

# Opening

Hello everyone and welcome!

My name is Elizabeth and I am going to be leading proceedings to celebrate the love between Catherine and Isaac.

Shortly, we will begin and our ceremony will last around 30 minutes.

We will hear blessings and readings from some special guests, and of course the vows and commitments from the happy couple themselves.

Catherine is about to enter, so if you are able, please do stand to welcome the Bride and her bridal party.

*Guests stand as Catherine enters with her parents, Michael and Elizabeth, followed by Emma, her Maid of Honour, and Jack, the Ringbearer. As she enters, her grandfather, George, stands at the front and plays "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles on the violin. He returns to his seat once the piece is complete.*

# Welcome

Warmest of welcomes to you all today as we join together to celebrate the union of Catherine and Isaac.

I would like to invite you all to take a seat. Emma and Jack, we have special VIP seats at the front here for you both, with your grandparents.

*Emma, Jack, Michael, and Elizabeth sit down.*

Welcome to everyone who is here in person, to those who have travelled from near and far, and also welcome to those of you joining us by video link, which we can see to the side.

May I just check with Ruth, Isaac's sister and the planner of this wonderful day, to ensure that everyone joining remotely can hear me and that you can see everything?

*Celebrant waits a moment for confirmation from the venue staff managing the link and waves from those on the video screen.*

I also want to quickly check in on our VIPs at the front here – is everyone ready and able to hear?

Please ensure your phones are on silent and your cameras are put away.

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We have a wonderful photographer, James, who is here to capture this special day for us so that you can all give your full presence to Catherine and Isaac today.

As we know, many of you have travelled a long distance to be here today, and Catherine and Isaac would like to express their sincere thanks to you all for making the journey.

Not only that, but many of you are taking key roles throughout this special day.

It truly means a lot to them that you've all been so involved and to have you all here together in this Tudor Great Hall, to celebrate their love with you all.

I know from everything Catherine and Isaac have told me that a significant amount of planning and careful preparation has gone into making this moment and this day the perfect celebration of the union we are about to witness.

And what a venue this is!

Catherine knew the moment she saw this Manor House that this was the place where she wanted to celebrate her union with Isaac.

She loved everything, but most of all, it reminded her vividly of childhood summers at her grandparents' home, and she knew it would be a wonderful way to honour those memories.

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Video calling Isaac on the day she visited; they both knew that this was the perfect venue for this momentous day!

Bringing together the deep history of this traditionally British countryside location, the vibrant African cultures, and the themes of Christian faith that have been woven throughout this day, I know that you will all have the most memorable and spectacular day.

From the floral arrangements of both English roses and South African Proteas, to the traditional and locally made wedding cake and the koesisters made by Isaac's mother,

the effort that has been extended to represent the joining of these two families and cultures today has been extraordinary.

## *Giving Away*

Catherine has been accompanied here today, to join in union with Isaac, by both of her parents: Michael and Elizabeth.

As she made her way down the aisle today, we heard The Beatles' *Here Comes the Sun*, played beautifully by Catherine's grandfather George, continuing a long-held family tradition.

Thank you, George, for starting our proceedings by allowing us to hear your stunning rendition of a piece, with its reference to a new day and a rising sun, that really represents what this day is about: uniting as one in love, joy, faith, and newness.

Celebrating this new beginning for both Catherine and Isaac, we know that they both arrive here today with equally rich personal histories, and this is why Catherine has chosen not to be traditionally "given away" but instead, to come here today, with her family by her side, to join in union with Isaac and his family.

Thank you, Michael and Elizabeth, for coming here today with Catherine, along with Emma and Jack, as they embark upon their new future.

## *Introduction*

Catherine and Isaac have always had a clear vision for their wedding ceremony.

We are here today, celebrating their union, the love of these two people who come here with their own experiences, their own distinct beliefs and values, but we are also here to celebrate the joining of two families and two cultures.

