

Wedding Ceremony

The Reverend Phillip Smedstad

Dear Friends,

We are gathered here today to witness and to celebrate a spiritual union between this man _____ and this woman _____.
In reality, we are not here to marry these two, but to publicly recognize the marriage that has already taken place in their hearts.

Each of us is here by divine appointment, and a divine appointment always means there is something for us to give and something for us to receive. We are each here to give our love, our prayers, and our friendship. As to what we are here to receive, we ask God to open our hearts and minds to all it can be.

The commitment these two are making today
is a blessing to each of us here and to the entire community as well (so it is fitting that it be publicly declared, in the presence of you, their loved ones.)

Let us begin with the Lord's Prayer.

(Optional) "Who presents this bride to the marriage?" Thank you.

Please be seated.

Jesus Christ said, "**Whenever two or more of you are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you.**"

In my experience, this is both literally and symbolically true. Whenever two or more of us are gathered together in love, knowing our oneness with God and with each other, miracles of love are created.

This is what marriage is – two whole beings joined heart to heart and mind to mind. What is created from such a union is greater than the sum of its parts, and can often seem magical, even mystical.

As you already know, marriage is a commitment. In fact, it is the deepest commitment two adults can choose to make. But this word "commitment" needs to be addressed. Many of us learned long ago to associate "commitment" with "imprisonment." But for some of us, the commitment of marriage hasn't resulted in less freedom but more – the freedom to be ourselves and to grow as much as we want.

My prayer is that your marriage is the kind of marriage I have been blessed to have. It has meant practicing, beyond all else, what

it means to be a true friend, what it means to be on each other's side. For (Lura) my wife and me, our marriage is, first of all, a commitment to ourselves, our true selves.

The most important element of our marriage, and the most common element of marriages that last, is that each of us puts God first in our lives.

When you both know that God is the true source of your love, you feel safe to be yourself, and you can allow your partner the freedom to do the same.

(My) (Our) marriage has also been an adventure in self-discovery. It can be so for you _____, and you _____ as well. Especially when you know one of life's great secrets: That each of you is a mirror of each other's mind and heart. In truth, this is so with everyone we meet. We are all one with each other, each of us a cell in the Body of Christ.

Jesus, when asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" replied, "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto the first. You will love your neighbor as yourself."

Your spouse is, of course, your very closest neighbor, and mirrors your soul more closely than anyone else. As you continue to discover deeper and deeper parts of each other's inner self, there will no doubt be things about him – and her – which you admire, and about which you say "I wish I was like that." It is important to know you are like that. If you were not, you couldn't see it in your partner.

The same is true, of course, if, like the rest of us you sometimes have critical thoughts about your spouse. One of life's great quests is to find inner peace, and we only find this peace as we learn to love and accept ourselves as we are. This is one of the most profound possible benefits from any relationship – to learn to see ourselves in others, and to learn to love ourselves by loving our mirrors. The more you two see yourselves in each other, the easier it becomes to surrender to each other's love.

This word "surrender" also needs to be addressed: In marriage, it doesn't mean defeat. It means victory.

To surrender to love means to practice being yourself.

It means to let down your guard, which is the only way you can let in the love you want.

It means to be open, and honest without blame.

It means to say "I love you" and to demonstrate your love by your actions.

Never forget that the climate in which love can grow is one of intimacy, which really means "into-me-see".

Never forget also that, no matter how much your partner should know you love him or her, we all need to hear the words "I love you" every day.

The Bible has many things to say about love. One of my favorites is this section of I Cor. 13:

"Love is patient, love is kind and envies no one. Love is not boastful, nor conceited, nor rude, nor selfish, nor quick to take offense. Love keeps no score of wrongs, does not gloat over the errors of others, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face. There is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance. Love will never come to an end."

There are many things that those of us here – and many others – ask in prayer for you today:

We pray that your life is filled with all God wants for you – long life, robust health, prosperity in its fullest meaning, and lots of joy.

We pray that you always have the romance and passion in your marriage that you both deserve, and that you always feel connected, whether you're in each other's arms or a thousand miles apart.

