

# **A TOOL TO PREPARE A MARRIAGE SERVICE**

## **MARRIAGE APPLICATION AND INFORMATION**

AT

NELSON UNITED CHURCH  
602 Silica St.  
NELSON, BC  
V1L 4N1  
250-352-2822  
email: [office@nelsonunitedchurch.ca](mailto:office@nelsonunitedchurch.ca)

## INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING TO BE MARRIED

AT

### NELSON UNITED CHURCH

Congratulations to you both as you embark upon the life-long journey of marriage. We believe that this is a creative venture of faith and love on your part. Should you have your marriage here at Nelson United Church or at some other venue, we trust that it will have a deep spiritual meaning for both of you. We shall endeavour to help in any way possible to make this a memorable occasion.

It is important to understand that a wedding under the auspices of Nelson United Church (and the Province of BC as the licensing body) is, first and foremost, a religious ceremony. It is the understanding of our Church that a religious ceremony involves God (however you understand God) in the commitment and covenant that you make in a wedding service. Part of the ceremony also involves asking God to bless your union.

Time should be allowed for consultation with the minister concerning the form and meaning of the service and the responsibilities which you assume. If you wish, you are encouraged to design individual commitments or even the whole service so that your marriage ceremony will be your very own.

Marriage is also a legal matter, coming under Provincial Law. Sanction to marry is given by the issuing of a Marriage License; the office for this is at 310 Ward Street, Nelson, and you will need to bring the license to our Church office at least a week in advance of your wedding.

Since the definition of marriage was changed under federal law in 2005 to include same sex couples, Nelson United has adopted an inclusive marriage policy affirming the rights of all people to be married. Following the federal government act, our marriage policy reads: **Marriage is defined as the lawful union of two people to the exclusion of all others.**

Some practicalities...

In order to maintain the dignity and reverence of the service (especially when it is in the Church building), we ask that pictures be taken during the processional and recessional, at the signing of the register, and at other mutually agreed moments in the service. Please discuss this matter with the minister.

The minister will also be pleased to discuss with you the music you may wish to have at your wedding, where the register will be signed, whether flowers are needed, and any other relevant details. Because we are concerned about the environment (and because it is difficult to clean) please do not use confetti or rice.

The Church has suggested the following fees:

For use of the Sanctuary	\$ 200.00
*Administration (see below)	50.00
Janitor	35.00
Organist	125.00
Minister	<u>150.00</u>
	<u>\$560.00</u>

For Church supporters and members of their family the fee for the use of the Church (\$200.00) is waived; also the honorarium for the minister is left to the discretion of the wedding party.

\*In terms of the administration fee, this has to do with processing paperwork and providing for congregational bulletins. If you do not wish to have congregational bulletins, the administration fee is \$25.

If you are having a wedding outside of the church, the fee is the minister's honorarium and the \$25 administration fee. If you want congregational bulletins or programs, the full \$50 will be charged.

For all wedding parties, a deposit of \$50.00 is required to hold your reservation. Forty dollars will be refunded if the booking is cancelled with reasonable notice. The remainder of the fees is due the week prior to your wedding (during normal office hours, Monday to Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to noon). Please make all cheques payable to Nelson United Church.

Arrangements can also be made if you wish your wedding to take place outside of the church. Please indicate if this will be an outdoor wedding or if the wedding will take place at a facility other than Nelson United Church.

If you have any questions regarding your wedding or the above information, do not hesitate to call the Church office at 250-352-2822. After normal working hours, please leave a message on the answering machine.

May happiness and true love be yours all the days of your life, and may God richly bless your marriage.

**WEDDING INFORMATION**

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Date of wedding: \_\_\_\_\_; Time: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Date of Rehearsal: \_\_\_\_\_; Time: \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Place of Wedding: Church seats about 300: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Expected number of guests: \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Double: \_\_\_\_ OR Single: \_\_\_\_ Ring Ceremony.

**INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR LICENSE**

1. Full name: \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_; Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Father's name: \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Father place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Mother's full name (with maiden name): \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Mother's place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_.

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2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Age: \_\_\_\_\_; Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_.  
Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Father's name: \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Father place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Mother's full name (with maiden name): \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Mother's place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_.

