

*Maintain a healthy sense of humor as you
continue your preparation!*



*We delight in the joy of your love...
a love which reflects the very heart of God!*

The Congregational Church
of Mansfield

A United Church of Christ Congregation

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Rev. Theodore H. Newcomb III, Pastor
Mrs. Annette Valentine, Secretary

Mr. John K. Read, Music Director
Ms. Pam West, Custodian

Welcome To The Congregational Church!

Congratulations on your decision to unite in Christian Marriage! The members and friends of the Congregational Church of Mansfield (UCC) wish you a lifetime of blessings and happiness as you begin this sacred venture. It will be a pleasure to work with you to craft a service that will reflect the dignity and rich faith tradition on this special occasion.

This informational brochure is designed to help you plan your wedding day. The first few pages outline *church policies, expectations* and *costs*. The remainder may be used as a *planning tool* to compose your thoughts about your service of Christian Marriage. Your personality, faithfulness, and understanding of this sacred event will contribute to the significance of this moment for all involved. Take time to review this brochure carefully. Be creative. Do not feel limited by the finite choices incorporated within. Let them serve only as a starting point. Please note that any portion of the service which includes a response from the congregation (or a hymn not found in the Pilgrim Hymnal) will require a wedding bulletin to detail this information. Several designs are available for your consideration, but you will be responsible for the cost of either photocopying or printing. Office Supply, Photocopy, Christian Bookstores or Michael's Arts & Crafts generally have a wider variety of bulletins or you may review a catalogue we have on hand at the church to place an order. If you wish, you may choose to have one designed through the software and scanning capabilities available through our church office.

It is the sincere hope of our church family that this brochure will be a useful tool in the formulation of your wedding plans. May the time spent in preparation for this special day be filled with God's grace and love! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email the pastor.

A Wedding Planner Checklist

Wedding Date & Time: ___/___/___ @ ___:___ am / pm

Rehearsal Date & Time: ___/___/___ @ ___:___ am / pm

Wedding Location: Orthodox Congregational UCC
 Other: _____

Reception Location: _____

Special: _____

My Notes

THE BENEDICTION

bids you to "fare well" under God's grace and guidance.

You are sent into the world in a new relationship with God's blessing. May your love be a sign of God's unconditional love to all whom you encounter.

- [1] And now may the God of love who has led you here this day, bless you and keep you. May God support and guide you, that you may enter into the world in the fullness of his love, with joy dancing in your hearts, both now and forevermore. Amen.
- [2] Go forth in the love of God, go forth in hope and joy, knowing that God is with you always. And the peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus Christ; and the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, be with you always. Amen.
- [3] And now may the God of grace who imparts to us his great love through the gift of Christ Jesus our Lord go with each of us; compelling us to be as gifts of love one to another, inspiring us to grow in our ability to love, and causing us to respond with acts of love and mercy to the end of our days. Amen.
- [4] **Saint Francis Prayer (A Unison Benediction)**

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace:

...that where there is hatred, I may bring love
...that where there is wrong, I may bring pardon
...that where there is discord, I may bring harmony
...that where there is error, I may bring truth
...that where there is doubt, I may bring faith
...that where there is despair, I may bring hope
...that where there are shadows, I may bring light
...that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted; to understand, than to be understood; to love, than to be loved. For it is by giving that one receives. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen."

- [5] **An American Indian Blessing** Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other. Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other. Now there is no loneliness. Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you. Go now to your dwelling and enter into the days of your life together. And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

PRESENTATION OF THE COUPLE

involves introducing you as a new couple to all those assembled.

- [1] I now have the pleasure of presenting to you Mr. & Mrs. NAME.
- [2] I now have the pleasure of presenting to you, Bride and Groom, wife and husband.
- [3] I now have the pleasure of presenting to you, Groom and Bride, husband and wife.

Estimated Number of People: _____

Participants

Organist _____
Soloist _____
Instrumentalist _____
Guest Pastor _____

Assistants

Florist _____
Photographer _____
Videographer _____

General Information

Congregational Singing? Yes / No Hymns: #____, #____
Solo/Duet? Yes / No
List Songs & Vocalist Below:

Wedding Bulletin? Yes / No
Double Ring Ceremony? Yes / No

Resource List

Organist:	Mr. John Read	508.649.4093
Local Florist:	Judy's Flowers	508.543.4400
	Stobbart's Flowers	508.851.8999

Bridal Party

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____
Bride's Maid: _____
Bride's Maid: _____
Bride's Maid: _____
Bride's Maid: _____
Flower Girl: _____

