

CANADIAN CONSEIL  
UNITARIAN UNITARIEN  
COUNCIL DU CANADA



## **DESIGNING and LEADING RITES of PASSAGE**

### **BASIC TRAINING WORKSHOP**

### **PARTICIPANTS' WORKBOOK**

## **CANADIAN UNITARIAN COUNCIL**

1-888-568-5723

Email: [info@cuc.ca](mailto:info@cuc.ca)

[www.cuc.ca/lay\\_chaplaincy](http://www.cuc.ca/lay_chaplaincy)

Newcomers page: [www.unitarian.ca](http://www.unitarian.ca)

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## Child Dedication and Naming Ceremony

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this section, participants will be able to:

1. understand what such ceremonies are, and why families have them for their children
2. adapt an interview form for their use
3. feel prepared to meet with a family for the first interview
4. develop ceremonies from templates received and suggested resources

### INTRODUCTION

Societies have been performing rites of passage to welcome their children for all of recorded history. They do so for many reasons, in many faith traditions or none, and in many varied ways.

Traditionally, the element of water has been used as a symbol in these ceremonies, for all life has arisen from the waters, and it is through water that life is sustained as it flows forward like a river.

Traditionally this is also a time to recognize the child by name, for it is by our names that each one of us is acknowledged as an individual, a unique and separate person with a life and dignity of his or her own.

A “christening” or “baptism” is a way of welcoming the child into a Christian church, with a prescribed set of values and beliefs. In some cases, the ceremony can be a symbol of washing away the child’s “original sin”.

A Unitarian \* Universalist naming and dedication ceremony welcomes the child into the world, and seeks to encourage parents and other adults to dedicate themselves to the well being of this child and all children, by creating a world that is safe and welcoming for children. It is assumed that the values and principles of the *family* and its *wider community* are the ones that should be conveyed to the child. To customize the ceremony for each child gives families the opportunity to make their ceremonies meaningful to them.

Why might parents turn to *Unitarian* lay chaplains to dedicate their children? For some, they want a solemn and spiritual occasion in which to welcome their child to the family and larger community, and officially to bestow the child’s name. For others, family members are urging them to have a “christening”, and do not have a faith community, or are uncomfortable with that of their family. Other reasons abound, and it is always worth asking the parents about their particular reasons.

## **General Overview of a Naming Ceremony**

Procedures will vary in accordance with circumstances. The following outline presupposes a church setting. Although these ceremonies often include several children, the wording here is generally in the singular, and may need to be adjusted.

After an appropriate hymn (optional), the parents and child, the sponsors (if any), siblings or other relatives (if desired) and the Lay Chaplain take their places. Then follows a brief reading or two and an address. Next, the Lay Chaplain questions the parents (and sponsors). The congregation may be drawn into the ceremony by a question from the Lay Chaplain, or by a charge.

If practical, the Lay Chaplain takes each child in his/her arms and asks the child's name. Greeting the child by name (and touching the child's head with water), the Lay Chaplain recognizes and welcomes the child with a sentence or two, then returns the child to a parent. If the congregation was not involved earlier, all may now unite in brief words of welcome and commitment, as printed in the Order of Service. The ceremony concludes with prayer/meditation and closing words. Before the participants return to their seats, the Lay Chaplain hands the certificate to a parent. A rosebud or other flower, (if not presented earlier in the service), can be handed to the child or a parent at this time.

**Sample Interview Form**

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Names: (as you want them to appear on the certificate)

Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents: Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Godparents or Sponsors: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the expectations of the godparents/sponsors? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Location of service (do I need a map?) \_\_\_\_\_

Time and date of service: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of guests expected: \_\_\_\_\_

Formal/Semi-formal/Informal \_\_\_\_\_

Robe or not? \_\_\_\_\_

**DETAILS OF THE SERVICE**

\_\_\_ Music?

\_\_\_ Musicians?

Co-officiants; other participants

## FORMAT OF THE SERVICE

- a) As in booklet?
  - Opening words
  - Introductory Statements:
    - to congregation
    - to parents
  - Dedication of the child/children
  
- b) Optional elements to include, e.g. rose ceremony (BYOR, dethorned)
  
- c) Other readings? By whom?
  
- d) How to include older siblings
  
- e) Other creative elements

Reception Afterwards? Where?

Finances: (Members free)

Amount paid

Or payment to be made when and how?

## SAMPLE HYMNS AND READINGS

From Singing the Living Tradition (Unitarian Hymnal)

#338 - "I Seek the Spirit of a Child"

#409 - "Sleep My Child"

#301 - "Touch the Earth, Reach the Sky"

### Opening Words: Suitable for a tiny infant

Welcome to earth, my child!  
We time-worn folk renew  
ourselves at your enchanted spring,  
As though we all begin  
again in you.

*C. Day Lewis*

### Our Child

Our child. Being of our life. Our being.  
We see *him/her* in *his/her* cradle, *his/her* sandbox, *his/her* classroom.  
We see *him/her*, and we smile for we see ourselves.  
But this is not ourselves, not our life, not our extension,  
not yet wholly our responsibility.  
Someone we can touch but cannot grasp.  
Someone we can hear but cannot know.  
Someone we can love but cannot own.  
Someone we can hold but cannot be.  
Our child. *He/She* is *him/herself*.

**Your Children Are Not Your Children**

Your children are not your children.  
 They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
 They come through you but not from you,  
 And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.  
 You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
 For they have their own thoughts.  
 You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
 For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
 Which you cannot visit,  
 Not even in your dreams.  
 You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.  
 For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
 You are the bows from which your children  
 As living arrows are sent forth.  
 The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
 And he bends you with his might  
 That his arrows may go swift and far.  
 Let your bending in the Archer's hand be for gladness,  
 For even as he loves the arrow that flies,  
 So he loves also the bow that is stable.

*Kahlil Gibran*

**Lucia at Birth**

Outrageous company to be born into,  
 Lunatics of a royal age long dead.  
 Then reckon time by what you are or do,  
 Not by the epochs of the war they spread.  
 Hark how they roar; but never turn your head.  
 Nothing will change them, let them not change you.

*Robert Graves*

**A Newborn Baby**

A baby is God's opinion that life should go on. Never will a time come when the most marvellous recent invention is as marvellous as a newborn baby. The finest of our precision watches, the most super colossal of our supercargo planes, don't compare with a newborn baby in the number and ingenuity of coils and springs, in the flow and change of chemical solutions, in timing devices and interrelated parts that are irreplaceable.

*Carl Sandburg*

**Whenever A Little Child Is Born**

Whenever a little child is born  
All night long a soft wind rocks the corn;  
One more buttercup wakes to the morn,  
Somewhere, somewhere.

One more rosebud shy will unfold,  
One more grass-blade push through the mold,  
One more bird-song the air will hold,  
Somewhere, somewhere.

*Agnes Carter Mason*

**The Art of Parenthood**

Of all the commentaries on the Scriptures," wrote John Donne,  
"good examples are the best."  
Our children are watching us live,  
and what we are shouts louder than anything we can say.  
When we encircle them with love they will be loving.  
When we are thankful for life's blessings they will be thankful.  
When we express friendliness they will be friendly.  
When we speak words of praise they will praise others.  
When we set an example of honesty our children will be honest.  
When we practice tolerance they will be tolerant.  
When we confront misfortune with a gallant spirit they will learn to live bravely.  
When our lives affirm our faith in the enduring realities of life they will rise above doubt  
and scepticism.  
We can't stand there pointing our finger to the heights we want our children to scale.  
We must start climbing, and they will follow!

*Wilfred Peterson*

**Wonder of Life**

Children are the most wholesome part of the human race, the sweetest, for they are  
freshest from the hand of God.  
Whimsical, ingenious, mischievous, they fill the world with joy and good humour. We  
adults live a life of apprehension as to what they will think of us; a life of defence against  
their terrifying energy; la life of hard work to live up to their great expectations. We put  
them to bed with a sense of relief - and greet them in the morning with delight and  
anticipation. We envy them the freshness of adventure and discovery of life.  
In all these ways, children add to the wonder of being alive. In all these ways, they help to  
keep us young.

*Herbert Hoover*

**Baby's First Day**

Wonder of all wonderment!  
Momentous moment when small form  
First feels life in itself.  
When new eyes open wide  
On old, old world.  
When tiny hands handle air;  
Touch tenderness and love.  
When ears first wake to sound  
And silent lips find voice and food.  
Soon newly-wakened baby wearies.  
World will keep  
Being born is quite enough  
For one short day.  
Baby hands rest; baby mouth yawns;  
Baby eyes close in sleep.

*Patricia White*

## OPTIONAL RITUALS

### 1. Water Sentences

I touch your young brow with water from old Nature's infinite water which touches every shore and nourishes every race and people. In so doing I dedicate your life and thought to the good of all humankind and to your own true growing.

(Child's name) \_\_\_\_\_, with this water, source and symbol of life, we express the dedication in which we all share.

The Lay Chaplain, naming the child as daughter or son of (parents' names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, shall dip his/her fingers or a flower into a bowl and say

(Child's name) \_\_\_\_\_,

I touch you with this flower, a symbol of life's beauty and with this water, a symbol of purity, on your brow, your lips and your hands, to dedicate your thoughts, your speech, and your deeds to our heritage of good.

May you serve with all your mind and soul the ideals of truth and beauty, and put on strength and nobility of purpose day by day as your life unfolds into the future, to the end that the true riches and blessings of life may be abundantly yours.

### 2. Flower Gift

As a sign and symbol of this dedication we give you this flower. May this gift to you symbolize the better world we would give you if we could, and the beauty which is always at the heart of truth and love.

The water with which we touch your forehead is a symbol of the pure life, and the flower we give, of the fragrance of good deeds.

### 3. Presenting Rosebud to Child

As a token I give you this rose that it may be a symbol of the beauty of life that we wish for you.

May you have joy in listening and joy in singing; joy in hearing and joy in seeing; joy in thinking and joy in learning. May your future be forever bright in play and in work, and in friendship and in love.

As the flower unfolds in natural beauty so also may your life unfold.

### 4. Rosebud Ceremony

We give the child a flower, which symbolizes the beauty of life. It is not for us to open the bud into a blossom, but we can give it the nurture and will enable it to unfold. No flower grows alone, apart from the sunshine and the rain, apart from the soil in which it lives. So too, no child grows alone.

May the flower then be a reminder of the beauty of fulfillment, and of the reward which comes from love and understanding from teaching and example.

### **5. Candle Lighting**

We light candles to symbolize hope and new life in the world. And from these candles of hope and new life I have lit a candle for you. Life passes from parent to child just as does light from one candle to another. One fires the other. As you have received life and light, may you pass it on when your turn comes. May your life, like your candle lighting, always be happy and cheerful.

I give your candle to your parents that they may hold your light as they nourish your life. Someday you will carry it for yourself. May the love you receive from your parents make you ready.

### **6. Blessings With The Four Elements**

## 5. CONCLUDING PRAYERS AND BENEDICTIONS

We lift our hearts in gratitude for life in its endless procession.

For the parents who gave us birth and who cared for us in the days of our childhood;

For the blessing of love and renewal that brings to us in our turn the gift of children.

May this child to whose care we have dedicated ourselves today, grow to be a courageous and compassionate seeker after truth and beauty, with a deep reverence for the making of the world in which our children will live. We pledge ourselves to work in hope and love to make of it a fairer and kindlier place for the generations yet to come.

The Lay Chaplain shall then invite the congregation to stand during the closing meditation or prayer.

For the gift of childhood, whose innocence and laughter keep the world young, we lift up thankful hearts. May this child whom we have accepted into our community of friendship and ideals, receive abundantly of the blessings of health, love, knowledge and wisdom, and render back richly into our common heritage for these benefits.

Remembering that those who come after us must inherit their world from us, we dedicate ourselves to our part in the building of a kinder, juster and happier human order.

Amen ~~~~~

*Jacob Trapp*

### **Now This Is the Day**

Our child,

Into the daylight

You will go out standing.

Preparing for your day.

Our child, it is your day.

This day.

May your roads be fulfilled.

In your thoughts may we live.

May we be the ones whom your thoughts will embrace.

May you help us all to finish our roads.

*Zuni Indians*

May the blessing of the light be with you always,  
Light without and light within.  
May the sun shine upon you and warm your heart  
Until it glows like a great fire  
So that others may feel the warmth of it.

And may the blessings of the rain be upon you,  
The sweet and tender rain,  
May it fall upon your spirit  
As when flowers spring up and fragrance fills the air

And may the blessings of the great rain  
Wash you clean and fair  
And may the storms always leave you stronger  
And more beautiful.

And when the rains are over  
May there be clear pools of water  
Made beautiful by the radiance of your light,  
As when a star shines beautiful in the night  
Pointing the way for all of us.

We pray that (*child's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ may bear his/her name with pride and that he will bring joy and honour to it and to all who love him/her. May he/she be cradled in affection and tutored in wisdom, that he/she may make for him/herself a special place among those who are dedicated to the transformation of the world into a community of peace and compassion and generosity of spirit. May his/hers be a life of joy and service for and among fellow human beings.

We give thanks for the gift and the promise of life as we dedicate this child to the tenderness of love, the tutelage of wisdom and the maturing of compassion. Let us all honour the trust of children by giving them, as they grow, the strength of good example and the courage of sustaining faith.

We are mindful that within each child there exists an immense potential that emerges as the years pass – and we realize with some apprehension that the quality of our own lives will determine how well this potential is realized in full bloom and flower. On this day of great promise, we dedicate ourselves to the children here presented, and to all children.

*Rev. Fred Cappuccino, Minister Emeritus,  
Lakeshore Unitarian Congregation (Montreal, Quebec)*

## **BENEDICTION**

We have dedicated these children. May we still more dedicate ourselves this day. May this occasion work its miracle in our own hearts, so that we may mould our lives more and more in accordance with the truth, beauty and goodness we hope for our children.

