



Symbols and rituals can be very meaningful

Are there any cultural rituals that would be meaningful to you?

For example, I have conducted weddings that have exchanged wedding crowns such as in orthodox communities, or tea ceremonies - adapted for your purposes of course, but representing your culture of origin.

Additionally there are many symbolic gestures that you might feel are appropriate for the occasion. Here are a few suggestions, but feel free to research or create your own....

EXAMPLE RITUALS

Candle Lighting Ceremony

Often a unity candle is decorated with the wedding invitation, an inscription, a picture of the couple, or other ornamentation. In some circles, it is customary for the couple to save the unity candle and re-light it on anniversaries.

It is sometimes performed to symbolise the joining together of the two families, and their love for the bride and the groom, into one united family that loves the new husband and wife. More often it is to symbolise the union of two individuals, becoming one in commitment.

The popular explanation is that the taper candles are lit by representatives from each family to symbolize the love and allegiance that each family has for either the bride or the groom. As the bride and groom use these two flames to light the unity candle, they bring the love of both families together in a united love of the new couple.

Generally, the two tapers are left burning and replaced in their holders (because each family's love for their own will continue). However, in some ceremonies they may blow out their individual candles.

Ring Warming Ceremony

Just before you exchange rings, have your celebrant let your guests know that your rings will be making their way through the assembled guests, with an invitation for each guest to hold the ring: to 'warm' it, say a silent prayer/blessing/or wish for your marriage, and then pass it to the next guest.

Obviously, there are limitations to a ring warming: it wouldn't work well for super large weddings, and if you're having a big wedding you may want to have someone watching the progress of the rings and keeping them moving in a timely manner through your guests.

Some people worry about rings getting dropped during the ceremony — if you like, you can put them in a little organza bag, but it's a lovely way to get your guests involved and to feel the warmth of your metal rings upon their return to you. (I've done this ritual a lot...the rings have never dropped!)

The Unity Sand Ceremony

A unity sand ceremony using coloured sand, works particularly well when blending families; giving each child a role within the ceremony and highlighting his or her importance within the family unit.

Each person involved in the sand ceremony has their own coloured sand. A special glass container is purchased (with a lid or cork) and at a particular point in the ceremony- each person steps forward and pours their sand into the glass jar.

Sample of wording:

“ Like colours of the rainbow we are all different and special, valuable, and precious. Therefore it is only fitting that you be shown as an important part of this marriage - after all marriage is really about family. These containers of sand represent each of you and your importance in this family. I will ask each of you to now pour some of your sand into the jar. The sand has now been joined together and cannot be isolated. These grains of sand can never be separated and poured again into the individual containers, so will your family be a moulding of 6 individual personalities, bonded together. You are joined together today, not only in marriage, but also as a family. “

Hand fasting Ceremony

Hand fasting is where the couple link their hands in a circle, symbolising the entirety of the universe, and their love. Their hands, wrists to be exact, were bound with what was available vine, cord or colourful cloth.

In a hand fasting ceremony you can choose silk, cotton, or hemp; you can include a gold chain, ribbons, or something that has sentimental value. If you are using more than one piece of material cut them into the same length, about 2 ½ to 3 meters in length, and have different textures.

The couple stand facing each other, crossing their arms in front of their bodies in a figure eight, holding their partners hands, while the Celebrant gives a Blessing of the Hands, somebody special to you, maybe your best man or maid of honour takes the material and ties it around your wrists and through your hands to bind them together. We'll practice this at the rehearsal as it's kind of tricky!

The celebrant or a significant or special person in your lives then says “As this knot is tied, so are your lives now bound. Woven into this cloth, into its very fibres, is all of the love of your family and friends. With the entwining of this knot do I tie all of the desires, dreams and love wished here in this place to your lives for as long as you may live.”

The hand fasting ceremony would be perfect prior to the Asking & the Vows, then untied just before you exchange rings.

Step Parent / Blended Family Pledge

In some instances it might be nice to include a little statement by the adults or step-parent about their commitment to this blended family, I've conducted a wedding where the Groom has given a gift to his new children and said a few words to them, it's very moving.

Sample pledge:

Groom/Bride: “(children’s names), I want you to know that I dearly love your mother/father. As you have so graciously shared this wonderful person with me, so will I share the love I feel for her/him with you. Together, we will learn much more about each other. I promise to be fair and honest, to be available for you as I am for your mum/dad, and in due time, to earn your love, respect and true friendship. I will not attempt to replace anyone, but to make a place in your hearts that is for me alone. On this day when I marry your mum/dad, I also commit to you, and I promise to love and support you as though you were my own.”