ACTIVITIES PRECEDING AND FOLLOWING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Candles, if used, may be lit before guests are seated, or as part of the pre-ceremony activities, before the seating of the parents. This is usually done by two of the ushers.

Prelude - usually beginning 15 – 30 minutes before the service.

Seating of Guests - Bride’s family and friends to the left when facing front, Groom’s to the right, unless they are not somewhat equal numbers. In that case, the side does not matter.

Seating of Grandparents and Great Grandparents - Groom’s first, then Bride’s.

Seating of Groom’s Parents

Seating of Bride’s Mother (assuming her father is escorting the Bride). At this point, some couples have the two mothers light the two candles by the Unity Candle.

Placing of the White Runner (Optional) - After this point, no one is to walk on this runner except the bridal party. Latecomers should be seated through side aisles.

Entry of the Pastor and Groom’s Party – The pastor enters first, followed by the Groom, Best Man, and Groomsmen, with the pastor going to his place on the platform, while the Groom’s Party proceeds to the head of the aisle to await the Bride. It is also acceptable to have the groomsmen enter escorting the bridesmaids. The Best Man, however, always accompanies the Groom.

Bridal Procession - Bridesmaids first, Ring Bearer and Flower Girl, Maid of Honor. (Some brides have the attendants enter as couples. In that case, only the Best Man and Maid/Matron of Honor enter alone.) At this point, the music often changes, the Bride’s mother stands, signaling the congregation to stand, and the Bride enters, traditionally escorted by her father. When all are in place the pastor may signal the congregation to be seated, or may begin the ceremony and seat people after a Call to Worship and/or Prayer.
TRADITIONAL WEDDING CEREMONY

Call to worship
• I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God; For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels. (Isaiah 61:10)
• Dear friends, God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us… (1 John 4:16)
• Today we celebrate how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is, and we want to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that we may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:18-19)

Invocation (Extemporaneous; for a written invocation, see “Other Options”)
Invite God’s presence and recognize that marriage is part of his good plan. Ask God’s Spirit to supervise the service and sanctify all that happens.

Welcome
Greet the guests on behalf of the bride and groom. A few personal comments regarding the couple would be appropriate although not necessary.

Song or Special Music: Optional

Statement on Marriage:
Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God, to join this Man and this Woman in holy marriage; which is instituted of God, regulated by His commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all men. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage, for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Our Savior has declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. By His apostles, He has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other’s infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow; in honesty and industry to provide for each other, and for their household, in temporal things; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as the heirs of the grace of life.

Vows of Intent
These vows may also precede the Vows after the Charge, as two parts of the same Vows. Used at this point in the service, the implication is that the Bride’s Father is hearing these as a condition of giving his daughter.

G****, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her and forsaking all others, keep only unto her as long as you both shall live? (Groom answers, “I will.”).
B****, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him and forsaking all others, keep only unto him as long as you both shall live? (*Bride answers, “I will.”*)

**Vows of Intent**

Before you make your individual vows, I would like to solicit from you some promises which have to do with your relationship to God, for only as you rest in Him as the source of power and strength will you be able to bring to each other the vitality that will make yours a living, growing union. Do you pledge, now in God’s presence and in front of your families and friends:

- To love God first in your affections,
- To think as God thinks by the serious study of Scripture,
- To respond to the workings of the Holy Spirit in your individual hearts,
- To confess all known sin to God and to be honest in admitting those failings in which you injure each other,
- To keep the vows you are now making when they are the hardest to fulfill,
- To maintain fellowship with other Christians in the church,
- To support and pray for each other with compassion, mercy and affection?

*Bride and Groom respond together: With God’s help, we do.*

**Giving of the Bride**

Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

*Father: “Her mother and I.”* (*The father, guardian, brother or friend of the woman shall put the woman’s right hand in the right hand of the man. She may give him a kiss. At this point the wedding party may move forward to the platform.*)

**Song or Special Music** *Optional*

**Scripture**

- *Genesis 2:18-24* - Eve brought to Adam
- *Ruth 1:16-17* - Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi
- *Psalm 121* - “I lift up my eyes to the hills…”
- *Psalm 127* - “Unless the Lord builds the house…”
- *Psalm 128* - The blessing of a large family
- *Ecclesiastes 4:8-12* - “Two are better than one…”
- *Song 2:10-13* - The season of love
- *Song 8:6-7* - “Many waters cannot quench love…”
- *Isaiah 61:1-4* - “…to bestow on them a crown of beauty…”
- *Malachi 2:15-16* - Warning not to break faith in marriage
- *Matthew 19:4-6* - Jesus’ restatement of Genesis 2:24
John 2:1-11 - The wedding and miracle at Cana  
Romans 12:9-13 - Guidelines for loving one another  
1 Corinthians 13 - The love chapter  
Ephesians 5:18-33 - Paul’s teaching on marriage  
Philippians 2:1-11 - Assuming the humble attitude of Christ  
Colossians 3:12-14 - Qualities of Christian relationships  
2 Peter 1:5-8 - “…add to your faith goodness, etc.”  
1 John 4:7-12 - “Let us love one another…”

Meditation (also called The Charge to the Bride and Groom)  
You may want to base your remarks on the text just read. This brief message should be 5-10 minutes unless arrangements are made for the wedding party to be seated.

