

Renewal of Vows Ceremony
for
Michael and Sue

Music: Van Morrison, *Have I Told You Lately*

Welcome and Introduction:

We are here today to share with Michael and Sue in the celebration of 10 years of their marriage.

This is a special and joyful occasion, on which we shall be witnesses together as Michael and Sue renew their marriage vows and express their desire to enrich their love and loyalty to each other.

As the setting they have chosen suggests, they do not wish this to be an over-solemn or somber ceremony - there is music, there is food, there is drink, there will be dancing!

This is not just an idea that you have dreamed up - like "we thought it would be nice because other people do it".

Michael and Sue, as you prepare to renew your marriage vows and enrich your commitment to one another, take a moment to think about the many experiences you've shared, the people who have come into your lives, the great times and the tough times, the successes and failures, the days when you've made wise decisions and times when you know **now** that you were foolish.

Be thankful for the past, and then release it with gratitude. This is a new beginning for you both, a renewal not just of your vows but of your relationship and your life together.

Whatever challenges you faced, you are here today to say we are going to move forward, **together** - in those famous words

that have stood the test of time, this is: *for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part.*

Our wish today for you both is that the special love you now share will continue to grow and deepen in years to come and be sustained by God, family and friends and by the vows you will re-affirm shortly.

There are quite a few differences between today's ceremony and the one you shared together 10 years ago tomorrow.

For one thing, there's the setting - on *that* day, it was Gretna Green - how romantic can you get?!

Of course the happy couple still look young and attractive - granted one rather more than the other!

The choice of Gretna Green suggests they didn't want everyone to know - although family members did get in on the act.

Then there was just the one *junior* member of the new family - baby Abby. Now Abby is 10, and she's been joined by Georgia and Alfie - Oh, and by Rex, the long-suffering family dog.

In a moment, I shall invite Sue and Michael to kneel as they prepare to renew their marriage promises. It seemed to them most appropriate that they choose new words for today.

They have chosen *not* to mirror the words they repeat to each other, but to choose words that best reflect their sincere intentions and their deep longing to continue loving and cherishing each other.

The vows:

Michael and Sue, you are about to make promises of love to one another. These promises declare your continuing love to be a special commitment that will strengthen your lives for whatever situation you may face with the strength and courage of two.

(join hands)

Sue

*I, Sue Jones
in the presence of God
renew my commitment
to you, Michael Jones,
as your wife.
I give thanks that you have shared my life,
all that I am
and all that I have
I continue to share with you.
Whatever the future holds,
I will love you
and stand by you,
as long as we both shall live.*

Michael

Sue, in the past I have taken you for granted. I have put others before you. I have done things I am not proud of. And I have often been wrong. On the other hand, I have always loved you and stood beside you. I am here today to move forward with a renewed commitment to you, our love, and our lives together. I pledge that from this day forward you will be my number one priority. I promise to be there for you in all that life brings our way. It is because of you that I am here today and I vow to give you all that I am and all that I have for the rest of our lives together. This is my solemn promise.

The blessing of rings

A circle is an ancient symbol of wholeness and peace. It speaks of the special and exclusive nature of the marriage relationship. As these rings are fashioned from one of the earth's most precious metals, so may your love, nourished and sustained by the love of God, be the most precious and durable of the values you share. In giving and receiving these rings, you again acknowledge that your lives remain joined in one unbroken circle. Wherever you go, you will always return to your shared life together.

Sue, I gave you this ring
As a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
All that I am I give to you,
And all that I have I share with you,
Within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Michael, I gave you this ring
As a sign of our marriage.
With my body I honour you,
All that I am I give to you,
And all that I have I share with you,
Within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, by your blessing
Let these rings continue to be to Sue and Michael
A symbol of unending love and faithfulness,
To remind them of the vows and promises
That they have made today.
Amen.

In front of us all here this afternoon, and before God also,
Michael and Sue have renewed their marriage vows to each
other.

They have re-confirmed their marriage by the joining of hands
and by the blessing of their rings.

May there be truth and understanding between you as you are a
joy and blessing to each other and to your children. May you
enjoy many more years together, may your hopes be fulfilled,
may your dreams be realised, and may you discover true peace
and contentment together.

Prayer:

Loving God,
Your Son Jesus has shown us how to love
And invites us to love one another
As he loves us.

We pray for Michael and Sue,
With their shared memories of the past;
Of joy and laughter,
Sadness and disappointment,
Forgiving and being forgiven.
By your Spirit,
Help them put their trust in you
To guide and guard them in the future.

Help us all
To know you more clearly,
Love you more dearly,
And follow you more nearly,
Day by day
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

I close with a true story about a special kiss - not a humorous
tale but one that I think makes the point rather well. It's told by Dr
Richard Selzer, a surgeon. He tells, in hushed and awed tones,
of what he observed after he had performed a delicate operation
on a young woman's face.

"I stand by the bed where the young woman lies, her face post-operative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed.

The surgeon has followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh; I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had to cut the little nerve.

Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and altogether they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private.

Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily?

The young woman speaks. "Will my mouth always be like this?" She asks. "Yes," I say. "It will. It is because the nerve was cut."

She nods and is silent.

But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says. "It is kind of cute."

All at once I know who he is. I understand, and lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a god. Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close, I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers, to show her that their kiss still works."

I think that when a couple renew their marriage vows it is like they are saying to each other - and to those who know them - "look, our relationship does still work, and we want to continue to make it work, whatever that takes."

Michael and Sue, may you know great blessing and joy together and with your young family, both today and for the rest of your lives.

God bless you.

Music: Phil Collins, *A Groovy Kind of Love*