

**SUNDAY SERVICES: 10 AM
(CHILDCARE AVAILABLE)
CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:
MONDAY-FRIDAY
9 AM—4 PM**

**The Universalist Church
433 Fern Street
West Hartford
Connecticut
06107**

P: 860-233-3669

F: 860-570-1205

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www.westhartforduu.org



Universalist CHURCH of West Hartford

Love is the Spirit

**PLANNING
YOUR
WEDDING**

WEDDING RESERVATION PROCEDURE

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials.

Please take a moment to review the enclosed information packet so you are aware of the fees and policies associated with a wedding service at The Universalist Church.

All wedding dates are set on a first come-first served basis. If the date you request is available, we have an ordained Unitarian Universalist Minister here at The Universalist Church. If our minister is unavailable, we have several other Unitarian Universalist ministers whom you may contact.

You should contact the church organist immediately after reserving the church for your ceremony. You should also contact the officiating minister who will help you plan the ceremony.

If you have any questions about these policies or the fees, please don't hesitate to call. The staff of The Universalist Church hopes you have a wonderful celebration of your special day. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make the day more joyful and meaningful for you.

Sincerely,
Congregational Administrator
The Universalist Church
433 Fern Street
West Hartford CT 06107
860-233-3669, Ext. 106
admin@westhartforduu.org

RECEPTIONS AT THE CHURCH

With prior approval your caterer may serve modest amounts of wine and /or champagne, and must not permit overconsumption. No hard liquor or beer is to be served.

Your caterer must provide the following: table linen, china, glassware, cutlery, and coffee urns. (Church china, linen, glassware, and cutlery are not available for use.) You must provide any stereo equipment and music for the reception. Your musician may use the piano in Fiske Hall, but please **DO NOT** move the piano.

Your caterer must leave the kitchen in good order and must mop the floor as part of clean up. We will provide the mop, bucket, and detergent.

We do not have storage space for rented chairs or tables. You must use the furnishings provided by the church. You must consult with the Wedding Coordinator about any other equipment before you bring it in and it must be removed immediately following the rental.

The rental fee allows use of the building for 7 hours. This includes a set-up by your caterer (approximately 2 hours) and the time it will take your caterer to clean up (at least one hour). All Saturday wedding receptions must end by 10 PM, in order that our sextons have enough time to break down your reception set-up and reset for services on Sunday. Please plan the timing of your reception accordingly.

If wedding gifts are on display, the security of the gifts is the responsibility of the Bridal party.

A SECOND MARRIAGE

If you are blending families together, do include your children. They are a previous part of your family; this day will be an important and emotional event in their lives, too. Your children will be trying to work out their place in the new family relationships, and you want them to share your joy in this day as the best possible beginning to your lives together as a family. We urge you to include them and discuss with them their involvement in the service. Please feel free to talk with the minister about ways to help the children feel an important part of this ceremony. You can include your children in loving and traditional ways by asking them to do any of the following: Maid of Honor, Best Man, Attendant, Usher, Flower Girl, Ring Bearer, or simply standing beside the minister.

WORDS FOR CHILDREN

1. Minister, speaking to the children: _____ and _____ are very excited today. Perhaps you are excited, too, and know how much they love you. I want to talk about that a bit. They are starting life together in a new way. In getting married, they are opening themselves up to be new parents to you. That does not mean that your other parents are less important or don't count. But it does mean that _____ and _____ are creating another home for you. You will always be welcome there. It is a place where you can share your feelings and your dreams as well as your desires. _____ and _____ love each of you and hope that they will be as open with their thoughts and feelings as you will be.

Each of you brings to this family a special warmth that is just yours. It is yours to be held in or shared freely as only you will choose to do. For your part in making this family, _____ and _____ are deeply thankful and they love you very much. *(Hugs are appropriate here).*

2. _____ and _____ (children's names), do you share the hopes of _____ and _____, and wish them happiness in the years to come? *(A hug might be appropriate at this time).*



BUILDING USE GUIDELINES

We ask that all members of the wedding party be informed of these rules and regulations.

MINISTER – It is expected that a Unitarian Universalist minister will preside at all weddings in this Church. We cannot guarantee that one of our Ministers can officiate; however, we have several other Unitarian Universalist ministers you may contact.

MUSIC – It is expected the church organist will play at all weddings. If another organist or instrumentalist is desired, the Director of Music (ext. 107) must approve his or her participation. (Please see “Music for Your Wedding”).

