

CEREMONIES FROM THE FRONTLINE

by Charlotte Eulette, North American Director

Celebrants are like a prism, gathering the light of the story to be told and from the many facets shines the ceremony, beaming forth authenticity and meaning. Raising awareness locally in communities, reaching out to people from all walks of life, paying homage, listening to the stories and recognizing all life forms on our planet are all facets to what it means to be a life-cycle Community Celebrant.



In the years including 2007 our North American Celebrants have shared with us the ceremonies that connected them and electrified their ever-growing relationship with life and Celebrancy.

I am thrilled and honored to be part of this embracing, tuned-in and generous community and to have been given permission to share their beloved ceremonies with you. When you are so moved or intrigued by a Celebrant and their ceremony

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NEWS FROM THE CELEBRANT INSTITUTE

by Cynthia K. Reed, Director of Academics



The Class of 2008 is underway and it is an exciting time at the Institute, with our largest class of students ever and a roster of experienced Celebrant faculty members bringing fresh insight into our constantly evolving curriculum. Class of 2008 includes 63 new students, as well as a dozen returning alumni studying for additional certificates and ten students completing the Celebrancy Business certificate course.

Celebrancy continues to expand with students from twenty-three states and one Canadian province. For the first time, we will have Celebrants in Kansas, North Carolina and Tennessee. Nearly fifteen percent of our new students are men, and we will have the largest class of funeral and family Celebrant students in our history.

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A FUNERAL AND A NEW BEGINNING

by Elizabeth Phaire, Faculty member & Celebrant

What can you do when you are at a major crossroads in your relationship, but neither you nor your partner really want to break-up? I was faced with this question last November, when my 7-year relationship with my boyfriend Joseph came to a painful end. We loved each other deeply, and knew that this phase of relationship we had been in was definitely over - it had died. Yet we could see the possibility of a new relationship glimmering through the shambles of our old relationship; but we did not know how to clear our path to it. Too much had happened for us to simply say:

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LABYRINTH CEREMONIES

by Cristina Spencer, California Celebrant

The first time I walked a Labyrinth was in the Fall of 2002. As the closing ceremony to a class entitled The Wisdom of the World's Religions, our teacher took us to the outdoor Labyrinth at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Without elaborate explanation or description, our she offered us the Labyrinth. As the fog rolled in over the city she held the space for us to enter the walk one at a time, and was there to receive us as we completed our walk. For most of us it was our first time.

The experience that unfolded for me that evening was typical of what the Labyrinth inspires in many people. The spiraling directions disoriented me and I had to focus on my steps to stay on the path. Step by step I felt my mind grow quiet and then shift into a calm and receptive state. Things about my life that

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GENDER AND OUR APPROACH TO RITUAL

by Jack Cuffari, Celebrant and Ritualist

The Role of Gender in Our Approach To Ritual is a topic that is vitally important to have on the table to discuss. It's an honor and a blessing to witness both genders represented so fully at Celebrant gatherings, evidence that this is to some extent "preaching to the converted."

Let me begin with the ancient tale of Tiresias. Tiresias was a blind prophet, the most famous soothsayer of ancient Greece. Once when Tiresias was walking in the woods, he came upon two great serpents mating; he struck them with his staff, and was

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We welcome new faculty members Dorry Bless, Caroline Flanders, Deb Goldman, Lamira Martin, Peggy Lewis, Elizabeth Phaire and Regina Ruopoli, adding their breadth of experience and dynamic teaching styles to the program. We are thrilled to have April Beer, Cynthia Matchett and Woody Winfree return to teach this year.

What students are saying about the course:

“I want to congratulate you all on the community you have created. I like the people the institute is attracting and I can see the vision and determination it has taken to see this through. Hooray for you!” ~ **Dina Stander, Shutesbury, Massachusetts**

“This is my first foray into online learning and my first class of any kind in over 40 years. To say that I was apprehensive is a gross understatement. I am finally feeling that I truly belong here, and look forward to the new vistas sure to open in the next 6 months.” ~ RJ Esposito, Mukwonago, Wisconsin

“I appreciate the level of readings and the thoughtful way they were chosen and put together, the attention to quality and scholarship, awareness of issues around oppression and cultural

(mis)appropriation, etc. I feel quite confident that this was the right choice for me.” ~ Lori Anne Agricola, Dayton, Ohio

“I just wanted to say how extraordinarily happy I am to read the eight points in the Fundamentals of Celebrancy Class 1 document under: “How do Celebrants differ from other types of officiants.” These eight-points state exactly how I was imagining my role of a Celebrant would be.” ~ Wing-Siu Wong, Vancouver, British Columbia

It’s not too late to register for Winter 2008 certificate courses! We are offering Weddings, Funerals and Ceremonies for Families and Children from February to April 2008. Contact the Institute for more information.

