



# Your Occasions

*by Matthew Bin and Mei Cheung*

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**Matthew Bin and Mei Cheung**

HUMANIST OFFICIANTS

SERVING THE HALTON, PEEL, AND TORONTO REGIONS

CONTACT

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## About Your Occasions

Your Occasions is a husband and wife team of Humanist Officiants. We are registered to perform and legally solemnize marriages in the province of Ontario. We perform non-religious, personalized wedding ceremonies in Toronto, Peel region, Halton region, and Hamilton. Our goal is to help you write a ceremony that expresses your personalities - as unique as you are - while still recognizing the commitment you are making.

We can also help you mark other momentous life occasions with a ceremony that reflects your unique situation. Our other life ceremonies include Baby Welcomings, Namings, Adoption Ceremonies, Vow Renewals, Coming of Age Ceremonies, Funerals, and Memorials. As Humanists, we strive to help you mark important life passages with solemnity, dignity, equality, and joy.

## About Humanism

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. Humanism affirms the dignity of each human being, and balances that with our social and planetary responsibility. It stands for human rights and social justice. Free of dogma, it recognizes human beings as a part of nature and holds that values-be they religious, ethical, social, or political-have their source in human experience and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

## What is a Humanist Wedding?

As Humanist Officiants, we take this approach: we turn the focus away from the religious tradition, and turn it towards the couple and their relationship. So often couples find out that what they thought was ‘their day’ turns out to be about making other people happy. It can be a relief to find out that with a Humanist wedding ceremony, at least one aspect of the day is truly about them. While the ceremony must meet the legal aspects set out by the Marriage Act, a couple’s ceremony does not belong to a religious institution, or the government, or even the officiant they choose. Instead, the ceremony is their own personal expression of their loving, enduring relationship, celebrated with their closest friends and family.

## About Us



Matthew Bin is a writer and consultant. He volunteers for social justice and arts causes. He first became active in the humanist community in 1996. Matthew holds a BA and MA in English Literature from McMaster University.



Mei Cheung is a professional engineer and a patent agent. She is an amateur photographer and a stained glass artist. She holds a BEng in Engineering Physics from McMaster University.

Mei and Matthew are both originally from the Hamilton area, and now live in Oakville with their beagle, Jake.

**Tell us about you and your ceremony:**

CONTACT INFORMATION	
Partner: (full legal name)	Partner: (full legal name)
Cell:	Cell:
E-mail:	E-mail:
Occupation: (required for the register)	Occupation: (required for the register)
CEREMONY Location	
Address:	Venue #:
	Venue Contact:
Parking Instructions:	
CEREMONY Details	
Number of Guests:	Number in Wedding Party: (for each partner)
Ring Bearer?	
Flower Girl?	Who will hold the rings?
Name of Witness 1:	Name of Witness 2:
Who will provide music during the ceremony? (DJ, musicians, iPod & speakers, etc.)	
How will the wedding party enter the ceremony space?	
How will the wedding party line up during the ceremony?	

## **Ceremony Parts**

This template explains the typical parts of a marriage ceremony and provides a possible flow. It can be a starting point for creating your own unique ceremony.

### **MUSIC**

It is appropriate to have music playing: as guests are arriving, for the processional, during the signing of the register, and for the recessional. Music should not be playing during the spoken parts of the ceremony.

### **PROCESSIONAL/ CEREMONY SPACE POSITIONING**

There is a range of possibilities for arriving at the ceremony space. Once the wedding party reaches the ceremony space, the wedding party lines up in front of the officiant. You should decide where everyone will stand before the wedding day (for e.g. at your rehearsal).

### **GATHERING WORDS/WELCOME/OPENING**

Officiant welcomes guests, introduces himself or herself, and states the purpose of the ceremony and/or recites a reflection on marriage. Partners may personalize the section with their “couple story”.

### **READING OR RITUAL**

A reading of your choice to reflect your personalities and what your marriage will mean to you. This can be an excerpt of literature, a poem, or song lyrics. This can be read by any of your guests or by the Officiant. In place of a reading, you may also want to include a traditional wedding ritual based on your cultural backgrounds or that reflects your own personalities.

### **DECLARATION OF INTENTION**

Statement from the Marriage Act where the partners declare that they are legally able to be married and want to marry each other. The Declaration is recited with direction from the Officiant.

### **READING OR RITUAL**

For shorter wedding ceremonies, this may be left out.