**WEDDING PARTY**

1. Attendants: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

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

2. Ushers:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Ring Bearer: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Flower Girl: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Organist: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Soloist: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Readers: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Other Participants:

\_\_\_\_\_

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

What follows is a typical order of worship for a wedding. The usual wedding lasts about 25-40 minutes from beginning (when the processional occurs) till the end (when the service, signing and recessional are concluded). A church wedding implies that two people wish to be united in marriage in an act of public worship, before God. Thus, the marriage ceremony is more than just a legal act; two people make a covenant with each other and with God.

While it is desirable to have many of the parts of the service listed below, the whole service is yours to plan in consultation with the minister. You are encouraged to write your own vows if you wish, to include holy Communion if you wish, and to change other parts of the service to suit your needs. During your meeting with the minister, examples of readings and services can be provided and the service can be discussed and worked out. As part of the church's services, we can also supply printed bulletins as a keep-sake and partly to assist the worshipping guests.

The examples that exist below are from many different sources, some of which are United Church in origin, some from other traditions and some from weddings attended. Attempts have been made to attribute the sources, but that is not always possible.

### **I. ORDER OF SERVICE**

The typical elements of a church wedding are:

- A PROCESSION
- THE WELCOME
- LIGHTING OF CANDLES
- DECLARATION OF PURPOSE
- DECLARING INTENT TO MARRY (the I will's)
- DECLARATIONS OF SUPPORT (by family and friends)
- A PRAYER
- READINGS (1 or 2 usually, including any poems or special readings)
- THE VOWS
- THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS
- BLESSING THE MARRIAGE/PRAYER
- THE LORD'S PRAYER
- LIGHTING THE MARRIAGE CANDLE
- OTHER SYMBOLIC ACTIONS
- SIGNING OF THE REGISTER (publicly)
- THE DECLARATION
- THE KISS
- THE INTRODUCTION ... APPLAUSE
- FINAL BLESSING
- THE RECESSIONAL

### **II. OPTIONS**

Into this scheme a host of options are possible. This is your service and the shape of the service depends on you and your concerns. Please consider the following:

THE USE OF CANDLES  
CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSES  
SPECIAL MUSIC  
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING  
OTHER SYMBOLIC ACTS  
CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION  
SERMON by the minister  
CELTIC OR OTHER TRADITIONS

### III. EXPLANATIONS

#### A) THE PROCESSION

The entrance into the church is increasingly an area where couples choose to do some new things. Family processions are common in which the mother and father escort their child into the church with the attendants escorting each other. As a couple, you may want to enter together rather than processing separately, and have your attendants precede you to the front of the church. Many couples choose a traditional entrance in which one party waits at the front while the other party processes in just after the last guest has been seated. Some people dance down the aisle; it is really up to you so be as creative as you choose. For outdoor services, the same apply.

#### B) THE WELCOME

The welcome could be an informal greeting by the Minister or it could be something more formal. If it were to be more formal, it often takes the form of a blessing; examples follow:

- 1) May the grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.
- 2) May God, the author of life and love, fill our hearts with joy today, and be with us in our worship and praise.
- 3) We gather in the presence of God our Creator, in the love of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, our Sustainer.
- 4) NN and NN, we welcome you. We are glad to join with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows, to share in your love and to wish you joy in your life together.

#### C) THE DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

Some couples choose to write something about what marriage means to them to be shared on the wedding day. This ranges from words they say to each other--usually unknown to the other until the service--to something the couple prepares together and which one or both present to the assembled company. The traditional form of this is for the clergy person to talk about the nature of marriage. Examples are:

- 1) By our presence here we accept responsibility for helping NN and NN encouraging them in the new relationship into which they are about to enter. We are called to rejoice in their happiness, to help them when they have trouble, and to remember them in our prayers. Marriage, like our creation, owes its very existence to God. It is God's intention that two people should love each other throughout their life. (After which the Presider shall say to the persons being married:) NN and NN, your marriage is intended to join you for life in a relationship so intimate and personal that it will change your whole being. It offers you the hope, and indeed the promise, of a love that is true and mature. To attain such love you will have to commit yourselves to each other freely and gladly for the sake of a richer and deeper life together. Let God be your guide and helper.
- 2) We are gathered as friends of NN and NN to witness their joining in that



estate of marriage which people have entered responsibly and joyfully for generations, with full anticipation of its faithful keeping. Before us these two shall profess their love for each other, the blending of their lives, and their companionship of mind and heart. As two separate beings, they shall create one home in which each shall become more whole because of the other. From joys and sorrows shared, they shall grow in love and loyalty; from any pain given and forgiven they shall grow in mutual understanding. What the we now celebrate, and the province makes legal, these two shall henceforth make real. (J. Donald Johnston)

