

# Humanist *Ceremonies*

**Humanists UK**  
**Wedding Celebrant Training**  
**Sample wedding scripts**

Humanists UK  
39 Moreland Street, London EC1V 8BB | 020 7324 3060

[weddings@humanism.org.uk](mailto:weddings@humanism.org.uk)

[www.humanism.org.uk](http://www.humanism.org.uk)

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## **Acknowledgements**

Humanists UK wishes to thank the following celebrants for so generously giving their time and sharing their scripts: Ian Willox, Christine Berrisford, Cate Quinn and Elizabeth Donnelly.

## **Notes**

In each of these scripts is a bespoke-written ceremony. They will give you ideas for structuring a ceremony and - most importantly - making it personal to the couple. For ease of reading all stage directions and other 'working script' features have been removed. The document has been formatted for double-sided, monochrome print.

# An informal wedding ceremony

## Welcome

Welcome everyone. We are gathered in this atmospheric and cosy cruck barn to celebrate the union of Bride and Groom, as they make their declarations of love for one another. The song you have just heard is about a wish coming true. Today, *you* will be witnesses to Groom and Bride's wish coming true.

Please sit down and make yourselves comfortable.

Cruck barns were once a common sight in the dales, but this barn is the first of its kind to be built since the times of Henry VIII, in 2006, using traditional methods and materials. The timber came from nearby Bolton Abbey and Broughton Hall; and the roof is clad in heather - hence the steep pitch to assist in the weatherproofing. Hopefully, it will do its job to keep us warm and dry today, along with the sheep's wool insulation and roaring fire!

My name is Cate Quinn, and I am a Celebrant, accredited with Humanists UK. I am delighted to have been asked to conduct Bride and Groom's wedding ceremony today.

Groom and Bride chose a Humanist ceremony, as they wanted to celebrate their union in a manner that is inclusive of all beliefs and respects their close relationship with the natural world. That is why they have chosen this environmentally-friendly venue.

Bride and Groom do not feel the need to get married to demonstrate the *inward* love they feel for one another. You are not gathered here to witness what *will be*, but rather, what has *already* taken place in their lives. You are here to celebrate the *outward* commitment they make to each other today in front of the people who mean the most to them. *That is, you* - their loving families and dearest friends. They hope that you will share in their joy and help them keep their promises in the future.

Groom and Bride are delighted that so many of you could be here to share in their special day. It means an awful lot to have you all here and many of you have travelled from afar.

They would also like to take a moment to remember those who cannot be here today or are no longer with us.

## Thoughts on marriage

For thousands of years, people from across the world have marked significant events in their lives with music, song and rituals. Today is one of those occasions, as we celebrate Bride and Groom's wedding.

Marriage is a significant event. Out of the routine of everyday life, something extraordinary has happened. And marriage is itself, both ordinary and extraordinary, because it is about everyday life. It holds special, heightened moments, as well as the ordinary and the routine.

The inner progression of love between two people is a most *marvellous* thing; it cannot be found by searching for it, or by passionately wishing for it. It is a kind of fortunate accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.

**Celebrant to couple:** Groom and Bride, *your* wedding ceremony is likely to be the greatest gathering of the people you hold *most* dear in life. Treasure this moment and treat it with the importance it deserves.

Marriage is a partnership in which each of you can grow and be your true selves, whilst sharing and supporting in the development of the other. It is a statement to all those around you of what the two of you already know. Namely, that you have found such love and support that you wish to share the rest of your lives together. You each take the other in your entirety as companion, lover and friend.

And finally, a wedding brings together two families. So, Mum 1 and Dad 1; Mum 2 and Dad 2, - this also means that your new daughter-in-law and son-in-law will be yours to love too, not just someone your child loves.

### Reading one

I would now like to invite X, one of Bride's friends to come forward and read us an adapted extract from the Pulp song '*My Lighthouse*'. Thank you, X.

#### Extract from '*My Lighthouse*', by Pulp

Read by X

*Come up to my lighthouse for I have something I wish to say  
It can wait for a moment; well in fact it can wait all day  
I just wanted to bring you up here so you could have the chance to see  
the beauty of this situation that you could share with me  
It may seem strange to talk of love and then lighthouses  
It's not strange to me  
All alone, you and I in our look out  
That's the way to be 3*

### Couple's story

Bride and Groom are keen for this ceremony to focus on the importance of their families and friends in their lives. The understanding and mutual respect, which they bring to their relationship is rooted and has grown from the love, friendship and guidance you have given them.

However, it wouldn't be conceivable to not briefly tell the story of how they came to be in *their* 'lighthouse' and decided that they wanted to share the rest of their lives together.

Groom and Bride were both interviewed for the same **one** Jb vacancy in the Government department Defra. Luckily, NN (who is here today) managed to employ them both and they became close friends. **Good work NN!**

They were friends for over a year before they finally got together. Bride quickly realised that she had finally found someone who was willing to accompany her to all the random events she likes to go to. Groom proved his open-mindedness and patience when Bride took him to the pop-up '*Museum of Broken Relationships*' for one of their first dates. This seemed to go well, so this was followed by a visit to an exhibition on *dirt* at the Wellcome Collection. Bride admits that the *dirt* exhibition wasn't that great.

Groom also realised that he had found someone who he could happily be himself in front of, and who even seemed to enjoy his slight oddness.

They have a shared love of the outdoors – hiking, nature spotting; and both agree that a flask of coffee and a picnic of cheese and pickle sandwiches, prawn cocktail crisps and a sneaky pork pie to share is the best.

Neither Groom nor Bride had any doubts that they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together. Although Groom had been secretly thinking about marriage for a while, the proposal was a spontaneous affair at the top of a Corbett in Scotland.

When Groom got down on one knee, Bride just thought he was tying his shoelace.

*Apparently, this takes quite a long time to do as he ties his shoelaces in a weird way.* Groom got a bit concerned when Bride realised what was actually happening, and started saying "*no, no, no – what are you doing you wally*" in surprise. But reassuringly, this was quickly followed by a

**"Yes!"**.

Naturally, this was celebrated by a flask of coffee and cheese and pickle sandwiches.