## Charges to Godparents / Sponsors and Siblings

### 1. CHARGE TO GODPARENTS

Lay Chaplain: In thinking about the future of your child you have chosen to name godparents who will be available to your child with love and caring as *he/she* grows. Will you now introduce the godparents.

*Parents respond:* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are the godparents we have chosen.

Lay Chaplain to the godparents: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as godparents, will you dedicate yourselves anew to that way of life which will fill this child's heart with memories of gladness and sense of divine love and mercy?

*Godparents respond:* We will

Lay Chaplain: Will you as godparents for this child continue to bear in mind your promise to befriend and guide and help this child as the need should arise?

*Godparents respond:* We will

### 2. CHARGE TO SPONSORS OR GODPARENTS

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, in the event that the parents of this child are prevented from discharging their responsibilities for *his/her* spiritual nurture, will you endeavour, to the best of your ability, to instruct *him/her*, by your teaching and example, in the way of reverence, love, and service, and to love *him/her* with an unselfish and patient love?

*Answer:* We will.

### 3. CHARGE TO SIBLING/S

You will be a special hero to this child. *He/she* will learn from you how to talk, play and to grow up. Will you do everything you can to make *him/her* happy?

Response: We will.

### OR

You will be *his/her* special hero if you earn that honour in *his/her* eyes. Will you undertake to be trustworthy examples to *him/her*, even as you help *him/her* to become *his/her* own special self?

Response: We will.

## 1. Child Dedication Service for Two Children

### GATHERING MUSIC

Recorded

### WELCOME, OPENING WORDS

We gather together in the family close circle out of reverence for the mystery of life revealed in the miracle of birth and childhood for a ceremony both ancient and timeless. Long before baptismal rites were adopted, it was the custom of many religious peoples to dedicate their children to the highest traditions of their faith.

Our [Unitarian Universalist] ceremony welcomes (*child's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_ and (*child's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_ into this religious community who pledge, together with their family and friends, to nurture them in the ideals of truth and love. We use the symbolism of water and flower to celebrate the freshness and unfolding nature of growth that is the right of each child. We recognize our responsibility for the care and nurture of all children, and for the world they will inherit. On behalf of all humanity, we therefore bid these children welcome.

### READING

#### Your Children Are Not Your Children

from "The Prophet" by Kahlil Gibran

### LIGHTING THE CHALICE

We light this chalice, sign of the life energy,  
the fire that fuels the dreams and hopes of humanity,  
in the life of these children and all children.

### CHILDREN'S CANDLES

From this chalice of our faith, I light these two new candles, in celebration of the uniqueness of each of these children, (*child's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_ and (*child's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_. May these flames symbolize the light in each of them that grows brighter with their growing.

### STORY FOR ALL AGES

Read story: "The Everything Seed" by Carole Martignacco

Pass Basket of Seeds to children, have each choose one, ask:

#### To children

What are you a seed for? If you were to blossom, what would your flower look like?

**To entire gathering**

It is yet to unfold how these children will enhance the world in which they grow. May we be mindful of the potential they hold, for they are the future into which we live. May we provide fertile soil for the growth and blossoming of these children and all children, and welcome the unique contributions of each of them in our world.

**PLEDGES OF SUPPORT**

So we have gathered together for this special event in *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_ and *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_'s life. I shall ask each of us to remember and affirm our responsibility to them and to all children. Our task is to give them a world of peace and justice, a commonwealth of goodness and hope. Our task is to share with them our ideals and longings, and to help them form their own.

And our joyful task is to learn from the zest and wonder with which children approach life, which we too often lose without their presence in our lives.

**1. COMMUNITY BLESSING**

Will you, the family and friends here present, take upon yourselves the privilege and responsibility to nurture the character and support the growth, freedom, well-being and spirit of these two children?

If so, please respond: We will.

Response: We will

**2. SIBLING BLESSING**

*(Sibling's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_, you have a different responsibility.

Brothers/Sisters are very important. You are a teacher, a companion, and very special friend to *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_ and *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_.

Will you, as their older brother/sister, promise to do all you can to positively influence your younger brother/sister and be a good role model. Will you to the best of your ability love and protect them and offer help when they turn to you?

If so, please respond: I will.

Response: I will.

**3. GRANDPARENTS' PLEDGE**

You are the grandparents of *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_ and *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_ and *(sibling's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_.

Do you pledge your support for them, to stand beside their parents and extend to their children your unconditional love, respect, and nurture?

Will you hold all three of these children in your heart as a most sacred charge, and continue to do all you can to contribute to their nurture and growth, to their well-being of body and mind, and to the blossoming of their spirits?

If so, please respond: We will.

Response: We will.

#### 4. PARENTS' PLEDGE

(Parents' first names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Names are important; it is by our names that each of us is acknowledged as an individual and called to live our own unique lives.

(Parents' first names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, please tell us the story of how you have chose names for these two children.

(Child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and (child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and (sibling's first name) \_\_\_\_\_.

To you is given the awesome privilege of being the givers and shapers of their lives, a process you are well on your way to accomplishing. Before you continue the challenge of their developing intelligence, their questioning minds, their unfolding wonder of self-hood, the unfolding of their unique personalities, and their increasing response to the world beyond your family circle.

As parents of these children, do you vow to the best of your abilities to work together as parents, to instruct, protect and help \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in learning and practice the principles of right living, to share with them your highest ideals and values, seeking always to help them become most fully themselves?

If so, please respond: We do.

#### RITUAL

##### Dedication Ceremony with Rose and Water

In the spirit of an age-old tradition, we will now dedicate

(child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and (child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_.

to the service of goodness, justice, and love and to lives enfolded in loving community.

*Pour water into bowl.*

Water is the source of life, without which nothing lives. It is the cleansing force, the powerful energy from which our thirst is quenched and all life on earth is renewed, refreshed.

*Hold rose for all to see.*

The rose is a symbol of growth and transformation. We use a flower to symbolize the unfolding of life, the process of ongoing change that occurs in the long journey through childhood into adulthood. This rose has been stripped of thorns to indicate that we seek to smooth the path and give time for gathering strength to face life's challenges as children mature. We will now bless each of these children in turn with this rose dipped in water.

### **Blessing of Child**

(Child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_, I bless your thoughts, your words, your feelings, your heart which is the spirit's center, and the work and play of your hands. With the touch of this water, ancient symbol of the source of life, and this flower, sign your unfolding life, I bless you and welcome you with love into this community of belonging. May all whose lives you touch be enriched by knowing you, and may you be blessed by others all the years of your life. May you do good to all whom you encounter, and may all do good to you.

### **Presentation of Dedication Certificates**

(Parents' first names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, as their parents, please accept these certificates into your safekeeping, so that at some future time when your children are grown, they may receive them back and know with what love and promise their lives were dedicated.

## **READING**

### **I Am A Child**

I am a child. All the world waits for my coming.  
All the earth watches with amazement  
To see what I shall become.  
The future hangs in the balance,  
For what I am the world of tomorrow will be.

I am a child. I have come into your world  
About which I knew nothing.  
Why I came, I knew not, How I came, I knew not.  
I am curious, I am full of wonder.

I am a child. You hold in you hands my destiny.  
You determine so much of whether I shall succeed or fail.  
Give me, I pray, those things that make for happiness.  
Train me, I beg you, in the ways of love and goodness.  
That I may be a blessing to the world.

**Extinguishing the Chalice, Presentation of Candles of Life**

Our hearts are full of joy and gratitude as we celebrate the mystery of life and growth in (child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and (child's first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and their brother/sister (sibling's first name) \_\_\_\_\_.

Let us remember, in dedicating our children that all children live in the world of our making, as we will someday live into the world they in turn create. We seek grace to love them wisely giving our strength and guarding them against our weaknesses. We would help them find their own fulfillment as we pass into their keeping the torch of life. This flame burns more brightly with each generation.

\*Hand candle to \_\_\_\_\_, and pass \_\_\_\_\_'s candle to parent.

**BENEDICTION**

May the spirit of life bless and keep you;  
 May you go forth into the world to live in peace,  
 May everything you touch turn to blessing,  
 And may love surround you everywhere you go.

Go now in peace to love and serve the world.

*Postlude:* Recorded Music

## 2. Naming Service / Celebration for the Welcoming of Infants

### OPENING READING

read by Grandparent

#### Your Children Are Not Your Children

Gibran

### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

#### 1. To the Gathering

This ceremony that we now participate in together expresses our feelings and needs of this day, and yet for centuries parents have brought their children to places of worship, places of sacredness and of meaning, in order that they may share their thanks giving and have their dedication witnessed by family and friends, and also the community at large.

This is why we are gathered; to share with

(parents' names) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ their wonder and joy, their commitment and dedication to this new girl/boy child with which they have been blessed.

Traditionally, the element of water has been used as a symbol, for all life has arisen from the waters, and it is through water that life is sustained as it flows forward like a river. Traditionally this is also a time to recognize the child by name, for it is by our names that each one of us is acknowledged as an individual, a unique and separate person with a life and dignity of his or her own. Our name begins to form our identity, to give shape and meaning to our lives. Our names can be our link with preceding generations.

This is a public celebration, shared by parents, friends and all who have gathered here, to mark the fact that all of us have a responsibility for the care and nurture of all children.

It is our task to work for a world of peace and justice in which they may have the freedom to grow and find fulfillment. It is our task to share with them our ideals, our hopes, and to help them develop their own.

It is our task to learn from them the zest and wonder in life with which all children come into this world.

## 2. To the Parents

Let me speak to you now as the parents of this child. In presenting this child at this ceremony, you invite all of us to share with you, in your joy and also to support you in your dedication, as you undertake to help with love and guidance the fullest possible unfolding of the personality of this girl/boy child entrusted to your care.

That undertaking will not always be an easy one. The time may come when you may be called upon to sacrifice ambitions, deny yourselves pleasure, possibly set aside dreams, in order that the child may tread the more surely the onward path of life. Though the choices be difficult and challenging, you accept this service to another, whose life has been intertwined with yours, knowing that your own lives will be the richer and fuller in consequence.

*(Lay Chaplain asks the parents to speak their pledge.)*

### Parents

We promise that by example and affection,  
we will to the best of our ability  
help you to an appreciation of truth and beauty,  
to grow to be an individual of strength and integrity,  
Of caring and of love.

I now will ask that *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_'s godparents please stand

*(Godparents' names)* \_\_\_\_\_ will join with you in responding, "We do." to this question.

Do you now promise that by example and affection, you will to the best of your ability help this child to an appreciation of truth and beauty, to grow to be an individual of strength and integrity, caring and love ?

Response: **We do.**

## THE NAMING

The Lay Chaplain takes the child.

"What name do you give this child?" \_\_\_\_\_

Your parents have given you the name of *(child's first name)* \_\_\_\_\_.

You have been given the name *(child's middle name)* \_\_\_\_\_

These are the names you will be known by, and the names you will live into. They are good names.

## **WATER CEREMONY**

*(child's full name)* \_\_\_\_\_,  
with this water, source and symbol of life,  
we express the dedication in which we all share.  
May the blessings of an understanding heart,  
strength and integrity of purpose,  
and love received and given  
be yours and remain with you  
as you go forward into ever fuller life.

## **CONCLUDING PRAYER**

We lift our hearts in gratitude  
for life in its endless procession  
for the parents that gave us birth  
and who cared for us in the days of our childhood;  
for the blessing of love and renewal  
that brings to us in our turn the gift of children

May this child to whose care  
we have dedicated ourselves today  
grow to be a courageous and compassionate seeker after truth and beauty,  
with a deep reverence for this earth that nurtures and sustains us all.

In this our prayer we acknowledge our share  
In the responsibility for making of this world in which our children will live.  
We pledge ourselves to work in hope and love  
To make of it a fairer and a kindlier place  
For the generations yet to come.  
Amen/So be it.

Go now and walk the ways of this world and may your days be good and long upon this earth.

### 3. A Christening Service

**Lay Chaplain:** Every child is born into the world dependent upon the love and care of others. Each is entitled to be received by loving arms, and to be guided with intelligent and sympathetic concern. Each child has a right to knowledge of its human heritage, and of its obligations to fellow members of the human race.

**To the Parents:**

Parents, in bringing this child to be welcomed through this congregation into the fellowship of humankind, you acknowledge *his/her* need for loving care, and your determination to guide *him/her* with understanding. Do you then promise, to the best of your ability, by your example, your precept, and your love, to lead *him/her* in the way of righteousness, beauty and of truth?

**Answer:** I do

**Lay Chaplain:** Name this child.

A parent responds.

**Lay Chaplain:** \_\_\_\_\_, I welcome you into the fellowship of all souls, and dedicate you to a life of love and service.

**To the congregation:**

In welcoming this child, we who are present accept responsibility also. May we be strong in patience and discernment, giving of ourselves to *his/her* growth in wisdom and love. As we receive this child, we wish for *him/her* the fulfillment of a life strong in duty, and radiant with purpose, hope and joy.

#### 4. A Naming Celebration

Lay Chaplain: In welcoming a child, we celebrate one of the continuing miracles, the miracle of birth. Though we may be the instruments of the child's becoming, the wonder of it transcends our understanding.

We rejoice that this child has been born into the concern and care not only of his/her parents, but also of this community.

By our presence today, we participate in a ceremony observed in differing ways by many cultures, and through countless generations, which recognizes the dignity and individuality of a new person, and which accords *him/her*, *his/her* own place among human beings.

#### CHARGE TO PARENTS

Lay Chaplain: Friends, in bringing your child to be names before this congregation, you acknowledge that he/she is more than you own creation and your private concern, and you declare your desire and purpose to raise him/her according to your best endeavour in the faith and values of liberal religion, of this church, and of the church universal. To this end, will you teach him/her, by precept and example, to walk in ways of truth, righteousness, and love?

