

Handfasting – Celtic Style

Opening

The Celebrant will first explain a little about what will take place today and then will cast the circle to make the area we are using more sacred for the duration of the rite. All present are asked to remain within the circle until the Celebrant opens it at the end.

Celebrant: Let us begin with peace for what better way to start a new life than in peace and love. Let there be peace in our lives, let there be peace in the lives of those we know, let there be peace in the lives of all in the world.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: I will now call to Earth, Sea and Sky to strengthen our connections to them

Celebrant: I call on the rich Earth beneath us. Help us to feel our connections to you. Help us to know the strength and solidity that are part of you and of us. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: I call on the Seas, the Waters of Life flowing through us and through the Land. Help us to feel our connections to one another. Help us to know the flexibility and fluidity that are part of you and of us. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: I call on the Skies, the sparkling heavens above us. Help us to feel our connections to the Universe. Help us to know the wonders and openness that are part of you and of us. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: I will now call upon the ancestral Spirits of this place, of our families and of the Spiritual paths we follow.

I call to the Ancestors of this Place, those who have walked this Land before us. I call to the Ancestors of our Blood, those who we inherit so much from. I call to the Ancestors of our Spiritual Paths, whatever path we walk. I ask all of these Ancestors to join us and bear witness with us as we celebrate the joining of this couple before us.

Celebrant: I will now call upon the Goddess xxxx and the God xxxx to join us in today's celebrations.

Insert calls to deities chosen by the couple.

Celebrant: Lastly I call to the Spirit of this Place that you will welcome us here and bear witness to this our rite. So mote it be.

All: So mote it be

Celebrant speaks about Handfasting

Celebrant will speak on Handfasting, explaining a little of what it is and will then call for the first reading.

First Reading:

Walking the Seasons

Celebrant: xxxx and xxxx will you now walk the circle of the seasons?

Couple: We will.

(Couple walk together to the East)

East: Will your love grow with each dawn? Will it be nourished with the vitality of Spring?

Couple: It will

East: Then accept this token of Spring as a reminder of your words

(Couple walk together to the South)

South: Will your love stand strong in the fierce heat of noon? Will it grow strong in the warmth of Summer?

Couple: It will

South: Then accept this token of Summer as a reminder of your words.

(Couple walk together to the West)

West: Will your love hold fast in the evening breezes? Will it remain steady in the storms of Autumn?

Couple: It will

West: Then accept this token of Autumn as a reminder of your words.

(Couple walk together to the North)

North: Will your love comfort you in the darkness of night? Will it survive the frosts of Winter?

Couple: It will

North: Then accept this token of Winter as a reminder of your words.

(Couple walk together to the centre to face Celebrant again)

Celebrant: All things in life are circular – night becomes day, day becomes night and night becomes day again. The moon waxes, wanes and waxes again. The year flows from Spring to Summer to Autumn to Winter and back to Spring once more. Will your love continue flow through these cycles?

Couple: It will

Celebrant will call for the second reading.

Second Reading:

Vows

Celebrant: We have come here to witness your vows to one another. Are you ready to make them.

Couple: We are

Couple turn to face one another and say their vows. Ideally these should be written by the individuals involved but the Celebrant can offer advice and suggestions if required.

Celebrant: These promises you make by the sun and the moon, by day and night, by earth, sky and sea. With these vows you swear to be full partners, each to the other. If one drops the load, the other will pick it up. Should you fail to keep the oath you pledge today, the elements themselves will reach out and destroy you.

Exchange of Rings

Celebrant: These rings symbolize the union in which your two lives are now joined in one unbroken circle, in which, wherever you go, you will always return to one another in your togetherness. Let these rings remind you of your commitment to love one another, to share your hopes, your difficulties and your triumphs.

Celebrant: [insert bride's name] repeat after me:

I, xxxxx, do take you xxxxxx, to be my husband in the presence of all here. With this ring I join my life to yours

Celebrant: [insert groom's name] repeat after me:

I, xxxx, do take you xxxx, to be my wife in the presence of all here. With this ring I join my life to yours

Celebrant: Let the sun and the moon and the stars and these our brothers and sisters bear witness that xxxx and xxxx have been joined together and are husband and wife.

Handfasting

Couple join hands. Celebrant comes forward with cloth/braid/ribbon and wraps it loosely over couple's hands

Celebrant: May the bond of your vows be no heavier to bear than this cloth. Above you are the stars, around you is the sea, below you is the earth. As time passes remember like a star your love should be constant. Like the sea your love should always flow. Like the earth your love should be firm. Possess one another yet be understanding. Have patience one with the other. For storms will come, but they will go quickly. Be free in giving of affection and warmth to one another.

Couple: Your hand to my hand, your heart to my heart, your life to my life.

Celebrant: You may now kiss.

Sharing of Mead and Bread

Celebrant: As part of this rite you have chosen to share bread and mead as a symbol of the first of many meals you will share together as husband and wife.

Celebrant will explain that couple will share bread and wine first and that then mead and bread will be circulated once round the circle so all may join in the symbolic meal.

Blessings

Celebrant: We have shared bread and mead together, let us now join hands and share in a moment of silence during which we can all wish our own blessings for xxxx and xxxx and for their future together.

Celebrant:
Now you will feel no rain,
for each of you will be shelter to the other.
Now you will feel no cold,
for each of you will be warmth to the other.
Now there is no more loneliness,
for each of you will be companion to the other.
Now you are two persons,
but there is one life before you.
Go now to your dwelling place,
to enter into the days of your togetherness,
and may your days be good and long upon this earth.

Closing

Celebrant: It is now time for this rite to draw to a close and before we leave I will give thanks for the presence with us today of the Spirit of Place, [insert name of deities] the Ancestors and the Earth, Sky and Sea.

Thanks given in Celebrant's own words to Spirit of Place, Deities and Ancestors.

Celebrant: We give thanks to the Skies for helping us feel the wonder and openness of the Universe. May we carry with us the knowledge we have gained today. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: We give thanks to the Seas for helping us feel the flexibility and fluidity within our lives. May we carry with us the knowledge we have gained today. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: We give thanks to the Earth for helping us feel your strength and solidity as part of us. May we carry with us the knowledge we have gained today. So may it be.

All: So may it be.

Celebrant: In Peace we began so let us end in Peace and carry our Peace into the World. Please wait while I open the circle.

Celebrant will open the circle and let everyone know when the circle is opened.