

Ceremonies/Rites of Passage

Rev. Kate Wilkinson

1. N and S's Marriage Ceremony

I. Welcome

Welcome! Welcome to this very special day when we are coming together to bless the marriage of N and S. N and S have gathered together their friends and family to witness their vows and commitment to one another, knowing that our blessing will make this day even more sacred and that our support will make their love even stronger. Just as all of you here have come to know and love one or both of these two special people, I have been blessed with knowing N for, well, her whole life, and have been happy to get to know S over these last few years. I am honored to officiate your marriage ceremony today.

We are standing under a beautiful chupah, made by N's sister L, which in the Jewish tradition symbolizes the home that you two will build together with your marriage. This canopy, like your marriage, is literally being held up by love. N's sisters L and H are here, as well as N's mom B. S's son K is here, and S's sister T. N and S's friend M is here. N and S, I think I speak for everyone when I say that all of our good wishes are with you in the fullness of this moment.

II. Recognition of Those Not Present

Friends and family, N and S are so grateful that all of you are here with us today. We also wish to hold up now the names of those who are unable to be here, and by doing so make them a part of this special day as well. They are here in spirit and in our hearts.

RW, Jr., N's father.

RW Sr., N's grandfather.

LG, N's grandmother.

III. Story of N and S

We each know N and S in different ways, and have been present to them at different points in their lives, witnessing different stages in their relationship. As they take this next step we are all gathered together to recognize their commitment to one another.

N, S loves your sense of humor. She loves your warmth. She loves how accepting and encouraging you are. She can be relaxed with you. S, N loves your sense of humor. She loves how you make her day better and how you appreciate the beautiful things. She loves going on adventures with you.

N and S, we hope that your friendship and love continue to grow as you enter into this next stage of your lives together. May your respect and admiration for one another sustain you during the

hard times, may you be patient with one another when life does not make it easy to let go of your differences, and may you continue to find new things to love about each other.

You are each freely choosing to commit yourselves to one another. Today, you widen your family circles, creating a new one which links the two together. The ideals, the understanding, and the mutual respect which you two bring to your marriage have their roots in the love, friendship and guidance each of your family and friends have offered you.

Today, some of your family will offer you their support and congratulations by reading words that you have chosen.

B, would you come forward? (Thomas Moore Poem)

K, would you come forward? (poem)

L, would you come forward? (The velveteen rabbit)

And S also has a poem. (Emily Dickinson)

IV. Affirmation of the Family and Friends

S and N come together today to offer their love and commitment to one another, but it is not this ceremony that gives them the capacity to fulfill those promises to each other. N and S are able to wholly and joyfully offer themselves to each other because they have known unconditional love themselves. They have been cared for, respected, challenged, listened to, valued, and loved by their families. And in their marriage, they seek not to leave behind those families, but to bring them together into an even stronger circle of love and care.

They will need you even more as they embark on this new life together, with all the joys and challenges of marriage.

Just as their families have helped N and S learn how to be in this world and taught them love, so too have each of their other guests here today. You represent their community: a self-selected family of friends that they have gathered over their lifetimes. All of you who are gathered here today represent the value that both N and S place on community. Your blessing, too, is dear to them.

Would all of the family and friends now gathered here stand for an affirmation? If you agree with the following affirmation, please answer with the words "we do." Family and friends, do you, in your love for them, promise to continue your support for N and S and to offer your blessings on the life they will build together in marriage?

(WE DO)

N and S, our presence here truly is a statement of our encouragement and support of the marriage you seek to create.

You may be seated.

And now S's sister will offer a song.

[Song by T]

V. Vows

S and N, we have offered our blessings on your union this morning, but it is only your love and commitment to each other that will truly create a marriage. It is the making and keeping of vows which will truly bless your relationship. So I invite you to share your vows with each other now.

Repeat:

This day, I marry my friend—the one I laugh with, live for, dream with, love. I pledge to love you for yourself in the hope that you will become all that you can be. I promise to honor this pledge with faith in our future through all the changes of our lives.

VI. Rings

In addition to vowing your love for each other, you have also decided to exchange rings as a symbol of that love. May they be to you a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. (M, may we have the rings)

S, as you place the ring on N's finger, repeat after me:

With this ring, I thee wed, and with it I pledge my honor, my love, and my friendship.

