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**Marking Togetherness: Beyond the Unity Candle**

**By Blake Kritzberg**

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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.

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

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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.

### \* 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.

### **Lighting the Way when Two Become One**

**By M J Plaster**

#### **Lighting the Way when Two Become One by M J Plaster**

Whether you want to add a little extra romance to an evening reception or a little glow to your house of worship, candles are a natural, effortless addition to your wedding theme. You'll have no trouble finding a role for candles at the wedding ceremony, at the reception, and even as part of the floral displays.

#### Unity Candles

Join the growing number of couples who include a unity candle as part of the wedding ceremony. Perhaps you think that unity candles are steeped in a rich history of religious tradition, or perhaps you think that unity candles are the invention of the candle makers to sell an extra candle or 10,000. Neither is the case. The exact evolution of the unity candle is uncertain, but since it began 30–40 years ago, it seems that we have that ever-lively 60s generation to thank for yet another custom that has wormed its way into modern life.

I'd like to propose my own idea of the unity candle's origin—an unlikely science experiment. You can perform this experiment yourself. Light two tapered candles, or use whatever candles you have handy. Note the height and brilliance of each flame. Now, join the two flames together and look at the single flame. The united flame is taller, stronger and brighter than the sum of the two individual flames. Isn't that what marriage is supposed to be—a single unit stronger than the sum of its parts?

The most traditional of the variations on the theme is the tall, thick white candle in the center of a candleholder surrounded on each side by a white taper. During the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom light the center unity candle with the two tapers, creating the stronger flame as a symbol of the stronger unity gained through marriage.

Beyond the traditional unity ceremony, today's weddings provide the opportunity for many variations, particularly second weddings that include children. If each partner has children, the children may light the unity candles. Sometimes, parents from each family light the unity candle. You'll want to preserve the moment in a picture, because it's unlikely you'll find this level of cooperation again.

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If you carry a hand-tied bouquet, incorporate a white taper into the bouquet, and carry the taper up the aisle. The groom can hold his taper until you reach the altar, when you each place your taper into the unity candleholder to accentuate the unity theme.

If your house of worship doesn't allow unity ceremonies, conduct the ceremony at the reception right before the toast.

### Candles for Your Wedding Decor

Consider candles an integral part of your floral displays to add warmth to a sterile reception hall environment. Select your candles first, and then select flowers to complement the candles. If you maintain the candle as the focal point, you'll spend a lot less money on bridal flowers.

Place a single sculptured candle by the guest book, for example. Incorporate candles into your table displays at the reception. You can actually use candle displays in place of floral displays. Consider the idea of floating candle displays at the center of each table. They're low enough to allow conversation without talking through flowers.

You're not limited to white candles. Work the candles into your color scheme: silver and gold for holiday weddings. Nor do you have to limit yourself to unadorned candles. Ribbons add a nice accent to simple candles. Select elegant candles for a formal wedding and less formal sculpted, marbled, or otherwise embellished candles for less formal weddings.

### Candles as Wedding Favors

Candles always make nice gifts, and you can capitalize on this by selecting a candle for your wedding favor. A small, beautifully wrapped candle makes a wedding favor that your guests will appreciate and display at home—something to remember your special day.

However you choose to add candles to your wedding, their warm flame will add to the ambiance of an already glowing moment.

M J Plaster is a successful author who provides information on shopping online for [http://www.candles-4-u.com/unity\\_candles.htm](http://www.candles-4-u.com/unity_candles.htm) and [http://www.candles-4-u.com/scented\\_candles.htm](http://www.candles-4-u.com/scented_candles.htm). M J Plaster has been a commercial freelance writer for almost two decades, most recently specializing in home and garden, the low-carb lifestyle, investing, and anything that defines la dolce vita.

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