

## *A Sample Marriage Ceremony*

*Rev. Marvin M. Ellison  
Mellison122@gmail.com*

### *Welcome to family and friends:*

Dearly beloved, today we are gathered here to do a good thing, a *very* good thing: [Name and Name] are renewing their vows of promise and commitment in celebration of their more than four decades together as a couple united in love. And because of the recent change in Maine law, they will also become a civilly married couple.

When we met together a few weeks ago to discuss this marriage ceremony, [Name] said that she wanted us to strike a note of real joy that civil marriage for same-sex couples is finally possible. [Name] added, not once but twice, maybe even three times, that she never expected that the option to marry legally would happen in her lifetime -- and yet it has. She then chimed in with that [Name]-laughter of hers, saying "When I was 10 years old at St. Joseph school, I never thought my life would turn out like this!"

I'd like to add that this happy day has, in fact, become possible here in Maine because of [Name and Name]'s own longstanding public advocacy in behalf of justice and equality -- and because of their persistence in loving, day in and day out, against the odds. Now, not to turn you two into "legends in your own time," but you've been remarkable trailblazers and role models of showing the LGBTQ and the larger community what relational integrity is all about.

So, yes, today is a day for joy, but it is also a day for our gratitude *to* you and *for* you.

It's also a day of joy because [Name and Name]'s beloved daughter Emily and her husband Bob are standing up for them. [Name and Name] have been a couple for 41 years, but they will tell anyone and everyone that they have had the delight, challenge, and never-ending amazement of being Emily's parents for the very best 26 of those years.

Today, at least for the time being, Emily and Bob are holding onto the rings that [Name and Name] will exchange later on, rings made of a rare Maine tourmaline that has only recently been discovered in a limited quantity. Like the two of them, the stone is dazzling and far from ordinary. [Name and Name] will wear these rings on their right hands -- to compliment their gold bands that they exchanged on the occasion of celebrating their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and now wear proudly on their left hands.

So -- dearly beloved, we're gathered here in the Presence of the Holy and among friends and loved ones this day, to celebrate a truly remarkable moment: to give recognition to the power and beauty of [Name and Name]'s love -- and to cherish the words which shall unite them in marriage

### **Two Readings:**

*[Name]'s sister:*

*“From the Goodridge v. Department of Health” decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, written by Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall and announced in November 2003:*

Marriage is a vital social institution. The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. For those who choose to marry, and for their children, marriage provides an abundance of legal, financial, and social benefits. In return it imposes weighty legal, financial, and social obligations. . . . Without question, civil marriage enhances the "welfare of the community." It is a "social institution of the highest importance."

Marriage also bestows enormous private and social advantages on those who choose to marry. Civil marriage is at once a deeply personal commitment to another human being and a highly public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, intimacy, fidelity, and family.... Because it fulfills yearnings for security, safe haven, and connection that express our common humanity, civil marriage is an esteemed institution, and the decision whether and whom to marry is among life's momentous acts of self-definition.

*[Name]'s sister, “Sooner or Later” (anonymous):*

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines, and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favorite memories, and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all -- one known only by those who love.

### **Statement of Intention**

[Name and Name], I remind you that marriage is a precious gift and hard work. I commend you for your willingness to recommit yourselves to the bonds of love -- and for your courage and tenacity in signing up to marry civilly and keep meeting the daily challenge, the daily gift of loving one another more fully, more freely, more joyfully.

I invite you now to pledge, once again publicly, your love for one another:

[To [Name]]

Do you, [Name], choose to marry [Name]?

Do you promise to honor and cherish her, and to continue to make a home with her that shall endure in love and peace?

Do you pledge to her your faithfulness through all the changes of life?

And, of your own free volition, do you now give yourself to her completely – body, mind, and soul – that from this day forward, you shall continue to be hers alone as long as you both shall live?

[Name], if you make this your intention, respond by saying, “I do.”

[To [Name]]

Do you, [Name], choose to marry [Name]?

