

# Whom the Goddess has Joined

Pagan  
Religious Marriage Officer  
Manual

Prepared on behalf of the  
South African Pagan Council

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## Demophon and Phyllis

Once upon a time there lived there most beautiful and graceful Thracian Princess, Phyllis. Demophon (the son of Theseus) fell in love with Phyllis but on the day of their wedding, Demophon was informed that his father had passed away and that he had to go to Athens for the funeral. Demophon promised Phyllis to return by a certain date, but months or (according to other versions) years later, Phyllis still had no news of him. Sure that her lover had perished at sea, Phyllis goes to where they would have met upon his return (Ennea Odoi – Nine Roads) and hangs herself, consecrating herself to their reunion in the realm of Dis.

Moved by her love for Demophon, the Gods take pity on Phyllis and turn her into an almond tree. When the errant Demophon returns, he finds the almond tree which bore no leaves, blossoms or fruit. Remorseful he embraces the tree and makes an offering to it, swearing his undying love for the deceased Phyllis. Suddenly the tree blossoms and starts bearing leaves, a manifestation which demonstrated Love that not even death can conquer. It was thus that the almond became the fruit of immortal love.

Given in uneven numbers (3, 5, 7, etc.) it brings good fortune and happiness. In modern-day Italy candied almonds (with a white and pastel pink, even gold for the more bold) candy coating are distributed in boxes (bonboniere) to each of the wedding guests, as a means of securing Unconquerable Love, good luck and fertility for the newlyweds.

## INTRODUCTION

As RMO'S it will be our pleasure and duty to serve the Pagan community by witnessing and marrying those who want to commit to one another, celebrating their love and union before the Gods and their friends, well as being of support and guidance to them in the months before the handfasting.

Some that will come to us will want to be overtly Pagan in their wedding ceremonies. We will do this respecting their partners/families who might not be Pagans, incorporating whatever aspects they wish into the ceremony. This will include same-sex marriages and traditional marriages.

A lot of Pagans like to hold their weddings outdoors. According to the Civil Union Act 2006, a civil union may be performed in a public office [magistrate's court, an office at home affairs], a private residence [with open doors], in a hospital room [in case of long-standing illness or infirmity], as well at a place where marriages are customarily performed by the Marriage Officer.

I believe we can circumvent this requirement and be able to have our civil unions performed outdoors by remembering that wherever the Pagan RMO's altar is, that is the place he/she habitually solemnizes marriages; within the sacred circle surrounded by the honoured four Elements. Here a welcome is given to all present. The Gods and Goddesses of choice are invoked and are called upon to bless the future life of the couple.

Pagan wedding ceremonies are commonly called handfastings and it marks the coming together of two people in formal, legal and loving partnership.

Pagans take vows and oaths very seriously. Pagan RMO's should make it their mission to ensure that the couple articulates their sincere and considered intentions, rather than repeating a standard marriage formula in parrot fashion. The couple should write their own vows which they will swear before their Gods and Goddesses; they can do this with the

assistance of the RMO's who will officiate the ceremony. They can vow to love, honour, respect and protect one another and their children.

Pagans soon-to-be married should be reminded that the responsibility for the committed relationship they are undertaking lies ultimately with them and nobody else.

Couples may handfast for the traditional period of a year and a day. These vows can be renewed every year. This will obviously not be a legal union as its temporary nature would conflict with the requirements of the Civil Union Act of 2006. Those wishing for a more permanent sort of bond can have a ritual and ceremony written especially for them.

Once the ceremony is over and the couple's right hands have been lightly bound together (symbol of their commitment and union), once the oaths defining the nature of their relationship have been voiced, the hands are unbound as a token that they will remain together of their own free will.

## 1. HANDFASTING

Since February 2008 three Pagan organisations have been designated by Home Affairs as religious organisations who may nominate members as Religious Marriage Officers in terms of the Civil Union Act (Act 17 of 1996). These include the South African Pagan Rights Alliance, the South African Pagan Council and the Correllian Nativist Tradition.

But when Pagans say marriage, are we talking about marriage or handfasting? Will our marriages last but a year and a day? And what is a handfasting?

Handfasting is an old Pagan custom. In the days of yore, the couples who wished to enter into a marriage contract would gather before the sacred Beltane fire and the Priest or Druid would perform a handfasting, in which the hands of the couple would be clasped together and loosely bound with a ribbon or a green cord. The couple would then exchange vows and would be considered married according to the Law. Vows were extremely important to the Celts and were not easily broken.

In the betrothal ceremony, a couple promised to get married in the future, whilst in the marriage they consented to getting married in the present and were subsequently legally married.

Following the handfasting, the couple exchanged a few symbolic gifts: the man would give the woman wheat, barley or oats for the larder, as a promise to provide for the household, and the woman would give the man a woven or knitted cloth as a promised to provide in her way towards the upkeep of their home. Next the husband would give her a dagger for the defence of the home and the woman would give the husband a shield with a sacred symbol etched on it for the protection of the same. When the ceremony was over, the couple would jump over a broom (or the groom could carry his bride over it) which had been placed in their path. This symbolized the solemnization of their union.

Amongst the ancient Celts, there was more than one form of recognized marriage. Handfasting was a form of contract with several purposes. One of them was a sort of ante-nuptial form of agreement in the case of property or in its absence and the expectations of those entering into contract.

For the ancient Celts, marriage was a very different thing than what we conceive of as "marriage" today. For them, marriage or handfasting as some know it was a form of contract that had several purposes. These included the protection of property rights, the care of progeny (children), and the rights of the individuals involved in the relationships themselves. Amongst the Celts the main purpose of marriage was the protection and the care of progeny, irrespective of legitimacy or not. The rights of the individuals who entered into the marriage contracts were assured and protected by the Law.

## Brehon Law and Handfasting

In Brehon Law a contract was taken for a year. The “and a day” bit was given to discontinue, modify or reinstate the contract and to enter into a more formal version of the same. According to Brehon Law, trial marriages were contracted for a period of a year and a day after which, if desired, a more formal marriage contract was entered into.

Handfasting was a sort of “betrothal” or engagement, a trial marriage rather than a true marriage. In parts of the Celtic world, if the couple consummated their union before the end of the betrothal period, they were automatically legally and permanently married.

Celtic marriages fell into different categories. Ownership of property was considered and dealt with an ante-nuptial agreement. Where no property was involved no agreements were needed and the marriage was therefore less formal. In some marriages men and women enjoyed joint authority, in some others a more informal union where the man visited the woman in her family’s home with their consent, or without if she was secretly visited, in the case where a woman eloped with a man without her family’s consent, a union where a woman was taken by force and so forth.

Polygamy, perhaps even polyamory (plural marriages) were widespread. The birth of a child made the union binding and this shows that marriage was instituted rather for the protection and care of the child and not because of the status of either of the parties involved. The bride was purchased from her father. Part of this price was given to the bride as her dowry, which remained hers in case of divorce, unless she was at fault; in this case it was forfeited to the cuckolded husband.

Celtic women had the right to choose their spouse and could not be forced into marriage by their kin. The rearing of children was a task given to both mother and father, the father remaining responsible for the child in the case of the untimely death of the mother.

## Divorce

Getting divorced bore no stigma in Brehon society. Divorce, or handparting, was the simple acknowledgment that the contract agreement was not respected by one of the parties and the union was dissolved. The division of the couple’s property depended on the original marriage contract. Divorce could be filed in the case of impotency, sterility, theft, unfaithfulness, abortion, failure to breast-feed children, entering the priesthood, etc.

Temporary separation was tolerated in the case the wife was barren and the man left to impregnate another woman, or in the case a woman desired to be impregnated by another man in the case her husband failed to fecund her. The child would be considered the husband’s child.

## Roman Marriage

Roman girls were married off between the ages of fourteen and sixteen whilst their husband would be in their late 20’s or even over 30 years old. The Paterfamilias chose the groom for his daughter and negotiated the dowry, which became property of the husband upon the wedding. A Roman Marriage transferred the bride from the tutelary authority or care of the Paterfamilias (the head of the family) to that of the husband and was held in the home of the bride’s father. Four witnesses were required to make the marriage legal.

The couple would stand in front of the priest, holding hands in sign of mutual consent to the marriage, and the bride would utter the following vow:

"Quando tu Gaius, ego Gaia"

(where and when you are, Gaius, then and there I am, Gaia).

Next the couple would stand on stools before the altar and make an offering of wedding cake to Vitruvius. The bride and groom would eat the said piece of wedding cake and their union would be applauded by those present before a sumptuous Roman feast would be served in their honour.

After dinner, the bride would bear a lit torch in front of the marriage corteo (procession) from her father's house to the groom's home. Here her mother would hold her, whilst the husband would forcibly tear her from her mother's arms. The marriage guests would throw nuts into the air and cheer, whilst the groom carried his bride over the threshold into her new home, still bearing the burning torch. Once inside the bride would extinguish the torch and cast it to the guest. Belief held that the one who caught it would be the next one to get married.

## Viking Marriage

Family ties were of utmost importance to the Vikings. It was unlikely that daughters would be married against their wishes; however marriage was "men's business", a process of negotiation between men of two families. The family provided security guidance and council but its authority never overpowered the needs and wishes of the individual.

Women had good status, could own land and property and had complete authority over household matters. A legal wife was distinguished from a concubine by the difference in price paid (bride-price) as well as the dowry. She would receive this from her father and a substantial gift from her husband on their wedding day. If the marriage ended in divorce, the dowry would be repaid.

To solemnize the wedding "Bridal ale" would be consumed by the couple in front of the wedding guests who functioned as witnesses and the man had to be led by the witnesses to the bride's bed. It was that simple! The wife kept her name and patronymic and never severed links with her kin.

Divorce was easy and carried no stigma. A declaration of the grounds of complaint and the intention to divorce before witnesses was all that was required.

## "IN CONCLUSIONE"

Bearing the above in mind, I believe that Pagan marriages will be a solemn affair and might just last "for ever and a day".

