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THE FIRST CHURCH OF NAZARETH, U.L.C.

St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands
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The Bible says: 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. 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.

In Western society, just about everyone connects the concept of love with the concept of marriage. The two just go together in our minds. But even though love is a phenomenon we are exposed to from our earliest days, few of us are able to say exactly what comprises love, and what its obligations are. I want to talk about this now, because it is the exercise of loving that has brought you two here today, for a happy purpose.

Love is putting the well-being of another, ahead of your own. This is a universal definition of love among humans, and can be applied to a wide variety of situations: husbands and wives; brothers and sisters; mothers and children. In fact, by this definition, we can even love our pets, our cars, and our countries. It is in marriage that our love for each other is tested daily, and sometimes harshly. In a healthy marriage, the act of loving often appears as compromise. We married couples spend a great deal of time talking back and forth, trying to work out solutions to little problems which will accommodate our needs and be beneficial to all concerned. In the course of these conversations, each of us sacrifices a tiny bit of our own momentary comfort in exchange for the extraordinary benefits of an intimate and enduring relationship — we give a little to get a lot, for a long time.

Your willingness to make these sacrifices for each other, is what we celebrate today.

Humankind has created ceremonies to help us focus on important concepts which are hard to express in other ways. By coming together in this place, at this time, you two are creating the opportunity to express openly to each other the feelings implicit in your everyday lives. It is with great joy and sincere feeling that I take this opportunity to guide your homage to the life you have shared, and will continue together.

In honor of the sacred pledge you are about to make, and symbolizing its unbroken perpetuity, please join right hands.

Boy/Girl, do you still take Girl/Boy to be your wedded wife/husband, do you still promise to love, honor, cherish and protect her/him, to share your joys and heartaches, your victories and your fears, in prosperity as well as in adversity, cleaving to no other, as long as you both shall live?

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life,
For which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned".
Youth shows but half; trust God, see all,
Nor be afraid!

Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be.

"Rabbi Ben Ezra" by Robert Browning

Please join your hands together and each of you repeat after me: I Boy/Girl still take you Girl/Boy to be my wife/husband, I promise you love, honor, and respect. to be faithful to you, and not to forsake you, until death do us part.

Throughout human tradition, when you make a pledge, it has been deemed good to have a token to remind you of that pledge. For this purpose you have chosen rings. They are appropriate to the task because they are circles never ending, like the promises you make to each other today. And they are made of precious metal, never to be tarnished, like the love you express before myself and these witnesses. Please place these rings, and honor each other in their giving.

Boy, do you give this ring to girl as a token of your love for her? I do.

Girl, I give you this ring as a token of my vow. With all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.

Girl, do you give this ring to boy as a token of your love for him? I do.

Boy, I give you this ring as a token of my vow. With all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.

May you continue to grow each day in understanding and compassion. May the home you have established be a place of sanctuary, where many will find a friend. When you are apart, may you return to one another in togetherness. And what you have joined together, let no one put asunder.

You have come here today intending to reaffirm your commitment. You have joined hands and made solemn vows before myself and these witnesses. You continue to be joined together in mutual esteem. Therefore, in accordance with the highest power that rules the land and the seas, I pronounce that your wedding vows are sealed, and you may continue to be known as husband and wife.

Those who God has joined together, let no one put asunder.

Let us pray: Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, look with favor upon the world you have made and upon Boy and Girl who you have made one flesh in Holy Matrimony... Continue to give them wisdom and devotion in the ordering of their common life, that each may be to the other a strength in need a counselor in perplexity, a comfort in sorrow, and a companion in joy. Give them the grace, when they hurt each other, to recognize and acknowledge their fault, and to seek each other's forgiveness and yours. Grant that their wills may be so knit together in your will, and their spirits in your spirit, that they may grow in love and peace with you and one another all the days of their lives. AMEN