Do you promise to honor and cherish her, and to continue to make a home with her that shall endure in love and peace?

Do you pledge to her your faithfulness through all the changes of life?

And, of your own free volition, do you now give yourself to her completely – body, mind, and soul – that from this day forward, you shall continue to be hers alone as long as you both shall live?

[Name], if you make this your intention, respond by saying, “I do.”

### ***The Exchange of Vows***

I now ask you to join hands – and exchange the vows of your marriage.

[To [Name]:]

[Name], repeat after me, in pledging your vow to [Name]:

“I, [Name], take you, [Name], to be my beloved wife.

To have and to hold from this day forward,

To share with you life’s sorrows and joys,

To support you in sickness and in health,

To appreciate you for richer and for poorer,

And love and cherish you as long as we both shall live.

[To [Name]:]

[Name], repeat after me, in pledging your vow to [Name]:

“I, [Name], take you, [Name], to be my beloved wife.

To have and to hold from this day forward,

To share with you life’s sorrows and joys,

To support you in sickness and in health,

To appreciate you for richer and for poorer,

And love and cherish you as long as we both shall live.

### ***Exchange of Rings***

By exchanging rings, you now offer each other a symbol of your continuous love and a remembrance of the vows that you’ve made to one another for 41 years and now renew this day.

[[Name] first]

Let us pray:

O Sacred Spirit who moves the stars above and gently places our feet on the earth below, bless now, we ask, this ring and she who gives it, that she may know, deep down, the joy of giving love with generosity of mind, body, and spirit,

And may she who receives this ring, wear it in the sure knowledge that she is now and will continue to be, wondrously cherished, all the days of her life. Amen.

[To [Name]:]

[Name], as you place this ring on [Name]'s finger, please say to her:

“[Name], I give you this ring as a pledge of my loyalty and love.”

[[Name] second]

Let us pray:

O Sacred Spirit who moves the stars above and gently places our feet on the earth below, bless now, we ask, this ring and she who gives it, that she may know, deep down, the joy of giving love with generosity of mind, body, and spirit, And may she who receives this ring, wear it in the sure knowledge that she is now and will continue to be, wondrously cherished, all the days of her life. Amen.

[To [Name]:]

[Name], as you place this ring on [Name]'s finger, please say to her:

“[Name], I give you this ring as a pledge of my loyalty and love.”

### ***Prayer***

Let us pray:

Endless source of peace and joy, we give thanks that [Name and Name] have invited us to witness their re-commitment to one another. In a world frightened of commitment, we have long admired their courage to covenant together -- and to share with one another the gift of love without ceasing.

We ask for a blessing upon them -- and for a blessing upon each of us --so that they, and we, may know and trust that none of us is born only to die, but rather to delight in life abundant, made all the sweeter because of love expressed in tender embrace, open heart, and clear mind. For all that [Name and Name] have been, for all they are this day, and for all they will yet become -- as individuals and as a couple -- we give thanks.

As they continue together to experience joy and sorrow, success and failure, let patience, compassion, and forgiveness remain their guides. Let their commitment to one another stay steadfast and unyielding in the face of difficulty – and continue to reflect a love that is respectful, honest, and resolute. May the path they have long traveled together remain a path of mutual affection, mutual care, and mutual delight, and may they continue to sustain the home they have graciously made for themselves, for Emily and now Bob, and for their many friends.

So be it.

### ***Pronouncement***

[Name and Name], having witnessed your vows for marriage with these witnesses, and by the authority vested in me, I announce with joy that you are lawfully wedded as wife and wife.

### ***Kiss***

You may seal your vows with a kiss.

***Presentation***

Friends, it is my honor to present to you as wife and wife , [Name] and [Name].

***Dismissal***

Today is a good and special day. Love is here, and where there is love, the divine Spirit dwells. Go forth now in peace, and continue to set the world on fire with your passion for justice, mercy, and compassion in all things. Amen.