If you are looking for a formalized, "expiry-date" affair or a "consume by date" relationship, I am afraid that Pagan Marriage will not be your cup of tea.

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## 2. CUSTOMS AND SUPERSTITIONS

There are many wedding traditions and superstitions dating back to Anglo-Saxon and Roman times. We will attempt to explain some of them:

### **“Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue and a Silver Sixpence in her Shoe”**

This is a Victorian rhyme. It is customary for a happily married woman to give the bride her old garter as a form of sympathetic magic in the hope that her happiness will also be shared by the newlyweds. The “old” item would confer the happiness of the married woman to the newlyweds in an act of sympathetic magic. It would also ensure that the couple’s friends would remain with them for many years to come.

Something new would be given by a close friend as an investment for the future happiness, health and success of the marriage.

The something borrowed gave the bride’s family the opportunity to give the couple a keepsake known to have brought good luck to them, to the couple, with the proviso that it was returned.

Something blue makes reference to fidelity and constancy as well as the bride’s intended commitment to her future husband. A blue ribbon would be either tied to the bride’s hair or to her marriage bouquet. Or the garter could be blue. A sixpence was placed in the bride’s left shoe to ensure wealth.

The bride should leave her home from the front door and step out with her right foot first. A sunny day, the seeing of a rainbow or a black cat the morning of your wedding was considered a good omen. Seeing a pig cross the road or meeting a funeral procession the morning of your wedding day was believed to bring really bad luck.

### Timing

**“Monday for health, Tuesday for wealth, Wednesday best of all, Thursday for losses, Friday for crosses, Saturday for no luck at all”.**

(notice that no mention is made of Sunday)

Despite the rhyme, most marriages take place on Saturday’s because folk work during the week.

**“Marry in the month of May, and you will live to rue the day”.**

May was the time for the Beltane festivals in the northern hemisphere. It was a time for fertility. Brides in Scotland walk three times around the church - Deosil (sunwise) for good luck.

**Married when the year is new, he'll be loving, kind & true,  
When February birds do mate, You wed nor dread your fate.  
If you wed when March winds blow, joy and sorrow both you'll know.  
Marry in April when you can, Joy for Maiden & for Man.  
Marry in the month of May, and you'll surely rue the day.  
Marry when June roses grow, over land and sea you'll go.  
Those who in July do wed, must labour for their daily bred.  
Whoever wed in August be, many a change is sure to see  
Marry in September's shrine, your living will be rich and fine.**

**If in October you do marry, love will come but riches tarry.  
If you wed in bleak November, only joys will come, remember.  
When December snows fall fast, marry and true love will last.**

The tradition of the best man and bridesmaids dates back to Roman times when 10 witnesses were required to make a wedding legal. It was also believed that ill-wishing spirits would attend the wedding with the purpose of causing mischief and sowing discord, so the bridesmaids and best men and groom's entourage would all dress up as the couple to confuse the spirits so they wouldn't know who it was that was getting married.

Back in the days when girls were taken from their families so that a young man could marry them the best man normally used to ensure that the bride would remain safe until they reached the place of marriage. It was not unusual for her family to steal her back and his job was to ensure that this did not happen.

## Getting dressed

The bride should never sew her own wedding dress as it brings bad luck. If she did take part in its making, someone else had to give the last stitch. She was also never to try on the entire outfit before her wedding day nor look at herself in the mirror in full wedding garb. A glove or the veil had to be left off to ensure that no bad luck befell the couple after their wedding day.

Brides would usually dress in their best dress in ancient times and it is only since the 19th century that folk started using the traditional wedding dress that we know today. Every colour but green was acceptable. Green was believed to be unlucky, enticing envy and the evil eye. It also implied that the bride had been 'a-maying' as the green could hide the grass stains. White was chosen as it symbolized purity and virginity and therefore had the power to ward off evil spirits.

**Married in White, you have chosen right  
Married in Grey, you will go far away,  
Married in Black, you will wish yourself back,  
Married in Red, you will wish yourself dead,  
Married in Green, ashamed to be seen,  
Married in Blue, you will always be true,  
Married in Pearl, you will live in a whirl,  
Married in Yellow, ashamed of your fellow,  
Married in Brown, you will live in the town,  
Married in Pink, your spirit will sink.**

The bride is also not to practice signing her new name, until it is legally hers. The bridal bouquet was originally made from herbs and spices in order to ward off evil spirits, bad luck and illness. The bride carries a lucky horse shoe in her hand bag. The groom wears a flower on his lapel button hole recalling the custom since medieval times for knights to wear their ladies' colours.

It was only during Victorian times that flowers took on the following meaning in a bridal bouquet:

**Orange blossoms – chastity and purity  
Red Chrysanthemums – I love you  
Azaleas – first love  
Lavender – devotion  
Violet – faithfulness  
Lilly – sexual purity  
Wheat – fertility  
Myrtle – love**

Rose – happiness  
Pink Rose – perfection  
Sunflower – adoration  
Pine – hope

Combinations with this make a statement and bring their beneficial influence on the day.

After the marriage, it is custom for the bride to throw her bouquet over her shoulder towards the grouped unmarried female guests. The one who catches it is believed to be the next to marry. The groom also throws the bride's garter at the function towards all the bachelors.

## The Veil

The veil dates back to Roman times and signifies that the bride is chaste and pure and that she intends to remain married.

## The Wedding Bands

The wedding rings are made of precious metals and symbolize the value of the union. The unending golden circlet symbolizes the Sun, the Earth and love, as well as the eternal commitment from the bride to the groom and vice versa as well as symbolizing the enduring nature of marriage.

The bride always stands on the left so that the groom would have easy access to his sword in case her family or other men wanted to carry her away. In the case of ambush the groom would hold the bride with his left hand and fight with his sword in his right hand.

The couple usually seals their marriage contract with a kiss.

## The Cake

The wedding cake was originally wheat cakes that were broken over the bride's head to bestow on her good luck and fertility. The cutting of the first cake by the newlyweds was equivalent to their first task together as well as their union and their life together. Kissing over a three tier wedding cake, without causing it to topple, brings good luck to the couple.

The bride and groom feed each other the first slice. This gesture symbolizes the commitment of both to provide for each other. The bride cuts the rest of the cake and dishes it out to the guests as a demonstration that she is capable of dividing food fairly and not wasting.

The bride and groom give a gift of 5 sugar coated almonds [confetti] to each of the guests. This gesture ensures health, wealth and prosperity, fertility, continuity and happiness.

Handfuls of rice, grains, and nuts are thrown at the couple as their exit to ensure fertility and good luck. These grains symbolize the life-giving seeds that will unite and ensure the continuity of the clan.

## The Honeymoon

The origin of this word is the Norse word *hjunottsmanathr* and it dates back to when the groom kidnapped his bride and took her into hiding for a while. They would spend the nights secluded, drinking mead made from fermented honey, alone under the moonlight. The groom and bride would obviously concur as to the location of their "honeymoon", but it was ultimately the groom's responsibility to arrange everything.

## Old Shoes

The tradition of tying old shoes to the rear bumper of the newlyweds' car has its origin in the Victorian custom of casting shoes at the newlyweds' carriage. A strike would be considered lucky for both the one who cast the shoe and for the couple.

In Anglo-Saxon times a male would demonstrate his authority over his bride by striking her with a shoe. This would be followed by the bride casting the shoe at the bridesmaids to establish who would get married next.

## Carried over the Threshold

Custom had it that a wife should always enter her home through the front door and that tripping or falling whilst doing it was very unlucky. For this reason the bride is first carried over the threshold.

## Jumping over the Broomstick

Leaping over the broomstick holding hands after the handfasting signified hopping from their old separate lives, into their new, shared one. Feasting and celebrations would follow this.

# 3. ROMAN MARRIAGE

The word Matrimony (matrimonium in Latin) has the word "mater" (mother) as its root. Roman marriage was designed to bind families together and creating of offspring to seal these ties, rather than binding two people who were in love. The socio-politic and economic considerations as well as the familial ties were far more important than love, though many a Roman did marry for love or grow to love his wife/her husband with the passing of time. Marriage was an institution designed to strengthen society by creating bonds between families of good standing. Marriage granted men and women a larger family network and the security that went hand in hand with it. The husband's status was also automatically conferred on the wife and children.

Everybody had the right to marry (provided they were of age) but there was no connubium between Patricians and Plebeians until the law Lex Canuleia was passed in 445B.C.

There were different types of union amongst the Roman Patricians: Usus required that the couple live together for at least a year before the wife came under her husband's manum (hand). If she managed to stay away from his home for three consecutive nights during that period, and not under her father's roof, she acquired a certain amount of freedom. Coemptio was when the groom purchased the bride before five witnesses and the bride brought her dowry into the marriage agreement; she and her entire possessions belonged to her husband. In the more solemn more sacred Confarreatio the bride became part of her husband's family through a solemn religious ceremony attended by citizens of good standing and sometimes even by the pontifex maximus. The later Sinu Manu allowed women to remain members of their own family as well as answering to the Paterfamilias despite living in their husbands' home. It became popular towards the beginning of the early Empire. Marriages between slaves were eventually allowed and termed contubernium and the marriage between a free man and a slave was called concubinatus.

It was very important that the consent to marry (for both parties) was proved. The couple would appear in public holding hands as a sign of consenting to the arranged marriage. A fair

period of engagement was considered necessary and decent, but was not legally required. The girl would wear a ring on the third finger of her left hand as the Romans believed that a nerve ran from this finger directly to the heart.

The night before her wedding day, the girl would give her bulla (locket) back to her parents and hand out all her old toys to her young family members. She would also try on her wedding dress, which had to be white and reach her feet as a symbol of her modesty and purity.

Roman girls were married off between the ages of fourteen and sixteen whilst their husband would be in their late 20's or even over 30 years old. The Paterfamilias chose the groom for his daughter and negotiated the dowry which became property of the husband upon the wedding.

A Roman Marriage transferred the bride from the tutelary authority or care of the Paterfamilias (the head of the family) to that of the husband and was held in the home of the bride's father. Four witnesses were required to make the marriage legal.

