# Welcome Family and Friends,

We are thankful that you are here to join us on our wedding day.

Today we come together to honor two distinct traditions. The Hindu wedding ceremony encompasses a symbolic order of events stemming from the Vedas, the oldest of Hindu scriptures. The Christian wedding ceremony marks the formation of a covenant between two individuals in the same way that one forms a covenant with God. On this occasion, we pay respect to both as we celebrate our love.

We will bless this marriage under a Mandap, a four pillared structure that symbolizes our first home and serves as a forum for God to witness and bless our union. We will also exchange wedding bands, a Christian tradition that signifies the unending commitment we make to one another. We will finish by reciting vows to each other in both Sanskrit and English: some of these are ancient and repeated at many weddings while others we have written ourselves.

This program seeks to explain some of the traditions that we will honor today, and we hope that it illustrates common themes we have found in both faiths.

We are grateful that you are here with us to witness and celebrate this moment,

Renuka & Shiv

The minute I heard my first love story I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was.  
Lovers don’t finally meet somewhere. They’re in each other all along.  
- Rumi (1207-1273)

# Baraat - Wedding Procession of the Groom

The groom makes his way to the wedding venue surrounded by his family and friends as they dance to music. The bride’s parents and family welcome him and perform an aarti (blessing) before the groom and his family enter inside.

# Madhuparka - Welcoming the Groom

The mother of the bride welcomes the groom to the Mandap, and the father of the bride washes the groom’s feet and honors him with honey water, rice, and flowers. Family members then raise a curtain in preparation of the bride’s arrival.

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. (John 13:14-15)

# Kanya Agaman - Arrival of the Bride

The father of the bride leads her to the Mandap where the mother and father of the groom greet her.

An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.  
The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.  
She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. (Proverbs 31:10-12)

# Antarpat - Exchange of Garlands

The raised curtain is removed and the bride and groom see each other for the first time. Garlands are exchanged between them as a form of respect.

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks  
himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with jewels (Isaiah 61:10)

# Kanyadaan - Entrusting of the Bride

The parents of the bride give her away by placing her hand over the groom’s. The couple promises each other endless love and devotion, and a hand-woven cord, a varmala, is placed around the bride and groom to unite and protect them from evil.

So they are no longer two but one flesh.  
What therefore God has joined together let not man separate. (Matthew 19:6)

# Mangalfera - Sacred Rounds

The couple walks around the holy fire (agni) four times, with the groom leading 3 times, and the bride, 1 time. Each round represents Hindu goals in life: Dharma (righteousness), Artha (accomplishment), Kama (energy and passion), and Moksha (liberation).

Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Wherever you go, I shall go, wherever you live, I shall live. Your people will be my people... and where you die, I shall die... (Ruth 1:16-17)

# Saptapadi - Seven Steps

The couple takes steps to symbolize the seven blessings in their journey through life:

* **First Step**: An invocation to God for plentitude of food and nourishment
* **Second Step**: A prayer for mental and physical strength
* **Third Step**: A fulfillment of spiritual obligations and duties
* **Fourth Step**: An attainment of happiness in all walks of life
* **Fifth Step**: A blessing for strong and virtuous children
* **Sixth Step**: A prayer for longevity and bountiful seasons together
* **Seventh Step**: A prayer for true companionship in a life filled with understanding, loyalty, and unity

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and...forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12-14)

# Wedding Vows

The bride and groom recite vows that they have written to one another stating their commitment to the marriage. They exchange rings symbolizing their never-ending love and their covenant with God.

I will make for you a covenant... and I will take you for my wife forever;  
I will take you for my wife in righteousness and justice, in steadfast love and mercy,  
I will take you for my wife in faithfulness. (Hosea 2:18-19)

# Mangalsutra Bandhan - Tying of the Auspicious Necklace

The groom adorns the bride with an auspicious necklace, or mangalsutra, a symbol of unity, love and friendship.

You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride; you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. (Song of Solomon 4:9)

# Pathi Purvani - Blessing of the Bride

The groom places sindhoor (red powder) on the forehead of the bride, promising to forever protect her and keep her happy.

Husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh. (Ephesians 5:28 and 31)

*What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to minister to each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent unspoken memories. - George Eliot* (1819-1880)