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## Interfaith Wedding Ceremony Ideas

By Heather Greene

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These days, it's becoming more and more common for couples of different religious backgrounds to get married. Many religions have embraced this fact— in two of the four major Jewish sects, interfaith marriages are regularly performed, most Protestant clergy are willing to officiate interfaith marriages, and more and more Catholic priests, Conservative Judaism rabbis, and Islamic leaders are conducting interfaith ceremonies. Ask other interfaith couples in your area for recommendations if you're having a hard time finding someone yourself. Or, you could have your wedding performed by a non-religious officiant. You will still have the opportunity to incorporate religion into your ceremony if you do this, but it will eliminate the hassle of finding a religious officiant who's views about interfaith marriage are the same as yours.

It may not be easy pulling off an interfaith ceremony. Your relatives may be upset that you are straying from tradition and even you and your fiancé may have some different ideas about how the ceremony should be run and which traditions and rituals should be part of the ceremony. You will need to take a lot of time to consider exactly what marrying someone of a different faith means to you and how you will handle your differences on the wedding day and beyond. With some compromising and understanding though, we're sure your interfaith wedding will go on without a hitch.

Since there is no traditional interfaith ceremony format, we can not recommend one that you should follow, but below you will find some tips for how to incorporate two religions into your ceremony.

**Involving Both Families**— Chances are, if anyone is upset about you having an interfaith marriage it's the older generation— your parents and grandparents. The best thing you can do to help them come to terms with your decision and understand it is to have both families participate in the ceremony. Unity candles are a wonderful idea to involve both parents and in this case, the candle lighting will have extra symbolism as you are not only joining your two families, but also your two faiths. At many interfaith marriages involving Christian and Jewish grooms and brides you will notice that the couple is taking a cue from the Jewish religion and having both parents walk the bride and groom down the aisle. This is sure to make both sets of parents feel special on the big day.

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**Neutral Ground**— It's important for many couples and their families to have a completely neutral ceremony. Many officiants steer clear of using non-inclusive language and avoid using mentions of things unique to one religion (for example, mentions of Israel, Jesus as a savior, etc.) and instead focus on God's love and the theme of unity and togetherness. In general, we'd advise against having the ceremony in a place of worship unless it is special to both the bride and groom.

**Music and Readings**— Incorporate music and readings from both your faiths into the ceremony or you can have faith neutral readings and music. We have several suggestions for readings as well as tips for readers weddings in our ceremony section.

**Programs**— Wedding programs are almost a necessity at an interfaith wedding if you will be incorporating aspects of two faiths into your wedding. A good program will explain the meaning and

origin behind any religious rituals that take place at the wedding, that way, none of the guests will be confused about what is going on (your guests may not have attended a wedding outside of their faith group).

**Having two officiants**— Many interfaith couples are now deciding to have two officiants present at their wedding ceremonies, one from each religion. By having two officiants, you'll be making everyone more comfortable, plus two heads are always better than one and two officiants can give you more ideas about conducting an interfaith ceremony than just one.

Heather Greene is the head writer for the wedding planning site, Wedding Wonderful located at [www.weddingwonderful.com](http://www.weddingwonderful.com). This article originally appeared on Wedding Wonderful.

### **Marking Togetherness: Beyond the Unity Candle**

**By Blake Kritzberg**

By now, surely everyone's familiar with the unity candle, but did you know there are other unification ceremonies to choose from when planning your wedding?

Although the unity candle seems to have been with us forever, in reality it's only about ten years old. During those years, more "two-become-one" motifs have arrived to round out the theme.

Unification ceremonies are not only a symbol of togetherness, they're also flexible elements of a wedding. These ceremonies can be "opened up" to include important family members, such as the bridal couple's parents. Children from previous marriages can play a part, as can the entire congregation in a smaller wedding. Candle and rose ceremonies are common choices for adapting in this way.

Unification ceremonies can also be "stacked." It's not unusual to find a wedding that includes a hand and water ceremony, for example, or a wine and rose ceremony. Some couples play music during these ceremonies and others don't.

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The timing of unification ceremonies varies by wedding, but they most often take place directly before or after the exchange of vows. These ceremonies may be especially important in non-religious weddings, which may end too quickly otherwise!

Let's look at some alternatives to the Unity Candle ceremony:

### \* Rose Ceremony

The rose ceremony is a flexible, informal ceremony especially suited to an interfaith or non-religious wedding, not to mention a garden wedding! In the rose ceremony, bride and groom exchange a single rose as their first married gift to each other. They are asked to recall this symbol of their love during the more trying seasons of marriage.

### \* Hand Ceremony

In the hand ceremony, the bride takes the groom's hands in hers, palms up. The officiant invites her to view his hands as a gift, and says: "These are the hands that will work along side yours, as together you build your future, as together you laugh and cry, and together you share your innermost secrets and dreams."

The groom then takes the bride's hands, palm side up. The officiant says, "They are the hands that will passionately love you and cherish you through the years, for a lifetime of happiness, as she promises her love and commitment to you all the days of her life."

### \* Knot Ceremony

In the knot ceremony, the mothers of the bridal couple are given a cord, which the officiant later asks them to give to the bridal couple. The couple ties a lover's knot, which they may save to look back on later.

### \* Sand, Water and Wine Ceremonies

These are all mixing ceremonies suited to a Unitarian or interfaith wedding. The sand ceremony is said to arise from Apache customs, and is popular in beach weddings. In each case, the bride and groom pour sand or liquid from two separate vials into one. In the wine ceremony, they drink the mixed wine.

A nice touch is to have the bride pour white wine while the groom pours red. You can then serve rosé at the reception to remind everyone of the ceremony.

### \* The Salt Covenant

The salt covenant is an ancient tradition, well-described in the Bible, and appearing regularly in Indian-national and Jewish weddings. Like the Jewish Huppah, the salt covenant (a mixing ceremony with ancient connotations of loyalty, protection and hospitality) is beginning to show up in non-Jewish weddings as well.

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### \* The Foot–Washing Ceremony

The foot washing ceremony (not to be confused with the Scottish bridal foot–washing ceremony, a raucous pre–wedding event) is a fascinating, solemn custom emphasizing the role of dual servitude in a marriage.

This short article hasn't covered all the unification ceremonies: there are bread–sharing ceremonies, circling ceremonies, broom jumping ceremonies, and probably more ceremonies that are being invented right now.

However, if you feel a unification ceremony might make your wedding more meaningful and personal, consider these alternatives. Don't forget that you can use more than one!

Blake Kritzberg is the proprietor of:

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and affordable wedding favor ideas, wedding favor FAQ, and a free wedding screensaver. This article may be freely reprinted so long as this resource box and URL are preserved.

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