BUILDING USAGE - The building will be open two hours prior to the ceremony. If you are planning a summer wedding, please be aware that our Sanctuary is not air-conditioned.

SUNDAY WEDDINGS – Due to Sunday worship scheduling, shortage of preparation time and custodial coverage, Sunday weddings will not normally be considered. If Sunday weddings are approved under special circumstances, they shall not be scheduled before 3:00 PM.

FLOWERS - The flowers should be delivered within two hours of the ceremony when the building is open. There are to be no scotch tape, tacks, or adhesives used on any furniture or walls; however, florists' tape, twist ties, ribbon or rubber bands may be used to affix flowers and bows to furniture or other objects. You are responsible for removing all objects after the ceremony.

CANDLES – Only dripless candles may be used in the Chancel (altar) area because of restrictions of the Fire Marshall. Fees will be charged if special cleaning is necessary to remove candle wax after a wedding.

6. Into this new goblet we have poured both sweet and bitter wine, even as life itself will pour into this new marriage its rich and varied wines of experience. Only in the deepest fellowship of shared love may its bitterness be so blended with the sweet that your life together may be full. May you now accept this common cup from one another's hands, drinking from it each in turn, as two who are now one.

(The wine is shared)

JAMES CURTIS

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

(The wine is shared)

KENNETH PATTON

Your loyalty, _____ and _____, is to each other, and to the many cups which you will fill for each other, not to this or other cups of past moments. As the Temple of Jerusalem, though shattered, lived and lives on in the spirit of the people, so may the spirit of love be ever alive within you and around you.

(The glass is broken)

4. The years of our lives are a cup of wine poured out for us to drink. 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.
5. Here is the wine of life, poured out for you to drink at the hands of each other. At times it will be bitter; at times sweet, but always yours to share together with loving care, with honesty and faith, with openness of feeling.

Herein lies the most precious possession, the only possession, each of you holds as his or her own: your unique life, lived fully sincerely and joyfully— for good or ill. As you shall in the days to come so here after the sharing of your wine of life, that you may become more than you are; that you may mingle and join

(Groom offers his cup to Bride; she drinks, returns it to him. He drinks and hands cup to Minister. With two cups, Bride follows same procedure with her cup.)

Each has tasted of the other; each freely given to the other. May you each know the love and the courage to drink deeply of the other's life. May your cups be ever full and overflowing.

RICHARD KELLEY

RICE, CONFETTI, BIRDSEED, FLOWER PETALS AND BUBBLES are not permitted within the church facility or on church grounds. It is extremely dangerous, particularly for older people, to walk where there is rice or birdseed on the ground. Confetti and rose petals are difficult for the custodian to clean up, especially on brick walkways and in the case of flower petals, may even damage or stain carpeted areas. Bubbles can create a slipping hazard, and are also not permitted. The ushers will be responsible for informing the guests during and after the service and reception line.

PHOTOGRAPHY - Anyone taking photos during the wedding service is asked NOT to use flash cameras. Lighted videography is not permitted. Photographers/videographers may set up anywhere in the Sanctuary as long as they are inconspicuous and do not disrupt the movement and flow of the wedding. Photographers/videographers are asked not to wander behind the minister or into the wedding party. A good guideline is to move no farther forward than the front row pews. The wedding wishes should also be considered. Formal pictures are often taken before or after the ceremony.

FOOD & BEVERAGES - No food or beverages are allowed in the Sanctuary.

AISLE RUNNERS - We discourage the use of runners due to the difficulty in maintaining a stable walking surface.

PARKING - The church has very limited parking. All visitors to the church are asked to park in the lot behind the church, not along the sides of the church or in any restricted areas. If the lot is full, parking is available on nearby side streets. If your guests are authorized to park in a reserved handicapped parking space, a handicap permit must be easily visible. The fire lanes MUST be kept free of cars, and emergency exits free of obstructions.

Please Note: The Universalist Church is a smoke-free facility and is Handicap Accessible. NO SMOKING IS PERMITTED anywhere in the building or on the premises. The use of alcoholic beverages anywhere on the church premises is also prohibited.

