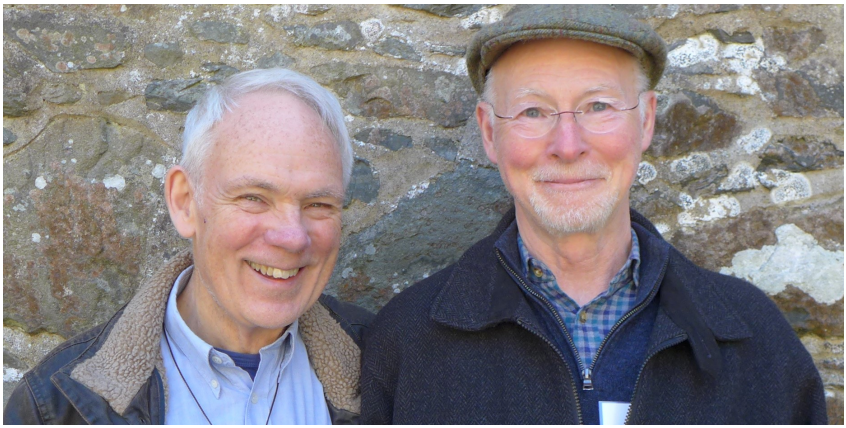

Ross Burgess & Peter Burman

Affirmation of Vows

Conducted by Revd Art Lester

Music by Gillian Stone

Croydon Unitarian Church

15 June 2019

THE FULL TEXT OF THE CEREMONY WILL BE ON OUR WEBSITE: WWW.FOXEARTH.NET/WEDDING.

Introduction

GATHERING MUSIC: 'Elizabeth' and 'In the Garden' (from *Shulbrede Tunes*) by Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry (1848–1918).

The Minister, Revd Art Lester, will invite everyone to stand for the entrance of Ross and Peter.

ENTRANCE MUSIC: 'Salut D'Amour' by Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934).

Peter and Ross will light the Chalice flame – the symbol of Unitarianism

Introduction by the Minister

Remembering Roger

A moment to remember Ross's late husband, Roger Burg.

Hymn

Let Love Continue Long

Let love continue long,
and show to us the way,
and if that love be strong,
no hurt can have a say;
and if that love remain but strong,
no hurt can ever have a say.

If love cannot be found,
though common faith prevails,
when love does not abound,
a common faith will fail.
When human love does not abound,
a common faith will always fail.

If we in love unite,
debate can cause no strife:
for with this love in sight,
disputes enrich our life.
For with this bond of human love,
disputes can mean a richer life.

May love continue long,
and lead us on our way:
for if that love be strong,
no hurt can have a say.
For if that love remain but strong,
no hurt can ever have a say.

Traditional American words, set to music by John Ireland (1879–1962).

A reading by Peter Scott-Presland

When I Heard at the Close of the Day

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd,

And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still I was not happy,

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,

When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning light,

When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,

And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way coming, O then I was happy,

O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,

And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came my friend,

And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly continually up the shores,

I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me whispering to congratulate me,

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool night,

In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,

And his arm lay lightly around my breast – and that night I was happy.

From Leaves of Grass *by Walt Whitman, 1819–1892.*

About Ross and Peter

The Minister: As many of you will know Peter and Ross first met as young men in London in 1970 almost half a century ago. At that time ill-informed prejudice against gay people was so great that the relationship they had then had only recently been liberated from being 'against the law'. The idea that they might have been able to commit themselves to one another in marriage would then have seemed like a cruel mirage.

After about a year, young and inexperienced as they were, they went their separate ways. Each had other relationships. Each had busy and satisfying professional careers. Peter blossomed in the world of architectural conservation, Ross in the field of IT. Both gave lectures, wrote books and articles. Both had many enriching opportunities. They also experienced sadness and loss, as we all do … and, happily, they never quite lost touch.

For the past year and a half they have come back together in love and friendship for one another, testing their vocation by living and sharing their still busy lives.

They have also set about sharing one another's friendships – your presence here today symbolises the importance of friendship in all our lives. Today, in your presence, Ross and Peter will reiterate a specific commitment to one another, to continue their life journeys together, however short or long they may be.

A reading by Bill Connor

From the Song of Solomon

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.
Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.
Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

Song of Solomon 2: 10–13, 8: 6–7; the King James Version (1611) of this ancient Hebrew love poem. The 'turtle' is of course the turtle dove.