The couple would stand in front of the priest, holding hands in sign of mutual consent to the marriage, and the bride would utter the following vow:

**“Quando tu Gaius, ego Gaia”  
(where and when you are, Gaius, then and there I am, Gaia).**

This phrase expressed the wife's willingness to follow her husband and to be of support to him.

Next the couple would stand or sit on stools before the altar and make an offering of wedding cake to Vitruvius or Jupiter. The bride and groom would eat the said piece of wedding cake and their union would be applauded by those present before a sumptuous Roman feast would be served in their honour.

After dinner, the bride would bear a lit torch in front of the marriage corteo (procession) from her father's house to the groom's home. Here her mother would hold her, whilst the husband would tear her from her mother's arms in a show of feigned force. The marriage guests would throw nuts into the air (confetti) and cheer, whilst the groom carried his bride over the threshold into her new home, still bearing the burning torch. Once inside the bride would extinguish the torch and cast it to the guest. Belief held that the one who caught it would be the next one to get married.

## Roman Wedding Ceremony

Great care was taken to choose a lucky date for the wedding; the month of June (dedicated to the Goddess Juno) was a particularly lucky month for marriages. It was customary to ask a male friend or the Flamen Dialis to perform a reading of the omens. This was done by examining the entrails of a sacrificed animal, whose cured skin was subsequently placed on the bridal couch in the atrium. Omens could also be interpreted by the breaking of an egg in a bowl or by augury (observing the flight of birds in the sky). The most auspicious date would be chosen.

Those who arranged the wedding had to prepare the house of the bride and her parents and that of the groom and his family. Each of the ceremony rooms had to contain family effigies; as far back as they could go. On the morning of her wedding the bride would be dressed by her mother.

The bride would dress in a long white tunic (tunica recta), wear bright yellow slippers (the colour of the Sun and gold) and a flaming red veil, in reflection of that of the Flaminia Dialis whose marriage could not be dissolved, and as a public declaration that she desired to remain forever married. A wreath of flowers was worn over the veil which the bride had to

gather and weave herself on the morning of her wedding day. Her hair was elaborately piled up into six locks at the nape of her neck, which symbolized a good and diligent wife. The most important part of her wedding garb was the way the tunic belt was tied around her waist in the "knot of Hercules" (who was the guardian of married life). The husband would untie this knot when they retired to their chambers after the wedding celebrations.

In the bride's wedding chamber there would be an altar with on it a plate containing two cakes of whole wheat/spelt flour (*farreum*), incense and candles/lamps. In the groom's wedding chamber, there would be a *Lararium*, a spirit bowl (a fireproof bowl alcohol will be ignited in it) and a bowl of water, a basket or bowl with flowers and a couch on which an animal skin is laid over.

The priest/priestess (*Auspex*) would light the candles, the incense and begin to purify and make sacred the space. She would command those present to be silent so that the negative and unlucky influences could be banished and the auspices favour the union she is about to celebrate. *Providence* and *Fortune* were called upon by the marriage officer to preside over the ritual and ceremony. The sacred wedding bond was sanctified by the power of the Immortals and had its symbolism in the cake of wheat. *Jupiter Feretrius* (god of contracts) and *Juno Pronuba* (goddess of marriage) would grace them by uniting the two individuals into a couple, so that no obstacles, adversities, enemies or time, not even death itself could pull them asunder. An invocation was also made for Love, Harmony and Happiness to reign in their hearts.

The bride was led towards the altar by her mother or the matron of honour (*Pronuba*). The bride was then asked if she was of marrying age, if she was contracted to another man or if she was not a blood relative of the groom. The bride would answer. She further had to declare that she had come thither to marry the groom of her own free will and that her family agreed with the wedding.

Next, the groom was led to the altar by the *Pronuba* and declared to be of age, that he was not legally married to another woman and that his chosen wife was not a relative of his. He also swore that he had come thither his own free will and with the blessing of his family. The groom's father had to declare that he was in agreement with the marriage. This was followed by the banishment of *Nemesis* and *Mania*. Offerings to the God and Goddess of the place followed.

The priest/priestess beseeched the household Goddess and God to look over those who there lived and to grant them longevity, raising a lit candle and invoking the element of Fire to make them forever prosperous and grant them eternal happiness and good health. Opening his/her hands over the couple *Janus* was invoked before wrapping their hands with a leather cord. *Jupiter Feretrius*, *Juno Pronuba* and the holy *Fides* (the god of loyalty) were asked to unite the couple and to allow them to stay together for the remainder of their lives.

The couple is explained that the cords were the ties of the bond of Love and Trust, the first as soft as silk, and the second as strong as iron. This should be the nature of their relationship. From that moment onwards, they were wed. At that point the *Flamen Dialis* broke a cake in two, handing half into the couple's free hands. The bride and groom feed one another, standing on a stool in front of the altar. The priest mentioned that the eating of the cake brought life, renewal and growth. The wheaten cake was called "*Fer*" and sanctified the marriage as *conferratio*, the most binding and sacred of marriages by Roman patricians. In some traditions a cake was offered to *Jupiter* by casting it into the fire on the brazier.

The cord was then untied and handed to the groom to keep. The couple rose. In modern ceremonies rings may be blessed to seal the marriage ceremony in heart, hand and spirit with the uttering of these words,

"Ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia" and he replies, "Ubi tu Gaia, ego Gaius".

The spirit of the ancestors, the family and guests are asked to act as witnesses.

Lastly a blessing would be uttered:

**“May Jupiter Feretrius and Juno Pronuba accompany you and lead you by the hand. May the divine Dioscuri, guardians of the journey, ever be watchful over you and may all the superior Gods bless you and give you benefit, whilst the inferior gods keep their darkness away from you. May you remember this day with joy and fondness and remember it for as long as you live.”**

After this rite was completed the procession was led to the groom’s residence, first the groom accompanied by the Flamen Dialis and the priest, followed by the elders and then the bride and her procession. They would assist the groom to get ready for the ritual which was to follow.

The bride bore a lit torch (in some traditions a distaff and spindle signifying her ability to provide clothing and warmth for the household). At the groom’s home the bride would cling to her mother or Pronuba. The groom tore her away with feigned force and welcomed her to her new home. He would pick up a bowl of water and the fire bowl and utter:

**“I offer you this water, for we all are born of it. May you drink it, may you use it to cleanse yourself, take it into our home and purify it, and may you also never thirst for anything, attention, understanding, material things and affection. Drink with me!”**

He would hand her the glass and together they shared the goblet of water.

The bride offered the groom the lit torch with which he lights the spirit bowl:

**“I offer you this sacred Flame for Fire represent our immortal souls and the fire of your loins. May it keep the hearth warm and divinity alive in us and in our home.”**

The torch was then snuffed and tossed to the wedding guests who scrambled for it. Tradition held that the one to catch it would be the next one to get married.

The newly-weds announced to all present that they accepted the gifts of water and fire and that they hoped the gods would maintain the balance of the two within their home and lives. The bride offered the groom a coin and in return received the keys of the house. From this moment she was the Matrona of the house.

To close the couple offered flowers, lit a lamp at the Lararium and pledged to love one another with all their souls. A cake was offered into the fire to seal the pledge. The Lare and Di Penates were adored, as well as Mother Vesta, who ensured their union was auspicious and fruitful.

With the wedding ceremony over, the celebrations and reception start and the couple take their place on the couch covered with sheepskin in the atrium. Before leaving the couple’s residence, after the wedding banquet, the guests were blessed with the ashes of the snuffed.

## Married Life

The bride brought into the marriage everything which her family could supply: jewels, furniture, slaves, clothing and other valuables. These automatically became the property of her husband. A Roman wife would be the hostess at their residence and would be mistress over the household and was called upon to make important family decisions. She was required to raise the children, manage the home and domestic finances, keep the slaves and servants in check, she had to be good at spinning and display modesty in every chore and task she performed.

## Divorce

The ancient Romans were a socially conscious folk. They utilized marriage, divorce, re-marriage and even adoption in order to assist their family to grow in importance and status. Divorce was unknown during the first 500 years in Rome and Polygamy was also outlawed. Eventually divorce was legalized. It is interesting to note that no stigma was attached to those who got divorced. It was seen as the mere rescinding of a social contract that had no more reason to exist.

Wives who had their own property, could sell it, give it away or bequeath it if they so desired. Women became more liberated and less dependent on their husbands. If divorce procedures were instigated by the husband, the wife's dowry (dos), and if the wife were guilty of adultery the husband would be allowed to keep part of the dowry as well as in the case of there being children from their union. Sometimes the father of the wife would be the one to instigate the divorce and the return of the dowry. In these cases, and if there be children born of the marriage, the husband sometimes had the right to keep part of the dowry.

Couples could file for divorce on the grounds of: impotence, infertility, adultery, sexual promiscuity, desire to marry a better party, e.g. Marc Anthony divorced Emperor Octavian's sister, Octavia, in order to marry Cleopatra. Children and the in-laws did not lose their importance after the divorce agreement had been concluded. Divorces were viewed strictly as a legal matter, handled in court before the Prolocutor of the Assemblies of the Tribes. Normally each of the parties would be returned what he or she had brought to the marriage, or its equal value in property. The courts would settle property disputes and legally end the marriage. Divorces were issued.

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## 4. NORDIC MARRIAGE RITUAL

The bride should be dressed in white, wearing a long wide headdress or veil, fastened to the top of her head and hanging down her back. At her breast she wears a jewel or rune ornament in remembrance of Lady Freya's powerful and magical Brisingamen necklace. The keys to the new home, or an ornate set of keys on a coloured sash, are on the altar to be presented to the bride as symbol of her attaining to the household. A groomsman carries a sword for the groom, and either wears or carries it.

