

# Wedding Nuances

## Ceremonies alive with changing traditions

By KEMA SODERBERG

Wedding traditions: Breaking a wine glass. Kissing the bride. Sharing communion.

Tradition creeps into ceremonies but "the traditional" Jewish, Protestant or Catholic wedding now is nearly extinct. Couples arrange ceremonies based on traditions that have meaning to them.

Rabbi Ian Jacknis, from the Tifereth Israel Synagogue, said the Jewish wedding ceremony "takes normal, everyday things and puts it on a higher level." He said weddings sanctify a relationship and are a way of saying "You're special to me."

Jewish couples can base their wedding celebrations on services from the Orthodox, Conservative or Reform movements. These three branches of Judaism vary in their ties to tradition. Elements in the Orthodox tradition based on superstition or the business aspect of marriage are absent from most Reform marriage ceremonies.

The rabbi, who recently moved to Lincoln from New York, said many couples have tradition-based weddings because they think "it's a custom, it should be done." Some think there's something wrong with them if they don't follow the customs.

There is room for originality, though.

Many couples involve their families and friends in the service, he said. Sometimes they read scripture or sing. Hebrew music is normally sung, but Jacknis said the theme from *Tootsie* was used in one wedding.

Jacknis said contemporary weddings depend on how innovative the couple is and what the rabbi allows.

"The rabbi may say 'Don't mess around with this part,'" Jacknis said.

Judaism borrows customs from non-Jewish traditions, he said. One such tradition is the ring and its "formula," a wedding vow. Jewish women traditionally have received wedding bands and "formulas" but now they also give them to their husbands.

When giving the ring, men traditionally say: "You are hereby consecrated unto me with this ring in accordance with the law of Moses and the faith of Israel."

Sometimes women say this phrase, but many quote a passage from the Song of Solomon: "I am to my husband and my beloved is mine."

One traditional aspect of the Jewish wedding is the feat after the ceremony. Jacknis said they are very popular in large Jewish communities.

People dance, blow horns and juggle. Sometimes the crowd sets the bride and groom in chair and dances while holding them in the air.

Huge family parties with rock bands or music are popular after Christian weddings, said the Rev. Dr. William Deahl, minister at Grace United Methodist Church.

The pastor said these get-togethers are most popular in rural communities where couples tend to have large support structures. Sometimes 200 to 500 people attend.

Deahl said the city weddings he's

performed are "fairly small." Most people are 17 to 33 years old when they marry. If they attend UNL, they probably will go home for their service.

Most of the wedding ceremonies Deahl has performed at Grace United Methodist are "transient weddings," he said. He said people will walk in and want a wedding done in two days. They come to the church because "that's where weddings are done, not necessarily out of a commitment" to the church, he said.

Deahl said the United Methodist Book of Discipline requires ministers to hold sessions with the couple before they are married.

"Usually, by the time anybody comes in, there's very little that a minister can do to change the decision," Deahl said.

Meeting with the couple does give the minister a chance to make the service "as friendly as you can get it."

Family members sometimes sing or read scriptures, prayers or poems. Younger relatives become ring bearers or flower girls.

"I'm not sure if there is a typical marriage service," Deahl said.

Music is an element that makes weddings different. Deahl said there are two varieties. The first, basic style includes classical music sometimes played by professional musicians.

Modern music is the second variety. Deahl said one couple he married used Country-Western music in their service.

Writing your own wedding vows also makes a service distinctive, Deahl said. Some people are concerned about sexist language and are sensitive to the language of traditional vows. However, the minister said, he's seeing less innovation in this area.

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