We are currently accepting applications of next year’s 2008-2009 program! Please refer interested friends, family members or clients to us – this year’s class includes several students who came to us after participating in or observing a Celebrant-led ceremony. Please contact me at: cynthiakreed@celebrantusa.com or 973.249.3974.



Cristina Spencer, California Celebrant

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let us know and we’ll be glad to put you in touch with your colleague Celebrant. Also, don’t forget many of the ceremonies below and an array of others await you in our on-line Celebrant Members’ library. I invite you to share your ceremonies with us in our next issue of the Celebrant Spring 2008 Newsletter.

Anna Bacall, MA, Celebrant -- Highest Wedding Ceremony! The most adventurous Mountain Climbing Summit Ceremony and the highest altitude wedding yet at 4,675 feet! Anna’s wedding couple’s ceremony took place at the White Mountains National Forest in NH on Mount Hight, appropriately enough. Says Anna, “this was the most spectacular, most amazing experience ever.”

The ceremony began at 5:00 in the morning at the bottom of the mountain and the couple, Anna and her husband hiked five hours to the top of the mountain. Some of rituals: hand-ceremony, blessing of the stones and stone toss over the sum-

mit - and the couple had inscribed on their rings the latitude and longitude of their love. Here is an excerpt from the Wedding - Anna’s words:

“C and L, nearly 4 years ago, fate introduced you on this very summit where we stand today.

Who could have imagined on that day that life’s journey would lead you back here, to stand once again on this mountain, but this time side by side, at the start of a new life together, as husband and wife.”



Funeral Committee Members Jeff Staab, Charlotte Eulette and Dorry Bless at the Funeral Expo in Atlantic City

Kit Turen, W. DC Celebrant -- Job Leaving Passage Ceremony

This ceremony marked the occasion for the honoree as she was leaving her job to take a new position at another non-profit organization. The surprise ceremony was created and facilitated by Certified Celebrant Kit Turen with the participation of the honoree’s colleagues.

In advance of the ceremony, Kit asked work col-

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had seemed complex started to make sense. And, as I look back now, I can see that my first walk through the labyrinth drew me into a meditative state, one which has taken a lot more practice to achieve in yoga or seated meditation. For me, and as it turns out, for many people, the labyrinth can be a kind of portal to a quiet state of mind.

My initial experience intrigued me, and I've been experimenting with the Labyrinth since then. One of the first ceremonies I did using the Labyrinth was a walk to celebrate a friend's pregnancy. Instead of a traditional shower, we invited three generations of women to walk a classical Labyrinth in my back yard. Like my teacher before me, I refrained from elaborate explanation and let the Labyrinth speak for itself. That day, the path served as a metaphor for pregnancy, for labor, for motherhood, and probably for private personal experiences I will never know. While we walked, we were contained as individuals and brought together as a group. Afterwards, my pregnant friend's mother wrote me to say that she felt blessed to have had the



opportunity to celebrate her daughters pregnancy in such a meaningful way. While I'd like to take credit, the truth is, the Labyrinth moves people. It has endured through the centuries because it works. It offers people a simple beautiful way to think, to pray, to celebrate, or just to take a walk.

As fall turns to winter, as one year rolls into the next, and as we head into the darkest night of the year on the winter solstice, it is a time of year that calls us to turn inward and reflect. At the same time, the world at large calls us out, to shop for holiday gifts, to prepare for celebrations and to catch up with family and friends. In the middle of all this, the labyrinth can offer a quiet

refuge, and calm amidst all the bustle of the season. I encourage anyone who is interested, to experience the Labyrinth for themselves, or if you have experience with the Labyrinth, to share it with others. For more information on finding a Labyrinth near you check the world wide Labyrinth Locator. <http://www.veriditas.labyrinthsociety.org/>

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leagues to create Gratitude and Blessing Flags. Each person wrote an appreciation of honoree (Gratitude Flag) and a blessing for her journey (Blessing Flag); these were put on a beautiful pieces of paper. Colleagues also wrote a special word for her on a rock or stone. Stones were provided or people could bring their own. These rocks then made the threshold that she would cross as part of the ceremony.