When we bring together established families and distinctive cultures in this way, we create something beautiful, something unique, something unforgettable.

We honour who we are as individuals, but we recognise and look ahead to how our values and cultures will help us to shape our future.

This is the true beauty of our celebration today: the fusing of cultures and histories and the recognition of the journeys already travelled to bring you here today.

This is Catherine and Isaac's vision.

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This is the moment everything comes together to create a rich and intricate canvas for a new and exciting life together.

Catherine and Isaac, are you ready to get married?

*Gingethi The Pink Celebrant*

## Reading

It is important to our Bride and Groom to honour each other's beliefs and values today, and as you all are aware, Isaac's faith is the cornerstone of his life.

Isaac is a member of Hope Community Church in Cape Town, and they have welcomed Catherine to their community with open arms.

Our first reading today is brought to us by Pastor David from Isaac's church.

Pastor David is joining us via video link, and I can see that he is waiting, so as soon as you are ready, Pastor, please do share your thoughts with us.



Catherine and Isaac, as you exchange your vows today, know that you enter fully into this covenant renewed in love.

Like the new covenant written on hearts in Jeremiah, your love becomes inscribed on each other's very being.

Like the unbreakable bond Paul describes in Romans, may nothing separate you from each other's love.

In this marriage, you embody the truth that God's faithfulness endures even when human relationships falter.

Your willingness to commit again speaks of courage, hope, and trust in God's redeeming love.

The covenant you make today is enriched by the lessons of the past and strengthened by the wisdom you've gained along the way.

May God, who has brought you together, strengthen your hearts in this covenant of love so that what joins together today, no one may put asunder.

May your love be renewed each day, growing ever deeper, ever stronger, through all the seasons of your life together.

Some very special and poignant words there from the Pastor.

## *Love Story*

Two people, Catherine and Isaac, from very distinctly different backgrounds: one from sunny and glorious Cape Town and the other from slightly wet but still wonderful Sheffield!

One runs not only one but FOUR different consulting businesses and expresses himself through his strong Christian faith, and the other is a committed mother of two to Emma and Jack, whose self-expression comes from the wonderful paintings she creates as a professional artist.

Both climbing Table Mountain in Cape Town one morning and a chance meeting changed their lives.

He, on one of his thrice-weekly runs up the 1000 metre mountain, and she, on a morning's hike with her two children as part of a wonderful holiday.

In his first, but as it turned out, certainly not his last act of supporting Catherine and her children, Isaac noticed Emma had dropped her water bottle and retrieved it for her.

A simple act of kindness that struck up an unforgettable conversation about Catherine's artwork and her imminent exhibition and led to us

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being here today to celebrate the joining of these two wonderful families!

As Catherine and Isaac's love blossomed, so did their support of each other, and their lives began to become intertwined with shared hobbies, values, and teachings.

Isaac's faith teaches him kindness and how to lead by example, but I am sure he won't mind me sharing his visible emotion when describing to me how Catherine's children, Emma and Jack, have taught him patience and an unconditional love that he didn't previously know existed.

Isaac maintains the boundary and respects the important role the children's father holds in their lives, but Catherine sees every day the unique bond he has with Emma and Jack, from their Sunday morning pancake rituals to teaching them to swim in the ocean.

As time has passed and their lives have merged further, they've learned to support each other with their own businesses and encourage each other to move outside of their comfort zones.

Isaac, being a man whom you all know as being good with a drill and a spirit level, built Catherine a home art studio, which she adores and is her sanctuary.

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Its perfect lighting and soft comforts are everything she needs for creating her masterpieces.

It's not always flowers and chocolates a woman needs, and Isaac knew exactly what Catherine needed and, boy, did he deliver!

Of course, blending two families from such different cultures and with such independent stories was always going to come with challenges.

Adding to that the time zones, the geographical challenges of two distinct continents, learning to co-parent, and their lives before they came together – all situations and considerations that would test any couple.