Payment is due one month prior to the date of your ceremony. Please write separate checks for the Minister and non-employee musicians. You may write one check for all other services. **Make check payable to “The Universalist Church” and mail it to the attention of the “Congregational Administrator”. 433 Fern Street, West Hartford CT 06107**

MEMBERS

with a paid pledge of record;
otherwise Non-Member fees apply

REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT	\$200 (To be paid when confirmed)
USE OF SANCTUARY	Donation gratefully accepted
Reception Hall	\$200
ORGANIST	\$300* (consultation, rehearsal and ceremony)
SOLOIST	\$140
SEXTON/CUSTODIAN	\$150 (Rehearsal and Wedding)
MINISTER	Includes meetings, rehearsal & ceremony. Honorarium paid to the Minister's discretionary fund gratefully accepted. Suggested gratuity charged by ministers outside the church are at the discretion of each individual minister
MINISTER (off site ceremony)	\$ travel expenses

**Non-members and members without a paid pledge of record must pay a \$200 non-refundable deposit toward their costs when the date is confirmed.

WINE CEREMONY

The wine ceremony provides an opportunity to symbolize in one more way the shared path you are on as husband and wife. For those from a Jewish background, this ritual allows you the blending in of the custom of breaking a glass after a couple has exchanged their vows.

1. Minister: Into this glass we pour wine, even as life itself will pour into this new marriage its rich and varied wines of experience.

Groom: I offer this glass to you, to share in all its sorrows and its joys.

Bride: I share this glass with you, that we may partake of a common life together.

(The glass is broken)

Minister: In accordance with ancient tradition, we wish that the years of your marriage be not less than the time it would take to fit these fragments together again.

2. _____ and _____, at many times and among many peoples, wine has signified life, and a life of plenty. And at many times and among many peoples, drinking wine from a common cup has been the mark of a deeper sharing. May you be blessed by life, and a life of plenty. May this cup of wine be a symbol of your lifelong communion of spirit, mind, and being.
3. 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.

(The wine is shared)

CANDLE LIGHTING RITUAL

Candle lighting symbolizes your future life together, in which your individual lives are joined in one common, shared life, while you each also maintain your own unique existence. Usually three candles are placed in a row, two smaller ones on the outside and a large one in the center. The two outside candles are lit first. They are lit passively or ceremoniously, early in the wedding ceremony or at this point. This can be done by two attendants or family members, or other designated individuals. The center candles is lit from the two separate ones.

1. Minister: By the joining of your loves together, you bring a common light into the world. May the hours of your joined life be lit by compassion and joy, by love and achievement. *(Bride/groom/partners light the main candle.)*

Minister: By your love and commitment, you create a common life within the caring community of your friends and loved ones. May it illuminate the lives of all forevermore.

RICHARD KELLEY

1. Minister: The single candles represent your single lives. Today you have ended that single life and will begin a life of mutual sharing. *(Bride/groom/partners light the main candle.)*
2. Minister: You have lit a candle together to symbolize the beginning of your new life. This candle, which you plan to keep in your home, will be a constant reminder of your unity.
3. Following the "Affirmation of the Gathered", some couples choose to use this candle lighting as a way of recognizing parents or other special relatives or friends who are not able to be present or who may be deceased. The wording can, of course, be modified to suit the occasion:

Minister: We light this candle to remember those who are not here today, but whose love, along with yours, has nurtured and will continue to nurture _____ and _____ in their life together.

NON-MEMBERS

NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT	\$200** (To be paid when confirmed)
USE OF SANCTUARY	\$400
Reception Hall	\$200
ORGANIST	\$300* (one consultation, rehearsal and ceremony)
SOLOIST	\$150+
SEXTON/CUSTODIAN	\$150 (Rehearsal and Wedding)
MINISTER	\$500 (includes meetings, rehearsal and ceremony)
MINISTER (off site ceremony)	\$500 (plus travel expenses)

Payment for all other gratuities is due no later than one month prior to the wedding date. Please write separate checks for the Minister and non-employee musicians. You may write one check for all other services.

*The Universalist Church abides by all guidelines of the American Guild of Organists, including the stipulation that our sitting organist shall be offered first refusal on all weddings and services, and that if our organist is available and not used, full fees will be paid to our organist.

MUSIC

Music enriches the wedding ceremony and should serve to express the love, commitment, and personalities of the bride/groom/partner. *Singing the Living Tradition* (our hymnal) and other hymnals can be excellent resources for planning music that is liturgically appropriate. You are welcome to peruse the copy of our hymnal that resides in our church office. Our Organist and Music Director can assist you in finding music that satisfies your needs and in arranging the performance of that music.