N, as you place the ring on S's finger, repeat after me:

With this ring, I thee wed, and with it I pledge my honor, my love, and my friendship.

VII. Proclaim Marriage

N and S, with the witness of your family and friends you have vowed your love to each other and have exchanged rings as a symbol of that love. All that is left is to go forth from this moment to create the marriage that you have dreamed together. I now pronounce you married!

VIII. Kiss

IX. Closing

May the meaning of this hour be fulfilled through the days and the years to come. May your love grow deeper and stronger. Loving each other, may you love all people. Trusting each other, may you have faith that goodness will prevail. May your love for each other and the world ground, sustain and liberate you, so that your lives may bless all whose lives you touch.

(smash the glass)

I present S and N...

2. Home Baby Dedication

I. Introduction

Good afternoon and welcome to this very special gathering. The ceremony we are about to share in is both ancient and timeless. In all parts of the earth, and from the earliest days of recorded history, parents have brought their newborn children to a place of worship, sharing their joy and dedication with their community.

Traditionally this is a time to recognize our children by name, for it is by name that each of us is acknowledged as a unique and separate person. The flower we will present to this child is also symbolic of the individuality we wish to affirm.

This is a community celebration, shared by parents, family, and friends, to mark the fact that we all have a responsibility for the care and nurturing of every child. It is our task to give them a world of peace and justice in which to grow. It is our task to share with them our ideals and hopes. It is our task to learn from them the wonder of life, with which all children come into the world, and which we too often lose track of as we grow up.

[Reading by family member]

II. Ceremony

(To parents)

A and T, in presenting your daughter at this service, you invite all of us to share some of the joy and responsibility that is yours as parents. You seek our support in your dedication to raising, nurturing and loving your daughter, and to the sacred task of helping her to grow into her own unique person.

Your task may not always be an easy one. But you accept this service to another life, knowing that your own lives will be fuller and richer because of her presence.

I know that you and H have already had some time to get to know one another and fall in love with each other. Probably you have already had your first disagreements and battle of wills too. But now is the time when you can put into words your promises to and blessings on your daughter.

A and T, in addition to your commitment to keeping her safe and attending to her physical needs, do you promise that, to the best of your abilities, you will help this child to appreciate truth and beauty, to have strength of character, and to know love? If so, say, "We do."

And what wishes do you have for H's life?

(parents state a few simple wishes)

H, these are our wishes for you also.

A and T have chosen C and C to be H's Godparents.

(To God parents)

C and C, an old Jewish proverb says, "In time of travail, go to the friend of your parents." From this ancient wisdom comes the idea of godparents, or special people who dedicate themselves to watching out for the welfare of others' children. It is a noble and loving tradition that you participate in today.

In our complex world, it is not possible for even the most loving and capable parents to raise a child alone. If our children are to become loving and independent adults, they need the wisdom, counsel, love, and support of many adult friends. You have been asked by A and T to accept a special honor and responsibility.

Do you then, to the best of your abilities, promise to add to the care and love of these parents, both in the day-to-day development of this child, and especially in the event of any extraordinary need? If so, say, "We do."

H is also blessed with many grandparents.

Grandparents, you have perhaps the most special job here. You are charged with loving H unconditionally and with spoiling her joyfully. Do you now promise to take up these tasks? If so, say "we do."

And what wishes do you have for your granddaughter's life?

S and S

S and E

(grandparents state a few simple wishes)

We also have a wish for H from R and B, who couldn't be here today. C will read their message.

H, these are our wishes for you also.

And now if all gathered here could repeat a few lines after me for a community blessing.

We give thanks for the gift and promise of life.

We give thanks for this child and for the adults who love her and promise to guide and protect her.

We pray that she may receive abundantly the blessings of health, love, and wisdom, and that she may give back to the world these same blessings.

III. Naming and Dedication

And now to the many blessings that H has already received, I add just a few more.

A and T, by what name is this child known? (parents give complete name of child)

(leader dips flower in water and touches child's forehead)

HMD,

with this flower, I touch you on your brow, that you may know wisdom and understanding, on your hands, that you may embrace the world and work to make it a better place, on your heart, that you may know love and give it freely in return, and over your whole body, that you may go through life surrounded by all the blessings you have received today.

When H has come of age, tell her of this day, and the love of your family, and this community and how happy we were to welcome her into the world.

Amen. Blessed Be.