Response: I will

To godparents, if any:

Will you as godparent to this child trust, befriend, and love him/her?

Response: I will

Lay Chaplain: In recognizing this child, we, as members of this congregation acknowledge our interest in and responsibility for him/her. We join his/her parents in providing for his/her religious nurture, and, with the larger community, we undertake to maintain healthful, wholesome surroundings for his/her growth and education.

Lay Chaplain to the parents: Name this child.

A parent having responded, the Lay Chaplain dips fingers in water and places them on the child's head saying \_\_\_\_\_ by this name shall you be known, and your personal dignity and individuality be recognized.

The water with which I touch your brow is a symbol of the purity and innocence in which your life begins.

Giving the child a flower, the Lay Chaplain says:

This flower is a token from this church of our affection and respect.

## Weddings

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

1. work with a couple to design a ceremony
2. interview the couple appropriately
3. have resources for further research for weddings.

### INTRODUCTION

A wedding is a sacred ceremony, a public witness to the commitment and vows of a private relationship. The couple moves through a rite of passage from unmarried into married, recognized legally in each province in Canada by licensed officiants.

#### **Couples coming from out-of-country**

Same sex couples coming to Canada from other countries need to be made aware that even if their marriage is not recognized at home, this is a legal marriage. Should their marriage end, one partner needs to reside in Canada for one year in order to be divorced.

#### **Changing Realities and Needs**

While a marriage ceremony is a universal tradition from ancient times, it is important to keep current with changing realities and needs. Contemporary couples have spiritual and family needs to be recognized in ceremony. More and more couples live together before marriage, so their wedding ceremony needs to recognize the foundation they have been building for some years already. More and more couples bring children into their marriage, and the families need to find ways to welcome, recognize and strengthen the blending family. More people are marrying again.

#### **Ceremonies of Union**

There are also couples who want to affirm their relationship spiritually, with their family and friends present, but without a legal component ( i.e. signing documents, pronouncement). These are Ceremonies of Union; perhaps the couple has already married privately. If this is the desired ceremony, it needs to be stated that this is not a legal wedding. Unitarian Church of Vancouver has a lovely Ceremony of Union Book with certificates.

#### **Couples Coming from Different Cultural and Faith Traditions**

More couples from different cultural and faith traditions are marrying, and it is important to explore and honour spiritual and cultural diversity in wedding ceremonies. In the case of Hindu or Muslim /Western marriage ceremonies, it is common to co-officiate, with sensitivity and respect. This opportunity to learn different faith traditions is a fascinating aspect to Lay Chaplains.

## **Mandatory Components**

There are four mandatory components to a legal wedding:

### **1. DECLARATIONS**

Each partner states that they come to this marriage free and willing.

### **2. EXCHANGE OF VOWS**

Hopefully the couple will create their own vows.

### **3. SIGNING**

Marriage licence and the marriage register that churches record and hold for the province.

### **4. PRONOUNCEMENT**

By an officiant licensed by the Province to perform legal marriages.

Beyond these components there is room for creativity, ritual, beauty, spirituality that is personal and meaningful to the couple.

## Same Sex Weddings

How are same sex weddings like and different from ceremonies for heterosexual couples?

The ceremonies themselves may simply involve new language, changes in vocabulary, e.g. “partner” or “spouse”, changes in pronouns, and some of the traditions of procession, wedding parties and so on. Ask the couple about their preferred language and movements.

### **There are other factors to be aware of.**

First, now that all couples are able to marry legally throughout Canada, religious and secular officiants alike need to be positive and comfortable in performing this rite of passage. If you have hesitations or attitudinal issues, it is important to become clear, or else invite a colleague to perform the ceremony.

### **Other issues to address**

Families’ support or lack of support for the couple and for their marriage will affect the level of anxiety among the participants and the need for the Lay Chaplain to discern and address the emotional climate.

When couples come to us from Asia or United States where they cannot marry legally, ask, rather than assume, about their ability to live freely and openly at home.

Make sure the non-Canadian couples are aware that should their marriage end, one partner must reside in Canada for a year in order to apply for divorce.

Often a same-sex couple has already been living in a committed relationship for several years.

Unlike heterosexual couples who can choose the kind of wedding they want, same-sex couples from elsewhere usually come by themselves or with their witnesses: yet they are not eloping. In planning the ceremony, you might suggest ways to invite the presence of their family and friends, through blessings, photos, candles; and integrate these suggestions into the ceremony. The venue can be smaller, more intimate. The ceremony can be informal.

### **Planning a wedding ceremony with a couple from USA or Asia**

As you won’t meet in person until shortly before the wedding, the co-creation process is done by long distance phone and email. When the couple arrives and you meet together, the interview will have a different focus from an interview with a local couple.

The marriage might be celebrated when they return. It is good to invite conversation about their plans to include their family and friends once they are home again.

**Sample Wedding Interview**

Introduce self as Lay Chaplain, a member of \_\_\_\_\_ Unitarian congregation and not a pastor or minister, nor a counsellor.

Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Wedding: (get postal code for the marriage licence) \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal: Y/N: Date and Time: Booked?

Name Telephone: h w

Name Telephone: h w

Address after ceremony

Family name(s) after marriage:

witness: attendants: (# )

witness: attendants: (# )

Ring bearer:

Flower girl:

Other participants:

Parents attending: 1's: 2's

Location of service: (do I need a map?)

(Fees: Reminder that fees, together with the marriage licence, should be received by the church office preferably a week before the ceremony, but definitely not later than three days before.)

**WEDDING: Names:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **INTERVIEW WITH THE COUPLE**

How did you decide to come here for your wedding?

What significance has the ceremony for you?

How do you feel about getting married?

or: How do you think marriage will make a difference in your relationship?

How did you meet each other?

How long have you known each other?

Do you presently live together or apart? If together, for how long?

Have either of you been married previously?

Do either of you have children?

Do you know each others' families?

Are there any special family situations? (Divorces, separations, recent death)

Ask if the couple would like Lay Chaplain to name absent family members in the ceremony.

Ask about current spirituality and cultural backgrounds, and whether the couple wants to include elements of culture and spirituality in their ceremony.

There are important issues to discuss between yourselves before marrying. If you wish a referral to assist you in discussing issues around sexuality/fidelity/Family/Children,

Finances, significant past experiences, I can offer you some resources?

If there are concerns, counselling or marriage preparation courses. e.g.

Marriage Project: 604-433 6416, WEB:[www3.telus.net/tmp](http://www3.telus.net/tmp)

\*NB: Selections below may need to be updated to match the new wedding book

**WEDDING:**        **Names:** \_\_\_\_\_

Procedures for the wedding:        formal / informal    - see guidelines in booklet

(Lay Chaplain dress)

email addresses:

**FORMAT OF THE WEDDING**

**Prelude**

**Procession**

**OPENING WORDS**

**Selection:** \_\_\_\_\_

**WELCOME**

\*\*\* I will begin with a welcoming and an invitation to take a few photographs now, then refrain until the signing of the registry        Y/N

Name absent family members if desired.

Cell phones off, please.

**Statement of Purpose:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The Presentation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Blessings from Family and Friends:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interlude: readings** \_\_\_\_\_

**music** \_\_\_\_\_

**other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Optional (Candle-lighting ceremony - part I)**

**\*\* The Declarations (mandatory in some form): (as is)**

**Preface to the vows: (as is) Y/N**

Exchange of the Vows: \_\_\_\_\_

Repeat after officiant? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Recognition of children: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

The Ring Ceremony: \_\_\_\_\_

Exchange of Rings: \_\_\_\_\_

Repeat after Lay Chaplain? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

The Reading (one or more): \_\_\_\_\_

Wine Cup Ceremony: Yes \_\_\_\_ If Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Candle Lighting Ceremony: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Signing the Marriage Licence and Marriage Register

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

\*\* The Pronouncement (mandatory in some form): 1, 2, 3

Kiss: yes/no How shall I introduce it?

Presentation of the Newly Married Couple Y/N (Change of family name?)

Prayer of Aspiration/Hopes for the Future: Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

If yes: (selection) \_\_\_\_\_

Closing Words: \_\_\_\_\_

Music: \_\_\_\_\_

**Details of the Service**

Is a Bride's room available?

Music? Musicians? Soloist?

Other co-officiants? Other participants?

Number of guests expected:

## HOUSEKEEPING

If service is at another location:

1. Request a table and chair for the signing of the licence and registry
2. If other special events are included in service (candle-lighting, cup ceremony) ensure you bring them, and the tables are there
3. Request that the bar not be open (or serve alcohol) until after the service
4. If wedding is outdoors: plans for rain? Portable table and chair for signing.
5. Photography: prefer no flash. Ask photographer not to interfere with sacred ceremony. Give community a chance to take pictures at first, then refrain until the end.
6. Ensure sound system is working.

## FORMAT OF THE SERVICE (ORDER OF SERVICE)

- Processional
- Tibetan Singing Bowl / Music (call to awareness)
- Opening words
- Welcome
- Reminder: (cell phones, pagers) – photo opportunity
- Statement of Purpose
- Family Blessing
- Community Blessing
- Candle-lighting (part one), Wine Cup/Flower Exchange
- Reading (who)
- Declarations
- Preface to Vows
- Vows – Informal / Formal
- Ring Ceremony
- Candle-lighting (part two)
- Signing Licence/Registry/Photo opportunity (witnesses?)
- Pronouncement
- The Kiss
- Presentation
- Blessing / Benediction / Recessional

**Sample Lay Chaplain's Checklist**

- Religious considerations
- Any traditions or cultural considerations?
- Reception: Where is it?
- Music plans: Names of performers and locations
- Professional photographer or videographer?
- Receiving line?
- Knock-down crew in place?
- Details of the bridal party
- Who is carrying the rings
- Flower girls/ring bearers (ages)
- Parents -all mobile or ambulatory?
- Any recognitions of those not present?
- Any children from previous marriages
- Vows, remembered or repeated?
- Incense, candles, etc, who brings them?
- Check sightlines after bridal party assembled (if large)
- Parking/ Arrival times - confirm departure plans
- What to wear? Gown, Stole, Outdoor wear.
- Licence: family of origin information filled out in advance?
- Have fun.

**Writing their own vows**

Suggest to couples when writing their own vows to consider these three questions:

1. Why do you want to get married?
2. What do you want from your marriage?
3. What will you promise your partner?

**Service Copy**

Lay chaplains may give the couple a copy of the wedding service.

## Wedding Ceremony

### PREAMBLE

What follows are several samples of how a Wedding Ceremony might flow. The content of the sections can be applied to many ceremonies

\*: asterisk indicates material specific to special cultural/spiritual traditions

### Jewish and Unitarian Wedding Ceremony

#### GATHERING MUSIC, PRELUDE

Processional, Attendants

(Attendants' names) \_\_\_\_\_

Gathering beneath the Huppah

#### I. OPENING

##### A) WELCOME

On behalf of (first name) \_\_\_\_\_ and (first name) \_\_\_\_\_, and their families, we extend a warm welcome to all of you, and we are all elated that you could join us for this joyous marriage celebration.

I am (Lay Chaplain's name) \_\_\_\_\_ of the [Unitarian congregation] and it is my deep pleasure to be here with you this evening to celebrate the wedding of

(Names of couple)

They have carefully designed this ceremony to honour their uniquely combined values and respective religious and cultural traditions.

Dear (couple's first names)

Today you are surrounded by your friends and family, all of whom are gathered to witness your vows of marriage and to share in the joy and sanctity of this occasion.

(To the congregation)

(Couple's first names) come together from different backgrounds and experiences. Through their marriage, they do not leave those behind, but instead, form a new family that will broaden the circle of love and understanding in this world.

##### B) OPENING REMARKS

Marriage is the ultimate friendship, the promise of a life made larger and more meaningful than our individual existence.

Yet, bringing together two adult lives is a delicate and rich work. (*couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have been constant partners in a search to both understand and celebrate your differences. Today is an occasion for rejoicing not only because you wed as husband and wife, but also from your whole and independent lives, you wed your personal histories and religious traditions as well. You come to this day, to celebrate that which is greater than your differences – your love for one another.

(*Couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, marriage asks much of us: devotion, honesty, fidelity, patience, and trust. But for those who are willing to offer their generosity and understanding – as well as their love – it also gives much in return. For no human ties are more tender, and no promises more sacred, than those which you will assume today.

### C) READINGS

1. Shakespeare Sonnet 116

2. I Corinthians 13

## II. CEREMONIAL ACTS

### A) Unity Candle

The candles before us symbolize the union of your marriage. The two outer candles represent both of you as individuals and members of separate families. The center candle represents the unity of your new family, distinct from but still part of your original families.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said: "From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being."

In this spirit, (*couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, take your individual candles and light together a third candle that symbolizes your marital bond.

(*Couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_) light the middle candle.)

As the flame of this marriage candle enhances the light of the other two, so may the flame of your marriage enhance the lives of each of you. As each has contributed light to this central flame, so may you each bring to your marriage gifts and skills that are yours alone, creating a union that will brighten the lives of all around you.

### \* B) Drinking of Wine

Wine is a universal symbol of joy, of the richness of life and the sweetness of love. It is appropriate, therefore, on this happy occasion that you toast and sanctify your new lives together with this ancient symbol. In sharing this cup, you are pledging to share all that the future may bring. (*Drink wine.*)

As you have shared this wine, so may you draw happiness, comfort, and fulfillment from your own cup of life. May you find life's joys heightened, its bitterness sweetened, and all things hallowed by true companionship and love.

### C) Parents' Blessing

Parents, please stand.

The marriage ceremony includes more than a man and a woman making themselves husband and wife. They who give a daughter and they who give a son become one family. So the miracle of love spreads its ties throughout the Earth. Do you now, as parents, pledge your blessing and continued encouragement to these two, as today they draw together your separate families into a new circle of love and kinship?

Please respond: **We will.**

Response: We will.