3) We are gathered here in God's presence to witness the marriage of NN and NN and to ask God to bless them. By our presence we accept responsibility for supporting them in the new relationship into which they are about to enter. We are called to rejoice in their happiness, to be patient when they make mistakes, to help them in times of trouble, and to remember them in our prayers. Marriage arose so that two people might have life-long companionship, that a mutual love might be realized in all its fullness, (that children might have the benefit of family life,) and that a free society might be strengthened through the covenant of marriage. The apostle Paul gave us a new vision of what marriage ought to be, a life of self-giving love. (United Church's Celebrate God's Presence.)

4) Your marriage joins you in a relationship so intimate that it profoundly affects your whole being. It offers you the promise of a love that is true and mature. Such a love requires that you commit your lives to one another freely and without reserve, for the sake of a deeper and wider life together. Seek to become one in mind and heart as well as one in body. Trust in the living God, and he will guide and support you on your way. (United Church's Celebrate God's Presence.)

5) You have freely decided to commit yourselves to each other in a close and continuing relationship in which your lives will flow commingled. In the presence of these witnesses you will exchange your pledges of that commitment, affirming your intention to strengthen and cherish the relationship you are building together, and to find through the sharing of your lives with each other a unity which will take you out of the loneliness of the isolated self. (Phillip Hewet)

6) Marriage is the journey of two people who wish to go through life together as one. In order for two people to live together as one, each must be respected, differences celebrated, and lives shared openly to establish a deep and lasting relationship. Your life together will be sharing love, joy, sorrow, the difficult times and the happy times. It is a relationship which requires love, patience, trust and honesty; through self-giving love you become truly one.

7) NN and NN, in presenting yourselves here today you perform a remarkable act of faith. This faith can grow and mature and endure, but only if you both determine to make it so. A lasting and growing love is never automatic, nor guaranteed by any ceremony.

If you would have the foundation of your union be the pure love you have for each other, not just at this moment, but for all the days ahead, then honour faithfully the statements and commitments that you bring here today. Today you resolve that your love will never be blotted out by the commonplace, obscured by the ordinary, or compromised by life's difficulties.

Stand fast in that hope and confidence, and believe in your shared future just as strongly as you believe in yourselves and in each other today. Only in this spirit can you create a partnership that will sustain all the days of your lives.

NN and NN, we are here to rejoice with you and to recount with one another that it is love that guides us on our path, and to celebrate as you begin a new journey together, a journey in marriage. It is in this spirit that you have come here to today to exchange your vows. (From LGBTQ wedding.)

8) Friends we are gathered here in the presence of God to witness the marriage of NN and NN and to ask God's blessing upon them.

Marriage is a gift of God and a means of God's grace, in which two people become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband/wife/life partners give themselves to each other in love, they shall grow together and be united in that love.

The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended for mutual comfort and help, that they may know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love.

In marriage, two people give themselves to each other, to care for each other in good times and in bad. They are linked to each other's families, and they begin a new life together in the community. It is a way of life that all should reverence, and none should lightly undertake.

We acknowledge that sometimes the gladness of marriage can be overcast. Yet the God who brings light out of darkness can turn our grief into joy.

We rejoice that marriage is given by God, blessed by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. (United Church worship resources.)

9) We have gathered here in the presence of God to witness the exchange of vows between NN and NN, and to ask God to bless them.

God created us to be in relationship with one another. And so today we celebrate the mysterious intimacy of the love between two people. We affirm the joy and freedom of lifelong union. We rejoice in the healing and new life we know even in the midst of our frailties and failures.

Trusting God's promise to be with us, may our hearts be open to God, and to one another, in faithfulness and hope.

NN and NN, you come before us all, your family and your friends, to make your promises. You have asked God to bless you in the new relationship into which you are about to enter. As a community, we witness your commitment and express our support by our presence and our prayers. May God be with you. (United Church's Celebrate God's Presence.)