When all is in readiness the Godi asks all to be silent for a moment, and then says:

**We are gathered here at this time  
To mark and to witness the joining in marriage  
Of two who would be husband and wife.**

**At this time and at this place we call also  
Upon Allfather Odin, Freya of love and desire,  
And Goodfriend Thor  
To witness the words that here shall be spoken.**

**In the ancient manner do we also invoke  
The Goddess Var, who,  
As told in our ancient legends,  
Hears the vows  
Of men and of women.**

After a pause of five heartbeats, the Godia says:

**Carry in the Hammer  
To consecrate the bride, and the groom.  
Lay this lap of each,  
To so wed these two together  
With the hand of Var.**

A Hammer of Thor is brought forth and the Godi says to the groom:

**Kneel now, to receive the ancient blessing.**

To the groom as the Hammer is touched to him:

**Before the High Gods, and before our people,  
Art thou blessed anew once again.**

The Hammer of Thor is handed to the Godia, who says to the bride:

**Kneel now to receive the ancient blessing.**

To the bride as the Hammer is touched to her:

**Before the High Gods, and before our people,  
Art thou blessed anew once again.**

When both are blessed the Godi bids them to rise. The Godi then says to the Groom:

**(grooms name), if you truly desire  
To marry this woman,**

I ask thee to give, wholeheartedly,  
The blade which symbolizes thy strength.  
Swear thy weapon to her,  
Always to be at her service.

The groom takes the sword and offers it to the bride, saying:

My most beloved,  
Accept the oath of love which I offer you.  
I vow this sword, as I vow my soul,  
Ever to be at thy service.  
Like this blade my heart will be strong,  
Like this steel my love will endure.  
Accept it, my chosen one,  
For all which is mine  
Will now be thine

The bride takes the sword silently in her hands and touches it to her forehead for the time of three heart beats. She returns it to him, saying:

My most beloved,  
I accept this oath, sworn on thy blade.  
Thou knowest what is in my heart  
As I know what is in thine.

The Godia then says to the bride:

(brides name) if thou truly desire  
To marry this man,  
I ask thee to give, whole heartedly,  
The jewel of beauty which thou wearest,  
In symbol of our lady's great magick and power.  
Swear thy jewel to him,  
Always to be at his service.

The bride then takes the jewel and holds it out to the groom, saying:

My most beloved,  
Accept the oath of love which I offer thee.  
I vow this jewel, as I vow my soul,  
Ever to be at thy service.  
Like its beauty will my heart be strong,  
Like its value my love will endure.  
Accept it, my chosen one,  
For all which is mine  
Will now be thine.

The groom takes the jewel silently in his hands and touches it to his forehead for the time of three heartbeats. He then returns it to her saying:

My most beloved,  
I accept this oath, sworn on they jewel.  
Thou knowest what is in my heart  
As I know what is in thine.

The Godi says:

Thou who shalt be husband and wife  
Listen to what we say, here and now.  
Whatever each of thee  
My accomplish in future years,  
Wherever thou may wander,  
Know full well that thou shalt do all  
For our people, for they family and thy kin,  
And to be worthy each of the other.

The Godia holds forth the keys to the bride, saying:

If thou would be mistress of the household  
And all therein, honoured for thy wisdom  
In the councils of our people,  
And equal partner to thy husband,  
I bid thee to take these keys,  
Symbol of thy new life.

The keys are handed to the bride and the bridesmaid sees that they are fastened at her waist as the Godia says:

At this time and henceforth,  
As the keys are given to thee,  
Dost thou take over a new household.  
Be wise in all though doest.

The Godi then says to the groom:

With this rite thou gainest a treasure of greatest value,  
Care for her, and protect her always.  
For there is none who is her equal.

Then the Godia says to both:

Above thee are the stars,  
Below thee are the stones.  
Remember always,  
Like a star should thy love be constant,  
Like the earth should thy love be firm.  
Possess one another, yet be understanding.  
Have patience, for storms may come and go.  
Be free always in giving of affection and of warmth,  
For our gods and our people  
Will always be with thee.

After a pause of 5 heartbeats the Godi asks:

Dost thou desire, (brides name)  
To have this man as thou husband,  
Forsaking all others?

(Bride answers)

Dost thou desire, (grooms name)  
To have this woman as thou wife, forsaking all others?

(Groom answers)

Then the Godia says:

**All have heard and witnessed that which has been said.  
Are there any who say nay?**

After a pause of 5 heartbeats the Godi says:

**Then in symbol of thy joining one to the other,  
Place each the ring upon the others finger,  
And seal the troth with a kiss.**

The couple will do so and the Godi/Godia continues:

**Before those gathered here,  
And before the high gods,  
Thou art man and wife,  
And henceforth be as one.**

Pause at this time for congratulations and felicitations.

The Godia pours a horn of ale for the two to share and gives each to drink, saying:

**In the name of our people and our gods,  
May thy knowest the best of fortune,  
And thy life henceforth be one  
Of joy and prosperity for thee,  
And pride and strength for our people.**

Then the horn is given to each of the bridesmaids and groomsmen, saying:

**I ask thee to wish well to those now wedded,  
And to drink in their honor.**

When the last guest has so pledged, the Godi says:

**This rite is ended.  
May our gods be with us always!**

## 5. WICCAN HANDFASTING

A handfasting is a betrothal or wedding ritual used by many Pagan religions. The following document is a generic template for the traditional Wiccan handfastings. In light of this, the reader should know that this document is not a strict set of rules, but rather a flexible guide, giving the general structure of a Wiccan handfasting, to be adjusted for the preferences of those wishing to use this information.

### The ceremony

The ceremony should be performed in a circle, with both a High Priest and High Priestess marrying the couple. It is traditionally performed at the full or new moon. The couple can choose the vows or traditional vows may be used. The ceremony below uses the traditional vows and it is assumed that the time of the handfasting is during the full or new moon.

The handfasting may also be a binding for set amounts of time, traditionally the handfasting is a binding that lasts "for as long as love shall last", although the couple may choose to make it binding for "a year and a day" and renew it after such a time if they so choose, or even forever, the choice is up to the couple.

Rings or small gifts are traditionally exchanged between the couple, these may be things dear to the couple or have a significant meaning, and the meaning of this gift is a confirmation of their marriage, like a traditional wedding ring.

The circle is often bedecked with flowers, especially the favourites of the couple, and guests, having to sit within the circle, may sit on the ground or on chairs depending on the couple's wishes. Dress is also up to the couple, although robes are traditionally worn, as in most other Wiccan ceremonies.

The ceremony begins as all the guests enter the circle, and finally the couple.

Each guest is asked the traditional question, "**Who wishes to enter?**" to which they reply with their given or magickal name, then they are asked, "**How do you enter?**" to which they reply "**In perfect love and perfect trust.**" The challenger must then say, "**Know that it is better to rush upon the blade than to enter the circle with fear or doubt in your heart.**"

Before the bride and groom enter, however, they should first be introduced to the guests as the couple see fit (e.g. "We are here today to celebrate the joining of two people etc.), and should be told that by entering their circle they are they declaring their intent to be handfasted to all present, and to the Gods, and that by entering this state of matrimony they shall be bound to each other for "as long as love shall last" or the amount of time decided by the couple.

Then ask whether they still seek to enter the ceremony, to which they reply, "**yes, we seek to enter**" at which point the traditional question of who they are and how they enter is asked, to which they reply with the traditional answers and enter the circle.

The circle is then closed in the normal manner (calling of the quarters and of the God and Goddess etc, and asking their blessing for the couple, the words used to close the circle should be chosen by the couple, keeping in mind that this is a wedding, and as such should be relevant to the union of two people).

The couple should then stand in the centre of the circle, next to the altar, and the high priest and high priestess begin the vows.

The vows are as the couple choose or as follows:

(I have used two of the most traditional sets of vows as examples; the first set of vows uses six cords, whilst the second uses only one cord, and is quite different from the first method of handfasting.)

## First set of vows

Both the high priest and priestess bless the union of the couple with the gifts of the elements, and whichever qualities they represent to the couple, fire is usually passion etc., Earth represents strength, consistency etc., water represents wisdom etc. and air represents communication and intelligence. They then ask for the blessings of the God and Goddess for the couple.

This set of vows, using six cords, is the traditional Wiccan marriage, and is much freer flowing than other versions.

In order to make the ceremony easier to understand, I will write it out in script form, note that the priest must speak to the groom and the priestess to the bride, and then in unison. I will mark the places where both the priest and priestess speak in unison with PP, the priest with P, the priestess with PS, the bride with B, the groom with G and finally, both the bride and groom in unison will be BG.

P – groom's name, Will you cause her pain?  
G – I may.  
P – Is that your intent?  
G – No.

PS – bride's name, Will you cause him pain?  
B – I may.  
PS – Is that your intent?  
B – No.

PP – Will you share each other's pain and seek to ease it?  
BG – Yes.

PP – And so the binding is made, join hands.

The bride and groom join hands, the priest and priestess drape the first cord across them.

P – Will you share in her laughter?  
G – Yes.

PS – Will you share in his laughter?  
B – Yes.

PP – Will both of you look for the brightness in life and the positive in each other?  
BG – Yes.

PP – And so the binding is made

The second cord is draped across the hands of the couple.

P – Will you burden her?  
G – I may.  
P – Is that your intent?  
G – No.

PS – Will you burden him?

B – I may.  
PS – Is that your intent?  
B – No.

PP - Will you share the burdens of each so that your spirits may grow in this union?  
BG – Yes.

PP – And so the binding is made.

The third cord is draped across the hands of the couple.

P – Will you share her dreams?  
G – Yes.

PS – Will you share his dreams?  
B – Yes.

PP – Will you dream together to create new realities and hopes?  
BG – Yes.

PP – And so the binding is made.

The fourth cord is draped across the couple's hands.

P – Will you cause her anger?  
G – I may.  
P – Is that your intent?  
G – No.

PS – Will you cause him anger?  
B – I may.  
PS – Is that your intent?  
B – No.

PP – Will you take the heat of anger and use it to temper the strength of this union?  
BG – We will.

PP – And so the binding is made.

The fifth cord is draped across the couple's hands.

