

## The Handfasting Ceremony of Marla and Tyler

### Initial Preparation

1. Cast a circle of wildflowers and fruit.
2. Symbols of the elements should be placed around the circle at their respective locations:
  - North corresponds to the element of Earth (coarse sea salt, soil, or a vase of flowers)
  - East corresponds to the element of Air (fan, wand, or feathers)
  - South corresponds to the element of Fire (a red candle or incense)
  - West corresponds to the element of Water (seashells or a glass or silver bowl of water)
3. In place of symbols of the elements, candles may be used (candles are held and lit by family and/or friends of the couple when the officiant performs the invocation):
  - North/Earth --- green
  - East/Air --- white
  - South/Fire --- red
  - West/Water --- blue
4. Place a small table in the center to serve as an altar.
5. Adorn the table with:
  - Small plate of cakes
  - Cup of wine
  - The wedding rings
  - A two-foot length of ribbon, a scarf, or cording in a color that best represents the couple
6. Place a broom on the ground at the East, but not as to close off the Eastern opening of the circle.

### Processional

The ceremony begins with the officiant standing at the center of the circle beside the altar. Attendants precede the bride and groom, taking places at the four directions; they may hold the symbols and/or candles representative of the elements (men --- North and South; women --- East and West). The bride and groom enter the circle together through the Eastern opening, hand-in-hand. Family and friends follow. All assemble within the circle.

**Officiant:** Long before organized religion existed, couples sought to be married. Wedding ceremonies were based upon the cultural and spiritual traditions of the time as well as a reverence for the life-sustaining forces of Heaven and Earth. Many of our ancestors' customs are visible in today's wedding traditions such as the sharing of wine and cake, carrying bouquets of flowers, throwing grains of rice, the bride being carried over the threshold, and the term "tying the knot." The ceremony you have been invited here to witness today is called a "handfasting." In the tradition of ancient wedding rites, the handfasting ceremony incorporates customs which honor our dependence upon each other as well as our interrelation with the forces of nature, Spirit and the Universe.

Welcome, Marla and Tyler. Today, you stand in this circle to be joined in marriage. Know now before you go further that since your paths have crossed in this life, you have formed ties between one another. As you seek to enter this state of matrimony, you strive to manifest the ideals that give meaning to both this ceremony and the institution of marriage. With full awareness, know that within this circle you are not only declaring your intent to be wed before your friends and family, but you also declare your intent before Spirit. Marla and Tyler, I ask you now: do you still seek to enter this ceremony? If so, please answer "we do."

We do.

Do you, Tyler, take Marla to be your wedded wife, to love only her, to comfort her, to honor her, and to keep her, forsaking all others and living together, lovingly, all the days of this life or until there exists between you a lack of love? If so, please answer "I do."

I do.

Do you, Marla, take Tyler to be your wedded husband, to love only him, to comfort him, to honor him, and to keep him, forsaking all others and living together, lovingly, all the days of this life or until there exists between you a lack of love? If so, please answer "I do."

I do.

Our ancestors believed that the human being --- body, mind and soul --- shared characteristics with all things divine. It is this belief that assigned virtues to the cardinal directions: North, East, South and West. In this tradition, we now call upon the directions to preside over this ceremony, offering their gifts to the sacrament taking place here today. This invocation honors the future Tyler and Marla create with their marriage, as well as our ancient history, the lovely natural surroundings in which we stand, and all who have gathered within this circle.

**Turning North:**

Spirits of the North, whose element is Earth, bless this union with a firm foundation upon which to build . . . with fertility of the fields in which this couple shall reap and sow . . . and with your gifts of strength and balance.

**Turning East:**

Spirits of the East, whose element is Air, bless this union with open communication . . . with the wonder of fresh starts and new beginnings . . . and with your gifts of wisdom, compassion and understanding.

**Turning South:**

Spirits of the South, whose element is Fire, bless this union with a warm hearth and home . . . with the fires of creation and re-creation . . . and with the gift of Light to illuminate the path these lovers shall take, together, from this day forward.

**Turning West:**

Spirits of the West, whose element is Water, bless this union with the gifts to quench all for which this couple may thirst . . . to baptize all which this couple seeks today to make new . . . and to reveal all that this man and this woman may seek to know in their journey.

Now do we stand at the center of the Circle, where all things meet their opposite --- male and female, darkness and light, visible and unseen, spirit and matter, god and goddess --- that which makes each whole and complete.

**Officiant, taking up the plate of cakes:**

As a symbol of this woman, Marla, I do offer Tyler these cakes representing the Goddess.

(The bride takes the plate of cakes from the officiant and feeds one to the groom.)

**Officiant:**

From this day, and through this union, Tyler shall come to know the Goddess through Marla.

**Officiant, taking up the cup of wine:**

As a symbol of this man, Tyler, I do offer Marla this wine representing the God.

(The groom accepts the wine, holding it as the bride sips from it.)

**Officiant:**

From this day, and through this union, Marla shall come to know the God through Tyler.