- Call our organist, (the office can provide the phone number) to arrange a consultation as soon as possible after reserving the church for your wedding date. Inform the organist of the expected date and time of the rehearsal and wedding.
- The normal fee for consultation, wedding rehearsal and ceremony is \$300. **Please make your check payable to The Universalist Church and mail it to the attention of “Church Administrator”, The Universalist Church, 433 Fern Street, West Hartford, CT 06107.**
- Our Music Director must be consulted if guest musicians, including vocalists, are requested. If needed, the Music Director can recommend local professional musicians who regularly perform at wedding ceremonies. The average fee for soloists is \$100+ for the rehearsal and service. Please tell the Director whom you have chosen to play or sing. An extra rehearsal may be required for supplementary musicians and will require additional compensation.

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When you meet with the organist, the following selections will be determined:

PRELUDE SELECTIONS – this music is played as your guests arrive and are seated by the ushers; the length of the prelude is usually 20 minutes; inform the organist of the expected number of guests

PROCESSIONAL(S) – this music is played while the attendants walk from the narthex to the front of the church, and can be different from the music played for the bride’s entrance (particularly useful for large wedding parties)

SPECIAL MUSIC, HYMNS – these may be used at various points during the service; the clergy and organist can assist in planning special music; hymns in particular are a wonderful opportunity to involve the whole congregation in the ceremony

RECESSIONAL – this music is played as the wedding party and guests exit the church; if you are planning a receiving line inside the church, the organist can choose quiet recessional music to allow the guests to converse; please inform the organist of your needs.

**Note - all music is performed on the organ unless otherwise specified.*

APPENDIX

CANDLE LIGHTING

WINE CEREMONY

SECOND MARRIAGE

MUSIC

17. May these rings, in the unbroken wholeness, be tokens of the unbroken circle of your coming life together, that in all things you might ever return to one another.

And in their enduring, shining substance, let these rings be signs also of the lasting trust and affection you bear one another.

With these rings may you seal your vows, saying:
(bride/groom/partner say words they've chosen).

18. Not as a bond, but as a pledge, let these rings encircle your finger, as your love does each other.

SAMPLE PROGRAM

PRELUDE

PROCESSIONAL MUSIC

OPENING WORDS

READINGS *

(SPECIAL MUSIC)

QUESTIONS OF INTENT/BLESSINGS

VOWS *

EXCHANGE OF RINGS *

(CANDLES/WINE) **

PRAYER

DECLARATION

KISS

CLOSING WORDS

RECESSIONAL MUSIC

POSTLUDE

* some choices included in this book

** see appendix

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. The joy of such a pattern is not only the joy of creation or the joy of participation, it is also the joy of living in the moment. Lightless of touch and living in the moment are intertwined.

ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH
From Gift from the Sea

I love you much more than anyone on the earth,
and I like you better than everything in the sky -
sunlight and singing welcome your coming.

Although winter may be everywhere
with such a silence and such a darkness
no one can quite begin to guess

the true time of year

and if what calls itself a world
should have the luck to hear such singing. . .
everyone would believe in nothing but love.

E.E. CUMMINGS

BRIDE/GROOM/PARTNER'S WORDS: SAMPLE

1. In token and pledge of our constant faith and abiding love, I give you this ring.
2. This ring is a circle, unbroken, just as my love is unbroken and complete for you.
3. With this ring I wed you and pledge my faithful love.
4. I give you this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our love.
5. I give you this ring in token of the love we celebrate today.
6. With this ring, I thee wed, and pledge my faithful love.
7. _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.
8. With this ring, I marry you, and to you I will be true as long as we both shall live.
9. With this ring, I marry you, and join my life with yours.
10. With this ring, I thee wed, and join my life with thine.
11. With this ring, I thee wed, and pledge my eternal love and devotion.
12. You are my beloved and my friend.
13. This ring is a symbol of my love for you, and the pledge of my trust in you.
14. In the giving of this ring, I wed you.
15. With this ring, I marry you, and to you I will be true as long as we both shall live.
16. Accept this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness for the years to come.

5. The ring is an outward and visible sign of an inner and spiritual relationship symbolizing, not the possession of one by another, but the deep and abiding love which each has for the other. The ring is a circle, an unending line of love, enclosing all your lives together. From out of this circle of trust, approval and affection, you may step singly or together to give and to receive from the world of challenge and need. To this circle of love, approval and affection you may return for the inspiration you find only together.
6. The ring is the symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no giver and no receiver—for each is the giver and each is the receiver.

