

## Designing a Marriage Ceremony

### You Can Design Your Own Ceremony

Designing a wedding ceremony can be simplified by using the various samples in the Ceremony Library categories. Pick and choose from the nine ceremony samples, delete words, select parts from the categories in the ceremony library, write your own vows, select readings and prayers, choose selections from other sources, and add your own words and ideas.

In the Ceremony Library samples, the Groom's first name is shown as **Grm** and the Bride's first name is shown as **Bde**. Just hit command shift H on Word and change all the Bde to the Bride's name and do the same with Grm for the Groom's name. Then all the parts you have selected from the Ceremony Library can be personalized with your names at one time.

Many of the distinct parts to a wedding ceremony are listed below in their usual order. The only required elements of a marriage ceremony are the Expression of Intent or Vows, and the Pronouncement. An Exchange of Rings, and everything else, is not legally required.

Music, prayers and readings can be added at any point in the ceremony. Unity Candle lighting, recognition of children and families, remembrance of loved ones, exchanges of flowers, and other personal touches are always appropriate – it's your wedding.

But be careful not to choose too much. Your guests will begin to fidget at 25 to 30 minutes. The average length of ceremony that couples select is 15 to 20 minutes. I have done ceremonies an hour long – twice – the guests and the wedding party were quite restless.

Too much music can also be a problem. I had warned the Bride, who had selected the ceremony and wanted four of her favorite songs played. During the second of the four songs played on a CD player, she whispered to me “You were right.” But at that point the other two songs were in the program and so we proceeded on.

Having music with nothing taking place will work once, but not four times. Having musicians gives the guests something to see, but a CD playing doesn't work more than once in a ceremony unless there is some action – like a Unity Candle or Presentation of Flowers.

### Prelude

Music before the ceremony begins. The Guests, Grandparents and Parents are seated.

## **Processional**

Entry of the Bridesmaids, the Groomsmen are either with the Bridesmaids or waiting at the front, the ring bearer, the flower girl and finally the Bride.

## **Presentation of the Bride**

Traditional wedding – “Who giveth this woman in marriage.”

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the guests.

## **Convocation**

Opening remarks by the Officiant.

## **Readings**

Can be given at any point in the ceremony by the Officiant or anyone else.

## **Music**

Music is appropriate at any time in the ceremony, but some action should take place during the music. Present flowers to Mothers or Lighting the Unity Candle.

## **Invocation**

Prayers can be said at any point in the ceremony.

## **Expression of Intent**

Bride and Groom express their intention to marry. This can also be the Marriage Vows. An Expression of Intent is an “I do” or an “I will.” This is sufficient for a marriage, but it can also be followed by repeat-after-me vows.

## **Marriage Vows**

The promises made by the Bride and Groom – usually repeat-after-me.

## **Exchange of Rings**

Exchanging the material symbol of marriage. It can also be just one ring to the Bride and none for the Groom – or no rings. It isn’t legally required.

## **Recognition of Children**

If this is a second marriage for one or both spouses, their children can be recognized.

**Pronouncement of Marriage**

The Officiant makes a public proclamation of marriage.

**The Kiss**

Bride and Groom seal their vows with a kiss.

**Benediction**

The blessing of God and the good wishes of all are requested for the new couple.

**Introduction of the Couple**

The introduction of the new couple.

**Recessional**

The wedding party leaves.

**Announcement**

Announcements can be given as to dinner, receiving line, etc. "Please remain seated. The Bride and Groom will return to release you row-by-row."

**Postlude**

Music as the guests depart.