### D) Community Blessing

Friends as well as family have the power to bless a relationship, with their understanding of its needs and their affirmation of its growth. (*couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have chosen the people here to share this special moment in their lives.

Will you, in turn, offer them your support as they encounter the challenges of marriage, and strengthen them by your affection and sympathy, and will you rejoice with them as they discover love's deepening happiness?

If so, please respond: **We will.**

Response: We will.

## Marriage Act

### A) Statement of intention and affirmation

I will now read an excerpt from the wedding contract that (*couple's first names*) signed earlier today. It is displayed here in this room.

*"We promise to be ever accepting of one another while treasuring each other's individuality; to comfort and support each other through life's disappointments and sorrows; to revel and share in each other's joys and accomplishments; to share our hopes and dreams; to strive for an intimacy that will allow us to accomplish this promise and permit us to become the persons we are yet to be.*

*We vow to establish a home open to all of life's potential; a home filled with respect for all people; a home based on love and understanding. May we live each day as the first, the last, the only day we will have with each other. All of this we take upon ourselves as valid and binding."*

(Spouse), do you now declare your willingness to take (*spouse's first name*) to be your [spouse], affirming that you know of no reason why you should not be lawfully joined in marriage?

Response: **I do.**

(Spouse), do you now declare your willingness to take (*spouse*), to be your [spouse], affirming that you know of no reason why you should not be lawfully joined in marriage?

Response: **I do.**

### **B) Vows**

(*Couple's first names*), you have freely decided to commit yourselves to each other in a close and continuing relationship in which your lives will flow together. In the presence of these witnesses, you will now exchange your pledges of that commitment. No other vows are more sacred than those you are about to make.

(*Spouse's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_, before family and friends, I commit to you my love.  
I pledge to share my life truthfully with you and to seek to understand you more deeply every day.  
I promise to honour and cherish you; to encourage you through all our life's changes; and to nourish and strengthen the love between us, as long as we both shall live.

And now, (*spouse's first name*) \_\_\_\_\_, before family and friends, I commit to you my love.  
I pledge to share my life truthfully with you and to seek to understand you more deeply every day.  
I promise to honour and cherish you; to encourage you through all our life's changes; and to nourish and strengthen the love between us, as long as we both shall live.

### **C) Exchange of Rings**

A circle has always symbolized unity and completeness. In the form of a ring, it especially symbolizes marriage, which has no end. We pray that your marriage will always be encircled, without end, by your love for one another.

(*Spouse's first name*), place this ring on (*spouse's first name*) finger and repeat after me.  
(*Spouse's first name*), with this ring, I marry you, and pledge to you my faithful love.  
(*Spouse's first name*), place this ring on (*spouse's first name*)'s finger and repeat after me.  
(*Spouse's first name*), with this ring, I marry you, and pledge to you my faithful love.

### **\*D) Proclamation of Marriage**

In as much as these two have lovingly exchanged vows and rings and written and signed their Ketuba, it is now my great honour and privilege to introduce to you, (*Couple's full names*), partners in marriage.

## E) Ceremonial Kiss

## IV. CLOSING

**\*Blessing of the marriage/Benediction**

May God be with you and help you grow together.

May you enjoy the peace of home, of mind, and of heart together.

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

May the Lord lift his countenance upon you and  
give you peace this day and all your days.

*Amen.*

**\* BREAKING OF THE GLASS**

The breaking of this glass reminds us that even in the midst of all our rejoicing, we must still be mindful of all the want, pain, and suffering that exist elsewhere in the world.

The frailty of this glass also suggests the frailty of human relationships. Even the strongest love is subject to disintegration. This glass, then, is broken to “protect” this marriage with an implied prayer, “As this glass shatters, so may our marriage never break.”

*(Spouse or Couple – crush the glass.)*

*Mazeltov!*

**\*OPTIONAL PASSAGES**

The Ba'al Shem Tov said: “From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other, their streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.” In this spirit, *(Couple's first names)* take your individual candles and light together a third candle that symbolizes your marital bond.

May you find in each other  
companionship as well as love,  
understanding as well as compassion,  
challenge as well as agreement.

May your friends and families,  
those present today and those unable to be here,  
continue to rejoice in the love that has united you.

And may your days be blessed,  
and those of your family.

## Co-officiating

Example of co-officiating with a religious person from another faith tradition.

### SAMPLE UNITARIAN/WICCAN HAND FAST/WEDDING CEREMONY

Co-Officiants: Unitarian Lay Chaplain, Wiccan Priest

The officiants will arrive 45 minutes early. **Wiccan Priest** begins preparing the space (Stage 1). The string quartet will arrive around 30 minutes early and will be playing as the guests arrive and during the preparing of the space (Stage 2). Guests are greeted by the groomsmen, who distribute the programs. The guests will be greeted by **Wiccan Priest** and asked to take their places. They will be asked to follow wedding etiquette (turn off cell phones, refrain from smoking, etc.)

Preparation of the space (Stage 2)

\***Wiccan Priest:** cleanses the circle with a candle and a broom.

\***Lay Chaplain:** assists him in cleansing the space with water.

Both officiants go to the front by the altar.

Music: "Air on G String" Bach

Groomsmen walk down the aisle and take their places.

[Spouse] walks down the aisle with his mother and seats her, and takes his place.

Flower girl walks in strewing flower petals, followed by bridesmaids

Music: Cannon "D" Pachabel

Bride and her father walk down the aisle to the front, then her father sits.

## OPENING WORDS

**Lay Chaplain:** The most wonderful of all things in life is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvellous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of Divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.

*Hugh Walpole*

## WELCOMING AND INTRODUCTION

**Lay Chaplain:** Good afternoon and welcome! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a Lay Chaplain from the Unitarian Congregation of \_\_\_\_\_.

Along with (**Wiccan Priest's** name), who is a legal handfastor from \_\_\_\_\_, it is our honour to co-officiate at today's wedding ceremony between (*couple's first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

We who gather here today share with (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.) their celebration of this memorable moment in their lives. The marriage between them is not created by you or by us. It is created by themselves, through the mutual love and commitment they already share, and will now put into words and in the presence of us all.

(*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.) want to acknowledge and honour their families – the members of the (*Spouse's last name*) family and members of the (*Spouse's last name*) family. Families can be sources of our strength, the origins from which we grow, places of refuge and inspiration.

When two people come together as (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_) have done, ready to create a new family of their own, they also bring together their ancestors past and present. In so doing they hope that new friendships will grow, and the families of all will be enriched.

**Wiccan Priest:** (*will introduce himself and will convey the idea that the guests are participants*). Maybe practices a “We do” or “You betcha”.

**Wiccan Priest** will then introduce a friend of the wedding couple, who will share with us a sonnet by William Shakespeare.

## READING

**William Shakespeare: Sonnet 116**

### STATEMENT OF INTENT

Charge to the Couple

**Lay Chaplain:** (Spouse's full name) \_\_\_\_\_, do you now declare your willingness to take (spouse's full name) to be your [spouse]? If so, please respond “I do”.

**Response:** I do.

**Lay Chaplain:** (Spouse's full name) \_\_\_\_\_, do you now declare your willingness to take (spouse's full name), to be your [spouse]? If so, please respond “I do”.

**Respond:** I do.

Charge to their Families and their Community. **Wiccan Priest:** (asks their families and their community to give their blessings to the marriage)

**Response:** We do.

### The Nature of Marriage

**Lay Chaplain:** (*couple's first names \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_*.) you have shared with me your thoughts and hopes and dreams about your marriage, knowing that the commitment you express today in front of your families and friends is an outer expression of a commitment which has been growing between you over these past several years. Today's declaration serves as an official beginning of your own family, to which there will be added other members over the years. Today's ceremony serves as an acknowledgement that the search is over, you have found each other and have discovered and cultivated a love for each other, you have grown to be each other's best friends. Out of this relationship came your decision to choose each other as life mates. You have developed the foundation of your relationship – you will continue to discover things about each other as the years go by, and you will continue to grow in each other's love if you pay attention to each other during all the changes that life brings.

Today's ceremony is a public celebration of your private relationship. It is a time to celebrate and rejoice in your love for each other. After the festivities of this celebration are over, it will be your task to take the ideas and expressions that you have chosen in words and symbols and actions in this, your wedding ceremony and learn how to incorporate that commitment to each other into your daily lives together. You have a lifetime to learn how to do that!

Wilfred Arlan Peterson has a few suggestions about how to do this in his piece entitled.

### Reading: The Art of a Good Marriage

A good marriage must be created

In marriage the little things are the big things.

It is never being too old to hold hands

It is never going to sleep angry

It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives

It is standing together and facing the world

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family

It is speaking words of appreciation

And demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget

It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful

It is not only marrying the right person, it is being the right partner.

May you find strength and the insight and the love to find the ways to sustain your commitment to each other during the years that lie ahead.

**\*THE NATURE OF HAND FASTING**

**Wiccan Priest:** describes the nature of hand fasting as he ties the couple's wrists.

**Wiccan Priest:** I invite you to exchange your vows.

**VOWS - (READ FROM SCROLL)**

**Spouse:** Before these witnesses, this is my solemn promise  
to love you and hold you always as my partner,  
to stand beside you in good times and bad  
because my love is so great  
and your presence such a miracle;  
to be tender with you and fierce with you;  
to nourish you with my strength;  
to go with you through all the changings of age;  
whatever the sorrows or losses;  
until we become true spirits in the end.

**Spouse:** Before these witnesses, this is my solemn promise  
to love you and hold you always as my partner;  
to stand beside you in good times and bad  
because my love is so great  
and your presence such a miracle  
to be tender with you and fierce with you;  
to nourish you with my strength;  
to go with you through all the changings of age;  
whatever the sorrows or losses;  
until we become true spirits in the end.

**Couple: (turning to their community)**  
We promise to take each other as our life partner  
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  
till death do us part.

## EXCHANGE OF RINGS

**Lay Chaplain:** These rings you have chosen because they hold special significance for you. A ring is a circle. A circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It represents wholeness and peace. In the form of a ring it is the accepted token of marriage. By the use of this ring you express in visible form the unbroken circle of your love, in which, wherever you go you will always return to your shared life together.

**Lay Chaplain:** (Spouse's first name) \_\_\_\_\_, please repeat after me.

**Spouse:** (Spouse's first name) \_\_\_\_\_, I give you this ring as a sign and measure of my love. From this day forward, your every breath shall be surrounded by my love.

**Lay Chaplain:** (Spouse's first name) \_\_\_\_\_, please repeat after me.

**Spouse:** (Spouse's first name) \_\_\_\_\_, I give you this ring as a sign and measure of my love. From this day forward. your every breath shall be surrounded by my love.

## PRONOUNCEMENT

**Lay Chaplain:** Since you, (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_.) have joined yourselves in marriage and have signified your commitment to each other in the joining of hands, and exchanging of vows and rings, you are now and henceforward [spouse] and [spouse].

## KISS

**Lay Chaplain:** You may now seal your wedding with a kiss. (*Couple kisses*)

## \*CUTTING THE BONDS

**Wiccan Priest** cuts the chord between [spouse] and [spouse]. They continue holding hands.

## Closing Blessings to the Couple

**\*Wiccan Priest** will give a blessing to the couple, invoking the celestial blessings, touching on the interconnectedness of all things.

**Lay Chaplain:** (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_.) you are beginning a journey together that will take you to many unexpected places in your lives. There will be times when that path will be uphill and hard – at those times you will be guides for each other, supporting, loving and giving strength. May there be wisdom in your support, openness in your loving and gentleness in your strength. At other times, the way will be beautiful and easy. May you share in each other's joy, rejoice in each other's being. May you learn to cherish the spaces between you, each preserving the other's integrity and growth and may you balance the spaces with the closeness that nurtures and encourages. May your lives together be rich and full, as you go on living and loving together.

May the home that you share, the home that is created between the two of you wherever it may be, may it be a place where all who enter in are renewed, a place for growing and for laughter, for hope and for strength for all who are entrusted to your care.

May no person be alien to your compassion. May there be a harmonious blending of your family and friends, and extend the connections love makes into the world. May your larger family be the family of all human kind. And may those who are nearest and dearest to you be constantly enriched by the beauty of and the bounty of your love for one another. I ask these blessings on your marriage and on your home. Giver of life and love we give thanks for the wedding of (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.) - may it receive all of our blessings. Amen.

### **\*JUMPING THE BROOM**

While holding hands, the couple walk down the pathway, and while the **Wiccan Priest** holds the broom, they jump the broom together.

### **SIGNING THE REGISTER AND LICENCE**

**Lay Chaplain** announces that we will now have the signing of the licence and register, and that we will return for the conclusion of the ceremony.

(The wedding party then walks along the path with the officiants leading. The signing is completed inside, with two witnesses. The officiants then lead the way and the wedding party returns to their place at the altar.) Music plays until the wedding party returns.

### **INTRODUCTION OF THE COUPLE**

**Lay Chaplain:** It gives me great pleasure to present to you our newly married couple, (*couple's first and last names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_).

### **WINE BLESSING**

**Wiccan Priest** will do a wine blessing at the altar.  
Couple each drink from the blessed glass of wine.

**CLOSING WORDS**

**Lay Chaplain:** Let me close the wedding ceremony with an Irish Blessing  
(*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_).

May your marriage bring hope and happiness your way.

May your joys be as bright as the morning  
and your sorrows merely be shadows that fade in the sunlight of love.

May you have enough happiness to keep your lives sweet,

Enough trials to keep your marriage strong,

Enough sorrow to keep you both human,

Enough success to keep you both eager,

Enough friends to give you comfort,

Enough faith and courage in yourselves to vanish sadness,

Enough wealth to meet your needs,

And one thing more

Enough determination to make each day a more wonderful day than the one before!

So be it!

And so concludes the wedding of (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_).

Now on to the rest of the celebration!

