

Sonoma County Wedding Ceremonies and Rites of Passage

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ALTERNATIVES THAT CAN BE INSERTED INTO YOUR CEREMONY

Ring Passing

In this ceremony, the rings are passed around the members of the bridal party (or the all the guests if there are only a few), to receive the blessings of friends and family before being given to the bride and groom to exchange.

The rings are put into a decorative box or basket, and as they pass from person to person, the officiant says:

The precious nature of these rings represents the subtle and wonderful joy Jack and Traci find
by losing themselves in each other.

But before they put the rings on each other's fingers, Jack and Traci
would like pass them around for their friends and family to see,

to touch, and bless in their own way (pass rings to guests and/or wedding party).

You may kiss them, blow on them, sing a song to them, wax eloquent, or say a few words to them;
whatever is in your heart as your most profound wishes for the happiness of Jack and Traci.

Speak out loud if you like, or meditate silently to yourself.

Sand Ceremony

In this ceremony, two containers of sand are poured by the bride and groom into one container, representing the blending of their two lives. If the couple has children, extra container of sand can be added for each child, and everybody in the family pours their sand into the main container:

Gene and Alex, you come to this ceremony today as unique individuals,
but today you will blend your individual spirits and personalities
to strengthen your bond and build a future together.

We symbolize this blending by pouring individual containers of sand representing each separate being
into one central container representing the new life you enter today, as you are joined together.

(POUR SAND)

As you pour your sand together, your lives also join together as one.

Just as each grain of sand maintains its own space, never losing itself,
but blending together for the good of the whole, so will your marriage and your family be.

Invoking the Four Directions

Invoking the four directions is a means of bringing in specific blessings from the four elements and the four cardinal directions:

In many cultures it is believed that the human soul shares characteristics with all things divine. It is this belief which assigned virtues to the four cardinal directions; East, South, West and North.

It is according to this belief that we align ourselves with these elements, and invite the energy of each element to help us build a happy and successful union.

The wedding party, the officiant and the audience stand and face each direction, as the officiant says:

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the **East** and the element of Air,
for openness and breath, communication of the heart, and purity of the mind and body.
From the east you receive the gift of a new beginning with the rising of each Sun,
and the understanding that each day is a new opportunity for growth.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the **South**, the element of fire,
for energy, passion, creativity and the warmth of a loving home.
From the fire within you generate light, which you will share in even the darkest of times.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the **West**, the element of water,
for our capacity to feel emotion. In marriage you offer absolute trust to one another,
and vow to keep your hearts open in sorrow as well as joy.

Blessed be this union with the gifts of the **North**, the element of earth,
which provides sustenance, fertility and security. The earth will feed and enrich you,
and help you to build a stable home to which you may always return.

Unity Candle

The unity candle is a Christian tradition that has been adapted over time, and is now used commonly in secular ceremonies. The bride and groom each take an individual candle, and from it, light a central candle to represent the merging of their spirits:

From every human being there rises a light that resonates with all the energies in the universe.

When two beings destined to be together find each other, their light flows together,
and a single, brighter light goes forth from their united being.

In this spirit, bride and groom, take your individual candles and light together a third candle which signifies your marital bond. May the light of love, and the light of understanding, and the light of respect shine eternally for you both.

This candle represents commitment because it takes two people working together to keep it aflame. It represents the merging of your energies, because each of you gives a spark of your life force to the other in order to create a new energy. As you light this candle today, may the brightness of the flame shine throughout your lives.

May it give you courage and reassurance in darkness. Warmth and safety in the cold.
And strength and joy in your bodies, minds, and spirits. May your union be forever blessed.

A very short “Handfasting”

Lynn and Erik have chosen to incorporate the ancient Celtic ritual of Handfasting into their wedding ceremony today. Traditionally in the British Isles it was performed by a priest or priestess, who would create a sacred circle in which the couple could be joined as embodiments of god and goddess.

The cloth that binds their hands was usually the tartan plaid, representing the bride's clan or family group.

One of the things we like about handfasting is that it is also a declaration of intent, where the bride and groom clearly state that they are marrying of their own free will.

(Officiant drapes a cord or ribbon around the couple's hands)

Erik and Lynn, as your hands are bound together now,
so your lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust.

Above you are the stars and below you is the earth.

Like the stars your love should be a constant source of light,
and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow."

A longer handfasting:

A variation of the above, using multiple cords/ribbons:

Jane and Lisa, know before you go further,
that since your lives have crossed in this life, you have formed eternal and sacred bonds.

And as you enter this marriage, know that within this circle
you are not only declaring your intent to be handfasted before your friends and family,
but you speak that intent also to your creative higher powers.

Do you still seek to enter this ceremony? *Yes.*

Will you honor and respect one another, and seek to never break that honor? *We will*
[the first cord is draped over the couples' hands] And so the first binding is made.

Lisa and Jane, Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it? *Yes*
*[Second cord]*And so the binding is made.

Lisa and Jane Will you share the burdens of each
so that your spirits may grow in this union? *Yes* *[third cord]* And so the binding is made.

Lisa and Jane,, will you share each other's laughter,
and look for the brightness in life and the positive in each other? *We will.*
[fourth cord] And so the binding is made.

(Officiant ties cords together)

Jane and Lisa, as your hands are bound together now,
so your lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust.
Above you are the stars and below you is the earth.
Like the stars you love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth,
a firm foundation from which to grow.

Buddhist vows

Marriage begins with the giving of words.
We cannot join ourselves to one another with giving our word,
and this must be an unconditional and intentional giving,
for in joining ourselves to one another,
we join ourselves to the universe.
In exchanging vows, you commit to embrace all parts of yourselves,
including your deepest fears and shadows
so that they can be transformed into light.
And you confirm your willingness to keep your hearts open
even in the midst of great pain.

It is in this spirit that you have come here to today
to exchange these vows.

VOWS

I John take you Mary to be my wife /
in equal love, as a mirror for my true self/
as a partner on my path, in sorrow and in joy.

The Apache Wedding Chant

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 for the other.
Now you are two persons, but there is only one life inside you.
Go now to your dwelling to enter the days of your life together.
And may your days be good, and long upon the earth.

*(this can be combined with handfasting by draping using multiple cords
and draping one over the couples' hands with each line of the chant)*

Vows Including Children

Vows that acknowledge the children who will become part of your marriage tug at the heart strings. They can also help these young ones feel more secure and loved as they adjust to the changes your marriage brings to their lives. Including children in your vows is an expression of your commitment to them as well as to the new form your family is now taking.

If the two of you are expecting a child, I would especially encourage you to include your baby in your ceremony. Welcome and celebrate the third life that is present there, being joined together with both of yours,