Isaac and Catherine, as we stand here now, celebrating your love and the coming together of these two beautiful but very distinct families, we know that we can say that you have certainly overcome those challenges and climbed those mountains, both literally and metaphorically.

And isn't the view absolutely worth the climb?

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The key to reaching the top was, as it always should be, honesty and openness. The Spanish artist, Salvador Dali, is famous for having stated, “drawing is the honesty of the art,” and that certainly applies to you, Catherine and Isaac.

Being honest with each other through tough times is a hard thing to do, but showing your true colours, your true nature and beliefs to each other when you are facing life’s challenges is undoubtedly what has led you to a deeper love of each other and to where we stand today, looking out over the mountain tops at your reward, getting ready to make your commitment to each other, for eternity.

Your honesty with each other has allowed you to stand together, resilient and uncompromising, especially when it comes to the children’s needs over anyone else.

I am sure that after today and into your forever, this will give you the foundations of a truly long and loving partnership.

And your partnership has paved the way for so many adventures together, to the peaks of mountains, along soft sandy beaches, and camping together under a canopy of shining stars.

Your newly discovered trails, accompanied by picnics of nourishing foods, and the way Catherine captures it all with her pencils and sketchpad – this all encapsulates the way you are approaching your life as one, together.

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Finding your way along the path that you tread, together as a family, exploring and discovering new ways to build your dream.

All the while, making sure you're looking after each other, putting each other and the children first, and taking the time to sit back, take it all in, and do it all in your own way.

*Gingethi The Pink Celebrant*

## Reading and Children's Promises

To truly help us understand the way that Catherine and Isaac's paths crossing has helped them to forge a deep, meaningful and everlasting love, we will now hear a reading chosen by Emma and Jack.

They have chosen "*Paths and Journeys (from Far from the Madding Crowd)*" by Thomas Hardy. They've told me that they've chosen this as it perfectly describes how their mum and Isaac came together, and how they approach the building of their family.

Emma and Jack, you have asked me to read your words with them today so if you would like to come up to the front, we can do it together.

*We are all on our own paths, all on our own journeys. Sometimes the paths cross, and people arrive at the crossing points at the same time and meet each other. There are greetings, pleasantries are exchanged, and then they move on.*

*But then once in a while these become more, friendship grows, deeper links are made, hands are joined and love flies. The friendship has turned into love.*

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*Paths are joined, one path with two people walking it, both going in the same direction, and sharing each other's journeys.*

*They will now skip together in harmony and love, sharing joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, strengthening and upholding each other as they walk along side by side.*

*At home by the fire, whenever I look up, there you will be. And whenever you look up, there I shall be.*

Such beautiful words you chose there, Emma and Jack and I am privileged you asked me to help out with reading those.

You have also both written some very special words of your own today, and I invite you both now to speak them to your mum and Isaac.

You want to make your own promises to your new family to show your own commitments to each other and to the lives you will forge together.

Jack, you're first – if you're ready, please repeat after me:

I promise to love everyone in our family, to be kind to everyone and to always have fun together. I promise to always enjoy Isaac's pancakes!

That was wonderful Jack, well done!



Emma, are you ready? Please repeat your promises after me:

I promise to love Mum, Isaac and Jack equally. I promise be honest, to listen and respect everyone in our family. I promise to make sure we make lots of memories together on big walks and swimming in the ocean.

Thank you Emma, that was very special.

Such beautiful promises for you both to make on such a memorable occasion.

Shortly, your mum and Isaac will be lighting a Unity Candle to commemorate the first steps you four will take as a new family.

The Unity Candle is intertwined within both Christian and secular culture and can be a special way to show the joining of two families and the beginning of their new lives.

In preparation for this, they have asked you both to light the first candles.

Please follow me to the table to perform this act.

We have two candles here, in candlesticks, one for you each to light.

I will help you by lighting a match for you each.

Then, you use that match to light your candles.

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Don't forget to blow the match out when you've finished!