**\*SABRE AND THE CHAMPAGNE**

The groom's friend opens a bottle of champagne with a sabre and champagne is then distributed to all the guests and the wedding party. Toast to the Happy Couple. The MC introduces himself and leads a toast to the happy couple. All toast.

### 3. Unitarian Wedding Service

#### OPENING WORDS

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to minister to each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in silent unspoken memories.

*George Eliot*

#### INTRODUCTION OF LAY CHAPLAIN

Welcome to this special place and this special time.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am a Lay Chaplain for (name of Unitarian Community).

It is my honour to officiate at today's wedding service

between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

On this memorable occasion, many of you may want to capture this event on film.

We ask that you do not take flash photo's during the vows.

#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We who gather here today share with (*couple's first names* \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_), their celebration of a memorable moment in their lives. The marriage between them is not created by you or by me. It is created by themselves, through the mutual love and commitment they already share, and will now put into words in the presence of all of us. It is good that their relatives and friends should be present to rejoice with them; to hear their vows; to extend their good wishes; and to be reminded of the loves and commitments that are a part of their own lives as well.

#### THE DECLARATIONS

(*Spouse's first name*), do you now declare your willingness to take (*Spouse's first name*) to be your [spouse]?

Response: I do.

(*Spouse's first name*), do you now declare your willingness to take (*Spouse's first name*), to be your [spouse]?

Response: I do.

## THE READING

### Respect For One Another

To know one another cannot mean to know everything about each other; it means to feel mutual affection and confidence, and to believe in one another. We must not try to force our way into the personality of another. No one has a right to say to another: "because we belong to each other as we do, I have a right to know all your thoughts." All demands of this sort are foolish and unwholesome. In this matter giving is the only valuable process; it is only giving that stimulates. Impart as much as you can of your spiritual being to those who are on the road with you, and accept as something precious what comes back to you from them.

*by Albert Schweitzer (from Memories of Childhood and Youth)*

## COMMITMENT FROM THE COMMUNITY

Will the family and friends please stand.

Lay Chaplain: A marriage is above all else an intimate relationship between two persons. But it also has its wider ramifications into the lives of relatives and friends, and of the community at large. Do you who are here assembled pledge your support to *(Couple's first names)* in the commitment that they celebrate today?

If so, please respond "We do."

Response: We do.

## PREFACE TO THE VOWS

The vows through which you accept each other as husband and wife have no hidden power within themselves. Only to the extent that they express in words, your continuing intention and commitment do they have meaning.

In a world where the pressures pushing people apart often seem stronger than those drawing people together, your commitment to each other will need to be re-expressed in many different ways in the coming days, months and years. The expression in today's vows is simply a visible milestone in your journey together.

I invite you now to join hands as you repeat your vows.

The hand offered by each of you is an extension of self, just as is your mutual love. Cherish the touch, for you touch not only your own, but another life. Be sensitive to its pulse. Seek always to understand and respect its rhythm.

### EXCHANGE OF VOWS

In the presence of these witnesses,  
I, \_\_\_\_\_ now take you, \_\_\_\_\_  
to be my [spouse]  
to have and to hold  
from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
in sorrow or in joy,  
to love and to cherish  
as long as we both shall live.

### THE RING CEREMONY

(Rings are given to the Lay Chaplain)

May your ring be always the symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Love freely given has no separate give and receiver. You are each the giver and each the receiver. May your ring always call to mind the freedom and the power of love.

### EXCHANGE OF RINGS

(Couple's names): I give you this ring  
to wear upon you hand  
as a symbol of our love and commitment.

### BLESSING FOR THE FUTURE

May the love which has brought you together continue to grow and enrich your lives, bringing peace and inspiration to each of you and to those who know you. May you meet with courage any problems that arise to challenge you; may you meet with strength whatever troubles may beset you. May your marriage be one of ever-growing depth and meaning, because of the sympathy, understanding, and love you give to one another in the life you share. So be it.

(*Couple's fist names*), it is my honour at this time to welcome you into the world of life-long committed relationships.

Please seal your vows with a kiss.

## SIGNING OF THE LICENCE AND REGISTER

### PROUNOUNCEMENT

In as much as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ have consented together in marriage, they are now wife and husband/wedded partners.

### INTRODUCTION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Couple's *first names*) \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

### Closing Words

Go now to walk the ways of the world together,  
and may your days be good and long upon the earth.

## Readings for Weddings

### CEREMONY BLESSING

Among us right now is the spirit of all that is divine. As we bless each other with our presence, so too are we blessing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as we witness their act of marriage. Let us be fully present, honouring whatever state we are in as we come to this time of celebration. Let us breathe together silently for a moment to bring ourselves fully here.

*Rev. Laura Friedman*

### "Blessing of the Hands"

"These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and full of love for you, hands that hold yours on your wedding day as you promise to love each other today, tomorrow, and forever. These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together you build your future. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, and with the slightest touch, will comfort you like no other. These are the hands that will hold you when fear or grief fills your mind, when tears fall from your eyes; tears of sorrow, or tears of joy. These are the hands that will tenderly hold your children. These are the hands that will help you to hold your family as one. These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it. And lastly, these are the hands that when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch."

### Shakespeare, Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments.  
 Love is not love which alters when it 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.

## Wedding Words for Welcoming Children

You are forming a new family together. It will be composed not only of yourselves.  
[Spouse's child], \_\_\_\_\_, will be sharing with you.

The formation of a blended family is not always an easy and straight-forward adventure; but its potential is rich with possibilities for the relationships among all of you.

May \_\_\_\_\_'s presence continue to add depth and joy to the life and love of your family home.

[Spouse] gives \_\_\_\_\_ (child) a rose.

[Spouse] (and parent) says to child: \_\_\_\_\_, as a token of our love for you and your place in our family home, we give you this rose.

Couple say together:

\_\_\_\_\_, we want you to be a part of the life and love we share.

(to spouse) \_\_\_\_\_ As the [spouse] of [spouse] you become part of a family.

Do you now declare your wish to share in the life and love of that family with (spouse's) children \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_?

(to spouse) \_\_\_\_\_, as the [spouse] of [spouse's name], you become part of a family.

Do you now declare your wish to share in the life and love of that family with (spouse's) children \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_?

(to children) \_\_\_\_\_, will you share your house and your [parent] with his / her new [spouse]?

## FAMILY CANDLE CEREMONY

We have here two candles representing the heritage of two family lines, now being united in this marriage ceremony. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, using the fire from those two candles, you will now light the single candle that represents your new family together.

Just as the family of humankind is One even as it provides for human diversity, so too, within any family, there must always be room for the expression of our individual gifts as separate people.

I invite each of your children to light their own, separate candles, taking their light from the flame of the family candle.

May the happiness and health of this marriage nourish each of those individual spirits.

And may the lights of these candles and the light that shines at the heart of the universe, burn steadily and warmly for you, all the rest of your days.

## VOWS TO THE CHILDREN

[Spouse] to [spouse's] children:

\_\_\_\_\_, I promise my love and care for you will continue unchanged, as strong as ever. I welcome you into my life, to respect you and honour who you are, to support \_\_\_\_\_ as your mother, and to care for you, and allow you to care for me.

[Spouse] to spouse's children:

\_\_\_\_\_, I promise my love and care for you will continue unchanged, as strong as ever. I welcome you into my life, to respect you and honour who you are, to support \_\_\_\_\_ as your father, and to care for you, and allow you to care for me.

**Lay Chaplain:** Your children, \_\_\_\_\_, already enrich the love that you share.

*To the children:* \_\_\_\_\_ will you honour your [parent], \_\_\_\_\_ in this marriage, and will you welcome \_\_\_\_\_ as a new member of your family?

Response: **We will.**

### To the families:

Would the family members of (couple's names) please stand:

Do you, the families of these two persons, give them your blessing and promise to support them and their children with your love, care, and friendship in their marriage for all the years to come? If so please answer, we do.

Response: **We do.**

### To the friends:

Would the friends of (couple's first names). please stand: *(family members remain standing)*

Do you, the friends of these two persons, give them your blessing and promise to support them and their children with your love, care, and friendship in their marriage for all the years to come? If so please answer, we do.

Response: **We do.**

## WINE CUP CEREMONY

(from an ancient Jewish tradition)

1. This cup of wine is symbolic of the cup of life. 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 couple drink from the cup.)*

or:

2. 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 wine.  
Under the wine press of time our lives give forth their labour 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 couple drink from the cup.)*

## CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY - PART 1 (BEFORE VOWS)

The Candle Lighting ceremony links the families that you have come from with the new family that you begin today. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have arrived here today with the help of your respective families' love and support, their courage and their commitment to you.

And through your marriage this day you will face tomorrow as a new family, ready and eager to embark on this new journey. In recognition of their love for you and their hopes for you in your marriage, two representatives of your families will come forward to each light a candle to symbolize your present families and your ancestors from which you have come. I'll now ask \_\_\_\_\_'s, family member, and \_\_\_\_\_'s family member to come forward to light the family candles.

## CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY - PART 2 (AFTER VOWS) (OPTIONAL)

At the beginning of this service, your parents (or family members), on behalf of your families, lit candles symbolizing their love for each of you and their hopes for you in your marriage. You will light the central candle from those candles as you unite in marriage and undertake new dimensions in your relationship. Please light the candle of unity. *(The couple each take a candle and light the candle of unity.)*

This flame of yours is strong though it may seem fragile,  
 glimmering dimly in the day's broad light  
 where you walk boldly, guided by the sun.  
 In darker hours its gleam more brightly shines,  
 throwing its beam upon the paths you tread.

It warms you in its glow and leads you  
 into ways of love and understanding.  
 Let the light you have kindled together  
 illumine your lives and the lives of others  
 through both sunshine and shadow, in the days to come.

### CANDLE-LIGHTING CEREMONY TO INCLUDE CHILDREN

The family gathers at the candles:

In the beginning, there is the light of life, and with it, the hope and promise of love.  
 When we are born, each of us receives the light of life and of love. \_\_\_\_\_ and  
 \_\_\_\_\_ will each light a candle to symbolize their lives and the love they bring to  
 each other. (*the couple each lights their candle.*)

As we live, our lives give light to others; so it is when we join into families. *The child/ren  
 light their candles, or parents light it for them.*

And now, your hearts are uniting to create new love as a family, with its hope and  
 promise for the future. You are all part of the new light, the new life in family, which we  
 recognize here today. I invite you to together to light the Candle of Unity.  
 (*Each takes the light from their own candle, and lights the Pillar Candle of Unity.*)

**Lay Chaplain:** Let the light you have kindled together  
 illumine your lives and the lives of others  
 through both sunshine and shadow in the days to come.

### Tao Te Ching/Lau Tzu poem

Your love contains the power of a thousand suns,  
 It unfolds as naturally and effortlessly as does a flower,  
 And graces the world with its blooming.  
 Its beauty radiates a transforming energy  
 That enlivens all who see it,  
 Because of you, compassion and joy  
 Are added to the world.  
 That is why the stars sing together  
 Because of your love.

**Covenant**

Today, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ enter into covenant with one another (optional: “before God and in the sight of this gathered community.”) For \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, the act of covenanting means mutually choosing to enter into a binding and enduring contract with one another before witnesses. They do not come lightly to this commitment. They enter into this covenant, not only for mutual love, support, companionship, and growth, but as a commitment in hope that, at this time in their lives, together they can offer more to others than they could on their individual journeys.

**Blessings For The Journey (Celtic)**

May the blessings of the air be upon you;  
A soft breeze to refresh you,  
A strong wind to lift you up,  
Great golden wings to enfold and heal you.  
May the blessings of fire be upon you,  
A blazing torch to light your path,  
A flaming sword to protect and defend you,  
The glowing sunlight to shine on you, and warm your heart.  
May the blessings of water be upon you,  
The soft sweet rain to wash you tenderly and nourish you,  
A rushing river to carry you forward,  
The vast depths of the sea to bring you wisdom.  
May the blessings of the earth be upon you,  
The green grass to lay soft under you.  
May your journeying be blessed.  
May all of your endings and beginnings be blessed.

**On Love**

I may have faith strong enough to move mountains;  
But if I have no love, I am nothing.  
I may dole out all I possess, Or even seek glory by self-sacrifice,  
But if I have no love, I am none the better.  
Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one.  
Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude;  
Never selfish, nor quick to take offence.  
Love keeps no score of wrongs,  
Does not gloat over other people's shortcomings,  
But delights in the truth.  
There is nothing love cannot face;  
There is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance.  
There are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love;  
But the greatest of them all is love.

*Paul of Tarsus (1 Corinthians 13, New English Bible version)*

## **FLOWER CEREMONY**

On arrival, guests are given a flower to hold and bless. Life is given to each of us, and love is within us like the bud of a flower in our hearts. We learn to love by being loved, and by our willingness to give to others. All of you gathered here this afternoon have in some way given nurture to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

So I will ask each of you to bless their union and their home with a flower which symbolizes your continuing support and friendship. Take a moment first to feel the blessing you are conveying, and imbue your flower with your good wishes. Then please forward and gift \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ by placing your flower in the vase.

May we all feel we are surrounded by a community of love and support."NB: This can be done with candles, passing the flame from guest to guest.

## **FOR MATURE COUPLES**

### **It Takes Years**

It takes years to marry completely two hearts, even the most loving and well intentioned. A happy wedlock is a long falling in love. Young persons think love belongs only to the brown-haired and crimson-cheeked. And so it does for its beginning. A complete marriage needs a long summer to ripen in. The golden marriage is a part of love which youth knows nothing of.

*Theodore Parker, adapted*

## Provincial Legislation

### ONTARIO LAWS

Ontario Provincial law requires that the officiant ask, in front of the witnesses, the Couple “if they know of any reason why they can not be legally married.” This may be done at a meeting with the couple and witnesses, as a formal part of the service, or more informally during the signing of the licence and register. The couple being married is required to ask the witnesses to be “witnesses.” The officiant is required to say, “By the power vested in me by the Marriage Act, I do pronounce you husband and wife.” (Or other appropriate wording if it is a same-sex couple)

While this exact wording may not appear in all of the appropriate sections of this booklet, the Lay Chaplain will see to it that the requirements of the law are met.