Now they have begun to build their lives away from London in Yorkshire. They feel very lucky to be able to see lots of trees and sheep from their house, and to be in the countryside in five minutes. However, they both miss having all their friends on their doorstep. Groom and Bride are incredibly thankful for all your support over the years and are ecstatic you are all here today.

### **Personal vows**

Bride and Groom have chosen to mark their union by making their own unique and shared promises to each other. Groom and Bride, will you please stand and face one another. We will start with Groom.

## **Groom's vows**

*I promise to accompany you on life's adventure.*

*To love, respect, listen to you and always try to understand you.*

*I acknowledge our individuality, promise to encourage you to do what is right for you, to always allow you to be who you are and who you wish to be.*

*You are the kindest and prettiest person I have ever met. With my best friend by my side life is full of infinite possibilities and I will be ever thankful you chose me.*

And now for Bride.

## **Bride's vows**

*I promise to accompany you on life's adventure.*

*To love, respect, listen to you and always try to understand you.*

*I acknowledge our individuality, promise to encourage you to do what is right for you, to always allow you to be who you are and who you wish to be.*

*You are the best person I know, so very kind and loyal. With you by my side life is full of infinite possibilities and I will be ever thankful you chose me.*

Thank you, Bride. If you would both like to sit down again.

## **Reading 2**

I would now like to invite Y, one of Bride and Groom's friends, to read us an extract from "Us two", by A.A. Milne.

### **Extract from 'Us Two', by A.A. Milne**

Read by Y

*Wherever I am, there's always Pooh,*

*There's always Pooh and Me.*

*Whatever I do, he wants to do,*

*"Where are you going today?" says Pooh:*

*"Well, that's very odd 'cos I was too.*

*Let's go together," says Pooh, says he.*

*"Let's go together," says Pooh.*

*"What would I do?" I said to Pooh,*

*"If it wasn't for you," and Pooh said: "True,*

*It isn't much fun for One, but Two,*

*Can stick together, says Pooh, says he.*

*"That's how it is," says Pooh.*

## **Exchange of rings**

And so, just like Pooh and Piglet, Groom and Bride have made their vows to stick together.

They have also chosen to exchange rings as an outward symbol of their commitment. We will be assisted in this part of the ceremony by NN, Groom's brother. Would NN please join us at the front with the rings? Thank you.

The circle is a symbol of the sun, the earth and the universe, and the changing seasons of life. May it stand for you as a bond, which unites two loyal people as you embark on life's adventure together.

Groom will first place Bride's ring on her finger. If we could have Bride's ring, please?

**Celebrant:** Groom, please repeat after me:

*"Bride, with this ring, I am gladly yours and you are mine."*

**Groom:** *"Bride, with this ring, I am gladly yours and you are mine."*

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Groom. And now for Groom's ring ...

**Celebrant:** Bride, please repeat after me:

*"Groom, with this ring, I am gladly yours and you are mine."*

**Bride:** *"Groom, with this ring, I am gladly yours and you are mine."*

**Celebrant:** Thank you, Bride. Please now take your seats.

Thank you once again to NN for playing this vital role in today's events.

### **Certificate signing**

Bride and Groom wish to reflect the formality of this ceremony by signing a certificate, witnessed by Groom's brother, Bride's friend. Please join us at the table?

[*'To be by your side'*, by Nick Cave playing in the background]

### **Pronouncement and closing words**

**Celebrant to guests:** It is with great joy that I now present to you our newlyweds, Bride and Groom.

**Celebrant to couple:** We would be delighted if you would seal this partnership with a kiss.

### **Recessional**

Groom and Bride; as the two of you commit your love to each other here today, remember the lessons of love that you have always known. Remember the words you have spoken and heard and keep your promises always.

Let your love comfort, support and encourage you. Let it be the best part of your lives; and may you always know that it will make everything better and your world a place of happiness.

Now the ceremony is coming to a close. In a moment, Bride and Groom will walk back up the aisle. You are then invited to join them for mulled wine in the bar area, whilst the main room is made ready for the reception.

Thank you, and my most heart-felt congratulations.

[Couple exit to '*This must be the place*' by Talking Heads]

# Cultural references during the ceremony

## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to the wedding of A S and B J.

A and B ask that you don't take any photos or video during the ceremony – they'd rather see you than your phone. At the end of the ceremony there will be ample opportunity to take pictures.

I should warn you that there will be audience participation. But only of the pleasantest kind. At the vows you'll be asked to give your support. And after the ceremony you'll have the opportunity to sign A and B's wedding certificate as a witness.

I should introduce myself. My name is Ian Willox. I'm a celebrant for Humanists UK.

A and B are both atheists. They're both aware of sharing our planet and our evolutionary roots with other living things. They share an intense curiosity about still pioneering research into the depths of ecology and evolution – especially our origins as African primates.

So they've chosen to celebrate their relationship with a Humanist wedding – a non-religious wedding. That doesn't mean anti-religious. This is a ceremony for everyone – including those with a religious faith.

If you're new to the idea of Humanism you might find American agnostic Robert Ingersoll's succinct definition helpful. He said:

“Reason, Observation and Experience – the Holy Trinity of Science – have taught us that happiness is the only good; that the time to be happy is now, and the way to be happy is to make others so.”

Terry Pratchett put it even more briefly. He said:

“Goodness is about what you do. Not what you pray to.”

In other words, today is all about being happy.

More importantly, it is about two human beings promising themselves to each other, and wanting you to witness it.

## THE STORY

But first let's back track a little to find out how we got here.

Both A and B grew up in countries far from and far different from the homelands of their parents.

In B's case – East Africa. He was born in and grew up in T.

In A's case – The Middle East and North Africa. She was born in S and grew up in L.

Both went to boarding schools. B in East Africa and the UK. A in Switzerland and France.

So Africa has been a common thread through both their lives.

That's partly why C will be playing music with an African inflection after the ceremony. He learnt to play the *mbira* – the African thumb harp - in Zambia. And happened to perform it downstairs from A and B's home in R.

There's an African connection to our presence in this beautiful barn – courtesy of L B and F W. They share A and B's consciousness of African origins. And L shares T as her birthplace with B.

