Ceremony for the Commitment to Life-long Partnership of
Dena Pedynowski and Douglas MacMartin

Seeing into darkness is clarity
Knowing how to yield is strength
Use your own light
and return to the Source of light
This is called practicing eternity

Lao Tzu, Tao te Ching

Officiant: Jen Bumgarner
Assistants extraordinaire: Carrie Nielson
 Bill D’Agostino
Meditation leader: Michael Bachmann
Readings: Rob MacMartin
 W. Tay Moss
 Cary Franklin
 Terry Root
Guitar: Clancy Rowley
Harp: Jan Frith
Blessing of the rings: Everyone!
Witnesses: Janice Pedynowski
 David MacMartin
Entry music – “Praises for the World” by Jennifer Berezan

Welcome

We wanted to invite you here to this grove of redwoods because our sense of spirituality is inseparable from the exploration of wild, beautiful places – both in the world around us and within our own hearts. We have crafted this ceremony to be on the edge between the inner and outer worlds, an attempt to give form to what is ultimately formless, nameless, and boundless. But of course, our commitment to each other will take form in this world. So we have endeavored to make shapes of word, song, and emotion to embody the lifelong commitment that we will formalize today.

A commitment to partnership is a sacred personal union that a state might declare legal, but ultimately, only love can create and mutual faith fulfill. We come here with great joy for having the opportunity to legally marry the life partner of our choosing. This is an opportunity that not all in this country are currently given, and for this right, we are deeply grateful.

Meditation – Michael Bachmann

The Tao of Marriage

Marriage and partnership mean different things to different people. We cannot begin a ceremony of partnership without understanding the meaning of partnership to the two people who shall make vows to each other. Dena and Doug have chosen this reading, from Steven Mitchell, to capture their understanding and their commitment to the “Tao of Marriage."

The deepest intimacy with the beloved becomes possible when we have experienced intimacy with the self. Intimacy with the self means awakening to our true nature. The old Zen stories say, about the moment of a Master’s enlightenment, “Suddenly he was intimate.”

“Go deeper than love,” D.H. Lawrence wrote, “for the soul has greater depths.” The willingness to go deeper than love is itself a kind of love, desire to meet the beloved beyond desire, in the darkness where there is no self, no other. For this meeting, two people must be whole enough in themselves to step out of themselves, into the place of mutual transformation. They are able to surrender everything that they know, everything they love, with the abandon that a Master has at the hour of death. Transformation is a death. It is also a birth, and can be as painful as any physical birth. Painful or ecstatic, it requires a fundamental trust. “Into your hand I commit my spirit.”

Two people who enter this depth of intimacy find themselves standing in the garden where Adam and Eve stood. All things are possible for them. The ancient Chinese sage Tzu-ssu said, “For the mature person, the Tao begins in the relation between [two people], and ends in the infinite vastness of the universe.” They have traced their love for each other back to the root of love, the radiant non-self, the bodhisattva’s serene compassion. Like the wedding ring, it has no beginning, no end.

Stephen Mitchell

First Reading – Rob MacMartin

Continuity and fluidity are not just features of the body – they are ways of being in the heart, body, and mind. The “dance” of love is a way of life – permeating word, thought, physical movement, and all the ways that Doug and Dena will create together in this world.

When you love someone you do not love them all the time, in exactly the same way, from moment to moment. It is an impossibility. It is even a lie to pretend to. And yet this is exactly what most of us demand. We have so little faith in the ebb and flow of life, of love, of relationships. We leap at the flow of the tide and resist in terror its ebb. We are afraid that it will never return. We insist on permanency, on duration, on continuity; when the only continuity possible, in life as in love, is in growth, in fluidity – in freedom in the sense that the dancers are free, barely touching as they pass, but partners in the same pattern.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh
from Gift From the Sea
Second Reading – W. Tay Moss

Any idea and any act can be seen from many perspectives. Dena and Doug chose this familiar reading from Corinthians because they began to see and understood it in a new way when they were writing this ceremony. The concept of love expressed goes beyond religious tradition, beyond historical context, and beyond the boundaries of self-identity.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.
Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.
For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end…
For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

I Corinthians 13:1-13

Third Reading – Cary Franklin

The next selection will not come as a surprise to those of us who know of Doug and Dena’s travels. It will also not come as a surprise that marriage does not mean “settling down” in any way to them. Instead, partnership is a commitment to exploring personal and worldly frontiers. It is a living challenge to share the winding, exciting, sometimes fearful, sometimes ecstatic, physical and spiritual journey through life. And that life is to be discovered, exalted in, and lived with gratitude over the mountains, valleys, and beneath the ocean’s surface.

I do not offer the old smooth prizes,
But offer rough new prizes,
These are the days that must happen to you:
You shall not heap up what is called riches,
You shall scatter with lavish hands all that you earn or achieve.
However sweet the laid-up stores,
However convenient the dwellings,
You shall not remain there.
However sheltered the port,
And however calm the waters,
You shall not anchor there.
However welcome the hospitality that welcomes you
You are permitted to receive it but a little while
Afoot and lighthearted, take to the open road,
Healthy, free, the world before you,
The long brown path before, leading wherever you choose.
Say only to one another:
Camerado, I give you my hand!
I give you my love, more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law:
Will you give me yourself?
Will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

Walt Whitman
Excerpts from Song of the Open Road
Dena and Doug’s love for each other was born even before they met each other. This is because their love is not just a love for a person, but for a way of loving and living life. It is both personal and inextricably connected to the entire world. Marc Payne and Diane Winn suggested the next reading – a poem by Nancy Wood. Marc and Diane could not be here today, but send their blessings with these words. This reading reflects the powerful collision of energies when Doug and Dena met, and which keeps evolving.