Adam Phillips, NY Celebrant Offered up a ceremony at his Vassar College Reunion. Adam also tells us that he has developed a Peace Circle that's open to the public. Celebrants Adam Phillips and NJ Celebrant Moya Powers-Keating presided over a Heart Broken Open Public Ceremony that took place around Valentine's Day in New York City. Adam dares to pierce the veil with ceremonies that tap into a community's psyche in profound ways.



Massachusetts Celebrants Deb Goldman and Anna Bacall at the Partners in Perinatal Health Expo last May

Caroline Flanders, Andy McCuen and Toni Torquato – The San Diego, CA Celebrant Chapter hosted a Holiday Remembrance Ceremony at the Sheraton Hotel with the support of Caroline's employer The Trident Society. San Diego Celebrants are creating community focused ceremonies and will be

approaching a Veterans Home for a Memorial Day 2008 Ceremony.

Elisabeth Phaire, NYC Celebrant and Faculty Member presided over a funeral ceremony for a retired Policeman, retired Marine, friend, father and grandfather. The ceremony included military and police funeral rituals, taps and included a flower gifting by the grandchildren.

Elizabeth also had the great honor this summer of officiating at her dear mom's wedding in the suburbs of Chicago, Ill. It was so meaningful to both of them to share in this mother and daughter event of a lifetime!

Beth Sandweiss, NJ Celebrant experienced the joy of officiating at her friend and Celebrant classmate Risa Marlen's marriage to her hus-

band Paul.

Roberta Koepfer, NY Wedding Celebrant Officiated at her son's wedding ceremony in the Northwest of the US this past year. Roberta is continuing her education and will be

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thereupon transformed into a woman. Some stories have him – er, her marrying and some have her serving as a temple prostitute. Seven years later, she passed by the same place and came upon the same two serpents mating again; she/he struck them again with the staff and was turned back into a man. One version says that because he did NOT interfere with them he was turned back.

Some time later, Zeus and Hera were arguing over who had more pleasure in sex, the man or the woman: Zeus said it was the woman, while Hera claimed men got more pleasure from the act. To settle the argument, they consulted Tiresias, since he had experienced life as both sexes, and Tiresias sided with Zeus. In her anger at his having spoken this truth, Hera struck Tiresias blind. Since Zeus could not undo the act of another deity, he gave Tiresias the gift of prophecy in compensation.

As Celebrants we have a responsibility to initiate dialogue like this –(dia- meaning "across" + logue – from legein, meaning "speak") – because as Celebrants we have taken it upon ourselves to bring meaningful and intentional ritual back into a society that is literally ill from the vacuum caused by the absence of such discussion and the absence of meaningful acknowledgment of rites of passage.

In terms of Jung's archetype we are the Wise Ones, the Sages, Magicians, Wizards, and Healers. And even a casual study of shamanism will confirm that these roles may be gender specific in pre-modern cultures, but shamans are always shape-shifters, their roles never limited by gender perspective. That is especially important in the context of 21st century western civilization – where we are and who we are.

And I think that perhaps the most prevalent of the ills from which we suffer from the pain of an unhealthy, systemic and societal myth – the myth of the superior gender.

All of us in this post modern, 3rd stage feminist era know that this is false, but we still are caught up in acting out scenarios based on the macho masculine roles – and I've always believed that true equality of the sexes can only be realized if men become liberated from these roles and seek out and em-



Jack Cuffari, New Jersey Celebrant and Ritualist

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taking a Buddhist masters course on Death and Dying. She presided over a Life Recognition Celebration with and for a young man living with a life-threatening illness.



Florida Celebrants Peggy Lewis, Cheri Erdman, Kristi Parks and Woody Winfree at the Orlando ABC Expo

Barb Mann, MN Celebrant and Community Education Director exhibited at the MN Women's Expo to introduce ways for families to incorporate ceremony in the everyday life. As an example she had expo visitors "Tie on a Ribbon for Peace" at her booth and participate in a New Year's release of 2007 by stating their intentions for the new year of 2008. She also participated in a Hospice Caretaker Retreat,

Renewal Ceremony, a Business Relocation Ceremony and a New House and Home Blessing where the parents honored their daughter "as she continued her life journey in this new phase as a first-time homeowner, fully independent and capable, thanks to their support and gifts in parenting."