Groom's Party

Best Man: _____
Usher: _____
Usher: _____
Usher: _____
Usher: _____
Ring Bearer: _____

A Wedding Policy For The Congregational Church of Mansfield United Church of Christ

Christian Marriage is a commitment grounded in God's love for us and our response to that love. *Marriage requires a love between two persons exemplified through diligence, patience, flexibility, self-giving, respect, forgiveness, gratitude, and artful communication in order to be effective and enduring.* Because we take this covenant of marriage seriously and due to the fact that many other church-related activities compete for our pastor's time, **we request you to make wedding arrangements with the pastor no less than four months in advance.** Indeed, many prepare over a year in advance. Your courtesy on this matter helps all of us schedule appropriately. And please note, *only one wedding will be scheduled per weekend.*

Regarding The Pastor

It is our church policy that the **Pastor will officiate at all services of the church** to be held on the church property. Guest pastors are welcome to assist our pastor, but at *his/her invitation*.

The Pastor believes it is theologically permissible to unite same gender couples in Christian Marriage. However, the church has not concluded its reflection upon this important issue. With mutual respect for Pastor and Parish, the Pastor agrees not to perform same gender services on church grounds until such time the congregation decides to authorize these services. Such services, however, may be conducted off-site at the pastor's discretion. We are sorry for this inconvenience, but for proper understanding and discernment to occur we need to take the appropriate time to help our church members reflect with openness and respect on differing perspectives.

The Pastor will arrange to have a series of **premarital meetings** (usually three) with the couple to guide them in their preparation. Time in these sessions will be devoted to issues of faith, communication, decision-making, and service formation.

A **wedding rehearsal** may be scheduled (usually the evening prior to the wedding) and will be conducted under the Pastor's direction.

Marriage License Application

The **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Marriage License** may be obtained through any Town Clerk's Office throughout Massachusetts. To apply you must both be present and have your drivers license and birth certificate. Blood tests and physicals are no longer required as

- [2] Forasmuch as you, Bride, and you, Groom, have consented together in this sacred covenant, and have declared the same before God and these witnesses, I pronounce you husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- [3] Now that Bride and Groom have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands, and the giving and receiving of rings, I pronounce that you are husband and wife, in the name of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What God has joined together, let no person seek to divide! Amen.
- [4] Bride and Groom, by your promises before God and this congregation, you have freely given yourselves to one another as husband and wife. You have been joined by the love of God; let nothing ever come between you. Amen.
- [5] And now as a minister in the name of Jesus Christ and by the authority granted to me by the Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I pronounce you husband and wife. What God has joined together, let no person seek to divide. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION,

when it is the first act in the life of a newly married couple, draws attention to the centrality of faith, service and self-giving love in that relationship. It recalls God's love for us in Christ and our call to love one another. The elements can be served just to the couple, to the couple and wedding party, or to the entire congregation. It is customary for the couple to bake the loaf of bread that will be shared. This service element is optional.

- [1] Holy Communion

THE UNITY CANDLE SERVICE

symbolically reflects the merging of two families. It is a quiet time during the service when the couple may ponder the significance of their vows. Frequently it is the time when a soloist or instrumentalist may share their skill. As with Communion, this is optional.

- [1] Three candles stand before you, Bride and Groom. Two are burning and one remains unlit. The lit candles symbolize the families from which you have come and the relationships which you have found to be so special in the days leading up to this moment. From the flames of your separate relationships, the two of you have been drawn together to form a new and very special union to be explored and to be deepened in the days that lie ahead. Therefore, at this time I encourage you to step forward...to let the flames of your present lives merge into one, that those families and friends so important to each of you individually, may henceforth nurture and guide you as a new couple.

GROOM: I pledge my love to you, Bride. I want to be your husband.

BRIDE: I pledge my love to you, Groom. I want to be your wife.

THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS

is a visible symbol of the vow you now share. This symbolic act recognizes the eternity of God's love given expression through the pledge to share your life fully with your spouse. The ring is a sign of mutual self-giving, not possession. Each exchange of rings begins with a question as to the nature of the symbol to be exchanged followed by an explanation of the rings and a prayer of blessing. You should make a choice concerning the ring exchange vow.