And you wouldn't believe the trouble A and B went to to find a celebrant with an African past – and his own clan *kikoi*.

But Africa was not where they met.

It happened at XXX University in XXX in the USA. A was on the faculty of the School of the Environment. B was a visiting faculty member at the Zoology Department. They were both at the doctoral seminar of a student who was jointly advised by professors from each of the departments. Since you ask, he was studying the role of forest rodents in dispersing tree seeds.

Afterwards, at the wine and cheese party downstairs in the Zoology Department, A was talking to the student. She told him that his seminar had been very enlightening, but she wondered if he couldn't have found an illustration or photo of an agouti rather than just describing it as "an animal like a large rat"?

Someone else in the group said, "B could have drawn you one".

At which point a tall, distinguished looking gentleman walked over to the Bboard, picked up the chalk, and with a few deft strokes, drew an agouti!

Which you have to admit is pretty cool.

A asked him who he was and she and B embarked on their first conversation. She remembers it focused on a skull that B called "Fourteen seventy".

And then she discovered that he had been born and raised in T and she thought: "Oh, he's an overseas kid like me!"

But the bit I really like is B's impressions of A. So much so that I'm going to quote him verbatim.

He said:

“While we first met in America it was in Indonesia that I first saw A in her real element, with giant fruit bats flying above equatorial forests alive with bulbuls, barbets and a thousand living things. This bold, alert, observant and beautiful scientist had the ability to seize and size up life’s opportunities as they came along, something often called “zest for life”. Like me she had spent the greater part of her life and career within just such settings, each informed by similarly biologically biased world views.”

“One always-to-be-remembered day, in Java, this extraordinary woman, fellow teacher, fellow researcher and fellow intellectual, (but emphatically of the opposite sex) left me trembling and speechless: she invited me to share her life. Could and would she share mine? After some eighteen years we have mutually agreed that each of us has passed all the necessary tests (not all of them academic). “

I think we’re talking about love.

### **THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE**

Shakespeare always has useful thoughts on love. A and B have gone for Sonnet 116:

#### **Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds By William Shakespeare**

*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 wand'ring 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 prov'd,  
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.*

Shakespeare may be universal, but he is also English.

A’s long time friend from New York – S B – will read words about marriage from a native American tradition. S...

#### **S B Native American (Apache) Wedding Blessing**

*Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for the other.  
Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be warmth to the other.  
Now there will be no loneliness, for each of you will be companion to the other.*

*Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before you.  
May beauty surround you both in the journey ahead and through all the years.  
May happiness be your companion and your days together be good and long upon the earth.*

Thank you S.

### **Warming of the wedding rings**

Before we move on to words by A and B – a little challenge...K has A and B's rings. Not just for safekeeping. He's going to hand them out to the back row to pass from hand to hand until they reach the front. This isn't just so you can admire the jewellery. It is to give each of you the chance to hold their rings, to bless them, to warm them with your wishes.

*K starts passing out the rings (2:00)*

If all goes according to plan, the rings will arrive at the front, where K will receive them, freighted with all your sentiments, just as we complete the vows.

A and B will you please stand, and face your friends and family.

You've heard Shakespeare on love, you've heard S's native American blessing. Now it's the turn of A and B to speak for themselves.

*[give A her script]*

#### **A (to B):**

*I love you B, for your sense of play – you make me laugh! And for the way your knowledge and insights enrich every experience we share, of nature or of culture, every conversation and exploration of ideas. I love you for your modesty about your many accomplishments; and because you are kind, generous, loving, and expressive – someone who cherishes and cultivates friendships. And, of course, because of your dancing, spiced up by African rhythm and moves!*

#### **B (to A): (in Swahili)**

*I love you A for being A, mate and comforter, loving but also curious, intelligent and as much in search as I am, for the biological truths that underpin the world (even as we try to understand it today). An extensive and wide ranging sharing of minds, ideas, fun, friends, travels, days and nights.*

*[encourage applause]*

We're approaching the moment when A and B exchange vows and rings.

At the end of the marriage vows I will I need your help. Because I will be asking you to make a collective vow.

### **VOWS**

A and B, I invite you to join hands and make your vows in the presence of your family and friends.

B J, do you take A S to be your wife?

**B:** I do.

*[IAN prompts quietly]*

I will love you,  
comfort you,  
honour and protect you,  
and, forsaking all others,  
be faithful to you  
as long as we both shall live.  
I will have and hold you from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us doth part.

Thank you B.

A S, do you take B J to be your husband?

**A:** I do.

*[IAN prompts quietly]*

I will love you,  
comfort you,  
honour and protect you,  
and, forsaking all others,  
be faithful to you  
as long as we both shall live.  
I will have and hold you from this day forward,  
for better, for worse,  
for richer, for poorer,  
in sickness and in health,  
to love and to cherish,  
till death us doth part.

Thank you A.

*(to guests)* You've witnessed A and B making their promises to each other. Now it's your turn.

For the avoidance of doubt the answer is “We will”.

Family and friends. Will you support and uphold A and B in their marriage now and in the years to come?

**OMNES:** We will.

Thank you.

### **EXCHANGE OF TOKENS**

K can we have A’s ring? (*the one with the heart on it*)

Now B is going to place A’s ring, warmed by all your wishes, on A’s finger. Hopefully the right one... By which I mean the left hand.

[*IAN quietly prompts B*]

I, B J...  
...give you this ring...  
...as a sign of our marriage.  
With my body I honour you...  
...all that I am I give to you...  
...and all that I have I share with you.

[*B places the ring on the fourth finger of A’S left hand.*]

K, can we have B’s ring please.

[*IAN quietly prompts A*]

I, A S...  
...give you this ring...  
...as a sign of our marriage.  
With my body I honour you...  
...all that I am I give to you...  
...and all that I have I share with you.

[*A places the ring on the fourth finger of B’s left hand.*]

[*IAN joins A and B’S hands.*]

A and B have given their consent and made their marriage vows by the joining of hands and by the giving and receiving of rings, in the presence of their friends and family.

I therefore proclaim they are now husband and wife.

The traditional moment for a kiss...