The wedding licence which the couple obtains from many convenient location is good for 90 days (note: not three months). This licence and the marriage register, a duplicate record which churches are required to keep for the province, are signed during the ceremony.

**Website:** [www.vs.gov.ca/index.html](http://www.vs.gov.ca/index.html)

For other provinces, please check the government website for applicable regulations.

## Wedding Resource List

### BOOKS

(see web and library) ([www.uua.org/bookstore](http://www.uua.org/bookstore))

Great Occasions

Joining Hands and Hearts

### WEBSITES

[www.uuottawa.com/weddingsmain.htm](http://www.uuottawa.com/weddingsmain.htm)

[http://www.firstunitariantoronto.org/wedding\\_manual.htm](http://www.firstunitariantoronto.org/wedding_manual.htm)

### MARRIAGE PREPARATION WORKSHOPS

<http://www.marriageprep.com>

**Certificates**

Many lay chaplains provide (as a courtesy) a Certificate of Marriage. However, this is not considered a legal document.

**Sample**

**Certificate of Marriage**

On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2008

\_\_\_\_\_  
and  
\_\_\_\_\_

were joined in marriage according to the  
Laws of the Province of British Columbia  
and the customs of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver

by \_\_\_\_\_(Lay Chaplain) at \_(City) (Province), Canada

Witnesses\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Officiant: \_\_\_\_\_ Unitarian Lay Chaplain

## Memorial and Graveside Services

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this section, you will have learned:

1. what is needed when someone close dies
2. interviewing the family
3. how to put together a memorial service
4. conducting the service
5. limitations of Lay Chaplain and Self-care

### Why Do We Have Memorial Services?

by Karl Perrin, former Lay Chaplain, Unitarian Church of Vancouver

1. to help those who grieve
2. to help those who grieve to recognize that a death has occurred. A circle of friends and family comes together to acknowledge that the center of that circle is gone, yet the circle continues. If good-byes were missed, ignored, denied, or forgotten, now is the time to start the goodbye. Here, among friends, good-bye.
3. to help family and friends suffer well: truly, madly, deeply—and to celebrate a life well lived, to celebrate a love well loved. Celebration of an inspiring life is often the main reason we have a Memorial Service.
4. In a tragic loss, to accompany people through an overwhelming time. If the death is tragic, people feel robbed, helpless in a rotten universe. Feelings run rampant, answers elude them. I try to listen to their suffering. I cannot be a guide, but I can walk with them through this part of the separation. I can suffer with one foot firmly planted in sanity, so they are free to grieve as the spirit moves them, for grief can be unpredictable. We try to walk with them, to protect and support them. In tragic circumstances, there may well be raw feelings: rage or bitterness. Sometimes the feelings are so overwhelming that people are still in shock, numb. We simply acknowledge that all feelings are acceptable, that people need sanctuary, so they can feel what they have the courage to feel, whenever that may happen.
5. to acknowledge the mystery of death—just a breath away—to give thanks for life, long or much too short—to pray, to forgive, to be forgiven.
6. to discover things that family and friends never knew about the person deceased. We tell stories, we recreate high points, and perhaps a low point or two, in a story about someone who had a spring, summer, fall, and now, a winter.
7. to grieve, laugh and cry together. To lessen the loneliness that grief brings. If I am asked to give the eulogy, I try to find a turning point in their life, a moment when they made a big decision: to move or to stay, to fight, to love, to work, to stand up for their beliefs.
8. And finally, to accept what has passed, gradually. To accept our place in the web of life and death with profound humility. To feel our place in the fabric of all existence, of which we are a part.

### **Sample Memorial/Funeral Interview**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ called \_\_\_\_\_

Birth/Death Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Date, Time, Place of service \_\_\_\_\_

Cause of death

Survivors' Names /phone/emails

Close friends and associates: phone/email

### **INTERVIEW**

(ask for photos to be available)

Light a candle to create sacred space.

\*Spiritual needs for family:

What qualities come to mind when you reflect on his/her life?

What stories/situations, images stand out for you?

Common expressions?

How would s/he want to be remembered? Sources of pride?

Passions?

Pivotal moments in her/his life? How did his/her life change direction?

Spirituality? Philosophical outlook or religious outlook?

What message /legacy does \_\_\_\_\_ leave for you and others?

Core aims and ideals?

Special readings and music that really reflect \_\_\_\_\_?

Favourite poems, art, objects you want to include in the service?

Slide show?

Summary of \_\_\_\_\_'s life: is there a bio or obit?

E.g. travels, major accomplishments, associations, significant relationships

Who will be at the service? What are their spiritual needs?

Any special dynamics to be aware of?

Who will speak?

Any additional thoughts or concerns?

## **Sample Memorial Service Planning Guide**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_, called \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

(Lay Chaplain's Dress code desired: Robe?)

Musical Prelude

Processional For Family? Yes/no

Candle-Lighting

### **OPENING WORDS, INTENTION**

(If there is to be an open sharing, introduce this early—e.g. “Later on there will be an opportunity to share a vignette, a tribute, a story of what \_\_\_\_\_ has meant to you. This gives people a chance to formulate a few thoughts.)

### **WELCOME**

(NB: cell phones off.)

### **HOMILY**

About \_\_\_\_\_

### **READINGS**

Something that was special to the deceased is preferred

### **MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

### **SLIDE SHOW**

OR special additions: displays etc

**INTRODUCTION TO EULOGY**

**EULOGY/EULOGIES**

**OPEN SHARING**

(Speakers can be invited in advance, or be spontaneous.)

**MUSIC/SILENT MEDITATION**

**PRAYER/CLOSING THOUGHTS**

**BENEDICTION**

**EXTINGUISH FLAME**

A family member may want to thank people for coming, and invite them to share more stories over refreshments after the service.

**POSTLUDE**

## **The Process of a Memorial Service**

*Rev. Wendy McNiven*

I generally think of the service as beginning in a sad place and moving towards more joy. I usually include poetic readings about general loss and grief, early on. I will say something about the variety of ways people experience loss and grief, and try to give permission for people to feel whatever it is that they feel.

Then I will move into the specifics of this particular person's life.

The eulogy I see as like the frame of a house, with no walls or paint or decoration, just bare bones. I tell people that it will remind them of the particulars of how they related to the deceased. I tell them I will invite their anecdotes later in the service (or if this is not desired by the family, later at the reception.) If others are to speak of the deceased person, they do so usually after the basic eulogy, and offer an anecdote or a few. Usually there are a few laughs during these stories.

Towards the end of the service, I will include some music and some quiet time for people to say their private goodbyes to the person. I like to end with something up-beat and inspiring people to live their lives according to the best values they knew of the person who has died.

**Sample Memorial And Graveside Service**

for

Name of Deceased \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Service \_\_\_\_\_

At (Location of Service) \_\_\_\_\_

**INGATHERING MUSIC****WELCOME**

Good morning, and welcome to this place made sacred by the presence of everyone here.

I am (*Lay Chaplain's name*) \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ [Unitarian Congregation]  
and it is my privilege to be with you to celebrate this service.

As a community of family, friends, and neighbours we are drawn together by the death of  
(*name of the deceased*) \_\_\_\_\_.

We share our love for him/her and for one another, and celebrate the memory of his/  
her spirit that will continue to live on in our hearts.

**OPENING WORDS**

A human life is sacred.  
It is sacred in its birth,  
It is sacred in its living,  
And it is sacred in its dying.

We know and accept, as best we can, that death will come to each of us in its own time.  
And death can wear many faces. When it comes after a long illness, (*name of the deceased*)  
\_\_\_\_\_ we can feel relief at his/her escape from suffering, as well as grief at his/her  
loss. That grief will take many forms in the days, weeks, months and years to come.  
It will surprise or assail us at moments when we least expect it.

Our experience will be unique, different for each one of us here. We may feel angry,  
hurt, abandoned, resentful, afraid or alone as well as sad and bereft. Painful as it is, I urge  
you not to avoid, deny or turn away from your grief, for it is as human to grieve as it is to  
love. Indeed, the two are inseparable from the joy of sharing our lives with one another.  
Rather, I urge you to let it wash over you and recede again like a wave, sometimes full  
force, and sometimes gently, like the tides on the ocean or a country lake.

And in your grief, I urge you to turn to each other for comfort, as members of a special  
community who share the loss of this most loved woman, (*name of the deceased*)  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**GREETING OF PEACE**

Let us now offer to each other a greeting of peace.

**CANDLE LIGHTING READING****Life Like a Candle**

I think a human life is like a candle  
 Whose flame, while it burns brightly  
 Whether for a long time or briefly,  
 Sends out a circle, a glowing halo if you will,  
 Of warmth and light in all directions.  
 When the candle is snuffed out, the memory  
 Of light and its brilliance continues to glow in the mind's eye.  
 So a human life when it is ended  
 Is remembered in the heart's deep core.  
 The fire of its brilliance continues to warm our spirits with love,  
 To illuminate and influence all that it has touched.

**Candles of Memory**

Sometimes we will celebrate (name of the deceased) \_\_\_\_\_'s life by sharing photographs, and stories that are like brief verbal snapshots. I invite you now to come forward as you wish to light a candle and share a brief memory, happy or sad, with humour and love, of (name of the deceased) \_\_\_\_\_.

**RESPONSIVE READING:****Mother of All (Hymn#91)**

Mother of all, in every age,  
 In every clime adored,

**Response:**

*By saint, by poet, and by sage  
 Your praises high have soared.*

Goddess of nurture and of love,  
 All nature sings your care.

**Response:**

*In life's extravagance you prove  
 The gift of giving fair.*

O spirit of unfolding grace  
 And deepest mystery,

*Unitarian Hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition*

**Teach Us Compassion's Gentle Face**  
And Wisdom's Mastery.

Teach us to cherish this proud earth,  
Its fragile beauty praise,

And for the dreams your joy gives birth,  
A hopeful future raise.

**LAY CHAPLAIN'S ADDRESS**

Life is a fragile gift, and death is one of its deepest mysteries. If we do not fear the mystery out of which we are born into this world, why should we fear the mystery into which we return when life is ended? For though we experience death as an interruption to life, it is but a natural part of the cycle, as is birthing and nurturing, sickness and health, breathing and growing.

Each of us has known (*name of the deceased*) \_\_\_\_\_ as she/he moved through all these cycles of life. In a few moments, we will leave the [church] and process to the cemetery. We will come to that most difficult moment, in which we must give (*name of the deceased*) \_\_\_\_\_'s ashes back to the earth. And we could hardly find the will or the strength to do this, if we did not know how much she/he loved all of nature.

In loving memory, we have celebrated the gift (*name of the deceased*) \_\_\_\_\_ has been to us, with memories spoken and silent. Her/his gracious spirit will live on in our hearts and in the stories of her/him we will continue to share with each other. Eleanor Roosevelt asked the question: "Why should it be any more miraculous for a person to come alive after death than before."

May (*name of the deceased*) \_\_\_\_\_'s abundant life and vibrant spirit remind us to live our own lives being fully alive. May her/his death remind us to be grateful for our brief time on this Earth. And especially in the days ahead, may we find comfort and support for our grief among the members of this loving community who have gathered in her/his name.

**Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth**

**Closing Words: Sing: Go Now In Peace**

(2 May the spirit of love surround us, Everywhere, everywhere we may go.

**Ring of Church Bells/Procession to cemetery**

(*a relative*) will take the urn and lead us out)

## Brief Gravesite Service

### Reading

Please join me in a litany by answering each time I pause:

### We Remember You

Adapted from #720 in Unitarian Hymnal, Singing the Living Tradition: Gittlesohn  
In the rising of the sun and in its going down...

**Response:** *We remember you.*

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter...

In the opening of buds and in the rebirth of spring...

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer...

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn...

In the beginning of the year and when it ends...

When we are weary and in need of strength...

When we are lost and sick at heart...

When we have joys we yearn to share...

At our hearts' deep center especially in this place...

Here amid these trees and hills we leave you ,(name of the deceased) \_\_\_\_\_,  
but your home is in our hearts.

(Two mourners will lower the urn into the ground.)

(name of the deceased) \_\_\_\_\_, we shall miss you  
and love you all of our days. Rest now in peace, with all those who have gone before you,  
amid the natural beauty you loved so well.

I invite you now if you feel so moved to take a handful of earth and  
add it to (name of the deceased) \_\_\_\_\_'s grave as a last goodbye.

## BLESSING

### May the peace that passes understanding

The peace we give to each other by our love

The peace of the unquenchable spirit of life

That will continue long after we are gone

May that peace be with us all, now and in the days to come.

## SING:

### Dona Nobis Pacem

### Sample Funeral for a Tragic Death

This young woman was killed suddenly in a house fire just before her sports tournament. Her death attracted a lot of media attention. TV and newspaper journalists were present at her funeral. There were about 650 people present, in a space that holds 300.

The logistics of the reception and the powerpoint presentation, and the audio feed for overflow mourners were challenging. I found I was absorbing the family's suffering, and needed spiritual guidance to refocus.

### HONOURING

First, middle and last names \_\_\_\_\_  
(dates of birth and death)

### PRELUDE

Smetana: Di Moldau, Pacabel's Canon in D, Dvorak's New World Symphony, and other selections.

\_\_\_\_\_ 's coffin rests in front of the church. The family comes in together, and sits in the front rows.

### CANDLE-LIGHTING

I light this candle to \_\_\_\_\_.

We come into this sanctuary of loss,

We come into this sanctuary of compassion

We come into this sanctuary of honour for \_\_\_\_\_.

We come into this sanctuary of love.