P – Will you honour her?  
G – Yes.

PS – Will you honour him?  
B – Yes.

PP – Will you never seek to give cause to break that honour?  
BG – We shall never do so.

PP – And so the binding is made.

The sixth cord is draped across the couple's hands.

The priest and priestess tie the cords together whilst saying:

**PP - The knots of this binding are not formed by these chords, but instead by your vows. Either of you may drop the chords, for as always, you hold in your own hands the making or breaking of this union.**

**BG – (turning to face each other)  
Heart to thee,  
Soul to thee,  
Body to thee,  
Forever and always,  
So mote it be.**

The guests then all reply: “So mote it be.”

The couple unbind their arms and place the cords on the altar and exchange the rings or gifts they have brought for each other.

The guests then congratulate and give gifts to the couple. Cake and ale is had in the great rite and the circle is opened and farewell is bid unto the God and Goddess etc...

## Second set of vows:

In this set of vows, a single cord and a chalice filled with ale or fruit juice is used as part of the ceremony. As in the first method of binding, the priest and priestess bless the couple. This handfasting ceremony is more formal than the traditional version with six cords, and it is required that both the bride and groom's parents/guardians are present. This particular ceremony takes many of its elements from conventional Catholic weddings.

In the following “script” P will represent the priest, PS the priestess, B, the bride, G the Groom, FB will represent the father of the bride, FG, the father of the groom, BG, the bride and groom speaking in unison and PP will represent the priest and priestess speaking as one...

**P – Is it true that you come of your own free will and accord?**

**G – Yes, it's true.**

**P – With whom do you come and whose blessings accompany you?**

**FG – He comes with me, his father, and is accompanied by all of his family's blessings.**

**PS – Is it true that you come of your own free will and accord?**

**B – Yes, it's true.**

**PS – With whom do you come and whose blessings accompany you?**

**FB – She comes with me, her father, and is accompanied by all of her family's blessings.**

**PP - \_Name\_ and \_Name\_, please join hands with your betrothed and listen to what we are about to say.**

**Above you are the stars, below you are the stones, as time doth pass, remember...**

**Like a stone should your love be firm, like a star should your love be constant. Let the powers of the mind and of the intellect guide you in your Union, let the strength of your wills bind you together, let the power of love and desire make you happy, and the strength of your dedication make you inseparable.**

Be close, but not too close. Possess one another, yet be understanding. Have patience with one another, for storms will come, but they will pass quickly.

Be free in giving affection and warmth. Have no fear and let not the ways of the unenlightened give you unease, for the Gods are with you always.

PS – (speaking to bride) Name, I have not the right to bind thee to (groom's name), only you have this right. If it be your wish, say so at this time and place your ring (or gift) in his hand.

B – It is my wish. (places the ring or gift in the groom's hand)

P – (speaking to groom) Name, If it be your wish for (name of bride) to be bound to you, place the ring (or gift, received from the bride) on her finger (or around her neck on a cord, or in her hand, depending on the object).

P – (speaking to groom) Name, I have not the right to bind thee to (bride's name), only you have this right. If it be your wish, say at this time and place your ring (or gift) in her hand.

G – It is my wish. (places the ring or gift in the bride's hand)

PS – (speaking to bride) Name, If it be your wish for (name of groom) to be bound to you, place the ring (or gift, received from the groom) on her finger (or as the bride did).

G – I, Name (in full), in the name of the spirit of the God and Goddess, by the life that course within my blood and the love that resides with in my heart, take thee, (name of bride in full) to my hand, my heart and my spirit, to be my chosen one. To desire thee and be desired by thee, to possess thee, and be possessed by thee.

I promise to love thee wholly and completely, without restraint, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in poverty, in life and beyond, where we shall meet, remember, and love again. I shall not seek to change thee in any way. I shall respect thee, thy beliefs, thy people and thy ways as I respect myself.

B – Says the same to the groom.

P – Hands chalice to the groom.

G – (hands chalice to the bride) May you drink your fill from the cup of love.

B – (sips from the chalice and hands it back to the groom) May you drink your fill from the cup of love.

G – sips from chalice before placing it on the ground, or on the altar, or giving it to the priest or priestess.

PP – (tying the cord around the hands of the couple) We now pronounce you partners in life. May your love so endure that its flame remains a guiding light unto you.

The couple may then untie the cord; the circle is then closed in the normal manner.

## 6. STREGA MARRIAGE RITUAL

This wedding ritual is based on the ancient Matrimonio Selargino and the festivities based on the Sardinian Ballu Tundu.

The rite commences on the evening before the wedding on the Saturday. The groom's close family visits the bride's home to admire the dowry. Her entire trousseau is carried and displayed to the entire neighbourhood by ox wagon, to the future home of the couple. The mothers of the both the groom and bride will already be there, preparing the wedding bed.

The following morning the couple will be dressed in ornate, hand-made robes, wearing ritual jewellery. Whilst this is taking place, the mothers sprinkle their respective offspring who about to get married with a mixture of salt, grain and little fashioned golden coins to wish them health, happiness and prosperity. As they do this they utter:

**“May your marriage last for many years, with health and grain”.**

The couple and their parents are led by a long procession of guests to the place of the handfasting. First the elders, the musicians and drummers, guests bearing homemade sweets, breads, and marzipan made into curious and colourful shapes. Behind them come the ox wagon bearing the bridal bed and the honeymoon gowns.

The guests take their place within the marquis/temple and the bride and groom stand together before the altar. The RMO explains to all present the meaning of a handfasting, explaining that it is a long-lasting commitment where each party places the welfare and happiness of his/her lover before his/hers.

The RMO will solemnize their union with these words:

**“You have come here today to gather with family and friends, within the sacred circle and to stand in the presence of Diana and Dianus and before your ancestors to beseech them to make of you One, as they are one, and to bestow upon you their blessing of everlasting love and devotion, through the sacred rite of handfasting. Consider well the gravity of your proposed commitment before assenting to this union. Do you before all witnesses here present declare that it is your wish to be legally joined to your beloved here present? Is it your intention to be bound to this man/woman through vows of devotion and commitment?”**

The bride and groom will respond affirmatively.

Next the RMO will ask if anyone present knows any reason why this marriage should not be celebrated and if anyone objects to the solemnization of the sacred rite of marriage.

If no objection is forthcoming, the parents of the couple ask for blessings on their children union, asking that it be happy, prosperous and fruitful. This is followed by the couple pledging their vows, loyalty, honour, love and conjugal commitment to one another.

The brides vow can be:

**“I vow that my love shall be constant and firm and that though I belong to you and you to me, that I shall strive to maintain a spirit of understanding and equality, where jealousy, insecurity and ego have no room, where stormy words and moments weather fast and where the sun is permitted to come shining through again. I pledge to look after you, cherish and nourish your needs. I will devote my self, my body my warmth, my shade, to keeping you**

**happy and fulfilled in your role as husband. I swear this before all Gods and men! Now and always! Così sia!!”**

The groom responds in kind:

**“I vow to keep you safe within my arms, to love and cherish your happiness above mine and to protect you at all times. I pledge to love, trust and honour you and to endure the hardships in a spirit of love and devotion. I pledge to be there for you and to help you heal so that we may grow together, evolving as two complementary halves of the One we have chosen to be and through which Life will renew itself in reflection of the Divine. I swear this before all Gods and men! Now and always! Così sia!”**

The groom’s mother now hands the couple a glass of water.

**“I bid you share water, the blood of Sacred Mother and Goddess. Water is life. Water binds us and all living things within the sanctity of Her body.”**

The bride and groom share a sip of water and a kiss to seal their vows. The couple now cut their wedding cake and shares the first piece as a symbolic gesture that they will share good and bad times throughout their marriage. The rest of the first slice will be placed as an offering before the Lararium.

The RMO now declares the union solemnized:

**“I hereby declare that AB and CD here present have been lawfully joined in marriage before the ancient Gods, their ancestors friends and family.”**

After the marriage ceremony, the bride is tied by a golden/silver chain around her waist, to the small finger on the groom’s left hand. This symbolizes their pledged of faithfulness. The couple stays like this throughout the wedding dinner, the dance, right through the celebrations, the casting of the flower bouquet until they are taken to the bridal tent or their home (depending on whether the marriage is celebrated in the countryside or in their neighbourhood). On exiting the marquis/reception hall the couple is given a parchment which the couple signs and seal. This will be kept safe and read out aloud at the 25th anniversary banquet before their children and guests.

The couple now rides on the bridal cart from o the place of the wedding reception to the bridal tent/home. The party continues around them. The Ballu Tundu (an intricate version of the spiral dance) is danced around them to ensure fertility and prosperity for the newlyweds. The following day the couple departs for their honeymoon.

## 7. ECLECTIC MARRIAGE RITUAL

Many South African Pagans classify themselves as Eclectic Witches. The following ritual is an example of an Eclectic Handfasting.

It would be ideal for the couple to choose a suitable or meaningful piece of music which shall be played on the set date. The HP/S and the coveners will prepare the altar and demarcate sacred space with fresh flowers and petals. The guests are smudged and anointed upon entering the circle. The HP/S explains what a handfasting is and the circle is then cast. The quarters are called as are the elemental qualities and light is brought to each of them. The altar candles are lit. Next the Lord and Lady are invoked to assist and preside over the marriage that will be taking place.

The HP and HPS announce to all that they are gathered in happiness to join AB and CD in the presence of the deities and elements and that their union may last a long time.

HPS:

**“You have come here today to gather with family and friends, within the sacred circle and to stand in the presence of our Lady and our Lord and to beseech them to make of you One and to bestow upon you their blessing of everlasting love and devotion, through the sacred rite of handfasting. Consider well the gravity of your proposed commitment before assenting to this union. Do you before all witnesses here present declare that it is your wish to be legally joined to your beloved here present? Is it your intention to be bound to this man/woman through vows of devotion and commitment?”**

The bride and groom will respond affirmatively.