10) Friends, we have gathered here in the presence of God to joyfully witness the exchange of vows between NN and NN, to surround them with our love and support, and to ask God to bless them.

God created us to be in relationship with one another. Today we celebrate the intimacy and joy of the love between two people. In the sharing of love through marriage, a husband/wife/life partner give themselves to each other, mutually, joyfully, and respectfully; they bring their own unique gifts and talents so that the other's life is enriched. And so, because of the gift of love, we rejoice in the healing and new life we know even in the midst of our human frailties.

NN and NN, we rejoice with you; we are glad to be here with you in the celebration of your marriage, to witness your vows and share in your joy. As the two of you enter this new relationship, may God's blessing always rest upon you and may God's blessing rest upon your families and friends. (United Church worship resources.)

11) Friends, we are here to participate in the celebration of love that NN and NN have chosen to share together, and to ask God to bless them in their marriage. By our presence we accept responsibility for supporting them in the new relationship into which they are about to enter. We are called to rejoice in their happiness, to be patient in times of change and growth, to help them in times of sorrow or distress, and to hold them in our hearts.

Marriage is a gift in which two people who are in love might have life-long companionship. We are created to love, and in the giving of love, we discover that our capacity to love is increased. We also find that in the giving and sharing of love, life is created and hope is renewed.

*(Spoken to NN and NN)* Your marriage unites you in a relationship so intimate that it profoundly affects your whole being. It offers you deep friendship, trust, hope, and becomes a safe place in which to grow and discover the endless possibilities of life. Such a love requires that you commit your lives to one another freely and without reserve. Seek to become one in mind and heart as well as one in body. Always trust the other and respect the individual gifts that you both bring to your relationship. And may God be with you always. (United Church worship resources.)

12) Good afternoon, and welcome to the ceremony that will unite NN and NN in marriage. We gather here today to celebrate their union, and to honour their commitment in exchanging marriage vows today. Today NN and NN proclaim their love to the world and we rejoice with and for them.

In marriage, we give ourselves freely and generously into the hands of the one we love, and in doing so we each receive the love and trust of the other as our most precious gift. But even as that gift is shared by two people who are in love, it also touches the friends and family members who in various ways support and contribute to the relationship. All of you are NN and NN's community, and each of you has played some part in this moment. This is why gathering as a community is such an important part of a wedding ceremony. Because NN and NN are now taking a new form as a married couple, and in this form, they become part of their community in a new way.

NN and NN, we are here to remember and rejoice with you and to recount with one another that it is love that guides us on our path, and to celebrate as you begin this new journey together; it is in this spirit that you have come here today to exchange these vows. (From LGBTQ wedding.)

13) We are happy to be here to celebrate with you formally what already exists - the living love of two people who have found joy and meaning together. In a mysterious yet happy way, you bring together two pasts, different in memories, traditions, hopes and loves. That will not change but will colour the future, so that, as you become one, you will always remain two. That is good. Marriage is not intended to be a melting pot where differences cease to exist, but rather the place

where you can be fully and honestly yourself, sharing at the deepest level all that life is and what you are.

#### D) DECLARING INTENT TO MARRY (The “I Wills”)

This is the part of the service in which you declare to each other and before your witness that you wish to be married. There is no longer any need to ask if there is any just impediment as to why you may not be married. Because these questions are about intention and will, the responses to the question are, “I will.” 1a) and 1b) below are the words that would come before the “I will” question. **Choose one of the following examples.**

1a) Presider: Before God and this congregation, I ask you, NN and NN, to affirm your willingness to enter into the lifelong commitment of marriage and to share all the joys and sorrows of this new relationship, whatever the future may hold.

1b) Presider: NN and NN, you have made it known that you wish to be joined together in marriage. I ask you now to declare your intentions of marriage.

The following questions are the actual “I will” questions. **Choose one of the 3 options.**

2a) Presider: NN, will you give yourself to NN, to be his/her husband/wife/life partner: to love her/him, comfort her/him, honour and protect her/him; and forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him so long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

2b) Presider: NN, will you love NN with integrity and gentleness, speaking openly and listening patiently? Will you protect, comfort and challenge her/him, cherishing the holy that is in her/him?

Response: I will.