Question: *By what symbol do you wish your wedding vows to be known?*

Explanation

Blessing of the Rings

Ring Exchange Vow:

- [1] Groom/BRIDE, I give you this wedding ring to be a symbol of my unending love and devotion. May its presence on your hand serve always to remind you of my love.
- [2] Groom/BRIDE, with this ring, I thee wed, and to thee I will be true, so long as we both shall live.
- [3] Groom/BRIDE, in token and pledge, of the vows between us made, with this ring, I thee wed, pledging unto you my undying love.
- [4] With this ring, I offer myself to you, Groom/BRIDE, for today, for tomorrow and for all the tomorrows to come. Please wear it as a sign to all the world that you have chosen me to be your wife/HUSBAND.
- [5] With this ring, I offer myself to you, Groom/BRIDE. I will love you with my whole being today, tomorrow, and all the tomorrow's to come.
- [6] Groom/BRIDE, accept this ring as a sign of my faithfulness and love.
- [7] Groom/BRIDE, I give you this ring in token of my faithfulness and love, and as a pledge to honor you with my whole being.
- [8] Groom/BRIDE, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT

is the official act whereby the marital covenant is religiously and legally sealed. The nuptial kiss follows!

- [1] Bride and Groom, you have committed yourselves to each other in this joyous and sacred covenant. Become one. Fulfill your promises. Love and serve God. Honor Christ and each other. Rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

of Feb. 1, 2005. The license has a 3 day waiting period and will be valid for 60 days from the date of application. The Marriage License should be presented to the Pastor at the rehearsal or during the last premarital session (*if the latter falls within the 60 day period*).

Same Gender Couples seeking to be united in marriage are required to: 1) be residents of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or 2) from a State that recognizes same gender marriage. You will be required to read and sign a statement to this effect at the Town Clerk's Office.

Organist and Music

Our church organist and pianist, **Mr. John K. Read**, is a gifted and devoted musician who is available for most services of Christian Marriage. To enlist his assistance, you should contact the church office and make your request for his services. Should a guest organist be desired, arrangements must be made with the Pastor and with the approval of the church organist. Couples should be reminded that music selected for the service is your opportunity to reflect the sacred nature of the celebration of Christian Marriage.

Honoraria & Fees For All Weddings

At The Church

Honoraria For Personnel

Pastor (Rev. Ted Newcomb)		\$200
Organist (Mr. John K. Read)	Service	\$150
	Rehearsal	\$ 50
Custodian (Ms. Pam West)		\$ 75

Non-Member Building Use Fee \$250

In the event the wedding is to be held at another location, there is no "building use fee", nor would there be a fee associated with staff other than the pastor.

All honoraria and rental fees are to be paid at the wedding rehearsal. In the unlikely event damage is done to the church property or if the property is left in a poor condition, the church reserves the right to assess an additional charge.

Parking

There is ample parking on the streets in front of the church and in the lot in front of the Town Hall, just across the common. There is very limited handicap-appropriate parking in the small lot on the side of the church.

Church Equipment

The Church Center Aisle is 75 feet long. White Runners are generally purchased through your florist if this is important to you but is not essential. The following church equipment is available for use by a couple.

- Kneeling Bench
- Altar Candleholders
- Two Large Candelabra (you provide 14 10-12" taper-style candles)

Flowers

Judy's Flowers in Foxboro has a key to the church, but you are welcome to use any florist, or provide your own flowers. The florist should call the church office to arrange a delivery time on the day of your wedding.

Candlelight Service

If you plan an evening candlelight service, it is your responsibility to purchase the 14 "non-drip" candles for the candelabra. The Unity Candle Service involving just 3 candles will also require you to provide the candles (2 tapers and 1 pillar or wedding candle).

Additional Guidelines

Flash Photography is permitted *ONLY* during the processional and recessional or at the conclusion of the service. All other photography and videography will be by existing light. When bulletins are used, a statement to this effect should be included. Ushers should acquaint guests with this policy. **No auxiliary lighting will be permitted for the videographer.** We request that those capturing the service on video assume no more than one or two locations during the service and these by pre-arrangement with the pastor. Both strobes and flashes create distractions detracting from the sacred nature of the service. The pastor will be pleased to re-enact the "photo-op" moments (i.e. exchange of rings) after the service.

You are asked to **refrain from the use of tacks or staples.** To secure decorations, hangers are most preferable with tape or string as alternatives. We know you wish to care for the sanctuary appointments as much as we do!

The piano will remain in its present location.

mother of our children forever.

