

Marriage by Handfasting

Words to be said are in this style: **All:** say these words.
Instructions are in italics.

This service may be taken by those in minor orders.

This traditional form of matrimony originated from the earliest times particularly in Celtic Christianity. Although non-Christian ceremonies have been based on this form, this service is not to be confused with versions that are un-Godly. This is not a legal solemnisation of marriage, but a traditional betrothal. This form can be used for same sex unions in which case titles Bride and Groom may be replaced or adjusted as appropriate. It is recognised as a promise made between consenting adults freely and unconditionally as a marriage, either because secular legal marriage is not possible or desirable in the circumstances. In some jurisdictions it is called 'common-law marriage'. The conducting minister must be satisfied that the intent of the participants is genuine, completely voluntary and freely entered into. The minister will refuse to conduct this service if this is not so.

At the appropriate part of this service the couple can chose to bind with one hand each or two. For one hand, they stand side-by-side and hold out their arms together. If they choose two, stand face-to-face and clasp each other by the hands (or wrists if preferred) - some couple cross their arms, with one's left hand linking the other's right, which looks like an infinity knot from above. Ribbon is to be used as a symbol of gentleness, truth and beauty, cord should not be used: this binding is of love, not restraint.

There are several ways to tie the ribbon, from a simple knot to a more elaborate wrapping of the wrists that results in an impressive infinity knot. However it is chosen to tie it, it shouldn't be so tight so not to be able to pull loose afterwards. This is where the phrase 'tying the knot' originated.

After the ceremony, the ribbon should be kept as a keepsake of the vows taken today.

Couples can choose to use different colours to represent each person involved in the ritual, creating an additional sense of unity. Sometimes parents of the couple bring the ribbons for the hand binding. If the couple have children, they too can be involved in the ceremony in this moment.

Welcome

Minister: I welcome you all in the power of our loving God.

A Hymn may be sung or poetry read if preferred.

Minister: We are here to celebrate and bless (Name and Name) as they begin their married life together. Their love for one another is not new, but today they have

chosen to affirm their love in the commitment and promises of marriage, and that is new. Marriage has its ups and downs, its trials and its triumphs. With full understanding of this, (Name and Name) have come here today to be joined as one in marriage. By our presence here, we are encouraging them in their days ahead, as they grow together in love.

Minister: Who is bringing the Bride on behalf of her family and ancestors?

Sponsor: I am (we are), with the blessing of her family.

Minister: Let us pray.

Loving gracious God, we thank you for the gift of life and for the joy that (Name and Name) have found in each other. We pray that you remain with them as a partner in their marriage. Let nothing come between them and keep them loving and true to each other. Keep them safe from all that would hurt them. Grant to them, and to us all, love and understanding in all of our days.

All: Amen

Charge to the Couple

Minister: With full awareness and knowledge do you accept that within this gathering and beyond, the promises made today and the ties that are bound here greatly strengthen your union and will cross the years and lives of each of you as you grow, (name and name) so do you still seek to enter this estate?

Couple: We do.

Minister: Please join hands. These are the hands of your best friend and soul mate, full of love for you. These are the hands that will work long hours beside yours, as together you build your family and their future. These are the hands that will love and cherish you through the years and will comfort you like no other. These are the hands that will wipe the tears of sorrow and tears of joy from your eyes.

Minister: May (Name and Name) see God as healer, protector, shelter and guide as they hold their hands together all their lives long.

A Bible reading may be read here (1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 13 recommended)

The Promises

Minister: Before our God who is the God of love (Name and Name) make their vows: (Name and Name) would like to express their thoughts to (Parents' Names or friends names).

Minister: (Bride's Name), do you take (Groom's Name), to be your wedded husband? Do you promise before God, (Groom's Name) and all of us here that from this point forward, your arms may be his shelter? Do you promise to support him and nourish him and to love and honor him?

Bride: I do.

Minister: (Groom's Name), do you take (Bride's Name), to be your wedded wife? Do you promise God, the universe, (Bride's Name) and all of us here that from this point forward, your arms may be her shelter? Do you promise to support her and nourish her and to love and honor her?

Groom: I do.

Blessing of the Rings

Minister: Please bring the rings forward.