2c) Presider: Will you have this man/woman to be your husband/wife/covenant (life) partner and will you love him/her faithfully as long as you both shall live?

#### E) DECLARING SUPPORT

It is important that your family and guests have an opportunity to declare their intention of supporting you. Normally the question is asked of your parents and/or family members and then of your guests. Examples follow.

1) Presider (*To the parents and/or family of NN and NN*): Will you give your blessing to NN and NN, and will you promise to uphold and care for them in their marriage?

Response: We will.

Presider: (*To the congregation*): You are witnesses to the vows about to be made. Will you do all in your power to support and uphold NN and NN in their marriage?

Response: We will.

## F) PRAYER OF INVOCATION

This is a prayer that is usually spoken by the Minister. It is a prayer asking God's Spirit to rest upon the couple getting married and to be present in the vows that are exchanged. As an option, the congregation could say this prayer.

## G) SCRIPTURE READINGS

It is normal to read 1 or 2 passages of Scripture; other readings can also be chosen. I have a list of poems that have been used at weddings. Examples of Scripture readings follow.

Genesis 1:26-28; Isaiah 61:10,11-62:3-5; Psalms 19,33,63,67,100,148,149,150; Song of Solomon 1:15-2:4; Song of Solomon 2:10-14; Song of Solomon 8:6-7; Romans 8:31b-39; Romans 12:1,2,9-13; 1 Corinthians 13; Colossians 3:1-4,12,17; Revelation 19:1,5-9; Revelation 21:1-6; 1 John 3:18-24; 1 John 4:7-12; Matthew 5:1-10; John 1:1-5,9-16; John 2:1-11; John 15:1-11; John 15:9-12.

## G) THE VOWS

Often the most meaningful vows for couples are ones they write themselves. This is not as difficult a task as it seems and can be a lot of fun. To write your vows, simply begin by identifying the verbs you are already using to describe and interpret your relationship with each other. For example - are you talking about sharing, or building, or creating, or becoming, or making, or committing or what? Once you identify some of the key verbs you are already using together you can simply ask each other: Creating what? Possible answer -- creating a bond of trust which translates into a vow of I....take you....to work together to create a bond of trust....(that's vow #1) Usually 4-6 vows are enough. Or you can choose vows that have already been used.

1) I, NN, take you, NN, to be my wife/husband/life partner, to build with you a strong and lasting marriage, full of love, trust and respect, to walk with you hand in hand through life, sharing all your joys and sorrows. To laugh with you and to comfort you always, to love you and honour you above all others, and to be faithful to you alone as long as we both shall live.

2) In the presence of God and before my family and friends, I, NN take you, NN to be my husband/wife/life partner, to walk with you in the world, to share with you your joy and your sorrow, to work with you to build a life together, to grow with you, to laugh with you, and to love you as long as we both shall live.

3) NN, I take you to be my husband/wife/life partner, to laugh with you in joy, to grieve with you in sorrow, to grow with you in love, to be faithful to you alone, as long as we both shall live.

4) In the presence of these witnesses I, NN, now take you, NN, to be my life partner/husband/wife to have and to hold from this day forward for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, to love and to cherish as long as we both shall live.

6) I, NN, pledge you, NN, a life of giving and of hoping, a life of growing and of loving. I would dedicate to you both my work and my play. I shall be with you in your tears and in your laughter, just as I shall bring to you my joys and my sorrows.

I take you to be my wife and I pledge to you honour, faith and love.

7) From this day forward, you shall be my husband/wife/life partner, together to love, to work and to share, to grow and to understand, to discover a deeper, fuller life.

8) I, NN, take you, NN, to be no other than yourself. Loving what I know of you, trusting what I don't yet know, with respect for your integrity, and faith in your abiding love for me, through all our years, and in all that life may bring us, I accept you as my life partner/husband/wife.

9) Before God and in the presence of my friends and family: I, NN take you, NN to be my life partner/husband/wife, to grow with you through our lives together, to share your sadness, challenges and happiness, to share in building and supporting a life together, to be honest with you and respect you as an individual, and to love you as long as we both shall live.

10) I, NN take you, NN to be my life partner/husband/wife. To laugh with you in joy, to grieve with you in sorrow, to grow with you in love, to care with you for others, to be faithful to you alone, as long as we both shall live.