Lovely job both of you. Now that's done, please return to your seats.

## *Commitments*

Catherine to Isaac, you are about to make a commitment to each other for the rest of your lives.

You come here today full of love for each other and also full of experience and wisdom, with your own beliefs and values, and having already trodden your own paths to get here.

You stand here today in front of each other, honouring each other and everything that has led you here, holding that in your hearts in everything you do.

I ask you both to face each other, take each other's hands, and make these commitments today:

Catherine, do you promise to love Isaac, to respect his faith, to hold dear the path that led him to you, and to support him as he continues to grow with you by his side?

*Catherine: I do*

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Isaac, do you promise to love Catherine, to nurture her creativity, to hold dear the path that led her to you, and to support her as she continues to grow with you by her side?

*Isaac: I do*

The importance of the wisdom and experiences that led you both to this moment and what you both bring to this marriage cannot be understated.

You both recognise this today by lighting a unity candle.

In doing this, you demonstrate your respect for one another and you honour the blending of your two families here today and for always.

You will use the two candles already lit by Emma and Jack to help you pour love and unity into the central candle.

Please join me at the table to light the candle.

Jointly, each of you please take one of the lit candles and use it to light the central candle.

Once that is lit, please return Emma and Jack's candles to their candlesticks and come back to the centre.

Such a meaningful symbol of everything we celebrate here today.

## Vows

Isaac and Catherine, you have made your commitments to each other. Are you now ready to make your vows?

You have written your own very special vows to each other today, recognising the journeys you've taken up to this point in your lives, the mountains you've climbed, and the challenges you've faced both together and individually.

Ruth has printed these vows in these very special keepsake notebooks for you, which I will give to you now.

I now invite you both to speak your vows in turn, to each other.

Isaac, when you are ready, please speak your vows to Catherine.

*Isaac reads his vows aloud to Catherine:*

*As I enter into this partnership with you, Catherine, I know that, even with my lifetime's experience, you have taught me so much and you will continue to teach me in every day that we walk through life together today. You are incredible to me and I love you for the way that you approach life as a blank canvas, seeing the possibilities in everything. You inspire me in everything you do and the resilience you always show.*

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*I promise, from this day forwards, to honour you, to support you, to love you and to protect you. I promise to respect and love Emma and Jack and to inspire them in every day that I am privileged enough to spend with them, and with you.*

*With God as our guide, I vow to walk beside you, to support you in every challenge you face, every mountain you climb, until death parts us.*

Thank you, Isaac.

Catherine, when you are ready, please speak your vows to Isaac.

*Catherine reads her vows aloud to Isaac:*

*I come here today to enter into an everlasting partnership with you, Isaac. I do this with my eyes wide open, and with the wisdom and experience I bring from the past. I use that experience to make our lives better, to love you wholly and to nurture our new family.*

*We start today as a truly committed couple and we do that knowing the differences in our backgrounds and the uniqueness this brings to our family.*

*I promise to always celebrate our uniqueness, to draw on this to inspire our adventures and to push through any challenges we may face together.*

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*I promise to love you, to put you, Emma and Jack first, and to commit myself completely to this partnership, on this day and everyday forwards.*

## *Ring Exchange*

With your commitments and vows made, you will both now exchange your wedding rings as a symbol of the permanence of the promises you make today.

Jack, the rings have been in your safekeeping. Please could you bring the rings forward and place them in my folder?

*PAUSE whilst Jack brings the rings forward and places them on the Celebrant's folder. He then returns to his seat.*

Thank you, Jack, for looking after these precious items so carefully.

Catherine and Isaac, your wedding rings, in an infinite circle, are a permanent reminder of the vows and commitments you make today.

They are a token of your love and something you will carry with you always as you forge a new path together in your lives.

Catherine, please take Isaac's ring and place it on his finger, and repeat after me:

This ring symbolises the path we tread together, the mountains we've climbed to get here, and my eternal and never-ending love for you,

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both in this life and beyond. It symbolises the joining of our two families and the new future we forge as two people in love and as a newly blended family.

