



Rev. Ann Fuller

More Rituals

These rituals simply defy being placed in one of the other categories. This does not make them any less meaningful or unpopular.

- Blessing of the Hands / Hand Ceremony
- Warming of the Rings
- Signing of the License
- Bread, Wine, Salt and Silver
- Tree Watering Ceremony
- Time Capsule

Blessing of the Hands

This is a lovely way to transition from the vows to the exchange of rings. The couple is reminded of their responsibility to support one another through the many changes life will bring. The ritual brings attention to the hands that will wear the rings and thus leads naturally into the exchange of this classic symbol of unity and eternity. I have included several samples, but I often blend or edit the different versions depending upon each couple's unique circumstances.

I.

_____ and _____, please look at your hands and see the gifts they are to you. These are the hands that will work together as you build your future, giving you strength, supporting and encouraging you in all your endeavors. These are the cherished hands helping you express your love, compassion and desire. These are the hands always there to wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy. They will cradle your children in their loving embrace, helping keep your family warm and secure. May these hands we see before us this day be blessed and forever hold on to one another, remaining tender and gentle. May these hands help create a relationship founded in love, rich in caring and devoted to one another. May these hands that will hold your rings, forever be ready to reach out to one another in the glory of your love.

II.

_____ and _____, these are the hands of your best friend, as you promise to love each other for all time. These hands will work alongside yours as you build a future together. These hands will passionately love you and care for you throughout the years. These hands will hold you when fear or grief torments your mind and with the slightest touch comfort you like no other. These hands will give you strength and support when you struggle, and proudly applaud when you succeed. These hands will tenderly hold your children, and help keep your family together as one. These hands will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of joy. These hands when wrinkled with age, will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch. _____ and _____, may the hand holding your ring always be ready to hold the other, clasped forever in mutual esteem and devotion.



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III.

_____ and _____, please hold one another's hands with the palms facing up, so you may see the gifts they are to you. These are the hands of your best friend, strong and vibrant on your wedding day, as you promise to passionately love and cherish each other through the years, for a lifetime of happiness. These hands will work beside one another, as together you build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share your innermost secrets and dreams. These are the hands that will countless times wipe the tears from your eyes: tears of sorrow and tears of joy. These hands will provide comfort in illness, and hold you when fear or grief engulfs your heart. These are the hands that when wrinkled and aged will still be reaching for yours, still giving you the same unspoken tenderness with just a touch. These are the hands that will tenderly lift the chin and brush the cheek to gaze into one another's eyes—eyes filled completely with love and desire. May these hands we see before us this day be blessed and long be held by one another. May they have the strength to hold on during the storms of stress and the dark of disillusionment. May they remain tender and gentle as they nurture each other in their wondrous love. May these hands continue building a relationship founded in love, rich in caring, and devoted in reaching for perfection. May _____ and _____ see the hands that will hold their rings as healer, protector, shelter and guide.

Warming of the Rings

This is a beautiful way to include your guests. It is usually introduced at the end of the Words of Welcome since it is a natural transition from bringing your guests into the ritual to shifting the focus more intensely on the couple. I recommend putting the rings in a bag, box or other container rather than passing them loosely. It's not that I don't trust your guests, but I have seen one or two dropped during this ritual.

Truly blessed is the couple who come to the marriage altar with the approval and blessings of their families and friends. _____ and _____ would like to take this moment to express their appreciation to you for being with them this day and thank you for sharing in the great joy of this precious moment. Their wedding rings are an external and visible sign of their internal commitment. During the ceremony we ask that you, who by your presence here today, are being called upon to uphold them in loving each other, take part in the warming of their rings. As each of you receive the rings please take a moment to say a prayer, make a wish or think a special thought about the shared potential that is their life together. When these rings come back to _____ and _____, they exchange gifts that can truly never be measured—your shared hope, mutual support and boundless love.

At this point the rings are handed off to the guests who pass them along until the ring exchange at which point they always seem to miraculously appear back with the best man or ring bearer at just the right time. I've honestly never seen it ill-timed yet.



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Signing of the License

Some couples like to ritualize the signing of their marriage license within the context of their wedding ceremony. This can take place any time between the exchange of vows and the declaration of marriage. In the state of Florida, the bride and groom have already signed their portion of the license at the courthouse so this ritual simply consists of inviting their designated witnesses forward and completing the certificate section of the license.

This is an excellent time for background music or a soloist. In fact, I tell couples, if they want a musical interlude it is best to having something happening at the same time. Otherwise they'll be standing there staring at each other for three minutes. It feels like an eternity. Trust me!