We pray that your trust of each other continues to grow. Remembering, that trust can only be earned, a little each day, and can be lost in an instant.

We pray that you be one of those couples who demonstrate that love never calls for sacrifice, and that in any seeming difference, there is always a way for everyone to win.

Finally, we pray that you will continue to celebrate not only what you have in common, but your differences. They are, after all, part of your attraction for each other. They are also part of the strength of your union.

_____ and _____, of all the men and women you know, you are choosing each other as life-long partners. Are you ready to be husband and wife?

If so, please say, together, "We are."

To the groom:

Do you _____ take _____ as your wife,
to love and care for her,
to accept her as she is,
to daily choose her above all others,
and to be her true friend?

If so, please say, "I do."

To the bride:

Do you _____ take _____ as your husband, to love and care for him,
to accept him as he is,
to daily choose him above all others,
and to be his true friend?

If so, please say, "I do."

May (I) (we) please have the rings?

Your ring is the symbol of your love. The substance it is made of stands for purity and preciousness, symbolizing that the love you share is a treasure.

The process of refining this gold has removed any impurities from it, just as your love is a refining fire which has already brought up and removed many parts of you which are unlike it. It is important that you know that this refining process will continue.

Just as your marriage will result in new levels of joy, it will also sometimes result in times of upset. When these times come, remember, it doesn't mean something bad – about your marriage, about your partner, or about you. It means there is enough love and safety in your marriage for another part of your false self to surface so it can be released. At those times, keep sharing until you get back to the love.

Because the next part of what your ring symbolizes will always be the truth. The circle is the symbol of love without beginning or end. It is as if you have always loved each other – even before you found each other – and you always will.

Will you now turn and face each other:

and would you (bride) give your bouquet to your (Maid) (Matron) of Honor

(Groom),

I would like you to place this ring on the third finger of _____ left hand. Now, as you hold it there and look into her eyes, please repeat after me:

_____ **I take you as my wife.**

I promise to love you as you are.

To encourage you to be all you want to be.

To be your true friend

And to share with you every part of myself.

For as long as we both shall live.

(Bride),

I would like you to place this ring on the third finger of _____ left hand. Now, as you hold it there and look into his eyes, please repeat after me:

_____ **I take you as my husband.**

I promise to love you as you are.

To encourage you to be all you want to be.

To be your true friend

And to share with you every part of myself.

For as long as we both shall live.

(Optional – Candle Ceremony)

On the table behind me are three candles. The two, which are lit represent the light which each of you are. You are each already a whole and complete being. The unlit candle in the center represents your marriage. In a moment, I'm going to ask you both to light, together, your marriage candle. As you each bring your light to this marriage, a new light is also created – the light of your love and your union. Your individual candles will remain lit, symbolizing that each of you in your marriage remains a whole person.

But as each of you bring the light you are to your union, more light is generated. As you become an example of two people supporting each other in becoming all God means us to be, you light the way for others.

Will you now come forward and light your marriage candle together?

(Optional – Congregational Blessing)

To Congregation:

The path of love is meant to be walked together with society, so your presence here today is very important to _____ and _____. The love of these two is nurtured and guided by the love of others.

Each of us counts on friends and family for the caring and concern that replenish our own ability to love. _____ and _____ marry this day in the midst of the affection and friendship of you all. By your presence here today, you offer your blessing, your love, and your support.

Along with _____ and _____ formalizing their commitment today, they have asked that each of us here affirm our commitment of support and friendship.

So – to each of you – family and friends -- do you promise, to the best of your ability, to support _____ and _____ in their desire to be at one with God, one with each other, and one with everyone in their lives?

If so please join (Lura and) me in saying – together – “I do.”
“I do”

(Optional – Silent Prayer)

Will you now each take a moment for a silent prayer asking God for all that is most important to you in your new life together?

Will each of you here also join in silent prayer for _____ and _____, asking God for all you most want for them?

AMEN

And now, under the law of our land, and in the presence of the Holy Spirit, who performs every true marriage, I now pronounce you husband and wife.

You may kiss the bride.

(Would you please turn and face
your guests?)

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to present to you for the first time as husband and wife _____
_____.