconditionally care for you when life brings sorrow. May your life together unfold as smoothly as your rings will now slide onto your fingers.

Offering Flowers to Mary (old Catholic Tradition)

Our Bride will now offer her bouquet as a tribute to the Mother Goddess / the Blessed Mary. She asks for the blessings of all her foremothers to give her the strength of will and virtuous qualities she needs to help ensure the healthy longevity of her marriage.

(She may also offer a flower from her bouquet to closest or honored female friends and family.)

Spilling of Wine

Family and friends, while this is a day of peace and love, you also recognize that pain and inequality persist. Judgments based upon values, culture, and beliefs create much conflict, fear, and distress to many. Therefore, this couple has opted to incorporate a wine rite into this ceremony. May we have the wine please?

Before you enjoy this wine, please spill a little in remembrance of those whose joys cannot be complete due to worldly problems: without full equality, genuine happiness and harmony are not possible yet. Let us remember always to respect our differences, as they ought to be

fountains of originality.

As you drink the wine, know that you have promised to undertake to share all that the future may bring. All the sweetness that life holds will grow sweeter; bitterness will feel less strong because you will halve each other's burdens.

May wine forever be a symbol of your life-long communion in spirit, mind, and body. May your joint cycle of life be overflowing with abundant graces. May you work together productively in youth so you may enjoy picking on each other everyday in retirement. May the rains stay away every time you take a trip. May you challenge each other into enlightenment. And may you grow old together on one pillow.

Jumping the Broom

Option 1: Name and Name would like to now seal their union by jumping the broom. The handle represents the universal spirit of love bringing them together on this day and forevermore. The straws represent all the threads in their lives, including their unique gifts as individuals and their loved ones. They will step over this broom to symbolize the sweeping away of their old lives and thereby welcoming all the future may bring as they journey through life side-by-side in marriage.

Option 2: Before we become witnesses to this couple's first kiss in marriage, we conclude this ceremony with the jumping of the broom. When a couple "jumps the broom," they cross spiritual and material thresholds to become one precious new family.

Option 3: Early records reveal that jumping the broom took place as early as the seventeenth century here in the United States and has origins among disempowered groups ranging from Africans to the Roma or Gypsies, the Welsh, and Celts. During the pre-Civil War period, in particular, this rite of passage became remarkably important because enslaved African-Americans could neither hire a minister or magistrate or marry legally. Therefore, they "jumped the broom" to symbolize the start of their marriage.

As we honor the creation of this family today, we also honor the past. We pay tribute to those who worked hard so we may enjoy brighter future prospects. I will now sweep away any lingering negative energy surrounding our couple....

N. and N., you have promised to work together to building an even more amazing future. The leap of hope you will soon take is the first step towards embracing and realizing the exciting potential you share. Once you jump, know you entered into the state of matrimony together, so be prepared to bravely face all life will bring as devoted, loving life-long companions.

Family and friends, please say "Jump" on the count of three....1-2-.....

Kwanzaa Candle Ceremony

Our couple will now light seven candles to reflect the seven tenets of Kwanzaa. These are unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith. These are also the values they hold dear—the morals that will guide their bond.

Breaking Glass: this is both an Italian and Jewish tradition.

a.) As we all know, the world is not a place of shalom -- of wholeness and peace. The world has been shattered into fragments by violence and injustice, such as the destruction of the Temple thousands of years ago. As we watch this glass shatter, we are reminded of this shattered world, and of the power your love has to make the world a better place to heal some of those fragments.

b.) For many reasons, it is customary for a glass to be broken at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony. Symbolically, the breaking of the glass reminds us of the fragile nature of life. The custom has also come to symbolize the shattering of the old and the beginning of the new. Since this is an interfaith ceremony, let us envision the breaking of glass as mirroring the breaking down of barriers. As this glass shatters and thereby seals this marriage, you create a more unified, hopeful, and loving world.

c.) The breaking of the glass is a reminder that joy coexists with sorrow. As we celebrate the happiness this marriage will bring, we also express concern over the sadness felt by others. Name will now break the glass with our prayerful wish that this marriage bring more peace into the world. Know that once the glass is broken, this promise and this union are as irrevocable as the ability to once again render the glass solvent and whole...On the count of three...1-2-3...Mazel Tov!

d.) X and Y, as you celebrate the start of your marriage and your future together, you also honor the fragility and suffering experienced by many. And so, today, our groom and bride will break the glass as a reminder to constantly work toward repairing any pain in their lives and the lives of others. Once the glass is broken, know that your bond is irrevocable. You will be responsible for making your union in to a channel for healing and growth.

Yichud (quiet time after ceremony for couple)

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that X and Y will be spending a few moments alone together immediately following the ceremony. This is a custom called Yichud, which means "union" in Hebrew. It gives the couple an opportunity to privately absorb the power and importance of this moment in their lives. They will return shortly to greet you.