Bread, Wine, Salt and Silver

This is a ritual of blessing. It comes from Eastern Europe and is a visual representation of the essence of most marriage blessings. It therefore makes the most sense to place it in the ceremony immediately preceding the blessing of the marriage shortly before the bride and groom are pronounced husband and wife. The ritual is extremely easy to arrange and requires little to no expense and preparation.

(Bride) and (Groom) you have just sealed your relationship by the exchange of vows and the giving and receiving of rings. Today we wish to bless this union and bestow upon you the best gifts life has to offer. Please come forward together and share in this ritual of blessing and good will.

<Bride and groom each taste a piece of the bread on the altar/table>

May your home never know the pangs of hunger and always experience the fullness of life.

<Bride and groom each sip a little wine from the wine goblet on the altar/table>

May your union always bring you the sweetness life has to offer.

<Bride and groom each place a speck of salt on their tongue>

May the strength of your commitment enable you to overcome the bitterness life may bring.

<Bride and groom hold the silver coin between their right hands together>

May you be wealthy in good health and never know want or fear.



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Tree Watering Ceremony

This ritual came about when another officiant contacted me asking for assistance writing a ceremony for a couple who requested a unity tree watering. When putting it together, I realized it had the potential to transcend the symbolism of a unity, sharing and reconciliation ritual and could actually capture the intention of all three. The details of the ceremony can be adapted depending upon the age and type of tree; the symbolism of a fruit-bearing tree for a couple wanting to start their own family or blending step-children is a powerful one.

The conclusion of the ceremony can be customized depending upon what the couple plans to do with the tree. If it is a sapling they intend to plant in their yard or donate to a public green space versus a mature tree that just happens to be located at the wedding venue, the end of the ceremony would be very different indeed. I don't know this particular couple's circumstances so the sample below does not reference the type of plant and assumes a sapling they will plant in their own yard. Though in our highly mobile society today that might be a silly assumption.

(Bride and Groom) have just sealed their relationship with the giving and receiving of rings. Today their union is further symbolized by uniting in the life-giving act of watering this tree. Water unceasingly changes shapes and transforms itself. It is thus a model out of which everything can be born. It nourishes and purifies, reminding us that (bride and groom) joyfully undertake the sacred duty to transform their marriage when they find it in need of renewal and recommitment.

This vessel, symbolizing the cup of life, was crafted lovingly by human hands and represents love's strength and endurance dependent upon our human feelings and intentions. This tree, born of the tiniest of seeds, symbolizes both the beauty and the potential of love that blooms and grows through time.

Its roots remind us of the families who nurtured (Bride and Groom) to become the one person in the world each holds most dear, families whose love and support is important to the strength of this new union. The branches reach to the future that is their shared potential as (Bride and Groom) face it together, hand in hand and heart to heart.

(Bride and Groom), I invite you to now share in the watering of this tree, this precious gift of life to show your commitment to your marriage as a joint endeavor with responsibilities you now share as the consequences and rewards of lives lived well affect you both in equal measure.

(Bride and Groom) as you tend to this young sapling, may it remind you of the joy you feel this day. May you cultivate a marriage with deep strong roots and take pleasure in the effort that entails. May you always be the best of friends and your love for one another deepen over the years.



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Time Capsule

This is an adorable ritual and can include more participants than just the bride and groom - a great way to include people who are important to you. Simply ask them to bring something to the wedding they would like you to see again in five or twenty years. You pick the opening date! I had one couple use a four compartment container they had designed and built themselves. Each section was inscribed with the date of their fifth, tenth, twenty-fifth and fiftieth wedding anniversaries. If you include other people make sure they know what your size limitations are.

You can tell your guests what the contents are or keep that information private. You can purchase a lovely container or make one yourself. This ritual provides the opportunity for a great deal of creativity. There may be a bit of planning necessary, but the expenses involved need not break your budget. I am refraining from providing a sample ritual because each time capsule is unique and therefore I work closely with the couple to write something specifically for their occasion.

Examples of items in a Time Capsule:

- Newspapers and magazines from your wedding date
- Letters to the future (between the bride and groom and/or from family and friends)
- Anniversary gifts
- Your wedding invitation and order of service
- Swatches of material in the wedding colors
- Goals you want to see if you've accomplished together by the opening date
- Photographs

Happiness is having something to do, someone to love and something to look forward to. This ritual will definitely give you something to look forward to!