The HP and HPS ask for blessings on the Couple and on all those present and this is followed by the couple pledging their vows to one another, as well as the making of promises to love one another, to honour their conjugal commitment and to be loyal to one another.

Bride:

**“I vow that my love shall be constant and firm  
And that though I belong to you and you to me,  
That I shall strive to maintain a spirit of understanding and equality,  
Where jealousy, insecurity and ego have no room,  
Where stormy words and moments weather fast and  
Where the sun is permitted to come shining through again.  
I pledge to look after you, cherish and nourish your needs.  
I will devote my self, my body my warmth, my shade  
To keeping you happy and fulfilled in your role as husband.  
I swear this before all Gods and men!  
Now and always!  
So mote it be!”**

Groom:

**“I vow to keep you safe within my arms, to love and  
Cherish your happiness above mine and to protect you at all times.  
I pledge to love, trust and honour you  
And to endure the hardships in a spirit of love and devotion.  
I pledge to be there for you and to help you heal  
So that we may grow together, evolving as two complementary halves**

**Of the One we have chosen to be and through which  
Life will renew itself in reflection of the Divine.  
I swear this before all Gods and men!  
Now and always!  
So Mote it Be!"**

The HP asks if anyone present knows a reason why the couple cannot or should not be married. If no objections are made, the HPS will pass the handfasting cord around the circle:

**"This is the blessed cord of handfasting joins you both in the bond of Love. Remember that this bond needs support, in order to be strong, support from both of you, from the Gods and from your friends and family. We ask that you all direct your love and energy towards this cord, as it is passed around the circle, that A and B may joined in lasting joy and love. May laughter be the golden thread that sews their hearts together. May your souls unite, enfold and merge the golden hue of the Goddess fair."**

The couple gives one another their right hands and the HPS gently winds the silken cord around them.

HPS:

**"May you share your love, laughter and dreams."**

(She hands the groom an athame)

**"This knife represents the troubles that lie ahead and which come to all. May you be able to defend your Union during such times of onslaught, turmoil and unhappiness."**

The HP now hands the bride a chalice.

**"The chalice represents the Love that is contained within your hearts. May this Sacred Love conquer the trials, the sorrows and pitfalls that you meet along the way and keep you strong together."**

Finally the HPS and HP raise their arms with all present and thank the Gods and Goddesses for attending the marriage rites and for bestowing their blessing. The ritual is consecrated through the celebration of the Simple Feast before the HP declares the circle to be open but never broken. The couple run around the circle and jumps over the broom on exiting the circle. They are greeted by an all-round **"All hail and Farewell!"**

## 9. DIFFERENT CULTURES, DIFFERENT RITUALS

### Ancient Tamil Wedding

(adapted from P.T. Srinivasa Aiyangar's marriage Madras 1929)

This is a very old and simple ceremony. It dates back to pre-Aryan times [600 AD] and does not involve any fire offerings.

An auspicious night, with an auspicious Moon would be chosen for the ceremony. On the fortunate day, women would prepare the sweet meats, the food, and garlands. Women who had born sons in lavish dresses, would bathe the bride and adorn her with jewellery, rice grains and flower petals. They would then bless her with phrases that bestowed upon her chastity, a serviceable spirit towards her husband and his family, as well as to live in the grace of love with her husband for the remaining years of their fortunate lives. On the said night the neighbouring ladies would dress the bride in new clothes and subsequently send her to the arms of her future husband.

House lamps would be lit and the household gods would be worshiped in the pandal that housed many man guests, and a huge heap of rice cooked with ghee would be set out on the floor and served to the elders. The groom and bride would be adorned with flowers and perfume, each being given the traditional garland of flowers containing Lotus flowers. Wedding dances [in which drums featured paramount] would take place before the bride's family gave her away to the groom.

### Ancient Russian Marriage Customs

It was common for the bride to take a ritual bath before the wedding. The bath water was considered to be charmed, and some of it was saved and given to the husband to drink straight after the wedding and to sprinkle on the guests for good luck.

On the wedding day the chamber between the rooms of the bride and groom would be prepared. After mourning the immanent separation from her family, the bride would enter the middle chamber first, carrying money and a round loaf of bread on which two doves appeared, as portents of wealth and prosperity for their future life together. At this point her family transferred her to the groom.

The matchmaker would then braid the bride's hair into two plats, a symbol of wedlock. The bridal veil would be placed on her head next. Hops and grains, coins and fur coats were strewn around the couple to bring happiness, comfort and riches to the newlyweds. Unsown straw mattresses would also be placed near the couple to ensure the easy birth of their offspring and the continuity of the family therefore.

A single burning candle each would then be handed to the bride and groom and the wedding bands would be exchanged. Ornate wreaths containing rosemary would be placed on their heads to bless the couple. The priest would pray loudly, face the east and wish the couple many children and grandchildren. Whips were cracked, guns were fired, needles and pins were stuck into the bride's dress and nails were hammered into the wall to drive away unwanted spirits from the wedding ceremony.

Sometimes the bride would be hid under a large cloth and all the doors and windows would be shut until the wedding took place. Folk also refrained from calling out the names of the bride and groom to ensure that none of the ill-intending sprites jinxed the wedding or the future happiness of the couple.

Straight after the wedding ceremony the groom would remove his shoes and the wedding reception would then be held at his home, where he and the bride would share their food and

mix their drinks as a sign that they were finally one. Lastly the couple would be led to the nuptial chamber for the consummation of their union.

According to Russian custom, the bride was first separated from the spirits ties with her family and united to those of her husband's family, and this was followed by the rituals of propitiation to ensure the welfare of the family.

In rural areas some couples spent their first night in the barn in order to secure the fertility of the cattle through the sympathetic magic act of making love on their bed of hay.

## Marriage amongst the Hittites

Anatolia, modern day Turkey, was the melting pot civilization as far back as 9000 years ago. The Hittite Empire had its capital in Hattusa. An Indo-European people they adopted the Akkadian cuneiform writing and thousands of clay tablets bear witness to this fascinating, for long contested ancient culture.

Hittite texts such as "The Laws" imply that only monogamous marriages were protected by the Law. Marriages were arranged and brought with them material bonds, gains and responsibilities. It was believed that most of these arranged marriages would be successful, but Hittites left a small margin for the occasional percentage of failure. Divorce was there for these cases and was an amicable procedure whereby the property would be equally divided between the spouses. In the case where the wife reported to have been forced into having intercourse with her husband, the divorce settlement would be less equitable.

The word "pupu" means lover in Hittite. The Hittites were well aware that passion had the power to disrupt a well-planned marriage. For this reason plenty of room was given to elopement. Once the marriage had been contracted however, suspected rape or adultery was punished with death or the harshest possible punishment.

Women had the right to redress in Law. If a woman was raped by a stranger in the countryside, she would not be considered guilty. The rapist [if caught] could be put to death. If, however, the woman were raped in her own home, she would be considered guilty and could be put to death. In the case of adultery, and the husband caught the lovers in flagrante, he was not held to be guilty of committing a crime if he killed them in rage. If a man eloped with another man's betrothed he had to compensate the cuckolded suitor. This was his responsibility as a man and the sum paid had to equal the girl's dowry.

### REFERENCES:

<http://www.ancientscripts.com/hittite.html>  
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Bryce – the People and the Laws 2002

## 9. TIPS FOR WRITING YOUR OWN WEDDING CEREMONY

A Pagan wedding is called a handfasting, or be it in Old Norse handfesta which was the striking of a bargain by joining hands. This term was often used to distinguish between a marriage blessed by the church and a Pagan or heathen marriage that did not bear the church's seal of approval. Imperative in these ceremonies was the mutual consent of the parties as well as the clasping, binding of the hands and the exchange of some sort of promise or vow. This was supported by secular law through the code of Alfred the Great [849-899].

I like to think that the bride and the groom marry one another and that the RMO will only be the person officiating the ceremony. The ceremony should therefore be written around this concept.

In Tacitus' Germania, we learn that the bridal gifts were often horses and weaponry as amongst warrior people that were the most fitting, most expensive, most pleasing and needed of gifts. The gift of heirloom weaponry linked not only the woman to the man, but their respective relatives and clans to one another too.

Pagans should also bear in mind that the sword is a phallic symbol besides being a weapon of war. It represented honour and fidelity. Warriors lived and died by their sword. To use a sword as part of the wedding gift had therefore special significance.

In our country we are fortunate to have our handfastings and weddings legally recognized. This brings certain questions to the fore. Do you get handfasted as a form of betrothal, how long does the handfasting ceremony stand for, do you renew your vows every year? Or is one handfasting till the love lasts sufficient? These questions have only personal and individual answers to them.

The RMO must ask the couple if they have come hence out of their own free will. The groom must declare who he is, announce that he takes her for his legal wedded wife and vow to honour her always, take care of her and to defend her with his life.

The bride responds by announcing who she is, that she takes him for her husband and by vowing to honour, care for and love him and their children with all her might.

At this point the RMO may inquire if there is anyone present who objects to or knows of any reason why the union should not be performed and finally declared them "man and wife" or "civil union partners". Remember also that each of the parties must stand before the other, bearing a symbol of what you will bring to the union for the benefit of the whole, for its economic welfare.

Face each other, hold hands and declare your wish to be made one [By the Law of the Ancient Gods may we be made one]. The best man must now bind the hands lightly with a sash, the rings can be exchanged and the sash is removed and handed to the wife for safe keeping. The vows are made, facing each other and the tokens of your commitment presented with the vows.

The RMO now presents the couple with a goblet of mead to seal and bless their union. The bride takes a sip and the bridegroom may drain the rest of the contents in one sip. The wedding cake is now cut together and the couple shares the first slice, feeding it to one another. The husband can now give his bride his special gift, perhaps an especially designed piece of jewellery, a necklace or a pair of earrings to match the wedding band. This gift must be of value in exchange for her body through which his progeny will be born.