*[encourage applause]*

**CLOSING WORDS**

Family and friends, I give you A and B! Husband and wife! Let the celebration begin!



# Renewal of vows after 30 years of marriage

## Arrival

Everyone, could I please have your attention.

I am pleased to announce that D is ready; so if you could you gather round, we can begin this evening's ceremony.

Before D joins us there is a small house keeping point...

J and D have chosen some music to be part of this evening's ceremony and they respectfully ask that in order not to make any impromptu additions, you please switch your mobiles to silent. Thank you.

## Welcome

I wish you a warm welcome to this evening's celebrations. My name is Christine Berrisford and it gives me great pleasure to have been invited by Debbie and J to conduct their Renewal of Vows in my capacity as a Humanist Wedding Celebrant.

D and J have opted for an informal celebration and so they are very happy for you to take photos throughout. Could I ask that you don't blind us with flashes though, as I won't be able to read my script! Thank you.

As friends and family of J and D you will already be aware that this evening is going to be a less than traditional affair. The decision to hold this celebration was made during a rather splendid, but very drunken party, here at Sandra and David's home, on New Year's Eve. At that point though it was D and Sandra who outlined the plans, whilst J, at the other end of the table that evening, hadn't a clue what was being plotted! He has since been consulted on *some*, if not all of the plans!

Debbie and J want this to be a joyful, fun and memorable occasion, confirming how happy and stable their marriage has made them. They want you, their family and friends, to feel at ease and included in the proceedings.

By opting for a Humanist ceremony, they have been able to craft every aspect of this evening's celebrations, ensuring they are personal, meaningful and inclusive. They want this to be a ceremony in which you participate, rather than simply witness.

## Guest Involvement

J and D are delighted that you have all taken the time and trouble to be here this evening. They are particularly happy that their children - Stephen and Jamila, her partner Andrew and their Granddaughter Mya can share this with them. They have both spoken to me warmly about their family, their friends and their workmates.

Some people here already know each other, but others don't as yet, so let's break the ice a little more...

Please raise your hands in a 'hello' if you are *family* members?

Another wave 'hello' if you are *friends* of J and D?

Who here are workmates?

If you haven't raised your hand yet, we can only assume that you are in the wrong place...  
Mike, could you please escort the gate-crashers to the door?

At this point D and J would like to offer their huge thanks and gratitude to David and Sandra, who have so generously allowed us to use their beautiful home for this evening's celebrations and who been so supportive in assisting with all the preparations.

Can we please offer up an appreciative round of applause?

### **The Story So far and Words on Marriage**

J and Debbie have written their own renewal vows for today, but before they make those vows, they want a few reflections on how they have reached this point.

They met at a convention, where, they told me, it wasn't 'eyes meeting across a crowded room', as much as eyes meeting from the top and bottom of a staircase. No matter the location, they both agree that they definitely 'caught each other's eye'!

J tried out the incredibly smooth chat up line of, "have we met somewhere before?" and *despite* this, succeeded in getting an invitation to walk on the beach with D and her friends.

It wasn't until much later that J found out D and the gang were on the prowl that evening, hunting for men and J was snared! They DID all walk to the beach, but the friends promptly disappeared, leaving J and D alone. They exchanged phone numbers that night and the rest is history!

For Debbie and J, marriage is concerned with the sharing of love and support – both for each other and for their family. It allows them to feel that no matter what trials and tribulations they may face in their lives, they do so in the knowledge that it is not necessary to face them alone; they have someone who is willing to support and shelter them.

They bring different things to their marriage; D describes J as calming, dependable and loving; J describes D as bubbly, kind and beautiful. What they both agree on is that a marriage grows over time. They have had their share of ups and downs and there have been fireworks along the way! But above all they have had lots of fun and laughter. They have enjoyed the support of dear friends and they both feel lucky to be able to say how incredibly proud they are of their children, and their granddaughter, and how very much they love them.

When I asked why they had decided to have a renewal ceremony, they were both very clear... Their first wedding was very small and rather functional, with very little in the way of glamour or celebration. They wanted to have something on a grander scale, but over the years it never seemed quite the right time. They both agree that 30 years together is

something worth celebrating and they want to mark it in style, before Zimmer frames get in the way!

About 4 years ago they had decided to move abroad to live and had actually sold their house... but, the pull of leaving the family was too great, especially leaving Mya, so the plans were put on the back burner until a later date!

Their hopes going forward are that tonight's ceremony marks the start of them being as happy as they have been, for another 30 years; but, being able to spend even more of their time together once work is out of the way.

They look forward to watching their children have happy and successful lives and they hope to continue their adventures abroad.

## **The Vows**

### **J's Vows**

*Deborah, over 30 years ago, on our wedding day, I pledged my love and commitment to you, but it seems like only yesterday. I promised to love you, honour you and comfort you. I pledged to be by your side in sickness and in health, in times of want and times of plenty; for better or worse, for the rest of our lives. We have had all of those things and you have been by my side as we created a family, a home and a life together. My love for you has deepened beyond anything I could have imagined. I believe in this marriage more than ever and I reaffirm my love and commitment to you. Today, at the beginning of our 30th year as husband and wife, in the presence of our children, Jamila and Stephen, our granddaughter, Mya, our family and friends, I renew my vows to you, pledging my eternal love for you, and eagerly awaiting what life may bring us.*

### **Debbie's Vows**

*J, from the very first time I set my eyes on you I knew that I had met my soul mate! You had a smile that made my insides feel funny. You have always been my rock over the years, someone that has always been there for me. You have always been the one that unselfishly encouraged me and pushed me to be the person I am today.*

*I make this vow to you, that going forward, for the next 30 years I will continue to love you from the bottom of my heart. I vow to make you as happy as you have always made me. To support you, like you have always supported me, in all that you do and in whatever you want to do from now into the future. I vow to share your goals and dreams, and to make our love grow even stronger, as we now grow old together*

[Celebrant]:

J, with your family and friends gathered together as witnesses, will you confirm that you will continue to be husband, friend and companion to Debbie for the rest of your lives together.

[J]: I will.

[Celebrant]:

Debbie, with your family and friends gathered together as witnesses, will you confirm that you will continue to be wife, friend and companion to J for the rest of your lives together .