May the rings you give and receive this day be the symbol of endless love into which you enter as husband and wife.

7. Not as a bond, but as a pledge, let these rings encircle your finger, as your love does each other.
8. Black Elk, on Oglala Sioux, has written:

“Everything the Power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball and so are the stars. The wind in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were.

The life of a man or a woman is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves.”

_____, as you place this ring on _____'s finger, please repeat after me:

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

MAKE NOT A BOND OF LOVE

Love one another, but make not a bond of love;
 Let it rather be a moving sea between the shore of your souls.
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.
 Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
 even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.
Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
 And stand together, yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.
 But let there be spaces in your togetherness, And
 let the winds of the heavens dance between you.
Love one another, but make not a bond of love.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments.
 Love is not love
 Which alters when its 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.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight;
 I love thee freely, as men strive for
 right; I love thee purely, as they turn from
 Praise. I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints – I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,
"Sonnet XLIII"

Listen! I will be honest with you.
 I do not offer the old smooth prizes,
 But offer rough new prizes.
 These are the days that must happen to you:
 You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
 However sweet the laid up stores,
 However convenient the dwelling,
 You shall not remain there.
 However sheltered the port, and however calm the waters,
 You shall not anchor there.
 However welcome the hospitality that welcomes you,
 You are permitted to receive it but a little while.
 Afoot and lighthearted take to the open road,
 Healthy, free, the world before you,
 The long brown path before you, leading wherever you choose.
 Say only to one another:
 Camerad, I give you my hand!
 I give you my love more precious than money,
 I give you myself before preaching or law:
 Will you give me yourself?
 Will you come travel with me?
 Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

WALT WHITMAN

2. The metal in these rings has little value except in its use today.
 Your words today are gone as you say them;
 But as you say them your lives are changed forever.
 You are man and woman, born to trouble and to joy;
 And this is your great opportunity -
 That the greatest of gifts are yours for the risk of taking.
 We are to witness now the sealing of your promise with these rings:
 Sign and token before the world of the world you will create—
 Single, whole, and quiet -
 Within the world outside.
 Together you are one; as one you are a world.

J. LAWSON

3. May these rings, in their unbroken wholeness, be tokens of the unbroken circle of your coming life together, that in all things you might ever return to one another.

And in their enduring, shining substance, let these rings be signs also of the lasting trust and affection you bear one another.

With these rings may you seal your vows, saying:

(bride/groom/partner say words they've chosen)

JAMES CURTIS

4. The ring symbolizes the unbroken circle of endless love. It is worn on the third finger because of an ancient Greek belief that a vein from that finger connected directly to the heart, thus symbolizing the depth and sincerity of love.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The rings are simple symbols of the consecration of marriage through the giving and receiving of vows. As unbroken circles, they are a good reminder for us that marriage will be work as well as joy and happiness. The work is to grow together and separately over a lifetime.

As you prepare this section, it might be interesting to share your feelings about the rings: What does it mean if your partner does or does not wear a ring? How do you feel about that?

During the service, as rings are exchanged, it is usual that the minister says some words about the rings, and then the groom/bride/partner say a few short phrases to each other. Below are some suggestions for each:

1. **Minister:** The circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of holiness and of perfection and of peace, a symbol of endlessness and eternity. In this ring, it is the symbol of unity, in which your two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return unto the intimacy of one another.

Groom: I give you this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our unity. With it, I wed you and pledge my faithful love.

Minister: This ring is, likewise, the token of unity, joining your two lives which enter into the one unbroken circle of intimacy to forever return to one another.

Bride: I give you this ring to wear upon your hand as a symbol of our unity. With it, I wed you and pledge my faithful love.

KENNETH PATTON

If I speak in human and angel tongues, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; and as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes the imperfect will pass away.

So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS: 13

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 belongs
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 words 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
could have done to make me happy.

You have done it without a touch, without a word,
without a sign. You have done it by being yourself.

Perhaps that is what being a friend means after all.

Roy Croft

6. I love you. With your help I want to be your faithful husband/wife for all my years. With your help, I want to be a good father/mother to our children and a good son/daughter to your parents. With you, I want to face every trial and adversity and share every joy. To that unity, I pledge you all my love.

7. I, _____, want to live with you just as you are. I choose you above all others, to share my life with me, and that is the only evidence there can be that I love. I want to love you for yourself in the hope you will become all that you can be. I promise to honor this pledge as long as life endures.