- [8] Bride/GROOM, I offer you my love; I offer my faith and my hope; I offer my strength; I offer my encouragement; and I offer my challenge to continually grow and change with you as long as we both shall live.
- [9] I, Groom/BRIDE, take you, Bride/GROOM, to be my wife/HUSBAND, and in so doing, commit my life to you, encompassing all joys and sorrows, all triumphs and hardships, all the experiences of life; a commitment made in love, kept in faith, and eternally made new.
- [10] Bride/GROOM, I give myself to you to be your husband/WIFE, and I promise to love and sustain you in the covenant of marriage, from this day forward, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.
- [11] Here among friends and family I, Groom/BRIDE, wish for us both a marriage of love and laughter, of tears and then hope, where I am free to comfort you when you are sad, you to hug me when I am happy; where my heart is open to yours, and yours to mine, so long as we both shall live. I love you for the mother/FATHER you will be, the friend that you are, the woman/MAN who helps me grow each day. I will work with you that our love may deepen with each passing day, in good times and in bad. With Guidance from God, I am your partner, I am your husband/WIFE. Bride/GROOM, I pledge my love to you!
- [12] Bride/GROOM, I take your hand in mine. It is a symbolic gesture, fraught with meaning throughout the centuries. It symbolizes friendship and I promise now to be a true and loyal friend to you. It symbolizes union and I promise to keep our union uppermost in my life. It symbolizes help and caring and I promise to be here to help you whenever and however you need me. Most of all, it symbolizes love: joyous, God-given love, total and complete. Such a love is what I feel for you. I take your hand in mine -- for this hour, for this day, for this lifetime.
- [13] *(A dialogue between the couple)*
- BRIDE:** We stand today at the altar of love, ready to pledge our lives to one another.
- GROOM:** I promise to live in such a way that I will never bring dishonor or heartache into our marriage.
- BRIDE:** I promise to keep our home a sanctuary of love, contentment and compassionate understanding.
- GROOM:** I pledge to you my patience, my honesty and my faith in the rightness of our love.
- BRIDE:** I pledge to you my patience, my honesty and my faith in the rightness of our love.
- GROOM:** I will be your partner but never your shadow.
- BRIDE:** I will be your equal but not your double.
- GROOM:** I will strive for a love that is flexible, warm and sensitive that can adapt to your changing needs.
- BRIDE:** I will strive for a love that endures; a love which steadfastly spans the rigors of time and experience.

capacity for wonder; to remain flexible, warm and sensitive. Give fully to each other. Save time for one another and God, no matter what demands are placed upon you. I charge the two of you to nurture each other to fullness and wholeness, realizing that each of you will, at times, need to bring strength, support, and worth to the other.

And I charge you finally, as you grow each day under God's care, to discover out of God's love for you, a love for each other that enlivens your relationship with newness and joy to the end of your days.

This day I charge you with these special responsibilities, Bride and Groom, that you may share a common life that will promote mutual growth...a life in which God's presence will surely be felt. May God help you so to do. Amen.

THE COVENANT VOW

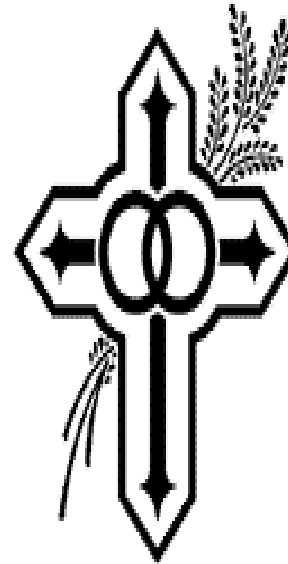
is your spoken pledge which binds you in covenant with each other as you are united in Christian Marriage. You turn to face one another and share the vow while joining hands.

- [1] I, Groom/BRIDE, you, Bride/GROOM, to be my wedded wife/HUSBAND, to have and to hold from this day forward: for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; to love and to cherish; and now I pledge to you my life, my love, and my devotion, in this world and in the world to come, so help me God.
- [2] Bride/GROOM, I give myself to you to be your husband/WIFE. I promise to love and sustain you in the covenant of marriage, from this day forward, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.
- [3] I, Groom/BRIDE, take you, Bride/GROOM, to be my wife/HUSBAND. I promise to be true to you always, in sickness and in health, in poverty or wealth, in my thoughts and in my speaking. I will be your dearest friend, your lover and father/MOTHER of your children. With this vow, I commit myself totally to you!
- [4] Bride/GROOM, I affirm you now as my life partner. I promise to remain with you in both times of celebration and in times of sorrow. I promise to love, honor, cherish, and keep you, Bride/GROOM, and be true in all things as a faithful husband/WIFE, as long as we both shall live. I accept you without reservation as my wife/HUSBAND.
- [5] I, Bride/GROOM, draw you, Groom/BRIDE, unto my very being to share with you life's sorrows and joys. I promise to respect, forgive, and instill hope in you, even as you offer these special gifts to me. I promise to accept and love you as you are, enriched and empowered by God's love, that together we may seek and share God's will and purpose for our lives.
- [6] I, Groom/BRIDE, take you, Bride/GROOM, to be my wife/HUSBAND from this day forward, to join with you and share in all that is come, and with the help of God, to be faithful to you as God gives us life together.
- [7] Bride/GROOM, I entrust my love to your care, that we may openly share in each other's growth, the growth of our separate selves and in the living bond which unites us as one. I promise to share with you in times of joy and pain, and will respect and love you as my friend, lover, and the

Rather than the traditional throwing of rice and confetti, we prefer the throwing of bird seed or blowing of bubbles as acceptable, ecological alternatives. And please, outside only!

