

A Celebration of the Marriage of

**Lisa
and
David**

Sunday, July 1, 2007

5:00pm Conch Time

Fort Zachary Taylor Park

the Rev. Dr. Randolph W. B. Becker, officiating

GATHERING

We are gathered here today to celebrate the marriage of Lisa and David. It is fitting and appropriate that you, their families and friends, be here to witness and to participate in their wedding, for the ideals, understanding, and mutual respect which they bring to their marriage have their roots in the love, friendship and guidance you have given them.

David and Lisa know that you come here out of a sense of love and warmth of heart; as they turn to speak the words which express the unity of their lives, they will be mindful of your presence and know that in good days or bad, they will never be alone. They are also mindful of the large cloud of witness who stand with them in spirit this day.

Lisa and David, you enter into a union which is most sacred and most serious, requiring of those who enter into it a complete and unreserved giving of self. It binds you together for life in a relationship so close and so intimate that it will profoundly affect your whole future.

That future, with its hopes and disappointments, its successes and failures, its pleasures and pains, is hidden from your eyes. Know, though, that love can make it easy and perfect love can make it a joy. May, then, this love with which you join your hands and hearts today never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as you go on.

INVITATION TO MARRIAGE

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Today each of you takes an ultimate act of faith, of choosing to live together in hope, believing passionately in the evidence of that great unseen quality which is love. You move in that faith by inviting your beloved into the pathway of marriage.

Lisa, do you invite David to be your husband, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him in sickness and in good health, and forsaking all others, be faithful unto him as long as you both shall live? If so, please say, "I do."

Lisa: "I do."

David, do you invite Lisa to be your wife, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her in sickness and in good health, and forsaking all others, be faithful unto her as long as you both shall live? If so, please say, "I do."

David: "I do."

READING

Many years ago a man named Paul wrote to the people of Corinth what would become a famous letter. As part of that letter he asked them to think about the nature and meaning of love. Hear his words, as we might receive them today, and sense their eternal wisdom.

If someone were to be able to understand all languages, but not understand the meaning of love, that person would be no better than a meaningless noise.

And if someone were to be able to know all things, but did not know love, that person would really know nothing.

And if someone were to be so faithful that mountains could be moved, but did not show love, that person would move no one.

And if someone were to act in ways of generosity and kindness, but did not act out of love, that person's actions would be as empty as the breeze in the skies above.

But, if someone were to want to know love, this is what must be known:

Love is patient and kind;

love has no room in it for jealousy or boastful behaviour.

One who knows love does not insist on his or her own way.

Love that is true is not irritable nor resentful.

When love is known, one does not rejoice in wrongs, but rather in the right.

Such a love can bear all things, finds the way to believe all things, builds hope in all things, and endures all that come its way.

When each of us was a child, we viewed things as children do;

as we grew into adulthood, we saw things differently. Even as adults we grow, and that which we only partially comprehend may become known to us later. We seek to perceive what will be of enduring value to us.

Now, everything else in this life passes away, but love, true love, never ends.

Knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and possessions all wither in time, but love is eternal. These three abide - faith, hope and love - and the greatest of these is love.

YORUBA - Tasting of the Four Elements

In celebrating this marriage today, the marriage of Lisa and David, we who stand with them pledge our support to them in the years ahead.

From the age-old traditions of Africa, in which the wisdom of the ages is transmitted by story and ritual more than written word, we receive the Yoruba ceremony, a time for the tasting of four elements - the sour, the bitter, the hot, and the sweet - four tastes symbolic of the elements of marriage.

Taste now the sour, for surely every life of integrity admits to its share of times which are less than perfect. As David and Lisa experience life's disappointments as well as successes, will we offer our love and support, without measure and without limit?

If so, let us all taste and say "we will."

Taste now the bitter, for surely every life of depth will know its moments of denial and rejection when we feel turned away by life. As David and Lisa encounter times when bitterness might take hold of their hearts, will we offer our guidance and wisdom, without measure and without limit?

If so, let us all say "we will."

Taste now the hot, for surely there is spice and passion in every enduring relationship. As Lisa and David find and express their hearts' deepest longings, will we offer them our respect and encouragement without measure and without limit?

If so, let us all taste and say "we will."

And finally, taste now the sweet, for the abundance of life which has brought these two lovers here to be joined in marriage will continue to pour itself out for their enjoyment. As Lisa and David know the sweetness of married life in all of its ages and stages, will we offer our congratulations and benedictions without measure and without limit?

If so, let us all taste and say "we will."

JOINING OF THE FAMILIES

David and Lisa: In your promises and commitments to each other, you will pledge yourselves to create a new life together from the lives you have each created. You each bring to this marriage special talents, insights, skills, and understanding. These have been nurtured by your families who join in your celebration today.

As you welcome each other's family, as you open yourself to a new, wider definition of kinship, you express your wish that the relationships created by your marriage will nurture you in your newly claimed and proclaimed meaning of family.

These flowers are symbols of so much: their beauty is embodied in a transience, a reminder to us to appreciate what is here now, calling us to have the relationships that we hope to have now. Your lifetime is a continuum, a flow of special moments, and each of those moments shows you what's possible. But it's not something you do just once. Like a healthy plant that grows new blooms in each of its seasons, your relationship to family can produce new experiences of connection in all the seasons of life. However, remember that just as the flowers require our tending, our care, relationship to family also calls on us to nurture them, that we might experience the flowering of connection into the future.

Lisa and David, with symbolic gifts of beauty, please open your hearts and lives to embrace your new, wider community of family.

VOWS

As you have invited yourselves into marriage, and have welcomed your beloved's kin as your kin, by what words will you celebrate the joining of your lives?

(David and Lisa will read their own vows.)

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

May I have the rings, please.

"This is the point in the ceremony when I usually talk about the wedding bands being a perfect circle, having no beginning and no end. But we all know that these rings do have a beginning. Rock is dug up from the earth. Metal is liquified in a furnace at a thousand degrees. Hot metal is poured into a mold, cooled, and then painstakingly polished. Something beautiful is made from raw elements. Love is like that. It's hot, dirty work. It comes from humble beginnings, made by imperfect human beings. It's the process of making something beautiful where there was once nothing at all." (Ariel Meadow Stallings)

So, may your rings always remind you that you are in a process called marriage. From the raw elements which are your two lives, through the crucible of passion which is love, your lives will now take a new shape, a sacred circle of being, polished by life and shined by love. As you now find no beginning and no end in these circles crafted of metal, may you also find no beginning or end in the circle crafted in your hearts and lived as your marriage.

Each repeats: "May this ring be a symbol of our love and unity."

Each kisses the other after the ring is given.

PRAYER OF BENEDICTION

Our Apache sisters and brothers blessed the union of marriage with these words:

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 bodies,

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 the earth.

JUMPING THE BROOM

As the Apaches called upon you to “go now to your dwelling place,” we remember that for many Africans, especially those restricted by slavery from being able to legally marry, a symbolic public act of declaring love, fidelity, and the establishment of a home was the jumping of the broom.

Now, having heard you declare your love for each other before this company through the taking of vows and the giving and receiving of rings, I place this broom before you, I place all of the future before you, I place your shared adventure of life before, and invite you to step into your new reality as husband and wife. Congratulations!

(Jump the broom)

(Big Kiss!)