[*Deb*]: I will.

Steven, please can I have your Parents' wedding rings...

Please take each other's ring.

[*Celebrant*]:

J and Debbie, will you seek to continue to live together as equals, accepting each other's strengths and weaknesses?

Will you continue to offer your love to each other, without condition?

Will you seek to continue to learn and grow from your shared experiences?

Will you seek to continue to build a loving marriage, allowing each other to change and develop; supporting each other through happiness and sorrow, illness and good health?

[*J and Deb*]: We will

Please place your wedding rings back onto each other's finger, as a symbol of your continued commitment to each other and to your marriage.

### **Signing of the Certificate**

D and J have opted to sign a commemorative certificate, as a keep-sake of their ceremony this evening. They would like Steven, Jamila and Mya to sign it along with them. While we do this you are very welcome to have a chat, take photos, or simply watch whilst you enjoy the music.

### **Formal declaration**

Everyone, could I please have your attention once again?

J and Debbie, please stand to face your guests.

*"You will not feel the rain, for each shall shelter the other*

*You will not feel the cold, for each will warm the other.*

*You will not feel solitude, for each will accompany the other.*

*You are two people, but leading one life.*

*May your days be good and long upon the earth".*

Would you please all give a round of applause as I introduce to you J and Debbie, the **still** married, Mr and Mrs B.

[kiss]

## **Handfasting included in the ceremony**

### **Preamble and Notices**

Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Donnelly and I am a Wedding Celebrant accredited by Humanists UK. I'm one of a network of celebrants who work across the country with couples to create and conduct personal, secular ceremonies such as this wedding.

Immediately following the ceremony J and T will leave for photographs while we go upstairs and tour the bridge. We will then return here for 2.30pm for the drinks reception, where there will be cake and champagne.

We will then begin to leave at 3.30pm in order to catch the bus for a sightseeing tour of central London. A picnic will be available onboard. The bus will take us to the Backyard Bar, where you can have some free time, stretch your legs etc. At 7:15pm we will all regroup for the evening's comedy night.

Please stand.

### **Entrance of the Grooms**

*'It Had To Be You', Harry Connick Jr.*

### **Welcome**

Please sit.

On behalf of J and T, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all and thank you for coming, with a special welcome to those of you who have made very long journeys to be here to share this joyful occasion.

I would particularly like to welcome J's family, his parents, M and B, and his sister and brother-in-law, S and G, along with their children, T, P and B.

I would also like to welcome T's brother, R, and his wife, A, as well as T's sister, J and her husband A.

Also here are M and C, who witnessed T and J's civil marriage, and I want to thank A who made the wedding cake.

We are also thinking of T's father, W, T's uncle A and J's aunt, B who are sadly no longer with us.

And we are glad to welcome S W, T's sister and family who are in Australia, but have stayed up late to watch the ceremony via Skype.

### **On Marriage**

We are gathered here today, not to witness the beginning of what will be, but rather to celebrate a love that already is. As Louis de Bernières said, “Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away”.

A marriage is made with hearts and minds, and so today is the declaration of J and T’s love, their celebration, their wedding day, which they wish to share with you – those they love from near and far, and the people they consider most important in their lives.

The founding of a new home and family has always been celebrated as an act of great significance. Marriage is the absolute sharing of life's experiences and is an adventure in the most intimate of human relationships. It is the joyous uniting of two people, who are dedicated to each other, and want to share their lives.

### **On Humanism**

Humanism is the outcome of a long tradition of free thought that has inspired many of the world’s great thinkers and creative artists. It is a life-stance aiming at the maximum possible fulfilment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers a rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. Humanism insists that personal liberty must be combined with social responsibility and supports democracy and human rights.

Humanism is a celebration of love: the love of T and J for each other; the love of family and friends, and the love of life itself. That love of life is the foundation of our beliefs as humanists – that this is the one life we have, so we should make the most of it. And a lovely way to do that is to have a partner – someone to hold hands with on your journey through life and friends to share the journey.

As Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said, *“Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction”*.

We will now hear from B.

### **All I Ever Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten**

**by Robert Fulgham**

All of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in Kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school. These are the things I learned...

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Give them to someone who feels sad.  
Live a balanced life.  
Learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day.  
Take a nap every afternoon.  
Be aware of wonder.  
Remember the little seed in the plastic cup? The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.  
Everything you need to know is in there somewhere.  
And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

Thank you, B.

### **J and T's Story**

Twenty one years ago, in year, J had just returned from Spain and moved to Islington. Nearby was a cabaret bar and J decided to go and see a drag act there one Friday night. He was at the back of the room and T was at the front. Each spotted the other and so they gravitated towards the centre. They went downstairs to the club area and chatted for a while.

A week later, J was sitting at home about to watch the Last Night of the Proms on television, when T called him. Very quickly he abandoned his quiet night in and went for drinks with T instead. They've been inseparable ever since.

In year, after three years together J moved in with T and in 2001 they moved into their present home in Hackney. Over the years they have discovered more about each other. J is the organiser, T the playful kid. T likes a sing-a-long, whereas J enjoys the flamboyance of cabaret. They scuba dive together, and have developed the trust that is an important part of the sport.

I asked J to tell me what he loves about T, on the understanding that he would not hear these words until this moment. This is what J said:

*You Are  
The One  
I love with all my might  
The One  
I'm thinking of every night  
The One  
That helps me make things right  
The One  
I dream of when I sleep at night*

*The One*

*I think of when I hug my pillow tight*

*The One*

*I'm not giving up without a fight*

I asked T to tell me the same and here is what he said about J:

*J is no fake. I love the way he speaks his mind and does not pretend to be someone else. I love the way he goes very, very quiet when he is about to try to get his own way on something, flashes those lovely eyes at me and tells me what we are about to do as if we have already discussed the matter. He is my friend, my partner and my lifetime soulmate.*

We will now hear from S.

### **Maybe**

Maybe... We are supposed to meet the wrong people before meeting the right one so that, when we finally meet the right person, we will know how to be grateful for that gift.

