

# A Simple Humanist Ceremony

## WELCOME

Each of you has played a special role in the lives of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. They wish to thank you all for your love and support, and for being here today to witness and celebrate their marriage with them. My name is Gail McCabe. I perform this ceremony today, as a representative of the Ontario Humanist Society. Humanism is a non-religious ethical philosophy, a way of life, and a way of thinking, which encourages each of us, in our own way, to work toward a more humane and more responsible world. Humanism is a commitment to reason, freedom and individual responsibility.

## ADDRESS/HOMILY

The love of which we speak is not static. It is a growing and dynamic relationship. Each of us has a dream of ourselves as a better person. It is a great blessing when someone believes in our dream of ourselves and wants to live with us and help make the dream come true.

One test of your marriage will be the way you affect each other, how you help each other grow, so that each is more fulfilled, each more of a person. Thus through your love you will stimulate and challenge each other and enlarge each other's world. You will never be smug or settle for too little. You will look forward to every day as a new day to be filled with living, and you will have zest for life. Life will never be dull or boring if, through your love, you live creatively with each other through all your years to the last breath.

Beyond all religious traditions, beyond all philosophies and cultures, love between consenting and thoughtful adults is a profound spiritual experience. When you love you identify with one another, you sense each other's needs and moods without words. If the other suffers physical pain or some other kind of hurt, you suffer. If the one you love is happy, that is your happiness.

## STATEMENT OF INTENTION

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? Will you continue to love and honor each other in the true spousal relationship for the rest of your lives? Say together: *We Will*

## EXCHANGE OF VOWS

When people exchange vows, so often we forget that we cannot guarantee something to occur perfectly in the future. We cannot promise that we will always be in perfect harmony with the other, because many factors can change what can happen. However, what we can promise is to try our very best to ensure that what we vow in a marriage ceremony today, will be cherished, as the most important aspects of our relationships. Marriage is not a performance. It is a process.

Gail: To be repeated verbatim by each of the marriage partners:

I promise to love you, to remain honest and faithful to you, to honour you, to treasure you, to be by your side in sorrow and in joy, to love and to cherish you always, to laugh with you, to struggle with you in the bad times and to rejoice with you in the good. I promise always to listen to you, and to be receptive to the gift of your love.

**READING**

**“Gift from the Sea” by Anne Morrow Lindbergh**

Here the bonds of marriage are formed. For marriage, which is always spoken of as a bond, becomes actually, in this stage, many bonds, many strands, of different texture and strength, making up a web that is taut and firm. The web is fashioned of love. Yes, but many kinds of love: romantic love first, then a slow-growing devotion and, playing through these, a constantly rippling companionship. It is made of loyalties, and interdependencies, and shared experiences. It is woven of memories of meetings and conflicts; of triumphs and disappointments. It is a web of communication, a common language, and the acceptance of lack of language, too; a knowledge of likes and dislikes, of habits and reactions, both physical and mental. It is a web of instincts and intuitions, and known and unknown exchanges.

The web of marriage is made by propinquity [nearness], in the day to day living side by side, looking outward and working in the same direction. It is woven in space and in time of the substance of life itself.

**EXCHANGE OF RINGS**

Gail: You have chosen to exchange rings as symbols of your vows. The ring is a circle symbolizing the completeness of your union. It is made of precious metal to symbolize the value of this treasure which is your relationship, and of the riches which reside in each of you. To bestow a ring is to join individuals as vows are sealed within the strength and protection on the circle. These rings are a sign of the vows by which you have bound yourselves to one another.

Gail: *(To be repeated in turn by both persons.)*

I give you this ring that you may wear it as a symbol of the vows we have made this day. With this ring, I marry you.

**SIGNING OF THE MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS**

**PRONOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, you have agreed to go forward seeking an ever richer and closer relationship. You have exchanged promises and rings. Therefore, by the authority vested in me by the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Humanist Society, I, Gail McCabe, pronounce you partners in marriage and I invite you to share a kiss.

**~INTRODUCTION OF THE COUPLE ~**

It is my great honour and pleasure to introduce you to the newly married couple, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Let us welcome them .... *applause*

**~ RECESSIONAL ~**