About The Service

The Service of Christian Marriage involves several elements. Each element has a purpose. Optional items are so labeled. A sample order follows.



Processional
 Gathering
 Hymn of Praise *(optional)*
 Prayer of Invocation
 Presentation
 Declaration of Purpose *(optional)*
 Declaration of Support *(optional)*
 Hymn/Soloist *(optional)*
 Scripture Reading
 Reflective Reading *(optional)*
 Meditation or Charge
 Hymn/Soloist *(optional)*
 Covenant Vow
 Exchange of Rings *(optional)*
 Pronouncement
 Nuptial Kiss
 Holy Communion *(optional)*
 Unity Candle with Soloist/Instrumentalist *(optional)*
 Benediction
 Presentation of Couple
 Recessional

The duration of the service is determined by the number of different elements you wish to incorporate. Services which exclude hymns & additional solos are about 20 minutes in length. Services which include virtually all elements are approximately 30-40 minutes in length.

Examine the worksheet pages that follow and the purpose given for each service element. Then, either circle your selection under each heading, or in the space provided at the end of this planning guide, write your own. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact the pastor. Please note, wherever you see "bride" or "groom", the respective name will be added at that part.

The Wedding Service Planner

THE GATHERING

serves to call the people to worship.

It states the purpose of our time together and sets the service within a Christian context.

- [1] Let us come from our separate ways to make and to renew our covenants with God and hear God's call to new life in faith. Let us understand that we come before God, who knows us thoroughly. Praise God who reigns above, the Lord of all creation. For today we gather to celebrate a new life...the life henceforth to be shared by Bride and Groom in Christian Marriage. For this reason, says our Lord, "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. What, therefore, God joins together, let no person come between." Let us then invoke the blessing of God upon the union now to be formed!
- [2] We are gathered here today in the presence of God to celebrate the marriage of Bride and Groom. This is our opportunity to pledge unto them our loving support and to bear witness to the union now to be formed. Let us ask God's blessing upon this special occasion.
- [3] Dear friends, we have come together in the presence of God to witness the marriage of Bride and Groom, to surround them with our prayers, and to share in their joy. The scriptures teach us that the covenant of marriage is a gift of God, a holy mystery, in which man and woman become one flesh, an image of the union of Christ and the Church. As Bride and Groom give themselves to each other today, we remember that at Cana in Galilee our Savior, Jesus Christ, made the wedding feast a sign of God's reign of love. Let us enter into this celebration confident that through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us now. So it is that we pray this couple may fulfill God's purpose for the whole of their lives.
- [4] We are gathered here today in the presence of God to celebrate the marriage of Bride and Groom. We come to pledge our loving support and to bear witness to this sacred event in their lives. Let us ask God's blessing upon the life to be shared, henceforth, by Bride and Groom.
- [5] Dear friends, we are gathered here as God's people to witness the marriage of Bride and Groom, to share in their joy, and to ask God's blessing upon them as they make firm the commitment which they share. Marriage is a gift of God, sealed by a sacred covenant. God's gift is human love, given that wife and husband may know each other with mutual care and companionship. God's gift is joy, given that wife and husband may share new life with their neighbors as Christ shared new wine with the many friends and guests at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. With our love and our prayers we come to support Bride and Groom as they now freely offer themselves to each other.



missing the other person when they are away
but remaining near in heart at all times

Love is the source of security

**Love is the
source of life**

THE WEDDING MEDITATION

is a personal reflection by the pastor which weaves together the scripture reading and the apparent strengths in your relationship. It is brief (usually about 3 minutes). No example is given as each is independently created. Either the wedding meditation or the charge to the couple should be selected, but not both.

- [1] Wedding Meditation

THE CHARGE TO THE COUPLE

can be understood as a challenge to uphold certain values in your new relationship. Remember, the "charge" is an alternative to the wedding meditation.

- [1] Bride and Groom, you have requested that I share with you this charge as you are challenged on your wedding day, by the scriptures we have shared, by your conviction of faith, and by the vows you are about to make.