### **EXCHANGE OF VOWS**

Partners make their promises to each other. Vows can be read individually by the couple or can be recited with direction from the Officiant. Memorization is not recommended.

### **EXCHANGE OF RINGS**

A ritual to 'seal' the vows.

### **PRONOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE**

Legal requirement where the Officiant pronounces the couple married.

### **SIGNING OF THE LICENCE AND REGISTER**

Legal requirement where the couple and their witnesses sign the Licence and Register. A table with at least one chair for the signing is required. It is a good idea to have music playing during this time.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

If you have any directions for your guests after the ceremony, e.g. clear the room, location of photos, hors d'ouerves, cocktails, dinner time, etc.

### **CLOSING WORDS**

Usually a wish or blessing for your marriage.

### **INTRODUCTION OF THE COUPLE**

### **RECESSIONAL**

# Sample Marriage Ceremony

## Introduction

Good afternoon and welcome. On behalf of *Partner 1* and *Partner 2*, I thank you for being here to share in the celebration of this very special day.

My name is Matthew Bin/Mei Cheung and I am a Humanist Marriage Officiant appointed by the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Humanist Society. Humanism is a rational philosophy based on a strong moral sense, and is motivated by compassion, fairness and respect for all.

## Gathering Words

We are here today with *Partner 1* and *Partner 2*, not to witness the beginning of what will be, but rather to celebrate what already is.

In this ceremony, *Partner 1* and *Partner 2* are dedicating themselves to give happiness and well-being to each other. Their pledge today is an expression of their devotion. The words spoken in this ceremony will validate their marriage, but it is their love and commitment that will sustain it.

Today, *Partner 1* and *Partner 2*, you announce your love for each other in the presence of families and friends. We rejoice with you and we wish you well.

## Optional: Reading (or Ritual or Cultural Tradition)

### A Reading on Marriage by Kahlil Gibran (Edited)

When you find someone you can love and who can love you, then love one another. And, as you love one another, remember this: Make your love a joyous, freedom-loving adventure. Let your love be a moving sea...Sing, dance, and be joyous together, and yet, let each of you have moments alone. Let there be spaces in your togetherness...Fill each other's cup, and yet, allow each to drink at their own choosing...Give your hearts to each other, while providing space for each other's heart to be free, for there is much in life to be loved. Let your lover's heart be free to answer the call of life.

## Declaration of Intention

Please join hands.

This union in heart, body, and mind is intended for your mutual joy, and for the help and comfort you give each other in prosperity and adversity.

In accordance with the requirements for legal wedding ceremonies in the Marriage Act of Ontario, I will now ask you both to make you solemn declarations of intention.

*Partner 1*, please repeat after me.

*I do solemnly declare that I do not know of any lawful impediment why I, Partner 1, may not be joined in matrimony to Partner 2.*

*I call upon these persons here present to witness that I, Partner 1, do take you, Partner 2, to be my lawful wedded partner.*

(Repeat for both partners)

## (Optional: Another Reading or Ritual or Cultural Tradition)

### **Exchange of Vows**

The promises you are making to each other today are a statement confirming a relationship so close and intimate that it has a profoundly affected your whole lives. The vows you will now make to each other are your pledge to share the journey of life together.

*Partner 1*, please repeat after me.

*I, Partner 1, take you, Partner 2, to be my partner; 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; until the end of our days.*

*Partner 2*, please repeat after me.

*I, Partner 2, take you, Partner 1, to be my partner; 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; until the end of our days.*

### **Exchange of Rings**

May I please have the rings?

The ring is the symbol of the unbroken circle of love. Love freely given has no beginning and no end. Just as love freely given has no giver and no receiver - for each is the giver and each is the receiver. May your rings always call to mind the freedom and the power of this love.

*Partner 1*, please place the ring on *Partner 2*'s finger and repeat after me:

*Partner 2, take this ring as a symbol of our union, a token of my faith and love.*

*Partner 2*, please place the ring on *Partner 1*'s finger and repeat after me:

*Partner 1, take this ring as a symbol of our union, a token of my faith and love.*

### **Pronouncement of Marriage**

*Partner 1* and *Partner 2*, you have declared your purpose before this gathering, you have made your pledges to one another and you have exchanged your vows and your rings. As you continue your journey together, may each challenge and each success be a new opportunity for your love to grow.