Cristina Spencer, CA Celebrant creates Mother's Labyrinth Walk Ceremonies for expecting mothers in Palo Alto, CA. Cristina has been studying and working with labyrinths as part of ceremony and ritual for everyday life as well as rituals to acknowledge earth and nature.

Mike Cordle, Seattle WA Celebrant wrote and published an article in an online magazine for a natural foods store on Funeral Celebrancy and 'Green' Funerals. He reaches out to religious organizations in his community to create a dialogue about Funeral Celebrancy. Mike is scheduled to speak at Marlene's Market – a large holistic foods store in the Tacoma/Seattle area.

Cindy Matchett, MA Celebrant, New England Director and Senior Faculty member approached and was engaged by a local senior home and created a pro bono Senior Home Ceremony honoring the lives of the residence and acknowledging those seniors that have recently moved in. Cindy and the North East Celebrants, Anna Bacall, Ellen

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brace the divine masculine.

Let us return to Tiresias for a moment. Unlike other Wise Man archetypes like Odin in Norse mythology or Utnapishtim from the Gilgamesh Epic, here we have the wisest sage of Greek mythology – so wise that he is called upon in death by Odysseus – being a complete amalgam of anima and animus. Wise because he is complete and whole, whole because he is balanced in both his feminine and masculine natures.

We know that there is a much-discussed collective wisdom shared among women, and a less obvious collective wisdom shared among men.

And each of us – male or female – has to travel our own journey – experiencing all that that entails: hard work, pain, death, rebirth, magic, loss, and transformation.

So why do we feel it so necessary to separate by gender to discover and celebrate these collective wisdoms? You know - women's moon circle's to the left – men's Iron Man drumming circle to the right.

Of course we don't intend to infer that each gender shouldn't gather to celebrate, support and affirm one another. But in my



opinion, these efforts can be absolutely divisive if we don't intentionally honor both the other gender, and that gender's presence and expression within our own gender.

I believe that most of what could be termed "evil" comes from lines of separation drawn between our selves and others – belief systems, race, gender, sexual preference, age, class – and if we ever look with contempt on anyone we are not seeing those people as individual human beings, each at their own, individual point of enlightenment. At that point we've created a "them" – an "other" – the beginning of all rationales for persecution. At some level we are all guilty of that. That's something that we have to work to overcome.

Before I had the honor of performing my first crowning ceremony, someone expressed the opinion that it might not be appropriate for me to do so. If that were true, would that mean that a woman couldn't or shouldn't perform a young man's coming of age ritual? That a male Celebrant couldn't or shouldn't perform a ceremony or celebrate the onset of his daughter's menses? Who gets to preside over a ceremony of community re-incorporation? Who gets to name the baby?

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Jackson and Deb Goldman exhibited at the 18th Annual Partners in Perinatal Health in May of 2007. The attendees were doulas, midwives, nurses and other people who work in the area of supporting families around pregnancy and birth. Deb Goldman, Cindy M. will be leading a workshop in ceremony and ritual for pregnancy and birth at the 19th Annual show this spring, and the North East Celebrants will exhibiting again in 2008.



Celebrant Cheri Erdman officiated a family ceremony for renewal of vows.

In addition to a Swing Dance Wedding Ceremony, Cindy was overjoyed this year to have presided over a Baby Adoption Ceremony. Below is an excerpt and reading from Cindy's lovely adoption ceremony:

**We Join with The Earth and Each Other -
adapted from Pat Crane**

We join with the Earth
And with each other,
To bring new life to the land,
To recreate the human community
To provide justice and peace
To remember our children,
To celebrate who we are.
We join together
As many and diverse expressions
Of one loving mystery,
For the future of the earth and of each other
And the renewal of all life.

Dorry Bless, NJ Celebrant and Faculty member represented the Celebrant Foundation & Institute at the "Morristown Festival on the Green" on Sunday, September 30, 2007. This fair/festival was attended by 10,000 visitors and

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These are questions well worth the pondering. But the bottom line question is: how do we as individual Celebrants consciously integrate and then call forth both our anima and animus to do work that is as healthy, healing and constructive as possible?