Maybe... it is true that we don't know what we have got until we lose it,

but it is also true that we don't know what we have been missing until it arrives.

Maybe... the happiest of people don't necessarily have the best of everything;

they just make the most of everything that comes along their way.

Maybe... the best kind of love is the kind you can sit on a sofa together and never say a word,

and then walk away feeling like it was the best conversation you've ever had.

Maybe... you shouldn't go for looks; they can deceive.

Don't go for wealth; even that fades away.

Go for someone who makes you smile,

because it takes only a smile to make a dark day seem bright.

Maybe... you should hope for enough happiness to make you sweet, enough trials to make you strong, enough sorrow to keep you human, and enough hope to make you happy.

Maybe... Love is not about finding the perfect person,

it's about learning to see an imperfect person perfectly.

Thank you, S.

### **The Proposal**

T and J spent years campaigning for full equal marriage so entering a civil partnership was never good enough for them. And when the law changed and equal marriage was finally

going to happen, T texted J in a very modern fashion, asking “Will you marry me?” – or something like that. J made T wait – at least half an hour – before he texted back, “yes!”

On the 29th March 2014, the first equal marriages were held and on Date last year, T and J registered their Marriage with the State, becoming one of the first gay couples to secure the privileges and acknowledge the responsibilities that the law of the land now allows and exacts.

### **The Exchange of Vows**

Which brings us to the heart of today’s ceremony, where T and J will exchange their vows. Today, they want to say to each other and before you, what love and marriage mean to them and the commitments and hopes they share for the future.

In the years ahead, as J and T’s lives adapt to changing circumstances, it may be to you that they turn for company and counsel. When that happens, your support will be all the richer for you having been here today. As you sit with them in the future, keep in your minds this happy occasion, the promises they made to each other for their future together, and their evident love for one another. If needs be, remind them gently about today.

First I will ask J and T if they are ready to enter marriage today.

T Peters, will you take J J to be your husband, will you love him, comfort him, honour and protect him as long as you both shall live?

**T:** I will.

J J, will you take T Peters to be your husband, will you love him, comfort him, honour and protect him as long as you both shall live?

**J:** I will.

I now ask you to face each other and make your vows to each other.

**J:** I take you as my friend and lover, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and tranquillity, asking that you be no other than yourself, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not know yet.

Never above you. Never below you. Always beside you.

**T:** I take you as my friend and lover, in laughter and in tears, in conflict and tranquillity, asking that you be no other than yourself, loving what I know of you, trusting what I do not know yet.

Never above you. Never below you. Always beside you.

### **The Exchange of Rings**

The exchange of rings is an ancient tradition. The ring's circle has no beginning and no end and is a symbol of everlasting love. Traditionally worn on the third finger of the left hand, it was believed that blood flowed from this finger directly to the heart.

These rings have been handmade by a friend of T's, from white and yellow gold, forged from the molten origins of the Earth, directly from the stardust that formed the Solar System.

T and J first exchanged these rings over a dozen years ago in Year, under the Christmas tree in their new home and when marriage equality was not on the horizon. In April last year the rings were repolished and exchanged again at their legal marriage ceremony. And then they were put away, to be kept until this their wedding day, when they could exchange them for a final time, in front of you, their friends and family. Thus these rings are a permanent record of their love for each other.

M, please give T's ring to J.

J, I would now like you to place the ring on T's left hand.

**J:** T, I give you this ring as a token of my love and affection, and remembering this day, wear it with a feeling of love and joy, always.

C, please give J's ring to T.

T, I would now like you to place the ring on J's left hand.

**T:** J, I give you this ring as a token of my love and affection, and remembering this day, wear it with a feeling of love and joy, always.

### **The Handfasting**

We will now seal T and J's promises in a very ancient custom, one that recognises marriage as a union of heart, mind, body and spirit – freely and openly undertaken. We will be literally 'tying the knot'.

Earlier today we were each encouraged to write a message to T and J on tags. These have been fastened to the hand-fasting rope which I will now use to bind these two men together.

J and T, I ask you to face each other, look into each other's eyes and join your hands.

These are the hands of your best friend, strong and full of love for you, that are holding yours on this special 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.

These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes; tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

These are the hands that will give you strength when you need it.

And lastly, these are the hands, that even when wrinkled and aged, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch.

The knots of this binding are formed not by this rope but by your vows. You hold in your own hands the making or breaking of this union.

And now as you remove your hands, the rope remains tied, and the knots symbolise your two lives becoming one.

### **The Pronouncement**

J and T have made their marriage commitment to each other; they have each given and received a ring as a symbol of their enduring love and marriage and they have been hand-fastened for life. It is therefore my pleasure and my privilege to proclaim that they are husband and husband.

Feel free to share a kiss!

### **The Signing of the Marriage Certificate**

I would now like to ask M and C to join J and T and sign the Marriage Certificate.

***'Somewhere Over the Rainbow', Eva Cassidy***

### **The Blessing**

J and T, on this day you have made a new life together, may you also continue to recognise that separateness from which your relationship has sprung. May your own special lives continue to nourish the love which can make your future – with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and failures, its pleasures and its pains – a future filled with warmth and love.

May you always communicate openly and honestly with each other.

May your relationship remain one of love and of trust.

May you continue to respect each other's individuality.

And may the happiness and joy you share with each other today be with you always.

T and J, I know that everybody here will want to join me in offering you our heartfelt good wishes. We wish you good luck for the future but, more importantly, strength in your relationship, to keep it blooming and healthy.

Enjoy the rest of today, as I'm sure you will, and all our best wishes for the rest of your married lives.

It has been a privilege for me to share this occasion with you, and I am delighted to say,

Family and friends of J and T: I present the married couple!

**'At Last', Etta James**



# Same sex wedding ceremony

## Procession

Please stand, as I call forward J and L to the romantic sounds of Mendelssohn's: 'Hebrides Overture', which evokes the mood and impact of the composer's visit to Fingal's Cave.

## Welcome

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to the wedding ceremony of L and J. They are delighted that you: their families and dearest companions, who have supported them, both as individuals and as a couple, are here to make today extra special for them as they make their declarations of love to each other.

Please all be seated.