I give you this ring as a token of my love and as a reminder for always of the vows I make to you today.

Isaac, please take Catherine's ring and place it on her finger, and repeat after me:

This ring, inclusive of stones from Table Mountain and the Peak District, symbolises the path we tread together, the mountains we've climbed to get here, and my eternal and never-ending love for you, both in this life and beyond. It symbolises the joining of our two families and the new future we forge as two people in love and as a newly blended family.

I give you this ring as a token of my love and as a reminder for always of the vows I make to you today.

In exchanging these rings today, you both offer each other strength, support, honesty, and compromise for this day and in every day moving forward in your lives together.

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You offer each other a symbol that shows you put each other and the children before all else, as you unite your families and create your new future.

*Gingethi: The Pink Celebrant*



## *The Kiss*

Now that you have exchanged your rings and made your commitments and vows, there is only one thing left to do:

Family and friends present and everyone watching via video link, I ask you – if you are able – to stand, to cheer as loud as you can, to clap your hands as I ask Isaac and Catherine to truly unite as one and share their first kiss!

A truly wonderful moment!

Please, everyone who was able to stand, take a seat for a moment more as I say a few final words to our Bride and Groom.

## *The Future*

Isaac and Catherine, your future together and with Emma and Jack as a newly unified and unique family, is one that no one else can or will ever replicate.

You will all have many, many more adventures, and you will have many new experiences.

I know you will do this with love for each other and with respect for who you are and what led you all here.

The trees you will plant after your ceremony, both here in the Peak District and at Table Mountain, will grow as your family fuses together, symbolising the love and support you give to each other and the life that you are nurturing.

On your future adventures and as you are climbing those mountains and treading those paths, don't forget to stop and take it all in.

Take each other's hands as you walk and feel the sand and the grass beneath your feet.

Look out at the endless and exhilarating views. Look up at the glistening stars as they smile down on you. Do it not alone, but do it together.

## *Closing Words and Blessings*

To conclude our celebration of Catherine and Isaac's wonderful and unique story, we will hear a traditional Zulu Blessing specially prepared by Isaac's mother.

A blessing such as this helps us honour the family's ancestors, strengthen the bonds of the two families being joined through this very special ceremony, and, most importantly, bring good fortune to our couple for their future.

I know that you will all join me in wishing this for Catherine, Isaac, Emma, and Jack, today and always.

Grace, if you would like to come to the front, please, to give your blessing.

*Grace comes to the front.*

As Grace's blessing concludes, we will hear straight away from the Johannesburg Gospel Choir as they give us a stunning rendition of the *Hamba Lulu, or Zulu Wedding Song*, as our newly united couple leaves this beautiful ceremony today.

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I invite you all, on behalf of Catherine and Isaac, and led by Isaac's Uncle Joseph, your Master of Ceremonies, to join in the singing, dancing, and feasting that will follow! Take it away, Grace!

*Today, Catherine and Isaac, you have joined your relationship and created a new family. You are the hopes to grow the seed planted by the Creator. Your love is like no other. You are each other's hope, the light in each other's lives. You were destined by the King to be together. You will change the "I" to "We." Because you are together, you win in life.*

*Close your eyes, touch your heart: the way it beats now and will always beat because you will always be happy. You will grow through actions, not words. In happiness and joy, you will be together. The truth will be the beginning and end of your love.*

*There is a Creator in your love and in your family. You will be five in your marriage: Isaac, Catherine, Emma, Jack and the Creator. The Creator will be the weaver of your family. The rings you exchanged today will be a symbol of joy and love, not a curse.*

*You five will be blessed with the love of our ancestors! Our celebrations today will join our ancestors and our families together. With the drinking of the beer, the feasting and the dancing, we will rejoice in the wonder of your love and your union.*

*Be happy, be together, be in LOVE!*