### WELCOME

I welcome you, family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_. I am (name) \_\_\_\_\_ a Lay Chaplain with the Unitarian (congregation). May we find solace and hope, as we share our grief for the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ and as we celebrate her life.

### INTENTION

#### We are many

The presence of all of you here brings some comfort to one another and to her heart-broken family and close friends. \_\_\_\_\_ has died, tragically, suddenly, too young. Nothing makes sense to any of us here. She lived in such light, and shared her light so freely in so many ways—ways we will hear about. We come from many different pathways and spiritual backgrounds. And you are all here because you have been touched, and touched deeply by her generous spirit.

And so we gather to honour \_\_\_\_\_. We gather to share stories, and let her light shine. There may be a full range of emotions—anger at the shock and rip-off, her precious life cut short. Sadness, and also gladness at the happy memories shared. As Kahlil Gibran says, “you are weeping for that which has been your delight.” We gather to give thanks for her life—lived fully and passionately and generously. We gather to mourn her loss. We gather in celebration and hope for the preciousness of life itself, and for her living spirit.

We gather in support for \_\_\_\_\_’s grieving family. These are the people closest to her: \_\_\_\_\_ parents, grandparents: uncles and aunts—sister \_\_\_\_\_. And we gather to celebrate all that does not die—your love for \_\_\_\_\_ and her love for you, the incredible strength and support within \_\_\_\_\_’s family and community. So many have contributed to this service.

We connect with the significant ways she has gifted you—you personally: We connect with the sacredness of her life, and all of life.

Helen Keller once wrote, “We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world—the company of those who have known suffering. When it seems that our sorrow is too great to be borne, let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grief has given us entrance, and inevitably, we will feel about us their arms, their sympathy, their understanding.”

It is comforting to be together today.

Inevitably, our anguish forms the question, “Why?” if not on our lips, in our hearts. There is no answer—no answer that can bridge the chasm of the irreparable separation. Life will never be the same, and this is true. The truth is, \_\_\_\_\_ loved freely and generously, and she knew she was deeply loved and cherished.

We face the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ with suffering; mourning that is a muddle of inconsolable desolation, courage, and affirmation. This is grief; for in our grief we shape our healing and hope. For love and the need for connection join until, when hearts open fully once more, love will triumph over death, and we become more aware of our belonging. And this takes time.

We ask, “why”; we ask “what if”, but we know there is no answer—and in fact “why” spins our mental wheels, and blocks grieving. And “if only’s” are lonely.

All we can do is ask the question.

So we have gathered here

To do the only things we can do:

To remember

To comfort one another

To shed tears

To let our anger flow

maybe even to laugh a little at some happy stories.

And let \_\_\_\_\_’s beacon guide us forward into loving life, again.

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

We would like to play a song by an artist who \_\_\_\_\_ loved. I would invite the community to sing along if you know the words.

**“Little Wonders”**

**MUSICAL INTERLUDE**

**INTRODUCTION TO THE EULOGY.**

No one can sum up the life of another, and \_\_\_\_\_’s zest for life was pervasive. She blesses us with her many qualities. Your memories are very much alive. Thankfulness is at the centre, as we think of all the ways you have been touched and nourished by \_\_\_\_\_.

As each of you come to speak about \_\_\_\_\_, please light a candle from \_\_\_\_\_’s flame.

**SPEAKERS:**

*Acknowledge the lights lit from the speakers from \_\_\_\_\_’s flame.*

**MUSIC**

The song, “Pieces of You” by Lennie Gallant

## CLOSING WORDS

And now I ask the tough, tough spiritual questions: how to get through this, and how to go on without \_\_\_\_\_? She has become light. Her spirit lives. Perhaps you will see her bright smile in another's face. Perhaps her hugs will embrace you with a friend. Perhaps her thoughtful, funny and spontaneous actions will come from you now.

As \_\_\_\_\_'s family mourns, there are things you, the broader community can do. You have already done so much, in preparation for her service. But the emptiness grows once everyone else returns to their usual lives. And so I appeal to you: rather than wait until family reaches out for your support, you might call up and offer your compassionate ear, a meal, a walk or a run. In other words, keep checking in during the weeks and months to come. (mother, father, and sister) were all in the midst of big changes in their lives; now the future is uncertain. Keep checking in, keep listening, keep loving and supporting. It will mean a great deal, you can help the healing journey.

To \_\_\_\_\_'s *friends*: I understand you have been getting together in your grief, going through pictures, making collages and poster boards. Connecting with each other. Keep doing what you are doing: no-one should be alone through this tough time.

And to the young men who were with her in the inferno, you know about surrender in your soccer games. To surrender to your healing is a different kind—it means giving yourself over to grace, to self-forgiveness and compassion.

And above all, keep thinking about what \_\_\_\_\_ would want. And what would \_\_\_\_\_ want for you? You know your \_\_\_\_\_. It is necessary to grieve. Would she stay morose? Would she stay caught in fear and isolation? Does she want that for you? She has joined the mystery, the larger energy beyond our ken. Can you feel her presence, her living spirit right now? Please take a moment to tap into her bright spirit, and the significant gifts she has given to you personally. Her generosity and her gift in connection? Her positive spin toward life? Her drive to live her passions with excellence? her unbounded capacity for fun? The quality of her loving?

As you receive \_\_\_\_\_'s gifts, as you live them and act on them, some of \_\_\_\_\_ now lives in your hearts and minds. Let her light shine through you, her loved ones.

**BENEDICTION**

Spirit of life, I pray that you bestow on \_\_\_\_\_'s family and all those who grieve her, compassion and gratitude for her gifts – gifts that live on and on through her loved ones. By enacting kindness, we say hello to the living as we honour \_\_\_\_\_. We pay it forward. Let us resolve to honour \_\_\_\_\_ by searching our own hearts, and uprooting any barriers that keep us from loving freely. Let us leave this sacred hour a little more compassionate and peaceful, and more open to others in our lives.

Let us lift up our hearts in gratitude for her life. Let us resolve to honour her living spirit by seeing more clearly the beauty in the natural world, in music, in the abundance of all things—and especially in one another.

May the love we feel in our hearts at this moment help us to join together in richer ways than before, and in time, lead to a peace that surpasses understanding. We know that \_\_\_\_\_'s spirit will always embrace you—for her love for you and your love for her will never die.

**When I Am Gone**

When I am gone, release me, let me go.  
 I have so many things to do and see.  
 You mustn't tie yourself to me with tears.  
 Be happy that we've shared so many years.  
 I gave you my love.  
 You can only guess how much you gave me in happiness.  
 I thank you for the love you each have shown,  
 But now it's time I traveled on alone.  
 Though you can't see or touch me, I'll be near,  
 And if you listen with your heart you'll hear  
 All my love around you, soft and clear.  
 And then when you must come this way alone,  
 I'll greet you with a smile and say, "Welcome Home!"

*Collius Norwood*

## CANDLE EXTINGUISHING

I extinguish the candle with these words,

\_\_\_\_\_, you are remembered in love

You are part of the now in us  
All the good, all the love,  
all the comfort a person can give  
is remembered and repeated for your sake.  
Time changes, everything passes, but love.  
\_\_\_\_\_, peace abide you.

\_\_\_\_\_’s family invites all of you to step across the courtyard to the reception, watch two slideshows in the Fireside Room, enjoy the refreshments and share stories and more stories together.

Please stand and join hands together, and listen as the pianist plays this brief song twice, then sing it together.

Go now in Peace, go now in Peace

May the spirit of love surround you everywhere, everywhere, you may go (Twice)

*Lay Chaplain leads \_\_\_\_\_’s coffin, followed by the pallbearers, the coffin, and family.*

## MUSIC

## Sample Memorial Services for Babies

### 1. Memorial Service for a Baby

We meet on holy ground,  
 For that place is holy where we meet one another.  
 Where lives touch, / Where love moves, / Where hope stirs,  
 There is holy ground...

*Zalmon Sherwood, p. 52, Equal Rites, Cherry and Sherwood editors*

We are gathered today to mark the end of a life barely begun, the end of \_\_\_\_\_'s pregnancy. Although the baby's eyes never saw the light of day, it is appropriate to mark its passing with a ceremony to honour the baby's soul, and perhaps to mourn what never will be.

Francois de Malherbe wrote a poem for his own infant:

She was this world's, that for fairest things disposes  
     The saddest destiny.  
 Rose as she was, her span was but a rose's:  
     A single morn had she.

Life does not always treat us fairly. As it is sad to see a beautiful rose blossom die, it is that much more poignant to see a human life plucked from the vine before it has even bloomed.

But what makes us sad is the love already felt for this tiny being, and the happy plans which were being made for a life together as a family. Although that love and excitement were short-lived, they did indeed happen, and they enriched the lives of all whom they touched.

### READING: WHY?

My tears come day and night  
     I remember our times together.  
 For a part of me has died.  
     As I remember, I pour out my soul.  
 Why? Why now?  
     Why have I been forsaken?  
 Why must I mourn?  
     Where is the healing?

*Meg Bowman*

Even a tiny, unborn baby has an effect on the world around it. The existence of this little person triggered feelings in all of you here, in one way or another. It may be the pride that comes with that miracle of creating new life. It may be that you as parents of \_\_\_\_\_ are saddened by their loss, and sad for your own children, knowing your own feelings of love for them.

This child mattered, already, at its tiny size. And we all matter. Each person's life makes a difference to others, whether we know it or not.

## MUSIC

### READING: PART OF GIBRAN ON SORROW

Relationships are not quite the same after a death. But it is not a time for guilt or blame or even touchiness, although all of these would be quite understandable. It is a time to affirm values that are shared, and to express love and solidarity, and the profound meaning of life. For you have shared a profound set of experiences together. It is a time to know how precious our relationships are. It is a time to express the loss, and also a time to hug one another. New dreams will come in their own time.

## SILENCE

Let us spend a few moments in silence, or if you wish, with your own words, to say goodbye to the baby whose life has ended, and to commune with that which is holy at the centre of life.

Nobody knows for sure what happens to us after we die, that is, where goes the Essence of the person that was to be. We do know that it's some kind of transition ... as it is a time of transition for you the living. It may be that you will meet up again as two souls one day. It may be that this soul had a job to perform and it has performed that job and has moved on. It has touched us all. Life is mysterious and wonderful, full of wonder. We never know all the reasons or all the answers. One thing we do know: the existence of death makes life more precious.

And life goes on. There will be other pregnancies, other births, and other deaths in our lives. The cycle of life continues, around and around, over and over again. There is always new hope.

## CLOSING WORDS

(Blow bubbles, or release a balloon, or feather)  
 My little one, my dear one, my love,  
 I release a balloon/bubbles/feather to the heavens.  
 letting go, I lift my love to you.  
 my eyes follow my love rising into eternity.  
 bless you, little one, my dear one. my love."

*Edward Searle, from "In Memoriam"*

## 2. Service of Committal for a Three-Day-Old Baby

Welcome to this service of memorial.

We are gathered today to celebrate the life of \_\_\_\_\_, to express gratitude for his being with us, and to say a final goodbye to his earthly being.

In a very real sense,  
it is not death which brings us here,  
but life – the life of \_\_\_\_\_.

If you had not known him and loved him and celebrated him,  
you would not be here.

And although we gather here for only a few minutes,  
in no way does that show a lack of affection for him.

He was special and is special,  
even though “we don’t get to keep him”.

For in the words of The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran,  
Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

In spite of the short time \_\_\_\_\_ was with us, only three days,  
he was an inspiration of love to his parents and family.

He had two grandparents, and five aunties, and many friends, who loved him and gave him support through his difficult three days of life.

In that time, even though it was short and difficult,  
\_\_\_\_\_ gave them much joy in celebrating his existence.

And that means they all carry with them a little bit of \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ (to parents): you have chosen this reading from The Prophet, to express some of the mixed feelings you are experiencing at this time.

**On Joy and Sorrow**

Although such wisdom does not make the sorrow go away,  
 it might help in your acceptance of it as part of your lives.  
 And in time, you will incorporate it into that wisdom of life that is already yours,  
 and continues to grow in depth and richness.

For you, \_\_\_\_\_ (parents)

Something has grown into our life, that will never again depart from it.  
 You are a mother, and you are a father, and you remain so,  
 even though your children have died.  
 For you have carried them in your hearts.

\_\_\_\_\_, by his being with you, has made a lasting impression on the world,  
 on you who have come here today,  
 as we all make an impression on the world  
 by loving and being loved.

\_\_\_\_\_, you will not be soon forgotten.

(Parent places the ashes in the grave.)

**PRAYER**

In the death of someone we love, a little part of each one of us dies. Let peace be in our hearts, as we face and possess our grief, and say our last farewell to \_\_\_\_\_.

As we express our gratitude for \_\_\_\_\_'s life, and we celebrate his time with us,  
 may we incorporate that love and wisdom received into our beings,  
 that we may live fully,  
 and be enabled to pass on that love  
 to the people around us.

May the spirit of love and life be with us,  
 as we rededicate ourselves  
 to the lives which are ahead of us now.

Amen.

### Sample Homily

This service was for an accomplished woman, unloved by her own family. The family did not want me to say she was a holocaust survivor, nor that she was Jewish. Some of the family's judgment dissipated after the service.

Who was this amazing personality, \_\_\_\_\_? I did not have the opportunity to meet her. And yet, uncannily, I feel a sense of kinship with her.

She may well have made this vow, as did the poet, Dawna Markova:

I will not die an unlived life.

I will not live in fear of failing or catching fire.

I choose to inhabit my days, / To allow my living to open me,

To make me less afraid, / More accessible,

To loosen my heart / Until it becomes a wing,

A torch, a promise. / I choose to risk my significance,

To live so that which came to me as seed / Goes to the next as blossom

And that which came to me as blossom, / Goes on as fruit.