It begins by honoring both contrasexual archetypes. At the deepest level we have to understand that the anima/animus concept conveys our soul image, the inward personification of the psyche – and that the soul itself is the mediator between self and ego, between self and other, the wellspring of our creative power and true relatedness.

So. In my life and in my work as a Celebrant and Ritualist I do everything possible to tear down walls between people, even though I find that everywhere – including somewhere deep in my ego – there is tremendous resistance to eliminating lines of division. But hopefully as Celebrants we will continue to move closer to reconciling gender difference – whatever our individual, pre-conceived notions may be about the opposite sex. We will truly know liberation when we can always honor one another, and honor both the feminine and masculine aspects of ourselves. Until then we can create ceremonies and rituals that are more informed, more balanced, and more reflective of our own growing ability to be whole humans.

May it be so.

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the fair focused on promoting community and non profit groups. Dorry Bless facilitated secular animal blessings at the festival and educated those that stopped by about “celebrants and what we do”. Dorry also presided over an animal memorial ceremony for Hamilton Pet Meadow (one of two pet cemeteries in NJ) to acknowledge and commemorate the 2nd Sunday in September which has deemed the National Pet Memorial Day by the International Association of Pet Cemeteries. Dorry’s ceremony excerpt to share with you.

Irving Townsend said: “We who choose to surround ourselves with lives even more temporary than our own, live within a fragile circle, easily and often breached. Unable to accept its awful gaps, we would still live no other way.”

Unbeknownst to them, our animals provide a window to our own soul and point to our capacity and our willingness to give and receive love, great joy and one of the most precious gifts of all -- celebrating and living life!

Peggy Lewis, Faculty Member and Florida Celebrant, along with her colleague Florida chapter Celebrants: Kristi Parks, Woody Winfree, Cheri Erdman represented the Celebrant Foundation as corporate sponsors and exhibitors at the **Association of Bridal Consultant’s National Conference in Orlando, Florida** in Nov. 2007. Our Celebrants re-enacted several wedding rituals for the ABC Wedding Consultant attendees. Also, Peggy’s **Tattoo Wedding** in Miami was one of her favorites she tells us... “It was a simple beach wedding, and the unique part...the couple decided to get matching tattoos as part of their marriage.”

Christina Cedar, Alberta, Canadian Celebrant—big congratulations to Christina! After three long years she finally got the stamp of approval from the Canadian government and she is now officially a marriage commissioner in Alberta. “YAHOO!” says Christina - we say it back at her!

Jack Cuffari, NJ Celebrant presided with enthusiasm and grace at the Celebration of Epiphanies to Mark the Amazing Journey and Life Transitions for Ms. Mary Z. Jack’s Ceremony/affirmations excerpt:

Celebrant: Do you, Mary’s beloved community, vow to be her companions on her journey, offering support, guidance and love, walking with her through sun and shadow?

Community: “We will.”

Celebrant: And will you treat her with the dignity and respect of an elder, honoring her experience and benefiting from her wisdom?

Community: “We will.”

Celebrant: Mary – welcome to your future. It begins now!

Marta Wimsett, NJ Celebrant Student, Class of 2008 was asked to be the Funeral Celebrant with a member of the clergy to honor the life of her dear friend’s deceased Mother.

Michele Davidson, British Columbia, Canadian Celebrant Created a Leave-Taking Ceremony conducted for a woman who had to leave her home after 25 years.

Cheri Erdman, FL Celebrant Cheri presided at an Ashes

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Southern California Celebrants (L to R) Toni Torquato, Andy McCuen and Caroline Flanders doing lunch!

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“Ok., let’s just put it behind us and start again.” Something more needed to be done. I got the idea for Joe and me to have a Funeral for our former relationship; and also do a ritual for New Beginnings. At that time I was attending the Celebrant Foundation, taking the certification course for Funerals and Healings. What I was learning touched me, and made me think not just about physical death, but also about the many other kinds deaths I have experienced in my life; and how healing it would have been to acknowledge those deaths, to grieve them and properly lay them to rest with a ceremony.