A song, sung by Lol Benbow

When they begin the Beguine

When they begin the beguine
It brings back the sound of music so tender,
It brings back a night of tropical splendor,
It brings back a memory ever green.

I'm with you once more under the stars,
And down by the shore an orchestra's playing
And even the palms seem to be swaying
When they begin the beguine.
To live it again is past all endeavor,
Except when that tune clutches my heart,

And there we are, swearing to love forever,
And promising never, never to part.

What moments divine, what rapture serene,
Till clouds came along to disperse the joys we had tasted,
And now when I hear people curse the chance that was wasted,
I know but too well what they mean;

So don't let them begin the beguine
Let the love that was once a fire remain an ember;
Let it sleep like the dead desire I only remember
When they begin the beguine.

Oh yes, let them begin the beguine, make them play
Till the stars that were there before return above you,
Till you whisper to me once more, 'Darling, I love you!'
And we suddenly know, what heaven we're in,
When they begin the beguine.

Words and music by Cole Porter (1891–1964).

A reading by Ross's cousin Ann Scott

People are like Cities

People are like cities: we all have alleys and gardens and secret rooftops and places where daisies sprout between the sidewalk cracks, but most of the time all we let each other see is a postcard glimpse of a skyline or a polished square. Love lets you find those hidden places in another person, even the ones they didn't know were there, even the ones they wouldn't have thought to call beautiful themselves.

From Wild Awake *by Hilary T. Smith.*

The Vows

Minister: So, having considered alone and together this marriage, I now ask you, Ross, and you, Peter, are you ready to repeat your vows of commitment?

Ross and Peter: Yes, we are.

Minister: Now symbolically I bind you once for the love Peter has for Ross … twice for the love Ross has for Peter … and a third time for the love that everyone here has for you both. Ross and Peter are now going to repeat their pledges and vows before you all, while they remain handfasted together.

Ross: I, Ross Christopher Burgess, do take thee, Peter Ashley Thomas Insull Burman, to be my wedded husband, the dear companion of my days, for as long as we are given to be with one another: for better for worse; for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health.

Peter: I, Peter Ashley Thomas Insull Burman, do take thee, Ross Christopher Burgess, to be my wedded husband, the dear companion of my days, for as long as we are given to be with one another: for better for worse; for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health.

Minister: At their wedding a week ago, Ross and Peter exchanged rings and took their vows. They are already wearing their rings, but today, before you all, they will repeat what they said on exchanging rings, and publicly declare that they wish to spend the rest of their lives together.

Ross: Peter, as a sign and symbol of my commitment to you, I place this ring upon your finger. Accept it, and with it me, and my love for you.

PETER: Ross, I do gladly accept your ring, and your love, and I accept you as my lawful wedded husband.

PETER: Ross, as a sign and symbol of my commitment to you, I place this ring upon your finger. Accept it, and with it me, and my love for you.

ROSS: Peter, I do gladly accept your ring, and your love, and I accept you as my lawful wedded husband.

MINISTER: Peter and Ross have now repeated before you the vows they made before their Humanist celebrant, Neil Anderson, following which he declared that they were legally married according to the laws of Scotland. So now I have pleasure in declaring before you all that they are HUSBAND AND HUSBAND!

The Quaich

The quaich is a traditional drinking cup, unique to Scotland

MINISTER: Strike hands with me, the glasses brim,
The dew is on the heather,
For love is good and life is long
And two are best together.
Bless the union of these two loving men
Eager for marriage, eager for love,
May they begin life together,
Live that life together
And come to the end together.

Art presents the Quaich to Peter and Ross who drink from it in turn.

The Acclamation

Minister: Dear friends, I now invite you all to join together in a communal acclamation to Ross and Peter, as set out in your Order of Ceremony.

All join with the Minister in saying:

Peter and Ross, we acknowledge you as husband and husband according to the vows you have made to one other.

We offer you our affirmation and support.

We thank you for your friendship, for the opportunity to be together today, and for the opportunity to share in this landmark moment in your lives.

We bless you, we affirm you, we give you our love.

Hymn

Jerusalem

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England's mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England's pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold:
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold:
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green & pleasant Land.

Words by William Blake, music by Charles Hubert Hastings Parry

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Closing Music: *'Chanson de Matin' by Sir Edward Elgar*

You are invited

to join Ross and Peter for the Garden Party at 104 Pampisford Road, Purley CR8 2NF. Bus numbers 405 and 455, alighting at the Wyvern Road stop.

There is no Wealth but Life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.

— John Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, 1860