

The Rev. Dr. Mary Barber

The Wedding of Mac Prell and Nigel Law

Sat., Sept. 5th

Isn't this an awesome day? All of us are here because we have some connection to Mac and Nigel, from school, work, the neighborhood, from this community of St Martin's. Mac and Nigel each grew up in St Martin's, they met and grew close here, and they are here today taking this next step in their relationship and life together.

We are here today to witness vows Mac and Nigel will make. Marriage is a vow, it is a set of promises, like those made in baptism and in confirmation. Promises to love God and each other, to live into and become our truest self, the person God made us to be.

Marriage is another step in this same journey. As Ruth says to Naomi in our first reading, Where you go I will go, where you live I will live, your people will be my people. Nigel and Mac are vowing today to walk together as they grow into being fully themselves. Curiously and surprisingly, they will find, as they have probably already discovered a little bit, that the closer they can be as a couple, the more they will become the unique individual each of them is. The more comfortable they will be in their own skin, the more they will be bold enough to go for their dreams, even as they grow into this new way of being as a couple and chosen family.

Loving God, loving each other, being our realest truest self. These are big promises, they are not easy. And so we make our promises of baptism and confirmation and marriage in community, with people to help us on the journey.

This wedding has brought former St Martin's folk from near and far away, Oberlin and Sarah Lawrence friends, extended family and others together. This room reflects Nigel and Mac's individuality as well as the common life they are making together, it is a colorful and varied tapestry of all their connections and experiences in life so far.

We who are here today are proud, excited, and happy for Nigel and Mac. We are also really lucky, privileged to see a visible example of love between two people, an example of commitment and caring. A visible example of the Divine, because when we see how this couple looks at each other we can get a glimpse of how God looks at us. Nigel and Mac are for us a sign of God's immense love for each of us. They are a sign and a reminder of the love we have experienced, the love we have given and received. They are a reminder of how precious that love is and has been, how lucky we are to experience it.

Marriage is a vow. And it is a sign, a visible example of love in this world that desperately needs it. A visible sign of God's love for us. Once we have the experience of such a love, of such a presence, it is with us forever, as Mary Howe expresses in our second reading. Once we have that experience, it can never be taken from us.

We gathered here are a sign for Mac and Nigel as well. We are here to support their promises, and also, to be an embodied presence for them of God's support and God's love. There are others here too, people in Mac and Nigel's life who have died, who are saints in light, present and smiling and cheering today. There are the saints who Mac and Nigel never knew, folks who have worshiped here over these past 135 years, whose tears and laughter and prayers are soaked in these pews. They too are rejoicing today. In days and years ahead, when Mac and Nigel are in the flow of life, when they celebrate in good times, they can remember this vision of a room filled with love, of all of us, those living and those who have come before. When they struggle through the difficult times, they can know that they don't do it alone.

Marriage is a vow. Marriage is a sign. And also, marriage is an invitation to step into an adventure together. When we say yes to love, we step into an unknown. We cannot know how it will work out. Marriage is an invitation, an opportunity, a lovely risk we take alongside another person.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus says, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. Jesus urges us to keep trying for what we want and need, from each other, and from God. Jesus says, keep knocking, keep asking.

Nigel and Mac have heard this invitation and have asked, have knocked, on the way to this day. When they knew they would be separated as they headed to different colleges, they wondered whether their relationship could last. And also, they thought, as long as it's good, as long as it works, why not try? They have already listened to each other's dreams and hopes. They have listened to fears -- like, this really can't happen, it's too big or too expensive or I can't. They have listened and said, Why not try? Why not talk about it and dream about it more?

Why not ask. Why not knock. Why not keep walking together and see where the path leads? This asking, this knocking on the door of possibility, the door of love, has brought two people to this day. This day of promises, this day of signs, this day of invitation and possibility.

Michaela and Nigel, as you go forward, may you always remember the love in this room on this day. You are saying yes to a beautiful adventure together. Know that all of us here, those present, those who wanted to be here, and the ancestors, the saints, are all with you on this path, walking beside you,

to witness and support and help if you just ask. Know that God too is walking with you both, every step of the way.

In the days and years ahead, may you keep practicing your vows, your acts of love for each other. In the days and years ahead, may you keep dreaming, keep asking for your heart's desire. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened for you. Amen.