Vows  
The pastor may say, “Will you now make your vows to one another?”  
The man and the woman are to face each other, holding hands. The Bride gives her flowers to the Maid of Honor. The Groom repeats the vow after the pastor as follows:

I, G****, take you B****, to be my wedded wife, / to have and to hold from this day forward, / for better for worse, / for richer, for poorer, / in sickness and in health, / to love and to cherish, till death us do part, / according to God’s holy plan / and with God’s gracious help.

The Bride repeats the vow after the pastor as follows:  
I, B****, take you, G****, to be my wedded husband, / to have and to hold from this day forward, / for better for worse, / for richer, for poorer, / in sickness and in health, / to love and to cherish, till death us do part, / according to God’s holy plan / and with God’s gracious help.

Vows  
Couples may wish to write their own vows, or precede the traditional vows with a personal statement of love for one another. Be sure the vows are un-equivocal and life-long. If they choose to state their vows from memory, you should have a written copy in case prompting is needed.

• __________, I love you and take you to be my wife/husband as long as God gives life to both of us. I do not know everything there is to know about love or about myself, but what I do know I want to share with you. I want to be open and honest with you in order that, through the bad times and the good times, our relationship might grow. I join you in praying that not only would our relationship with each other grow, but that our relationship with God would grow as well. Therefore, I commit myself to you in the sight of God.

• __________, today I take you to be my wife/husband. I know that God brought us together. I promise to love, honor and cherish you. It is my earnest prayer that I will be able to provide for your physical needs as Christ has provided for our spiritual needs. Being one in our Lord’s sight
will always make me share myself completely with you. Now, ________, as we turn to the future together, whether it means prosperous or difficult times, we will continue to seek God’s will for our lives together.

• I love you, B****, and because of that love and the knowledge that God has brought us together, I take you to be my wife. I want to be open and honest with you in order that, through the bad and the good times, our relationship will grow. I do not know what the future will hold, but I promise to be a leader in seeking God’s will in every area of our lives. And B****, I promise to provide the right atmosphere for you so that you may grow into all that God intended for you to be.

G****, I love you, and I believe that God has brought us together and will give me the ability to love you with an unselfish and growing love. I promise to love you consistently and to be a source of encouragement and support to you. I want always to be open and honest with you and to share myself completely with you. G****, I promise to be faithful to you in both good and bad times and I trust you to care for me as my husband and the head of our home.

• ________, I love you. I believe that God has brought us together and will give me the ability to love you with an unselfish and growing love. I promise to love you consistently and to be a source of encouragement and support. I promise to be faithful to you in both good and bad times, and I trust you to care for me as my wife/husband.

**Giving of Rings**

You have determined to seal your vows by the giving and receiving of rings. Rings are a sacred symbol, signaling to others that you are in an exclusive commitment to your beloved. The precious metal from which they are forged reminds you of the precious possession you have in marriage. And the infinite circle they form remind you that your new relationship is never to end.

G****, indicating your responsibility to B**** to receive her into your care and keeping, I give you this ring to place on her finger, as both a symbol and promise that you receive her. Just as this ring circles her finger, so you are to encompass her with strength and protecting love.

**Groom (repeating after the pastor):**

B****, this ring I give you / as a constant reminder / of my abiding love and commitment.

B****, indicating your responsibility to G****, to receive him into your care and devotion, I give you this ring to place on his finger as both a symbol and promise that you receive him. Just as this ring circles his finger, so you are to encompass him with strength and protecting love.

**Bride (repeating after the pastor):**
G****, this ring I give you / as a constant reminder / of my abiding love and commitment.

Optional: Unity Candle
Special music is often done during the Unity Candle ceremony. Another alternative is the reading of Gen. 2:20b-24. Some couples extinguish their individual candles after lighting the central candle while others leave them burning. At this point, some choose to present roses to mothers. The Unity Candle can also be done after the Pronouncement.

Prayer of Dedication
Couples may kneel if a kneeling bench is provided. The Lord's Prayer may be spoken or sung at the conclusion of this prayer.

Our eternal Father, send your blessing upon G**** and B****, whom we bless in your name, that they may live faithfully together. May they keep the vows they have made, and may they remain ever in perfect love and peace together, and live according to your Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pronouncement
For inasmuch as G**** and B**** have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and have pledged their faith each to the other, and have declared the same by joining hands and by giving and receiving rings, I pronounce that they are husband and wife together, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.

Kiss
You may kiss your bride.

Benediction
"The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26).

Presentation of Couple
(The bride retrieves her flowers from the Maid of Honor and the couple turns to face the congregation.)
It gives me great delight to introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. ____________

Ceremony (see below)

Presentation of the Couple
**Recessional** - The Couple exits together. When they have left the sanctuary, the other attendants recess quickly in couples. The pastor may stay in position until the parents are escorted out and then exit himself.

**Postlude**

**Ushering Out of Family** - Bride’s Parents, Groom’s Parents, Bride’s Grandparents, Groom’s Grandparents

**Ushering out of Remaining Guests**

**Receiving Line and Reception**