## 10. PRE-MARITAL COUNSELLING

Marriage is the cornerstone of a healthy family nucleus and a healthy and stable society. Before getting saying “I do” and getting married it is advisable that the RMO sets up at least nine sessions for counselling the future couple on the truths about long-term relationships, the responsibilities and the laws that govern love within our Path, the demystification of and the erroneous expectation of one another and marriage itself.

The RMO should explain to the couple that one should choose a person one can trust, because distrust is a negative force that erodes at the relationship and becomes a barrier to intimacy and communication. The couple should be encouraged to evaluate themselves as individuals as well as their relationship realistically.

Some joke about how marriage kills ones sex life. Physical intimacy is like a battery, it becomes charged with non-sexual activities and a sense of being comfortably together even outside the bedroom. The couple should be encouraged to spend time together and not to believe that it is fine to skip the building up to trust and intimacy which is the glue to any successful relationship.

Couples should be encouraged to engage in activities that enhance togetherness; watching television does not count much as there is no communication taking place during this activity. The couple should spend time talking, sharing their dreams and aspirations as well as secrets, laughing, planning weekends away during which they can have 'alone time' for communicating, doing activities together [camping, horse riding, hiking] and thereby release tension.

Couples that want to get married believe they already know each other, and yet they should be encouraged to discuss why they are in love with one another and why they wish to enter into a long-term relationship. The RMO should be attentive and note any negative reaction or sign of anger coming to the fore during the discussion of the proposed marriage. Some folk resent being pressurized into marriage (as they believe their personal freedom is at stake) whilst others are ecstatic about the upcoming happy event.

Topics discussed at this time should be relationship with in-laws, working finances together as well as respecting the budget together, comparing differences in the way each one expresses love, communication skills, conflict resolution, the importance of fidelity, planning ahead as far as acquiring property, having of children and parenting is concerned.

These pre-marital counselling sessions should afford the betrothed a lesson about each other, leading to deeper understanding of one another, better communication, and a better chance at a successful marriage. Premarital counselling should allow the future couple to get everything in perspective and to focus entirely on their relationship whilst keeping it alive.

The RMO's might find that there is initial resistance to the premarital counselling. This is because folk will feel like they are being forced into the situation. When they realise, through what unfolds at these sessions and through understanding the dynamics of their relationship, that the counselling sessions are indeed for their benefit and that the sessions are there to identify potential problems and to help prevent conflict at a later stage participation in the process will usually be the result.

Ultimately speaking the process is not about whether one should be getting married or not, but rather about being equipped with solutions for the solution of conflict and making it manageable and even healthy within the parameters of the relationship. The process will make them ready for the realization of their important decision to get married.

The Romans said that “marriages ought to be free” (*matrimonia debent esse libera*), this meant that either of the spouses could chose to opt out of the marriage if they weren't getting what they expected out of the deal. In one of Raymond Buckland's books I read the wise words “until the love last” which pretty much reflects this Roman maxim.

What is causing the higher divorce rate in the world?

- Folk are less committed to their union
- Folk do not communicate with their spouses
- Adultery
- Abandonment of the family
- Substance abuse and addiction
- Women and men being less willing to fill the traditional roles
- Mental, emotional, verbal, sexual and physical abuse
- Financial problems
- Irreconcilable differences and personality differences
- Too much ego and competition within the marriage
- Different expectations
- Inability to resolve conflict and manage the situation
- Low emotional quotient and lack of maturity
- Disagreement on how to raise children
- Intellectual incompatibility
- Sexual incompatibility
- Religious differences
- Mental illness or instability
- Lack of respect
- Interference from in-laws, friends and children from previous marriages
- Inability to forgive and move on
- Inability to deal with one another's petty idiosyncrasies
- Criminal activity and imprisonment
- Falling out of love and no longer caring
- Excessive jealousy and possessiveness
- Excessive insecurity and co-dependency

Marriage is about building bridges and not walls. Insecurities and jealousies have to be dealt with love within the relationship. The RMO as a counsellor and advisor must remember that one should reassure the insecure party where jealousy or any other issue becomes a problem.

Most divorces are caused by lack of communication between parties. One can't have an effective relationship if the communication lines are down as it means that if one is not at liberty to discuss how one feels about issues which might be bothering one resentment builds up. If there is no open communication, the partner is cut out from your personal sphere and does not know what is happening with you. The partner may not be aware of what you expect of them prior to the marriage. It is known that folk who come from divorced homes are more likely to resort to divorce than those who come from happily married households.

RMO's might be called to council a couple whom they married and it is important to let folk know that just because things in your home and relationship aren't good, does not mean that they have to resort to divorce. Encourage the couple to step back and to observe their life together from a surveillance camera point of view. One of course has to let go of the emotional stakes in the situation and this requires a great deal of maturity.

What may be leading to problems in the marriage?

1. lack of sexual intimacy
2. being temperamental and resorting to name calling and accusations during an argument
3. selfishness (not considering your partner), being unfair
4. dishonesty with your spouse leads to lack of trust and unhappiness in the home
5. lack of respect for your spouse
6. not paying attention to your spouse, not listening, ignoring her/his requests
7. childish and vindictive behaviour

Every relationship goes through a rough patch but it is how you deal with it that counts. RMO's should be aware that it is not easy to go for marriage counselling. The counsellor's role should be non-intrusive and non judgmental. The RMO should simply facilitate the meetings and allow the couple to express themselves in an atmosphere where understanding rules. It is extremely important that the marriage counselling be done by someone the couple feels comfortable with and trusts. In many cases one partner desires the counselling more than the other. It is important that the least keen partner is prepared to listen, open up his/her heart, share experiences and participate in the process of discovery and ultimately healing.

Encourage the couple to take a step back, as suggested and to decided whether the problem is. Remind them not to hold romantic and unrealistic expectations of long-term relationships. Infatuation is not love and expecting romantic love to exist in their mind, will only lead the couple to disillusionment about love.

Above all else encourage the couple to respect one another. Respect includes respecting each other's differences (contrary opinions. Couples should never belittle or demand from each other. Unfortunately some folk grow up in homes where name calling and verbal abuse are the norm. The partners must be made aware that this is not acceptable and that they have to will to be different and change the course of their lives and marriage.

Encourage the couple to long-term commitment, not to resort to excuses to terminate the relationship without some sincere effort at restoring the status quo. The couple must see themselves as a team and their relationship as a partnership. Co-operation and commitment will help them keep things together. When the couple works as a team, both parties realize that they both have the same goals and this benefits the commitment.

Encourage both parties always to speak the truth with diplomacy, decorum and the necessary care not to cause hurt. Being able to speak one's mind give rise to a certain freedom that leads to fluid communication and good communication leads to intimacy.

Encourage the couple to compromise and always to find the middle ground. These are vital for the success of any fulfilling and meaningful relationship. The individuals should be encouraged to grow and evolve with the relationship. The trick is not in changing one's partner, but in changing oneself in order to accept that which will not change in one's partner.

It is good for the RMO to note that some folk who come for marriage counselling are in the blame mode and are not willing to surrender to the process and undergo the necessary changes within themselves. Change causes discomfort and anxiety. A good counsellor will recognize this type of persona and lovingly guide them through the process and required changes. A good counsellor will also know that counselling will not necessarily save the marriage. There are cases where there are just too many unresolved issues at personal level and such ingrained bad will and lack of commitment as well as irreconcilable differences that there just is not justifiable reason for insisting in keeping the couple together.

## 11. THE FAMILY

The family is fundamental for social well-being. Divorce has become a worrisome trend in our society and it is said that there is a steady trend towards the deterioration of family values. Is this due to the deterioration of the patriarchal-type hierarchy of the household and the birth of a more egalitarian form of household? Must women adopt a subordinate role as housewives as did our grandmothers and our ancestral grandmothers? In Ancient Rome the paterfamilias was a powerful figure who possessed almost unlimited powers within the family setting. He had power over life and death of his children; the legendary founder of the Roman Republic, Junius Brutus, had his sons executed for disobedience. He owned all the property, he owned his wife, slaves, his children until he died, they were not free to make their own decisions or own property whilst he lived. Fathers ruled the household and maintained order and stability.

Paternal authority began to decline eventually with the increasing wealth and independence of the wives and children. Suddenly children no longer needed to consult their fathers but could choose their own spouses. The so-called age of the affectionate family came into being.

But was family life before this regimental and devoid of affection? Not at all. Romans took it for granted that love existed within the family. Affection was seen as being a natural and permanent state within the family fold. The central and binding value of the family was pietas, which means affectionate devotion. Husbands were expected to love their spouses, and wives their husbands, parents were supposed to love their children and the members of a family were supposed to love one another.

In the Late Republic authors, politicians and poets bemoaned the decline of paternal control and the increase in independence, the obsession with luxuries and narcissistic tendencies, sexual promiscuity, adultery and the breakdown of the traditional family which safeguarded the good health of the State. Tacitus, Cato, Polybius and Plautus lamented the old-time matrons and the fact that modern Roman women had no time to spend with their children, but handed them over to be raised by nurses, child minders and household servants. Sons no longer obeyed their fathers, women drank too much wine and were far more promiscuous as a consequence, there was an increase in violence, and they saw this as a direct consequence of social and moral degeneration which had its roots in the decline of the patriarchal family.

The autocrat Augustus tried to reverse the moral decline by passing a body of moral reforms most of which were aimed at restoring family values. Through these laws adultery became a public crime, Romans were forced to marry and have children, etc. Augustus believed that morality could not be legislated; it had to be imposed. The Patricians resented the State's intrusion into their private lives, so the reforms did nothing towards the restoration of morality.

Moral decline of the family is based on the idea of a better moral past. This is no more than an impression to the idealist and observer. Were folk really more moral in the past? Or do we just imagine that our ancestors were more obedient to social norms and laws and more morally virtuous? In the late Roman republic it was indeed a bad thing that the hierarchical relationship of men and women had been inverted and that the husbands had lost control over their wives. Juvenal's satirical parody of the independent-thinking woman (by some labelled as misogynistic in our egalitarian society) is the perfect illustration for this. I believe history has a tendency to repeat itself, so the issues families faced 2000 years ago, are the same issues [more or less] that families still face today.