I charge you, Bride and Groom, as you stand in the presence of God, to remember that love and loyalty alone will avail as the sure foundation of a happy and enduring home. If the solemn vows that you are about to make are made with sincerity, and if you steadfastly seek to do the will of your Lord, the home that you are about to establish will abide in peace. This is my charge to the two of you. May your commitment to one another continue to grow as the years before you unfold. Amen.

- [2] To the Christian, marriage is neither a casual nor a socially legislated arrangement alone. It is a holy covenant between two persons who love, trust, and pledge themselves to one another. Bride and Groom, your marriage is one of the most sacred and most treasured parts of your life.

It is a celebration of all the mystery and wonder that loving commitment to one another can bring to life. It is a recognition, however, that love and marriage are not always easy and that along with the tenderness, newness and joy in a marriage, a marriage must overcome many forces that will try to destroy it. Love is dynamic and will fly away from a marriage that has become static and unbending. When love lives as it does between you today, it reflects the deepest and most tender secrets of God's Kingdom.

I charge you, Bride and Groom, with the responsibility to keep this marital relationship alive: to grow, to change, to maintain your

anxious to suspect evil...bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail, whether there be tongues, they shall cease, whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away...But love's faith, hope and patience never fail...Love is eternal...So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love!"

[3] **LOVE** by Susan Polis Schutz

Love is

being happy for the other person when they are happy
being sad for the person when they are sad
being together in good times
and being together in bad times

Love is the source of strength

Love is

being honest with yourself at all times
being honest with the other person at all times
telling, listening, respecting the truth
and never pretending

Love is the source of reality

Love is

an understanding that is so complete that
you feel as if you are a part of the other person
accepting the other person just the way they are
and not trying to change them to be something else

Love is the source of unity

Love is

the freedom to pursue your own desires
while sharing your experiences with the other person
the growth of one individual alongside of
and together with the growth of another individual

Love is the source of success

Love is

the excitement of planning things together
the excitement of doing things together

Love is the source of the future

Love is

the fury of the storm
the calm in the rainbow

Love is the source of passion

Love is

giving and taking in a daily situation
being patient with each other's needs and desires

Love is the source of sharing

Love is

knowing that the other person
will always be with you regardless of what happens

[6] Dearly Beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God to join Bride and Groom in Christian Marriage. Let all who enter it know that marriage is a sacred and joyous covenant, a way ordained of God from the beginning of his creation. "For this reason," says our Lord, "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one. What therefore God has joined together, let no person put asunder."

Marriage is also compared by Paul to a mystical union between Christ and his Church. Therefore, it should not be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently considering the purposes for which it was ordained.

God has ordered the covenant of marriage, that husband and wife may give to each other companionship, help, comfort, both in prosperity and in adversity: that God's love might find a home in this new relationship; that children may be nurtured with love in families; and that human society may stand on a firm foundation. Into this sacred covenant, Bride and Groom, now wish to enter. Let us therefore invoke the blessing of God upon this union now to be formed.

[7] We have been called together as witnesses to the happiness which Bride and Groom have found together, and to the pledge which they will now make, one to the other, for the mutual benefit of their common life. We rejoice with them that out of all the world they have found each other, and that they will henceforth find a deeper meaning and richness in life by sharing it. With our love and our prayers we come to support Bride and Groom as they freely offer themselves to each other.

[8] **Responsive Gathering**

Pastor: Let us come from our separate ways to make and renew our covenants with God.

Families: We hear God's call to new life in faith.

Unison: Let us understand that we come before God, who knows us thoroughly. Praise God who reigns above, the God of all creation.

[9] **Responsive Gathering**

Pastor: Friends, we have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man, GROOM, and this woman, BRIDE, in the covenant of Christian Marriage. The union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; (and when it is agreeable, for the bearing of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord). Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and in accordance with the purpose for which it was instituted by God.

People: As they give themselves one to another in love, we pray that their hopes may be realized.

Pastor: For many of us this is a time of sacred memory as we recall the occasion when we have promised to love, honor and cherish. Silently, may we once more renew that special covenant.

People: We rejoice in the grace of forgiveness, the gift of sensitivity, and the blessing of understanding. We are glad for the God given capacity to seek another's welfare above our own; to enter into a union of body, mind and spirit; and to be united in purpose, will and motive.

Pastor: Love is patient and kind, love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

People: Marriage is a blending of joy and sorrow, of hopes fulfilled and broken dreams, of sustaining and being sustained. True marriage is built upon love which fulfills another's needs, which is willing to adjust continually, which gives instead of demands, and which readily forgives.

Pastor: As we wish for so much and so greatly rejoice in the privilege of this moment, let us unite our hearts in prayer.

THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION

calls our attention to God's presence not only in the midst of this ceremony, but in the marital union itself.

- [1] Our loving and sustaining God, who has set us in this world with one another that we may come to know the joy of relationships, and who, through the precious commitment of marriage, teaches us of a far greater love than we even now experience, be present to Bride and Groom as they enter into this new life together. Help them to continually grow in their love for one another. Then, may their love exist as a sign of your love blossoming forth within them. Keep them and all of us ever in your loving care. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- [2] O Gracious God, we gather this day to praise you with great joy in our hearts for creating us as your people who are ever in your care. We praise you for the relationships which you grant us, that we may experience, in part, the depth of the love which you freely offer to all people. So today, send your Holy Spirit upon us as we gather to unite Bride and Groom in the bonds of Christian Marriage. Let your Spirit of love be kindled within us as we support them in this new path which they choose this day even as we seek to renew those special relationships we cherish. All this we ask in the name of your Son, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- [3] Gracious God, always faithful in your love for us, we rejoice in your presence. You create love. You unite us in one human family. You offer your Word and lead us in Light. You open your loving arms and embrace us with strength. May the presence of Christ fill our hearts with new joy and make new the lives of your servants whose marriage we celebrate. Bless all creation through this sign of your love shown in the love of Bride and Groom for each other. May the power of your Holy Spirit sustain them and all of us in love that knows no end. This we ask in the name of your Son, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- [4] O God our Heavenly Father, we gather together this day to praise you for creating us as your people. You offer us a marvelous and beautiful world

THE REFLECTIVE READING

may be chosen in addition to the scripture reading. Many more writings of contemporary authorship are available than can be published here. If another selection is chosen that is not listed here, kindly email a copy to the pastor. This service element is optional.

[1] THE PROPHET by Kahlil Gibran (p.15)

"You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore. You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.

"But let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

"Love one another, but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.

"Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of life can contain your hearts. And stand together yet not too near together: for the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow."

[2] WE: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love

by Robert Johnson, (pp. 191-192)

"Love is the power within us that affirms and values another human being as he or she is. Human love affirms the person that is there, rather than the ideal we would like his or her to be or the projection that flows from our minds. Love is the inner god who opens our blind eyes to the beauty, value, and quality of the other person. Love causes us to value that person as a total, individual self, and this means that we accept the negative side as well as the positive, the imperfections as well as the admirable qualities. When one truly loves the human being rather than the projection, one loves the shadow just as one loves the rest. One accepts the other person's totality.

"Human love causes us to see the intrinsic value in each other; therefore love leads us to honor and serve one another, rather than use our loved one for our ego's purposes.

"Love alters our sense of importance. Through love we see that the other individual has as great a value in the cosmos as our own; it becomes just as important to us that he or she should be whole, should live fully, should find the joy of life, as that our own needs be met. "In it's very essence, love is an appreciation, a recognition of another's value. The archetypal nature of love is perhaps nowhere better expressed than in the simple language of St. Paul: 'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up...Love does not seek her own way, is not easily provoked, is not

he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another.

- [4] **1 Corinthians 13** I may be able to speak the languages of all people and even of the angels, but if I have not love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains; but if I have not love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burned, but if I have not love, it does me no good. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous, or conceited, or proud; love is not ill-mannered, or selfish, or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up: its faith, hope and patience never fail...Love is eternal...So faith, hope and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love!"
- [5] **Ephesians 5:1-2,21,31-33** Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ...For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.
- [6] **Colossians 3:12-17** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
- [7] **1 John 4:7-12** Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son that we might be forgiven for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No person has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God abides in us and God's love is perfected in us.



in which we can experience the joy of relationships and the companionship which other people afford us. So today we ask you to send your Holy Spirit into our midst as we gather in love to unite Bride and Groom in Christian Marriage. Let that Spirit of love burn within our hearts as we support them in this new venture even as we seek to renew those relationships that we cherish as important in our own lives. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

- [5] O God, the Giver of all that is true and lovely and gracious: we give you thanks for binding us together in this holy mystery of love which we celebrate this day. Come be with us as we draw close to one another to experience the warmth, the joy and the support of loving relationships. So, too, enter into the lives of your servants, Bride and Groom, as they bind themselves to one another on this special occasion by their acknowledgment of a mutual love firmly grounded in your divine love. And even as you bless this couple whom we unite this day, continue to rekindle the flame of your undying love in our lives that we may bear witness to a love which greater still. Amen.
- [6] O God, we praise your name, you who created the heavens and the earth and all that lives therein. Send your Spirit into our midst that we may worship you in song, in prayer, in word, in deed, and by our loving response to those who surround us. Amen.
- [7] Open us to your presence, O God, as we celebrate your love revealed in the special relationship which Bride and Groom acknowledge on this occasion. Fill our lives with the fullness of your love even as you enter into the union now to be formed. And instill within each and every one of us the desire to continually grow and further reach out in love to those who abide all around us in the fullness of your creation. In the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