A torch, a promise. Forceful, dazzling, restless of mind and body, \_\_\_\_\_ drew people around her and thrived on good conversation. Later, during the open sharing time, We look forward to vignettes from folk who have been impacted by her strong personality and her huge energies.

I think this was her extroverted, public side, wide open to the world. A tiny woman, with enormous zest and accomplishments. An inspiration. A torch and a promise.

And what of her private self, the self that was hidden from the world? What about this other side of her, that she showed her own family during their Sunday dinners? Carolyn McDade says, "To love is to know, and to be known." As I want to know someone, I look for pivotal moments—experiences which help both to shape and transform the journey.

There seems a mystery here, an opaque layer that was not known, not even to herself. Perhaps her adolescence, tumultuous in its historical European context, might open the door to understanding. It is well researched that survivors of a war live their lives with a deep and compelling need to prove themselves and to legitimize their survival. "Why was I spared? How do I justify that I am alive?" The survivor's legacy can become one of pressing the gas pedal to the floor, when suddenly the other foot stomps on the brake.

Her early life was kept silent from her family. Who knows the reasons? Did it still feel dangerous to expose it? Was it to protect? Just as there is power in the secret, there is power in the voice.

\_\_\_\_\_’s inner voice may go unheard. And yet, there is so much of \_\_\_\_\_ that has been heard and seen, qualities we can name and discern.

### A Prayer

May we know each other in the silence between the words.

May we heal the loneliness of our expertise with the wisdom of our service.

May we honour in ourselves and all others the deep and simple impulse to live, to find sacred space and open land.

May we remember that the yearning to be holy is a part of everyone, and the only hope for the next thousand years.

*Rachel Naomi Ramen, from Prayers for a Thousand Years*

In brief, \_\_\_\_\_ spent her childhood in Austria. She was sent to England to escape the war, and was educated there. She met her husband while in school in Glasgow. They came to Canada in 19\_\_, first settling in \_\_\_\_\_ with her family, and then Vancouver.

\_\_\_\_\_ built a career in \_\_\_\_\_. She and \_\_\_\_\_ loved their home in \_\_\_\_\_, which their son in law, \_\_\_\_\_ designed for them. There is so much I want to know about \_\_\_\_\_—questions I wish I could ask her. We will hear more of her history from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Racing pell mell through life, she ran—overlapping courses in retirement, spinning through books, through movies and plays. Loving music, she studied piano, even late in life. \_\_\_\_\_ was not comfortable leaving anything beyond her grasp, She exuded an insatiable thirst to experience life to the fullest, and neither illness nor injury could interfere. And from the vital life force came the desire to convey her experience and opinion wherever she could. Good conversation? It flowed. It spurred involvement and stimulation that nourished and fed \_\_\_\_\_'s connection to you, her people. Ever cheerful, she could laugh at herself. Perhaps she is laughing now at this tribute.

I see her edging towards challenges~ the bigger and edgier they were, the more they fuelled her spirit. She dreamed big dreams, She drove big old cars, dented cars. She once tried to fix one herself, and with great ingenuity, did so! She owned rental properties she filled with interesting, alternative lifestyle tenants who would give her a good run for her money. She loved people, and she wanted to help.

As her cancer progressed, she sought spiritual connection, a dimension new to her. As a scientist, it was difficult to comprehend. She directed her zeal toward seeking alternative healing strategies. Even in her illness, she didn't have the patience to surrender.

Tenacious to the last, she outlived her prognosis by several years. Three weeks ago, she traveled out of the province to celebrate her grandson's birthday. Air Canada wouldn't let her on the plane with her need for oxygen, so, undaunted, she switched airlines.

Unstoppable, in death, she may well have shed her frail and worn out body, and rushes on, dancing, into the light. May peace abide you, \_\_\_\_\_.

## Memorial Readings

### KINDLING THE FLAME

A human life is sacred.  
It is sacred in its being born,  
It is sacred in its living.  
It is sacred in its dying.  
I light this candle to \_\_\_\_\_.

To live in this world  
We must do three things:  
To love what is mortal,  
To hold it against your bones  
Knowing your own life depends on it.  
And then, when the time comes to let it go,  
To let it go.

*Mary Oliver*

Or:  
The wisdom of life moving with death  
is a profound faith, wide as the shores of heart,  
the sweep of mind.

*Carolyn McDade*

### OPENING WORDS

Let us be honest with death.

Let us not pretend that it is less than it is.

It is separation; it is sorrow; it is grief.

But let us neither pretend that death is more than it is.

It is not annihilation.

As long as memory endures, his/her presence will be felt.

It is not an end to love.

Humankind's need for love from each of us is boundless.

It is not an end to joy and laughter.

Nothing would less honour ( appropriate adjective ) souls  
than to make our lives drab in counterfeit respect.

Let us be honest with death.

for in that honesty we will understand \_\_\_\_\_ better,  
and ourselves more deeply.

Death is so limited.

It cannot cripple love,

It cannot shatter hope,

It cannot corrode faith.

It cannot destroy peace.

It cannot cripple friendships

It cannot suppress memories.

It cannot silence courage.

It cannot invade the soul.

It cannot steal eternal life.

It cannot conquer the spirit.

(can substitute Cancer is...)

**GENERAL READINGS****Do Not Stand**

Do not stand at my grave and weep;  
I am not there. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn's rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift uplifting rush  
of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not stand at my grave and cry;  
I am not there, I did not die.

Mary Frye

**To Everything There Is A Season**

To everything there is a season,  
And a time to every purpose under the heaven;  
A time to be born, and a time to die;  
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up that, which is planted;  
A time to kill, and a time to heal;  
A time to break down and a time to build up;  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh,  
A time to mourn, and a time to dance;  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;  
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing.  
A time to love, and a time to hate,  
A time for war, and a time for peace.

*from the Book of Ecclesiastes, Hebrew Scripture*

**RESPONSIVE READING****We'll Remember You**

In the rising of the sun and it's going down, we'll remember you.  
 In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we'll remember you.  
 In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of the spring, we'll remember you.  
 In the blueness of the sky and the beauty of the summer, we'll remember you.  
 In the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of the autumn, we'll remember you.  
 In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we'll remember you.  
 When we are weary and in need of strength, we'll remember you.  
 When we are lost and sick at heart, we'll remember you.  
 When we have joy we long to share, we'll remember you.  
 So long as we live, you will live, for you will always be a part of us  
 as we remember you.

NB: participants can add their own phrases before the last line.

*R. B. Gittelsohn*

**When I Die**

When I die  
 Give what's left of me away to children  
 And old men that wait to die.  
 And if you need to cry,  
 cry for your brother  
 walking the street beside you.  
 And when you need me,  
 put your arm around anyone  
 and give them what you need to give me.  
 I want to leave you something  
 something better than words or sounds.  
 Look for me in the people I've known or loved,  
 And if you cannot give me away  
 at least let me live through your eyes  
 and not in your mind.  
 You can love me most  
 by letting hands touch bodies  
 and by letting go of children  
 who need to be free.  
 Love doesn't die / People do.  
 So, when all that's left of me is love  
 Give me away  
 I'll see you at home/ in the earth.

Merrit Malloy

## RESPONSIVE READING

### S/He Is With Us Still

In the struggles we choose for ourselves, in the ways we move forward in our lives and bring our world forward with us,

Response:

*It is right to remember \_\_\_\_\_, who gave us strength in this choice of living.*

*It is right to name the power of a hard life, well-lived.*

We share a history with this life.

We belong to the same motion.

### Response

*S/he too was strengthened by what had gone before.*

*S/he too were drawn on by the vision of what might come to be.*

Those who lived before us, who struggled for justice and suffered injustice before us, have not melted into the dust, and have not disappeared.

They are with us still. The lives they lived hold us steady.

\_\_\_\_\_’s words remind us and call us back to ourselves.

His/her courage and love evoke our own.

We the living, carry him/her with us; we are his/her voices,  
his/her hands and his/her hearts.

Response: *We take \_\_\_\_\_ with us, and with him/her choose the deeper path of living.*

*Kathleen McTigue*

**Psalm 23 (King James version)**

The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:  
He leadeth me in the path of righteousness  
for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the  
shadow of death, I will fear no evil;  
For thou art with me, thy rod  
and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me  
in the presence of mine enemies:  
Thou anointest my head with oil:  
My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall  
follow me all the days of my life:  
And I will dwell in the house  
of the Lord for ever.

*Hebrew Scriptures*

**What Constitutes Success**

He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given them the best he had; whose life was an inspiration; whose memory a benediction.

Mrs. Bessie Stanley's essay

## Committal of Ashes

*adapted from In Memoriam, by Edward Searle*

And now we commit the ashes, what remains of \_\_\_\_\_ physical self to the waters of \_\_\_\_\_ and to its keeping. As we stand here under the dome of sky, washed by weather and Nature's green, let us be mindful always that only the physical shell will be scattered, for \_\_\_\_\_ lives on through you as all embracing spirit, loving heart, creator and lover of beauty, , and most of all, her family. (specify person's unique gifts.) As \_\_\_\_\_'s ashes join the sky and the waters, you have a peaceful place to visit, to remember, to pay homage. This place is sacred, just as \_\_\_\_\_ life is sacred and is consecrated by your memories and your love for her. It is kept sacred through your actions and your character which greets her spirit and her heart in the circles of caring , of bright laughter, of continuing the creativity and justice that meant so much to her. \_\_\_\_\_'s presence stays vital in the children and in the lives of you who loved her and were well loved by her.

\_\_\_\_\_ scatters ashes: others scatter flowers into the water as they say a few words.

Spirit of life, the spirit of \_\_\_\_\_ that filled our world with love and beauty has joined the mystery. Grant to those who grieve , forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude for his gifts – gifts that live on and on through her loved ones. Grant to you, in time, understanding and a meaning in which all things are understood and made whole. May the love in your hearts join yourselves together in richer ways than before, and in time, lead you to a peace that surpasses understanding. We know that \_\_\_\_\_'s spirit will always embrace you—for his love for you and your love for him will never die.

Or:

Spirit of Life, receive from us the person of \_\_\_\_\_. Let the best which was in her be renewed in strength in us. May we now give to others the love that we can no longer show to her, for the lives we now lead are her honour and her memorial.

So though \_\_\_\_\_'s spirit dwells no more in this physical form, we commit his ashes to the water/lake as we commit the memory his life, to the safekeeping of our hearts and minds and into the loving energy in the world around us. (or God)

The torch he lit we now carry forward, as others also will pass along ours, in the sure knowledge that the great gift of life flows ever onward in Love's large embrace. Life gives and life takes away. In love and gratitude we commemorate \_\_\_\_\_'s life, bearing witness and faith to what cannot die. Go now into the world bearing the torch proudly and peacefully , and may your days be good and long upon this earth.

**Closing Words**

It is done. We have bid a loving farewell to \_\_\_\_\_. We are profoundly glad that \_\_\_\_\_ lived. We are glad that we saw his/her face and felt the glow of his affection/friendship and love. We cherish the memory of his/her words and deeds and character. Carrying her/him so in our hearts, let us now go from this place in comfort and peace, assured that even in this time of loss and sorrow, life remains precious and good. May we also on this day rekindle in our hearts and appreciation for the gifts of life and other persons.

Let us honour the life of \_\_\_\_\_ by living, ourselves more lovingly in the days ahead. As you return to the routines of your lives, go in great peace, good people, and may God/an abiding peace go with you. Amen.

**Memorial Service Resources**

In Memoriam

## **Self-Care and Spiritual Growth**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this session you will be able to:

1. Affirm personal spiritual strengths and qualities for doing this work.
2. Identify issues that trigger our own personal spiritual issues.
3. Explore spiritual disciplines or practices that will enhance and deepen our own spiritual growth.
4. Commit to a path of processing with colleagues and/or a minister when appropriate.

## INTRODUCTION

The gift for those who are called to do this shared ministry extends beyond the service we do to families in celebrating life's transitions. Each ceremony, each encounter with another's life brings opportunity for our own spiritual growth, as well as challenges to our ability to access our own grief and joy when we resonate with the stories of others. Opportunities for enrichment are offered at many CUC Lay Chaplaincy programs, and lay chaplains are encouraged to work with their LC committees and their minister (if available) to process challenging experiences or issues that arise from their work in conducting rites of passage.

*Rev. Carole Martignacco*

## **Lay Chaplaincy Administration and Accountabilities**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this section, participants will be able to:

1. understand the roles and responsibilities of the CUC's Lay Chaplaincy Committee and the congregational Lay Chaplaincy Committee
2. develop a system to maintain their own records and provide required information to their Lay Chaplaincy Committee
3. understand the administrative, documentation and ceremony requirements to have legally married a couple in their province
4. identify and utilize resources to apply for their legal status to solemnize marriages in their province
5. understand the philosophy of fee structures and be able to apply it within the structure of their congregation's lay chaplaincy program
6. identify and utilize resources regarding legal aspects to marriage contracts between service providers and clients
7. be aware of issues and situations that lay chaplains may encounter, such as co-officiating, red warning flags, professional courtesy among lay chaplains

## INTRODUCTION

As well as the people and presentation aspects of being a lay chaplain there is the administration part. Lay chaplains need to (for their own benefit), and must (for the benefit of their congregations) keep track of their activities, accounting, legal requirements, documentation, and what's happening "in the field" (meetings, training, etc).

A lay chaplain must keep track of services performed so that statistics may be tracked and the monies collected (and disbursed) are accounted for. This will be invaluable to you at tax time. Additionally, it is important to keep a current list of up-coming services, their status, contact information and service location. This list should be updated and copied regularly to the Lay Chaplaincy Committee at the lay chaplain's congregation should anything happen.

Each province has its own application process to become licensed to perform weddings. As well, each province has its own legislation regarding requirements for marriage and necessary documentation. Keeping track of this information may seem a little daunting, but the CUC has some excellent resources to help you sort it out. Let's now take a look at these and other issues that impact the business of being a lay chaplain.