And how to raise children? How does one keep them in check? Does one punish them?

This is an excerpt from a child-rearing manual of 100 CE Rome:

**Children ought to be led to honorable practices by means of encouragement and reasoning, and most certainly not by blows nor by mistreatment; for it is**

surely agreed that these are fitting rather for slaves than for the freeborn, for so they grow numb and shudder at their tasks, partly from the pain of blows, partly also on account of the hubris. Praise and reproof are more helpful for the freeborn than any sort of ill-usage, since the praise incites them towards what is honourable, and reproof keeps them from what is disgraceful.

Seneca suggested that physical punishment be used only as a last resort, before children were of an understanding age. Blows and mistreatment broke their spirit and made them slave-like. Cato said that a man should never lay hands on what was most dear and precious to him: his wife and his children.

The Christian theologian Augustine recommended 500 years later that a father punish his child physically for his sins, as it was better for a child to suffer a beating than to suffer eternal damnation.

Today family values are closely linked to religious dogma and doctrine, e.g. The stance on abortion, divorce, pre marital and extra marital sex, the use of birth-control, familial obligations, family morality, same-sex marriage and partnerships etc. Family morality is not only a Christian or Muslim concern. It was preceded by Pagan antecedents.

#### REFERENCES:

Personal Patronage Under the Early Roman Empire (1982) Richard Saller  
The Early Principate: Augustus to Trajan, Greece & Rome, and New Surveys in the Classics No. 15 (1982) and The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture (1987).  
Patriarchy, Property, and Death in the Roman Family (1994).

## 12. WHAT ASPIRING PAGAN RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE OFFICERS SHOULD KNOW

A candidate RMO for the SAPC should be a member of the council for not less than 6 months in order to be nominated. The aspiring RMO must agree to abide by the SAPC Constitution and Code of Principles, as well as the Code of Principles for Pagan Religious Marriage Officers.

The candidate should prove beyond reasonable doubt to the Executive of the SAPC that they have good standing in the insular and national religious community by providing:

- Two character references
- A telephonic interview with the Convenor and Registrar
- A written motivated application from the candidate or a nominating letter from his/her group/coven

### Criteria

The applicant must be nominated by an organization whose constitution has been approved and designated as a religious organisation in terms of the Civil Union Act 2006 by Home Affairs and must pass an examination set by Home Affairs in which he or she demonstrates his/her knowledge and understanding of the Civil Union Act 2006, its Regulations as well as related obligations of a religious marriage officer.

### Requirements

Each applicant will receive a training manual and will be given 6 months within which the above mention examination must be written and passed.

### Duties and Obligations of an RMO

An RMO may not solemnize a civil union if the parties desiring to be partnered/married fail to present their identity documents or an Affidavit in the absence of the Identification Document [form BI-1763]. He/she must enquire from the parties if the civil union will be known as a civil partnership/marriage. Before solemnizing the union the RMO must enquire if there are any objections (which must be presented in writing) and inquire into the grounds of the said objection. Should the RMO be satisfied that this does not present a lawful impediment, he/she may go ahead with the solemnization. If he/she is not satisfied, he/she may refuse to solemnize the civil union, providing the reasons for refusal in writing.

If one or both of the parties were married before (under the Marriage Act of 1961 or the Customary Marriages Act of 1998), they must present a divorce order or a death certificate of the deceased spouse in order to prove that the previous marriage has been terminated.

Prospective Civil Union partners must first declare in writing that they are willing to enter into Civil Union with one another. They do this in front of the RMO and at least two witnesses as well as by signing the Declaration Document to register a Civil Union and the Civil Union Register. The RMO must present the parties with a Civil Union Registration Certificate straight after the solemnization of the Union.

RMO's are not required to follow a standardized marriage ritual but the Act requires that the following words be included in the ceremony.

Do you, AB declared that as far as you know there is no lawful impediment to your proposed marriage/civil partnership with CD here present and that you call all here present to witness that you take CD as your lawful spouse/civil partner?

When both partners have uttered the above vow, they must give each other the right hand and the RMO must conclude the solemnization with the following words:

I declare that AB and CD here present have been lawfully joined in marriage/a civil partnership.

Each marriage officer must keep a record of all civil unions he/she has conducted and transmit the Civil Union Register to the official concerned with the Population Register in their area.

RMO's may not solemnize a Civil Union which he/she knows is legally prohibited, and may not solemnize any union until he/she has been designated by Home Affairs to do so. RMO's may not demand any fees nor accept any gifts for any service as a marriage officer. Doing so will constitute an offence and the RMO will be liable to pay a fine or in default of payment to imprisonment.

The RMO's designation is only valid in the Republic of South Africa and may not be transferred from one religious organization to another. If the RMO resigns from or is expelled from an organization, or changes address, the Organization must immediately notify Home Affairs. The same applies in the case of death of the RMO.

## Writing the Examination

The candidate must await the arrival of a letter containing acknowledgement of his/her application for designation and reference number [e.g. CU(number)]. On receipt of a written instrument the candidate must contact and punctually report to the Regional Representative of the Department of Home Affairs in his/her area on the agreed date of examination.

His/her Identity and reference number will be checked against that appearing on the letter attached to the sealed envelope containing the exam paper.

The candidate is locked in a room alone (he/she may only keep his pens and ID document) and has two hours to read and complete the examination.

A file for Pastor .....(name)..... is then opened, into which go the Home Affairs letter to the candidate (Application for designation as marriage officer: Mr./Ms .....), a certified copy of the RMO's ID Document, as well as the completed examination paper. The Examination is sent to Pretoria Home Affairs for marking and the candidate will be notified by letter and telephonically of his/her results.

The candidate is warned not to schedule any marriages until he/she has received a letter of designation from the Department of Home Affairs. Until such time, he/she does not have the necessary authority to solemnize marriages.

## What RMO's should know

The full and short name of the Act

The number of the Act

The commencement date of the Act

The regulations pertaining to the Act

The objectives of the Act

The various definitions: civil union, civil partnership, etc.

Types of Marriage officers: Civil and Religious

Everything about the Act and its regulations

Documents required for solemnization and registration of a Civil Union

The pre-requisites/requirements for the solemnization and registration of the Union

Records for Population Register  
Fees for the issue of certificates and documents  
The two types of certificates: abridged and unabridged  
Time and place for and the presence of parties and witnesses at solemnization  
How to deal with objections  
Formula for solemnization  
The registration of the Civil Union  
Legal consequences of Civil Union  
Offences and penalties by RMO's  
Who qualifies to marry under this Act  
Who does not qualify to marry under this Act

## **13. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PAGAN RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE OFFICERS**

### **Scope of Code**

All persons registered as Marriage Officers under SA Pagan Council (SAPC).

### **Ethics**

To ensure all stakeholders are aware and compliant with the basic values enshrined in the SAPC.

To ensure accountability within the SAPC in terms of fundamental values and the law as pertaining to the Civil Union Act.

Honesty

Integrity

Loyalty

Professionalism

A positive public image

Confidence from the public

Striving for credibility and high service standards.

### **Purpose**

To give practical effect to the legal requirements for Marriage Officers. All registered Marriage Officers of the SAPC are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct. Failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct will result in an investigative hearing and sanction where necessary. The primary purpose of the Code is to promote exemplary conduct.

### **The Code of Conduct**

Loyally execute the duties and functions of a Marriage Officer, as stipulated in the Civil Union Act 2006.

Comply with all requirements of the Civil Union Act 2006.

Place the Pagan Community first in the execution of duties.

Strive to be familiar with and to abide by all statutory requirements applicable to Marriage Officers.

Promote the unity and well-being of the South African Pagan Community in performing your duties.

Serve the Pagan Community in an unbiased and impartial manner.

Be helpful, polite and accessible.

Do not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, gender, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, conscience, culture, political persuasion, language or belief.  
In no way abuse your position.  
Execute your duties in a professional and competent manner.  
Correctly report to the appropriate authorities and SAPC all accountable administration, as required by the Civil Union Act.  
Honor the confidentiality of all matters/documents implied as being confidential.  
Behave in a manner that enhances the reputation of Pagan RMO's.  
Act responsibly as far as alcohol or any other intoxicating substance is concerned.  
Do not use your position to garner funds.

# SAPC CODE OF PRINCIPLES

Constitution of the South African Pagan Council

## 2.2. The Code of Principles

2.2.1. As Pagans we recognize humanity's duty towards the environment and acknowledge that Nature is our Mother and teacher. We should strive to protect Her and to live in harmony with Nature.

2.2.2. We acknowledge the interconnectedness of everything and should therefore strive to practice kindness, generosity, hospitality and cooperation.

2.2.3. We acknowledge equality of the sexes and should therefore not regard one above the other.

2.2.4. We should honour those who teach and acknowledge those who have given themselves in leadership to the revival and advancement of Paganism.

2.2.5. We should avoid gossip and the repetition of unverified facts, and avoid passing judgment on others. We should not promote a spirit of animosity towards other religious paths.

2.2.6. Honour is a sacred virtue. Let our actions be upright, causing harm to none. We should at all costs, avoid deceit, exploitation of others, fraud, violence, theft, abusive behaviour, substance abuse and any form of action deemed illegal and detrimental to society.

2.2.7. We believe in religious freedom and should therefore be tolerant and accepting of other Pagan and non-Pagan spiritualities and religions.

2.2.8. We should remain true to our highest selves and strive to act with wisdom and strive never to do anything that would bring our religion and spirituality into disrepute.

2.2.9. We should be honest with others and let them know that we expect nothing less from them. Our word should be our bond.

2.2.10. Pagans should strive to obey the just laws of the land and its government.

2.2.11. Pagans should strive to act with dignity. Let our words, thoughts and actions be in line with our philosophy of life, respect and reverence towards all.

2.2.12. Pagans reserve the right to preserve our cultural and Pagan heritage (including the use and carrying of swords, knives and ritual tools) and traditions in the form of rituals, doctrines, practices and religious holy days.