11) I, NN, take you, NN, to be my wife/husband/life partner, to have you and to hold you from this day forward, to honour and treasure you, to respect you and grow with you, and to believe in you even when you doubt yourself. I promise to be at your side in times of sorrow and joy, sickness and health, failure and success; to love and to cherish you, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

12) I, NN, take you, NN, to be my wife/husband/life partner, to have and to hold from this day forward: for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer; in sickness and in health; in joy and in sorrow; to love and to cherish and to be faithful to you alone, as long as we both shall live.

13) I NN take you NN to be my spouse/wife/husband/life partner. I promise above all else to live in truth with you and to communicate fully and fearlessly. I give you my hand and my heart as a sanctuary of warmth and peace and pledge my love, devotion, faith and honour as I join my life to yours. (From a wedding ceremony.)

#### H) WORDS BEFORE THE RING EXCHANGE:

1) Presider: The circle is the symbol of the sun and the earth and the universe. It is a symbol of holiness and of perfection and of peace. In these rings it is the symbol of unity, in which your two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return unto one another to your togetherness. Let us pray...

2) The ring symbolises the unbroken circle of endless love. It is worn on the third finger because of an ancient Greek belief that a vein from that finger is connected directly to the heart, thus symbolising the depth and sincerity of love. Let us pray...

3) The ring is an ancient symbol of love and life. It has no ending and no beginning, but is ever encircling, sign of God's embrace and unending love. Let us pray...

4) The wedding ring is an unbroken, never-ending circle, as your

commitment and love for each other is never-ending. These wedding bands are made precious by what they represent. They are a symbol to you and the world of your union. Your rings say that you are two individuals bound together. When you look at these rings, remember the commitment that you have to each other today.

5) Wedding rings are made precious by our wearing of them. Your rings say that even in your uniqueness you have chosen to be bound together. Let these rings also be a sign that love has substance as well as soul, a present as well as a past, and that despite its occasional sorrows, love is a circle of happiness, wonder, and delight.

#### I) WORDS WITH EXCHANGE OF RINGS

1) I give you this ring that you may wear it as a symbol of the vows we have made this day and as a symbol of all that we will share together.

2) I bring this ring, forged in love, which to me is the symbol of completeness and eternity, and I give it to you to wear so that we will always remember our marriage vows.

3) I give you this ring that you may wear it as a symbol of our marriage.

4) I give you this ring as a symbol of the commitment we have made today.

5) I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. With all that I am and all that I have, I honour you.

6) Just as this circle is without end, my love for you is eternal. Just as it is made of indestructible substance my commitment to you will never fail. With this ring I take you to be my partner for life.

#### J) THE PRAYER OF BLESSING

The prayer of blessing is a prayer that asks God to be with the couple being married. This can be a prayer that the Minister says alone; or it can be a prayer that the congregation says; or it can be a combination of Minister and congregation. The Lord's Prayer usually follows this prayer.

#### K) SIGNING THE DOCUMENTS

This is fairly self-explanatory. In order for the wedding to be legally binding, the documents are to be signed and witnessed. It has become convention that this take place before the gathered congregation. At Nelson United Church we provide a church certificate of marriage; however, whether this is legally binding is an open question. The province of BC provides you with a legal certificate. Once the documents have been legally signed, the Minister will declare you to be legally married and then introduce you to the congregation; you need to decide how you want to be introduced. A final blessing is said just before the recessional begins.

#### L) DECLARATION

The declaration takes place after the legal documents have been signed. Then a kiss seals the declaration. The following words (or variations) are used.

NN and NN, you have made a covenant of love before God and in the

presence of us all. You have confirmed your commitment by joining hands, by speaking words of love to each other, by exchanging rings, (by lighting a candle,) and by surrounding yourselves with family and friends. Therefore, I declare you to be husband and wife/Therefore I declare you to be legally married/Therefore I declare you to be covenant life partners. May God bless you and keep you now and forever. **OR**

NN and NN, by joining hands now and looking into each other's eyes, let it be known that you are joined, body and soul in this lifetime, and that this bond is sacred and eternal. And now that you have exchanged these rings and these vows, and pledged your troth to one another before us all, it gives me gives me great pleasure to pronounce that you are and will continue to be married partners for life.