8. I take you as my husband/wife. I pledge to share my life openly with you, to speak the truth to you in love; I promise to honor and tenderly care for you, to cherish and encourage your own fulfillment as an individual through all the changes of our lives.

9. In reaffirming the relationship we have been building, I _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, to love and to cherish, to honor and to comfort, in sorrow or in joy, in hardship or in ease, to have and to hold from this day forth.

10. I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my husband/wife, to learn and to grow with, to come to in both happiness and sorrow, to confide in and trust above all others, to respect you in everything as an equal partner. But above all, to love you with all my being.

11. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, to share with me all the wonders life has to offer, through the good times and the bad, through laughter and tears, as long as we both shall live.

EXCHANGING OF VOWS: SAMPLE

The Vows represent the promises the bride/groom/partners say to each other and should be considered carefully. They may be identical or different for each, depending upon your personal inclination. They may be asked as questions by the minister or the individuals may repeat them by line, after the minister.

1. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband/wife, to love and to cherish, to honor and to comfort, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, in hardship or in ease, to have and to hold, from this day forth.

2. I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband/wife of my days, to be the father/mother of my children, and to be the companion of my house. I will keep together what share of trouble and sorrow our lives may lay upon us, and I will hold together my store of goodness and plenty and love.

3. 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 abiding love for me, through all our years, and in all that life may bring us, I accept you as my wife/husband.

4. I promise to express my love for you in all ways possible: To share in your pleasure and in your pain, and to let you share in my own. I promise to help you and to comfort you; To trust you, and to deserve your trust. I promise that with my heart, and with my mind, and with my body. I will honor and cherish you all the days of my life, as if each day were the first day of our love.

5. I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my wedded husband/wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, to honor and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. With my whole heart, and with complete devotion, I pledge you my love.

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, but not compel, 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 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 – physical and spiritual, together,

Warm and near when you are side by side,

And warm and near when you are in separate rooms, or even in distant cities.

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

May you have love; and may you find it in loving!

UNKNOWN

I would not have this perfect love of ours
Grow from a single root, a single stem,
Bearing no goodly fruit, but only flowers
That idly hide life's iron diadem:
It should grow always like that Eastern tree
Whose limbs take root and spread forth constantly;
That love for one, from which there doth not spring
Wide love for all, is but a worthless thing.
Not in another world, as poets prate,
Dwell we apart above the tide of things;
High floating o'er earth's clouds on fairy wings;
But our pure love doth ever elevate
Into a holy bond of brotherhood
All earthly things, making them pure and good.

SONNET III

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

Whatever else marriage turns out to be, its essence is the assurance of love over time. Only committed love permits access to our deepest being and pledges itself to support the best that is in another. Marriage is the admission that we need another person to extend and enrich us and lead us into a world neither could enter alone.

Marriage sacrifices novelty for the free flow of feeling that is granted by permanence and stability. It takes root as a seed does, pouring all its energy into one blossom. Married love is made up of an intimacy that does not end with the first serious disagreement. It promises that where love is mutual, there will always be another chance.

Marriage is no safe harbor. There's danger in it, and a dark surge of powerful emotions. Those who choose to marry plunge beneath the surface of the sea, daring to be drawn into the powerful subterranean currents that flow through their lives and another's. It is never easy, for marriage bars the easy way out, the quick fix, the fresh start in a new place. It demands change and compromise, the ability to struggle, to endure and to forgive. It means speaking up for what you want and choosing to be happy with what you have. It means, finally, finding within yourself the happiness no other person can ever give you.

LINDA WELTNER

love is a place
& through this place of
love move (with brightness of peace)

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

LOVE IS A PLACE
E.E. CUMMINGS

While Love is Unfashionable

While love is unfashionable
let us live
unfashionably.
Seeing the world
a complex ball
in small hands;
love our blackest garment.
Let us be poor
in all but truth, and courage
handed down
by the old spirits.
Let us be intimate with
ancestral ghosts
and music
of the undead.

While love is dangerous
let us walk bareheaded
beside the Great River.
Let us gather blossoms
under fire.

ALICE WALKER

Mark Twain was famous for his humor, but he was quite serious about marriage. He and his wife, Olivia, were married for 34 years, and by all accounts, had a loving and mutually supportive relationship. Of marriage Twain wrote:

"A marriage makes of two fractional lives a whole; It gives to two purposeless lives a work, and doubles the strength of each to perform it; It gives to 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."

MARK TWAIN