Before we met, you and I were halves unjoined except in the wide rivers of our minds.
We were each other’s distant shore, the opposite wings of birds, the other half of a shell that keeps the clam from falling out.
We did not know each other then, did not know our determination to keep alive the cry of one riverbank to the other.
We were apart, yet connected in our ignorance of each other, like two apples sharing a common tree.
Remember?
I knew you existed long before you understood my desire to join my loneliness to yours.
Our paths collided long enough for our indecision to be swallowed up by the greater needs of love.
When you came to me, the sun surged toward the earth and the moon escaped from darkness to bless the union of two spirits so alike that your pain became my discomfort.
In the hour when I stood naked,
You were there to play the drum of life for us.

Beloved partner, keeper of my heart’s odd secrets, clothed in summer blossoms so the icy hand of winter never touches us, I thank your patience.
Our joining is like a tree to earth, a cloud to sky, and even more:
We are the reason the world can laugh on its battlefields and rise from the ashes of its selfishness to hear me say,
In this time, this place, this way, I love you best of all.

Nancy Wood
from Shaman’s Circle

Amazing Grace – Clancy Rowley

Amazing Grace needs no introduction. Clancy Rowley will sing and play this time-honored hymn – with a few wording changes. We see Grace in many approaches to spirituality and religion. Perhaps the native people of North America captured it best with their knowing of the Great Mystery. The Great Mystery is the Truth, Beauty, and Love that is beyond what can be conceived, what can be imagined, or what can be described. It is mirrored in the Tao, the Buddha-nature, the Christ-love. We all see, hear, and feel grace in different ways – we invite you to bring your knowing of Grace to our gathering in this holy place of redwoods, by singing along with us softly, loudly, or in your hearts.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, That inspired, and set me free!
I once was lost but now am found, Was blind, but now, I see.

T’was Grace that taught my heart to love, And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares we have already come.
T’was Grace that brought us safe thus far and Grace will lead us on.
Blessing of the Rings

The wedding band is an ancient symbol of unity and enduring love and faith. Dena and Doug will give each other wedding bands engraved with the symbol of infinity in recognition of the continuity of their love. That love is not linear or static – it is a process of continual re-creation. The words of T.S. Eliot capture the essentially spiral nature of life and living:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time

And so it is with the wedding band – it is a circle of love that becomes a spiral as Dena and Doug walk together into the future. They might retrace familiar steps, but the experience will never be the same. As Doug and Dena explore life together, they will see their love and re-create their commitment from new vistas.

Dena and Doug have invited all of us here today to share and celebrate their commitment to life-long partnership. Each of us is a part of their lives – in many different ways – and they appreciate the unique and special contributions that we have made and will continue to make in their lives. As we pass the rings around, we ask each of you here today to bless them, in your own way, so that their relationship can be nurtured by the love and support of friends and family.

Celtic harp – Jan Frith

Declaration of Intent

Do you come here today to enter into this partnership consciously, with gratitude and joy in your heart, to celebrate your love for each other?

We do.

Of all of the people that you know, you have chosen each other as partners in your life’s journey together. Are you ready to formalize this commitment with the vows that you have written?

We are.

Vows

I choose you to be my life-long partner
To be alive together
To share life’s sorrows and joys
To celebrate the beauty of the earth from the ocean floor to the mountaintops
and work together to leave the world better for our lives having been lived

I choose you above all others. I love you for yourself, with the faith and the hope that you will realize and become all that you already are.

I promise
To love you
To cuddle and snuggle you
To challenge and nurture you

From this day forward, I promise to honour this pledge as long as life and faith endure.

Exchange of Rings

I give you this ring, blessed by the love and good wishes of our friends and family, as a sign of my enduring love.

Declaration of Marriage

Witnesses: Janice Pedynowski & David MacMartin
Benediction

From below the rising sun,
From the never-ending sphere of life,
From the unknown eternities above,
From Mother Earth
This moment in time has arrived, and we have
Come together to unite these two people
From here - here in this life - to the life beyond our
Present state,
From here to the never-ending sphere,
May these two people walk in peace.
May life make known its purpose to you;
May you endure hardships and be strengthened
Together into one.

May your bodies channel and amplify the energy of the earth.
May your hearts be strengthened to endure
the darkest side of life.
May it always be that your home is happy and that your
Fire will never die out;
May it ever shine to welcome all into your home.
May life bring to you whatever you are destined to become.

And so it shall be. It is finished; it is finished, and so
It is done. And it is done in beauty.

Adapted from a Navajo prayer, Ray Baldwin Louis

May I become at all times, both now
and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those in need of light
A refuge for those in need of shelter
And a servant to all those in need."

Prayer by Tenzin Gyatso

His Holiness the Dalai Lama

From Ethics for a New Millenium, May 2001