My name is Cate Quinn and I am a Wedding Celebrant, accredited by Humanists UK. I am delighted that J and L have chosen me to conduct their ceremony today. If you are not sure what a Humanist ceremony is - it is a non-religious ceremony that enables J and L to make public their commitments to each other, in a manner of their choosing. Still, I hope that those of you with differing beliefs can unite in sharing in this happy occasion.

There will be music and readings chosen by L and J that express what they want to say in a special and unique way. They will exchange their own personal vows and later take part in a Quaich ceremony that reflects their Scottish heritage. I will then ask you to join me in wishing J and L happiness in their future journey together.

Both J and L aspired to be married, just as soon as they had found the right person. That time has now come.

For those of you who follow L and J on Facebook, you may have noticed that they did venture up to Gretna Green last year, where they went as far as getting a 'selfie', but not going through with a wedding itself.

This is because it is vitally important to them to be surrounded by the people who mean the most to them when they take this significant step in their lives. However, they had anticipated a few more 'likes' at the time.

Having been sure of their love for each other for the past year, they are now prepared to seize the moment and make a lifelong commitment of love and respect for one another. They know that many of you have also been expecting it for some time.

L and J would also like to remember absent friends who could not be with us today; in particular, their grandparents and many of L's friends and family members from the States and Australia. They will always remain close to their hearts.

## Thoughts on marriage

Unlike romantic infatuation, which tries to negate otherness, love proper is an open-eyed recognition of separateness - but of separateness connected.

For L and J, being married is very much about establishing a cohesive unit, with each of them having respect and consideration for the other's thoughts and feelings.

That is the beauty of it; it lies in the connection, mutual and willed, that two individuals choose to make. J and L's partnership is freely chosen and founded on love, friendship, trust and respect.

### **Role of the guests**

[*Celebrant to couple*]: This gathering is made up of people who have played important parts in your lives. They are your family and your friends. They are the roots of your lives that have helped create the people that you have become today. As you speak the words that will unite you, remember those here today - by their presence you know that in good days and bad, you will never be alone.

[*Celebrant to guests*]: The vows made by L and J here today are the outward expression of their commitment to each other. You are all here to witness those promises and to offer your love, support and encouragement to help them keep them in the future.

[*Celebrant to couple*]: If you would like to sit down.

### **Reading One**

We now have a very special recorded video message from X. X has been a great friend of J's from the age of 19, when they went to University. They share a love of fun, tea shops, adventures and Harry Potter. X is going to read 'On marriage', by Kahlil Gibran. I'd like to ask J's dad, to start the video recording for us. Thank you.

### **'On Marriage', by Kahlil Gibran Read by X**

*You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore. You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days. Ay, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God. But let there be spaces in your togetherness, And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.*

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

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

That poem reflects L and J's togetherness and individuality. It has been lovely having X with us in 'virtual format', even though she could not be here in person. And thank you again, Dad.

### **J and L's story**

J found L online, and was first attracted to her beaming smile. L's husky, NN, also in the photograph, was quite good looking too. J quickly fired off a message.

L, being a wordsS, was impressed by J's ability to string a sentence together. J also had the advantage of being a 'Yorkshire lass', a criterion L's mum had advised her to seek in a partner.

J grew up in Leeds with her twin sister, NN, older sister, NN and parents, Dad and Mum . She was fortunate to have her Grannie and Grandpa nearby and to regularly visit her Gran and Gramps on the beautiful Scottish west coast. She left home at 18 to study History at XXX and then went on to study Psychology at XXX.

She spent a decade in the Spa Town of Cheltenham, and then several years to-ing and froing between Leeds and Cheltenham for work. She has now settled back in Leeds and teaches Psychology at XXX.

L's upbringing was very different. She grew up on a farm in Place, Australia – the site of the Australian Gold Rush. However, her mum, Mum is from 'Yorkshire stock'. Her dad is from Melbourne, but also has family roots in Norfolk, Somerset and Scotland.

L, as you may know, is a woman of many talents. She trained and worked as a chef for 10 years, but had to leave owing to a back injury, retraining as a paint sprayer. Not only that, but she also obtained a degree in writing and has subsequently written two novels, which she is currently working towards being published.

L's first visit to England was when she was 16. She was so smitten that she gained dual citizenship the following year and returned every other year, finally moving here permanently in 2014. Her parents have now followed suit, selling the family farm.

J and L's first face-to-face meeting took place last January at a well-known patisserie in Leeds. It went well, but towards the end, J explained about her illness and was worried that this would put L off.

But L took this in her stride and openly shared her own problems that sapped her confidence in starting a new relationship.

Nonetheless, they agreed to meet up again the following week in the same place. L was still somewhat wary, and was not sure that J really liked her. However, this doubt was soon put to rest when J kissed her goodbye on the train platform as L returned home to Manchester.

Those of you who know J well, will be aware of her propensity for random accidents, especially with gadgetry. This was hindering J and L's ability to communicate long distance when J's phone broke.

To resolve this problem, L took the bold step of purchasing a mobile phone for J and delivering it personally. She was immediately welcomed into the family home. So much so, that when L needed to leave her flat in Bradford at short notice, she was invited to take up residence with J's parents.

Both J and L were open with each other about their expectations from a relationship from the outset, having explored their respective values using their own version of '20 questions'. They had independently reached a stage in their lives where they were looking for a life-partner.

Holidays are usually a good test of a relationship, and L and J embarked on a series of excursions together. They had a short break at Place in March, followed by a 'luxury holiday' in a static-caravan in Portugal in May, where it rained the whole time. This did not spoil their enjoyment, and their relationship continued to flourish.

L knew that J was the one for her fairly early on in the relationship and took the brave step of declaring her love two months after their first meeting. But it was on Place, in June last year, that they both concluded they had indeed found their true love. [*Pause*]

## **Reading Two**

I would now like to invite Y, one of J's best friends, to come forward to read Elizabeth Barrett Bing's sonnet 43: 'How do I love thee', which J and L have chosen to express how they feel about one another. Thank you, Y.