THE PRESENTATION

is composed of three parts: the Statement of Intent, Questions Regarding Commitment, and the Presentation of Each Partner to the other. It marks the choice of each person independently to enter into this new relationship. Traditionally, the father has presented the bride. Today, couples may choose to adopt the traditional format, they may be presented by their respective families, or they may present themselves. Please choose (or write) one item per section listed below.

Statements

- [1] **Statement:** God has called you to the covenant of marriage. Before God and this congregation, I ask you Bride and Groom to affirm your willingness to enter this new relationship, sharing all its joys and sorrows, whatever the future may hold.
- [2] **Statement:** Today before God and these witnesses assembled, Bride and Groom pledge themselves to one another in the sacred covenant of Christian Marriage. It is their wish that those of you who are married will

take this opportunity to silently renew your own vows and that all will share in this celebration by offering your personal prayers for this couple ready to begin a new life together.

Questions

- [1] **Questions to Couple:** Bride/GROOM, will you have Groom/BRIDE to be your wedded husband/WIFE, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love him/HER, comfort him/HER, honor and keep him/HER in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep only unto him/HER, so long as you both shall live?
- [2] **Questions to Couple:** I now ask you, Bride/GROOM, will you take, Groom/BRIDE, to be your wedded husband/WIFE and live together in openness, love and peace under God's continuing care and guidance?
- [3] **Questions to Couple:** I now ask you, Bride and Groom, do you come here freely and deliberately this day choosing one another as partners for life? And do you further promise to love, honor and cherish one another in this new relationship, leaving behind all others to cleave only to each other so long as you both shall live?
- [4] **Questions to Couple:** Do you, Bride and Groom, find within your special love the commitment to spend the rest of your lives together? Do you find within yourselves the courage to resist the forces that may attempt to consume the love you share for one another at this moment? And do you accept the challenge to never allow the flame of love within your new life to flicker and die?
- [5] **Questions to Couple:** Groom/BRIDE, do you take, Bride/GROOM to be your wife/HUSBAND, to live together in the holy bond of married life? Do you promise to honor and uphold her/HIM in making a home that shall endure in peace? Do you affirm your purpose of a deeper union with her/HIM whereby you both shall know the joy and fulfillment of love? Do you pledge to her/HIM your complete faithfulness through all the changing seasons of your life? And of your own free choice, do you offer yourself to Bride/GROOM completely...body, mind and soul...that from this day forth you shall be hers/HIS alone, so long as you both shall live?

Presentations

- [1] **Presentation of Couple:** Who gives this woman, BRIDE, to be married to this man, GROOM, offering their blessing to this marriage?
- [2] **Presentation of Couple:** Who gives this woman, BRIDE, and this man, GROOM, to be united with one another in Christian Marriage?

THE DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

is used when the couple wishes to make a personal statement to those assembled. The declaration may be spoken by the couple (in a slightly revised form) or by the pastor. For those who choose to have a wedding bulletin, this declaration may be printed within or upon the cover.

- [1] Bride and Groom stand before you today in order that you witness this blessed occasion and share in their joy. They ask that you look upon them now and in the future as one and as a renewed life. They are happy you are here to share in this celebration of love and they hope you will treasure this day in memory. As their love continues to deepen with the passage of time and through shared experience, it is their hope that all of our hearts will continue to touch with happiness.

THE DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

is a congregational affirmation of the couple. It gives the people a chance to voice their support, encouragement, and love.

- [1] By our presence, we undertake the responsibility for supporting Bride and Groom in this deeper relationship that they are about to enter. We will rejoice in their happiness; support them in times of testing; offer them patience and forgiveness when they stumble and make mistakes; and remember them in our prayers, seeking God's blessing on them and the continuing presence of God's Spirit in their lives. Amen.

THE SCRIPTURE READING

draws attention to God's love as witnessed through human relationships portrayed in our biblical narrative.

Several popular selections follow for your reflection.

- [1] **Ruth 1:15-18** And Naomi the mother-in-law to Ruth said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not command me to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go; and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people; and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you." And when Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said no more.
- [2] **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to the one who is alone and falls having not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone? And though a person might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.
- [3] **John 15:9-17** As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name,