[Reading](#)

In myths and ancient legends, May is the time of the sacred marriage of the god and goddess under the Dyad moon. It is the time when the two become one, when all things meet their opposites in perfect balance and perfect harmony. The month of May is one to enjoy from beginning to end. Nature is in full bloom and the blossoms are the promise of a bountiful harvest to come. Taste the sweet wine of May and gaze at the profusion of wild flowers. Linger in the woodland glen and fern-filled glade and perhaps catch a glimpse of the bright elfin folk who dwell there. Spend quiet time by a sacred well or gaze into the depths of a mysterious pool. Scry the reflective surface of a pond and bless the iridescent damselfly that seems to hesitate before she disappears. Dance the round dance with joy in your heart and rejoice with

Demeter and Persephone as the Maypole is entwined. As you cast your circle this night of the Dyad moon, adorn it with apple blossoms and light candles of white. When the sacred round has been danced, sit a moment and reflect. Seek harmony in all things. As the dark half of the wheel of the year balances the light, as heat balances cold, recall the words of the goddess: "Let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you."

(The bride gives her attendant her flowers)

**Officiant:** Tyler and Marla, please face each other and hold each other's hands, so that you may see the gift that these hands are to you. Listen to my words: These are the hands of your best friend, young and strong and vibrant with love. They are holding yours on your wedding day, as you make your promises to love and support each other all the days of your lives. These are the hands that will work alongside yours, as together, you build your future, as you laugh and cry, as you share secrets and dreams. These are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years for a lifetime of happiness. These are the hands that will, throughout your marriage, wipe countless tears from your eyes: tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

(Officiant binds their hands loosely with the provided material.)

**Officiant:** Now, as you have been handfasted, you two are joined as one. Gentle are the bonds of this union; pull one way, and the ties are strengthened. Pull another way, and the ties are loosened. You may now speak your vows.

Marla, this is a day of promise, of expectations fulfilled, and of blessed renewal. Today, I take you for my wife. I pledge my love to always be as fresh and as fragrant as the crocus . . . and as temperate as the first breeze of spring. As the bud turns to flower, the hillsides become a carpet of color, and the birds fill the air with song, so shall my love for you be filled with the blessings of life abundant. I vow to always be true; and as spring turns to summer, summer fades to autumn, and autumn turns to winter, I vow to hold you, protect you and love you.

Tyler, this is a day of promise, of expectations fulfilled, and of blessed renewal. Today, I take you for my husband. I pledge my love to always be as fresh and as fragrant as the crocus . . . and as temperate as the first breeze of spring. As the bud turns to flower, the hillsides become a carpet of color, and the birds fill the air with song, so shall my love for you be filled with the blessings of life abundant. I vow to always be true; and as spring turns to summer, summer fades to autumn, and autumn turns to winter, I vow to hold you, protect you and love you.

(After the vows are exchanged, the officiant assists the couple in slipping their hands from the provided material. The "knot" is placed on the table.)

**Officiant:** Marla and Tyler, the knots of this binding are not formed by this material, but by your vows --- the promises you have just exchanged here in the presence of friends, family and Spirit. You hold in your own hands the making or breaking of this union. And as a visible symbol of the knot here tied, you shall wear these rings.

Rings are an ancient symbol, blessed and simple. Round as the sun, the eye, like the arms that embrace, like our earth and the moon that circles it. Circles, like love that is given, come round again and again, without end. Therefore, as you wear these rings, may you be reminded that your love, like the sun, illumines; your love, like the eye, sees clearly and without fail; your love, like the arms that embrace, is a grace upon this world; your love, like the earth, sustains and nourishes you, and your love, like the moon above, is mysterious, luminous, and as it shimmers, lights your way into the future you create here today.

Marla, this ring is a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. I give my love to you freely, and it has no beginning and no ending. Wear this ring and be reminded that the more we love, the more love we have to give.

Tyler, this ring is a symbol of the unbroken circle of love. I give my love to you freely, and it has no beginning and no ending. Wear this ring and be reminded that the more we love, the more love we have to give.

**Officiant:** The circle is completed. May the elements of Earth, Air, Fire and Water be released with

blessings and thanks for the gifts they bestowed upon this rite of marriage.

Source of All Things, please protect the ones we love. We honor all you have created as Marla and Tyler pledge their hearts and lives together. We honor Mother-Earth --- and ask for their marriage to be abundant and grow stronger through the seasons; we honor fire --- and ask that their union be warm and glowing with love in their hearts; we honor wind --- and ask that these two people sail though life safe and calm as in the Great Father's arms; we honor water --- to clean and soothe this relationship, that it may never thirst for love; with all the forces of the universe you created, we pray for harmony and true happiness as these two lovers forever grow young together. Amen.

Kisses are delightful, the first kiss always the sweetest. With this, the first kiss of our lives as newlyweds, may you know a lifetime of sweetness. You may now kiss.

It is with great joy and honor that I present to you Marla and Tyler, handfasted, heart-joined and husband and wife. Welcome them to this circle of love, family and friendship.

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