An assistant or a friend of the couple present the rings

Minister: Loving heavenly Father, who created each of us to love and to be loved by You and by others, we pray your blessings on these rings and on (Name and Name) who will wear them. May there be grace in times of conflict, an ability to communicate during misunderstandings and a deep sense of belonging to each other. May you protect them from all harm, provide for their needs, console them in their sorrows, lift them with joy. We ask that these rings hold and carry these dreams, remind them of the endless circle of their union to each other, and be a beautiful reflection of their sacred vows to each other, now and always. Bless them in the name of the Three in One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

A Hymn may be sung or a Psalm or poetry read if preferred.

The Vows

The couple stand side by side facing the minister who says:

Minister: And now, (Name and Name) have some personal words to say to each other.

Minister: (Groom's Name), as a token of your love and your desire to be united in heart and soul, place a ring on (Bride's Name) finger and repeat after me:

Groom: (Bride's Name), with this ring, I take you for my wife. Take this ring as a sign of my everlasting and unconditional love with all that I am and all that I have from this day forward as your husband.

Minister: (Bride's Name), as a token of your love and your desire to be united in heart and soul, place a ring on (Groom's Name) finger and repeat after me:

Bride: (Groom's Name), with this ring I take you for my husband take this ring as a sign of my everlasting and unconditional love with all that I am and all that I have from this day forward as your wife.

Minister: Love freely given is both giver and receiver. You are each the giver and the receiver. The wedding ring is a symbol in visible form of the unbroken circle of your love, so that wherever you go, you may always continue in your shared life together. May these rings always remind you of God's love for you both.

All: Amen

The Handfast

Minister: Please bring the Handfasting Ribbon forward.

An assistant or a friend of the couple present the ribbons. The couple still standing side by side facing the minister who says:

Minister: (Name and Name) have chosen to incorporate the ancient Celtic Christian ritual of Handfasting into their wedding ceremony as a symbol of their binding their lives together in the union of Holy Matrimony. It has since ancient times been performed by a Christian Minister, to create a sacred space in which the couple could be joined before family, friends and God.

Minister: (Name and Name), will you honor, love and respect one another, and seek to never break that honor?

Bride and Groom: We will.

The first loop is draped over the couple's hands.

Minister: We thank Christ that this binding is made.

All: Amen.

Minister: Will you share each other's toil and pain and seek to ease it?

Bride and Groom: We will.

The second loop is draped over the couple's hands.

Minister: We thank Christ that this binding is made.

All: Amen.

Minister: Will you share the burdens and trials with each other so that your hearts may grow in this union?

Bride and Groom: We will.

The third loop is draped over the couple's hands

Minister: We thank Christ that this binding is made.

All: Amen.

The minister's stole is wrapped around the bound hands and says

Minister: (Name and Name), your hands are bound together now, so your hearts and lives are joined in a union of love and trust. You have tied the knot in the name of Christ.

All: Amen.

The ribbon is carefully removed.

Minister: While these physical ties have been removed, the strength of the internal ties forged today will remain, in Christ Our Lord.

All: Amen.

Addressing the family and friends

Minister: You who have witnessed these promises, will you in all your power uphold these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will

Knotting The Ribbons

Minister: These three ribbons represent the separate lives of (Name and Name) and any children (and/or their wider family). They represent all that you are and all that you will ever be as individuals. They signify your lives before today. (Name and Name and any children) will now weave the ribbons together as a symbol of their blended lives and the creation of a new family.

Minister: (Name and Name), do you both promise to work together as your children's parents, to honor and protect them and provide for them as to the best of your ability, to make their home a place of trust, love and laughter where they may grow in peace and respect?

Couple: we do.

Addressed to the Children:

Minister: (Names of children), do you promise to love and honor your parents? Do you promise to love them and encourage their new life together?

Children: we do.

Pronouncement & Final Blessing

Minister: Now that (Name and Name) have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, and exchanging rings as a symbol of joining their lives together as one before God and those of us present here today, it is with great pleasure and by the power vested in me by God and the Old Catholic Apostolic Church, I now pronounce that they are husband and wife (a couple united by God). Kisses are messengers of love, and so I invite you to kiss each other now and let soul meet soul on each other's lips. Today and for ever.

Minister: I present to you (Name and Name) as a married couple since they have tied the knot before us and before God.

All: Amen

Everyone present applaud.

END of service

If a party celebration is being held after this service, the ribbons used for the Handfast should be displayed for all to see. Guests may bless quietly the ribbons and remember their own weddings if appropriate.

Please pray for this couple or new family regularly, on each anniversary of this day and for yourselves and the Old Catholic Apostolic Church.