### **'How Do I Love Thee?' (Sonnet 43), by Elizabeth Barrett Bing Read by Y**

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My heart can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints.  
I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of all my life;  
and, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death.*

L and J spent last year's summer solstice on the romantic island of Iona. Whilst separately rummaging in a gift shop, they each found their ideal wedding ring. It turned out to be the same one!

Thoughts soon turned to getting engaged, but their plans were interrupted by a visit to L's parents, Dad and Mum, in Australia, and a now famous miscommunication, which very nearly resulted in their separation.

Thankfully, once the dust had settled, they both realised they had got the wrong end of the stick and applied the 'three T's': Talk, Time and Touch, to mend their relationship. They now take the attitude that life is too short for arguing and any differences they have are quickly resolved.

The actual proposal of marriage was also fraught with miscommunication. L had been planning a surprise proposal to J on their first anniversary, with a view to getting married in the summer. Unbeknown to J, who was all excited about a great deal she had spotted on a trip to the States in August, and could not understand why L wasn't overly enthusiastic.

L rebuffed the idea with "Maybe you'll have something else on", and on further probing confessed to her plans. Being somewhat disgruntled that her surprise was a surprise no longer, L took the brave step of proposing on the spot.

J took her time in responding. About five minutes in fact. When she finally said, "Yes", L was not entirely sure what J was referring to. However, when realisation dawned, she was absolutely delighted.

They celebrated in true style that evening, by going for an early bird special at their local, with J's parents.

L and J share a common passion for archery and diving. The latter has involved them training in exotic places such as Crete, Capernwray and Sowerby Bridge! But it has not been all plain sailing.

L admires J for her family values, loyalty to her friends and strong moral code. She admires her for how she combatted her illness and turned her life around, and her willingness to make the most of each day; overcoming challenges without fear.

J loves L for her wicked sense of humour, her steadfast and loyal values and her intelligence – she is usually one jump or two ahead of everyone else. J also finds L rather attractive.

J and L share the same philosophy that life is precious and unique, their lives are meaningful, to live life to the full and to strive to make a positive difference where they can. They have both had cause to re-evaluate their lives, and together, they have made a vow that they will never entertain the concept of 'armchairs' in their lifestyle. They will always follow opportunities to get the most out of life and are excited by the prospect of growing old together, having lived a life of shared adventure.

### **Personal vows**

J and L have chosen to mark their union by making their own unique and shared promises to each other. L and J, will you please stand and face one another. We will start with J.

#### **J's vows**

Today, surrounded by the people who love us, I am privileged to call you, L, my wife.  
I promise to listen, for as long as it takes for you to feel heard.  
I promise to listen to your advice and value it.  
I promise to be your biggest cheerleader.

I promise to hold you when life is hard and to cry together.  
I promise to dream with you, respect our differences, travel with you and to love you throughout all of our lives.  
For better or worse, in sickness and health, for richer or poorer, as long as we both shall live

### **L's vows**

J, I won't make you promises of a fairy tale happily ever after, of pretty-sounding words said airily. I will however give you my solemn oath, my word, to share my life with you, and in turn share yours, so that neither of us loses who we are, but to create a future together, one of shared dreams and ambitions.

To support you as best I can in whatever aspirations you choose to follow, whichever direction they take, to comfort you through life's trials and tribulations. To encourage and remind you of your words and choices when paths become rocky, to not let you fall, but to slide gracefully with you if that should happen. I promise to remove any convenient 'armchairs' from your life, and ensure you live every day to the fullest, now and in the years to come, even in the afterlife should it be necessary.

You have my vow to be your staunchest supporter and, when needed, most irritating nemesis. I don't offer you a fairy tale, but a life worth living, and one to be shared as individuals, made stronger for being together.

### **Quaich ritual**

L and J have chosen to carry out a Quaich ritual to acknowledge their shared Scottish roots. The Quaich, which is usually a two-handled loving cup, was used for centuries in Scottish wedding customs to symbolise the coming together of clans and sharing between the couple.

The Quaich was also seen as a sign of trust, because it was offered and taken with both hands - so neither person could hold a weapon at the same time. Today, however, J and L, will be using a special 'Minoan' cup, that belonged to J's Grandfather, in recognition of their shared love of history and family unity.

I'd now like to invite J's sisters to come up and join us for this part of the ceremony, whilst we listen to 'Hedwig's Theme' by J Williams from 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's stone' playing quietly in the background.

A, would you be kind enough to fill the Quaich?

And now, B, if you would please offer the Quaich to L and J in turn. Thank you.

For all who share the wine from this Loving Cup, so may you share all things from this day on with love and understanding. All the sweetness life's cup may hold for each of 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.

Thank you for your help, A and B. Would you like to take your seats?

## **Pronouncement**

J and L have chosen to take J's surname as their new married name. So, it is with great joy that I now pronounce you as "Mrs and Mrs XXXXXX". We would be delighted if you would seal this partnership with a kiss.

## **Reading three**

I would now like to ask L's best friend and long standing pen pal, Z, who has joined us from the United States, to read the letter from 'Corinthians 13'. Regardless of your faith, or none, this passage contains some very profound lessons on love, from which we all can learn.

### **Letter from Corinthians 1:13' Read by Z**

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.*

*When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

## **Recessional**

[*Celebrant to couple*]: As you enter this union, your belief that marriage is a partnership between equal individuals with common goals, hopes and dreams will give your lives special meaning and fulfilment.

Continue to respect your individual outlooks. Share your thoughts, experiences and dreams with one another. Cherish the intimacy and understanding that comes with the passage of time.

Remember that your greatest gift to one another is your love and your willingness to accept each other's strengths and weaknesses. This will help cement the foundation for a strong and lasting marriage.

[*Celebrant to guests*]: Now the ceremony is about to end. In a moment, L and J would like you to join them for a celebratory drink outside on the terrace whilst Jn plays us out with

'The Best Day of My Life' by American Authors. This tune had to be played today as it was the song that was playing when L set off on the train before their first date.

But before J and L leave us briefly, I would be grateful if you would join me in congratulating them and wishing them every happiness in their future together by saying, "We do", as loudly as you can.

[*Guests*]: "We do"

[*Celebrant*]: L and J, J and L, may these truly be the best days of your lives.

Thank you.