**OR**

NN and NN, your lives and spirits are joined in a union of love and trust. Above you are the stars and below you the earth. Like the stars your love should be a constant source of light, and like the earth, a firm foundation from which to grow. As you have consented in this ceremony in the presences of friends and family to be partners for life, I now pronounce you married and bound together body and soul.

#### M) THE RECESSIONAL

The newly married couple usually lead the procession out of the church with the congregation following. Sometimes a receiving line has been set-up in the narthex, but that is up to each couple.

#### N) OPTIONAL CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSES

Many couples would like more participation of the guests. Congregational responses would allow for this participation; the responses would normally occur early in the service, perhaps forming the greeting or the purpose. Here is an example:

1) Leader: In marriage two seek to become one.

Response: NN and NN you are continuing on your journey of life together. We have shared much of your journey and intend to stay with you and support you even now as you each enter a new phase of your life.

Leader: In marriage two seek one future.

Response: NN and NN, some of us have experienced this same journey together. Our parents stand as our own examples of strength in love, patience in love and understanding of love. To be successful on your journey you must blend all of these virtues and the uniqueness of your persons into the being of one.

#### O) OPTIONAL CANDLE LIGHTING POSSIBILITIES

Many couples choose to use candles in some way during their marriage service. The following are suggestions:

1) In memory of a person particularly missing at this time. Usually it is a parent who died or a special person in one's life who cannot be present but whose symbolic presence



would have meaning. This candle is lit and dedicated to this memory at the beginning of the service.

2) The "three candle" liturgy is common. Two candles would be lit at the beginning of the service, usually by the parents of the bride/groom/life partners, but also by other family members. These two candles represent the uniqueness of your individual lives and all that you bring into the marriage covenant. Then, just after the vows, exchange of rings, you together take the two lit candles and light a third candle, the "marriage candle."

When the smaller candles are lit near the beginning of the service, they could be lit in silence or there could be a response such as the one that follows.

1) Leader: In marriage two seek one love, one light.

Response: NN and NN, your future is a journey and not a destination. Your love is the light that shows the path. Like light your love cannot be held, manipulated or wrapped up but must remain free, spontaneous and mysterious if direction is to be found through it. (Light Candles)

When the marriage candle is lit later in the service, usually just after the vows and exchange of rings, words like the following could be used and spoken by the minister or in a response form by the congregation.

1) By the vows they have made, NN and NN indicate their intention to share their lives together. As they light the centre candle—the marriage candle—it symbolizes the beginning of their married life. The light of their love will now be cast into the future of their life together, and this light, as it grows stronger, will be a reminder of the power of love to create life.

In lighting the marriage candle together, NN and NN symbolically give the light of love to each other and rejoice in the hopes and dreams of each other. The two smaller candles represent the uniqueness of their lives, their gifts and their talents, and the support of their families; these candles are not extinguished because the light that is each of them is not extinguished but is made stronger in the bonds of marriage. May the light of love warm their hearts and illumine the path they will walk in their future together. Amen

## P) MUSIC & SPECIAL MUSIC

It is your choice as to the music that is used during the processional, the recessional and during the signing of the register. You are free to have the organ played the piano or other instruments. If you wish to have a soloist sing, that, too, is your choice. It is also your decision as to whether the congregation sings a hymn(s). Think carefully about music, as it is very important. The church organist normally plays for weddings, but you are free to choose your own musician.

## Q) HOLY COMMUNION

If Holy Communion is important to you, it is an option to be considered. You are free to discuss this with the Minister.

## R) SAND CEREMONY

This has become more and more popular. Different coloured sand is poured into a clear vase or container. The symbolism is to show how two lives become one. There are

lots of wording examples on the internet. Words like the following can be used:

Today NN and NN wish to participate in the sand ceremony. This tradition indicates the joining of their hearts, their lives, their souls and their separate families as one. Just as these sands can never be separated and poured again into their individual containers, our prayer for you today is that your marriage and families be united together as one for all your days.

#### S) CELTIC OR OTHER TRADITIONS

1. **Celtic** resources are available on request.

2. **Hand fasting ceremony** is a possibility. It is an ancient earth tradition from the British Isles and Europe. A colourful cord is used to symbolically bind the hands of the couple together. There are a number of vows that accompany a cycle of binding. There are other words that are part of this ritual. Examples are available on request.