Now, I, Matthew Bin/Mei Cheung, by virtue of the powers vested in me by the Marriage Act, do hereby pronounce you *Partner 1* and *Partner 2* to be married. I invite you to share your first of many kisses as a married couple.

### **Signing of the Register**

*Officiant announces the signing of the register. Music plays while Witnesses and Officiant sign the Licence and Register.*

### **Optional: Announcements**

Just a small announcement before we conclude. The couple have asked that...

### **Optional: Closing Words/Wish for Marriage**

May you establish a home of warmth and understanding; may your lives be filled with peace and beauty; may you always share with one another your truth and your love.

### **Introduction of the Couple**

Friends and family, it is my very great pleasure to introduce *Partner 1* and *Partner 2*, now partners in marriage. Let us welcome and congratulate them together.

### **Recessional**

## CEREMONY PLANNING SHEET

There are three legal elements that must be included in the ceremony listed in **bold** below. Everything else is chosen by the couple to reflect their own unique tastes. You may fill in your choices below from the sample documents or your own personalized wording.

Gathering Words/Welcome (Processional may come before or after this)	
Mention of family members & loved ones, guests of honour, or memorials to loved ones who have passed	
Reading or Ritual	
<b>Declaration of Intention</b>	From the Marriage Act.
Call for support from the Children, Parents, Guests	
Second Reading or Ritual	
Vows (Intro & Exchange)	
Ring (Intro & Exchange)	
<b>Pronouncement of Marriage</b>	
<b>Signing of the Register</b>	(couple, witnesses, officiant are signing during this time. It is a good idea to have music playing during this part of the ceremony)
Announcements for your guests (where to go for photos, hors d'oeuvres, reception, etc.)	
Closing Words	
Presentation of the Couple (will one partner be taking another partner's name?)	
Recessional	
Anything else you would like to include?	

## Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How long is the average wedding?** The average length of a wedding is from 15 -25 minutes. Wedding length varies depending on the words, readings, rituals and music chosen by the couple.
2. **When does the Officiant arrive and leave?** I will arrive approximately 30 minutes prior to the ceremony and leave about 10 to 15 minutes after.
3. **Does the Officiant attend the reception?** There is no expectation that the Officiant will attend your wedding reception. But please feel free to send us a photo of the ceremony that we can display on our site's photo album and other promotions or leave us a review for our testimonials.
4. **What do the Officiants wear?** Our Officiants usually wear a business suit. In very warm weather, Mei will wear a simple dress.
5. **What arrangements are in place in the event the Officiant is unable to perform the ceremony?** We are part of a network of Humanist Officiants who have agreed to stand in for each other in the event of unforeseen circumstances. As a group, we ensure that couples contracting our services will have their ceremony performed at the designated time and place.
6. **How do I obtain a Marriage Licence Application?** A Marriage Licence is valid for 90 days, so you can obtain your licence any time during these 90 days from the clerk in any city, town, township or village in Ontario. Contact your municipal office for the current fee and requirements for purchasing a Marriage Licence.
7. **What if I have been divorced?** If one or both members of the couple are divorced, documentation relating to each divorce will be required when obtaining your licence. If you live and were divorced in Canada, you must bring the original or court-certified copy of the final decree, final judgment or certificate of divorce to your local municipal office when you are purchasing the marriage licence. If you live or were divorced outside of Canada, you may be required to submit documents to the Provincial Government several weeks prior to applying for a licence. Contact your local municipal office for further information or check the Ontario Government Website for additional requirements on Getting Remarried in Ontario after a Divorce. However, the Officiant only requires the Marriage Licence.
8. **What does the Officiant require for the ceremony?** The Officiant will ask for the Marriage Licence when he/she arrives. For the ceremony, we require a table with at least one chair for signing. Please make sure there is no water or lit candles on the table.
9. **What happens after the ceremony?** The Officiant will take the licence and the envelope it came in and mail it within 2 business days. You will be left with a Record of Solemnization and an information sheet detailing when to apply for your Marriage Certificate if you require it.
10. **What if I have a complaint about the Officiant's conduct?** Concerns relating to the performance of a Humanist Officiant as set out in the Ontario Humanist Society Professional Standards may be directed in writing to: Ceremonies Committee Chair, Ontario Humanist Society, 265 Gore Street, Almonte, ON, K0A 1A0 or by email to [ethicsconcerns@ontariohumanists.ca](mailto:ethicsconcerns@ontariohumanists.ca)

**Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your wedding ceremony.**



# LETTER OF AGREEMENT *Your Occasions*

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1. This Letter will constitute an agreement between \_\_\_\_\_, referred to as the Officiant, and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, referred to as the client in this letter of agreement.
2. The wedding ceremony will take place at \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_. The ceremony will begin at \_\_\_\_\_AM/PM.
3. *Initial Consultation:* the Officiant will meet with the client (one or both marriage partners) to consult on text and details of the wedding ceremony. The Officiant will also provide electronic or hard copies of ceremonies and resources to the client. Based on the consultation and instructions from the Officiant, the client may either choose one of the Officiant's sample ceremonies 'as is', or work with the Officiant to draft their ceremony prior to the service so long as the time constraints in striking this agreement will allow. Your ceremony should include all details such as names and relationship of anyone participating in the ceremony.
4. The Officiant will review the clients' completed draft and provide feedback within one week of the ceremony or sooner. Any additions and revisions should be submitted to the Officiant at least **one week** prior to the day of the wedding. In the event that the client is unable to comply, the Officiant may use the original text as submitted to the client.
5. This revised copy will become the 'official text' of the ceremony. The Officiant will forward a copy of the official text including all process details agreed on at the initial consultation, to the client prior to the ceremony.
6. *Ongoing Consultation:* the Officiant is available to answer your questions until the day of your ceremony.
7. The Officiant will conduct the marriage ceremony using the official text and following the details agreed on at the initial consultation.
8. The fee for services performed by the Officiant will be \$\_\_\_\_.00 within Toronto, Hamilton, Burlington, Mississauga, and Oakville, with any applicable additional fees special considerations, extra meetings, and for travel time for areas outside of these regions (e.g. Niagara-on-the-Lake, Guelph, Caledon etc.) and beyond. The client will pay a deposit (or the entire fee) upon booking. The client will pay a deposit (or the entire fee) upon booking. The remainder of the fee may be paid upon the Officiant's arrival at the ceremony. For a balance of \$425.00 or less, payment is typically made in cash.
9. The marriage licence may be delivered to the Officiant before the ceremony or handed to the Officiant upon his/her arrival the day of the ceremony. The Officiant cannot perform the marriage without the marriage licence.
10. The ceremony should start within 15 minutes of the agreed time, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Officiant. Every attempt to accommodate changes will be provided, but this is dependent on many factors, including other bookings on the same date. If the ceremony does not start within this timeframe, the Officiant may need to leave and return to officiate your ceremony at another time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTNER

\_\_\_\_\_  
PARTNER

\_\_\_\_\_  
OFFICIANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

# Wedding Fee Table

Client: \_\_\_\_\_

Your wedding fee is dependent on a number of factors such as the location of the ceremony, the inclusion of a rehearsal and bookings on specific holidays such as Thanksgiving, Valentines Day, New Year's Eve or weddings booked at unusual times of the day.

		Fee	Your Amount
<b>1</b>	<b>Standard Fee</b> Wedding Venue is in Hamilton, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga, or Toronto		\$
<b>2</b>	<b>Ongoing assistance to personalize your ceremony.</b> We provide suggestions and feedback about the ceremony you are constructing from the information and samples provided to you. Alternatively, we can help you create new rituals and personalized vows.	<b>0</b>	<b>No Charge</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Rehearsal.</b> If you would like the Officiant to be present at your rehearsal, please add this amount.		
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Special Considerations</b></p> <p>a. Toronto Island _____</p> <p>b. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;">For wedding venues outside the above regions, in addition to the standard fee, an amount of \$ .75/km will charged based on return trip. <math>\_\_ \times .75 = \_\_</math> If you would like me to be present at your rehearsal, this amount would be doubled.</div></p> <p>c. Holiday Booking (e.g. New Year's eve) _____</p> <p>d. Time of Day (e.g. midnight or sunrise ceremonies) _____</p>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Your Total</b>		\$
<b>6</b>	<b>Less Non-Refundable Deposit</b>		\$
<b>7</b>	<b>Balance</b> The balance is to be paid prior to the start of the wedding or as otherwise agreed.		\$

\_\_\_\_\_  
Client Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew Bin/Mei Cheung, Officiant

## Receipt

Deposit    
  Full Fee    
 (Payment may be Cash, Cheque or electronic transfer)

Received with thanks from \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_  
Client

the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the above wedding ceremony. \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew Bin/Mei Cheung