I thought that perhaps having a Funeral for my former relationship with Joe would give respect and honor to what it had been and what had caused its death, and also help us to set our focus on what we wanted to create in our new relationship. I suggested the idea to Joe and he agreed. We were excited, scared, hopeful, and not sure what the long-term result of the ceremony would be. It might just turn out that our relationship really was over, with no possibility for a new one - but we were willing to try it and see. So last January, we invited our friends to our home to witness the cere-



Elizabeth and Joe’s New Beginnings Ceremony

mony, which we officiated ourselves. And afterwards we all celebrated!

The following November, one day when I was in the middle of writing this article, my boyfriend came home early from work, and I greeted him happily, feeling especially joyful because I had been writing about our ceremony, and was just getting to the part about how our new relationship had grown in a positive way since then. He did not know I was writing about it. While we gave each other a great big delicious hug, he said: “Marry me. Please, please marry me.” I said yes!

Our wedding will be on June 21, 2008, and of course it will be a fabulous Celebrant ceremony. I am so grateful for the training I have gotten from the Celebrant Foundation, because it has enabled me to not just help others through ceremony, but also to help myself in my own life. I learned first-hand how creative and imaginative ceremony and ritual can be, and how they truly can help facilitate transformation and healing.

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Committal Funeral ceremony that took place on a boat - and a renewal of vows unity ceremony for a couple from Ireland. She tells us that both ceremonies were wonderful experiences that touched her deeply. Cheri says, “All the parts of this “vocation” are a perfect fit for a former educator, counselor, author and public speaker. I cannot decide which part I like to do best -- the getting to know my client/honorees, the crafting and writing the ceremony or the officiating.”

The Celebrant Foundation & Institute offered up a Passing of the Torch + Gifting Ceremony for our Celebrants Moya Powers-Keating and Julie Laudicina to honor Moya’s long-time dedicated service to the foundation as she passed the preverbal torch to Celebrant Julie Laudicina who has taken over for Moya in this honorable capacity as a Universal Brotherhood ordaining Minister for tri-state area Wedding Celebrants.

Emerging Ceremonies of Importance:

Over the past year there’s been a wave of conversations we’ve been having with our Celebrants about a deeply personal, healing and transition ceremony that is resonating and emerging among our Celebrant community in a big way and it is called a - Recovery Ceremony. I invite you to take a

moment and think about “recovery” and what it brings to mind and heart in your life and the lives of others and then imagine this ceremony and how you might wish to integrate it in your practice.

Shine on!
Charlotte Eulette, North American Director



Celebrant Sandee Monahan officiates at a beautiful wedding in Pennsylvania.

FROM OUR FAMILY ALBUM



1 Celebrant Lois Heckman officiating at a Buddhist and Catholic wedding

2 An Epiphany Ceremony designed and officiated by Celebrant Jack Cuffari

3 Cheri Erdman and the couple whose commitment ceremony she had just Celebrated

4 A California bride and groom process under and arch of their friends' hands at a ceremony performed by Alma Rose Middleton

5 Michigan student Helma Mezey (Class of '08) made this lovely spirit house dog shrine

Greetings from Kate at Celebrant HQ to all Celebrants, Students, and Friends-of-the-Celebrant Family! Can you believe it's nearly time for another graduating class of Celebrants to receive their Certificates? Graduation 2008 is right around the corner! Charlotte and Cindy have trusted me with the ancillary title of Graduation Manager, so reach out to me with any questions or concerns around Graduation. My email is kate@celebrantusa.com and the office telephone is 973-746-1792. All alumni and students should have received their printed invitations by now—if you haven't gotten yours, please phone me right away. If you're coming—and we hope you all are—you'll want to make your airline and hotel reservations as soon as you can to get the best rates.



Kate Daly

On a related topic—as you move freely about your lives, please don't forget to keep me updated with changes to your address, phone, email and website info ... and call or email me at any time with questions or issues about your Association Membership, referral status, Celebrant credentials, how to access the member library, chapter affiliations, or nearly anything to do with your Celebrancy practice and studies. If I can't answer your question I'll do my best to find someone who can.

See you at Graduation!

The Celebrant Foundation & Institute of North America is a nonprofit educational organization dedicated to the training of professional Celebrants to officiate at life's milestone ceremonies, and to promoting the importance of ceremony in the lives of individuals, couples, families and organizations.

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