

SAMUEL AND ANDREW

This is a friend's report:

I have never attended a more powerful, solemn, beautiful, elegant, releasing, joyful, meaningful, emotional wedding. The attention to all the minute details could only have been planned and accomplished by two gay men.

Each groom had two men and two women attendants including a sister of each of the grooms. The men wore charcoal tails with light gray ties and vests. The women wore bright red long sleeveless sheath dresses printed with a meandering spray of multicolored flowers from the shoulder to the hem. The strong purples, yellows, corals, blues of those flowers were used along with red roses in the floral arrangements and bouquets.

The church was a stone cathedral with beautiful rose windows and a big pipe organ at the front. The music was "high church" with a flute, oboe, piano/organ trio for the prelude. I can't remember what they marched in to, but it wasn't "Here comes the bride"!! They entered through opposite vestibule doors, met at the center back and walked hand in hand to the altar. On the platform with the wedding party were 50 members of the Boston Gay Men's Chorus that Samuel sings with. They were accompanied by a chamber orchestra complete with glockenspiel. Andrew's sister-in-law sang the Lord's Prayer and brought tears to many eyes with her beautiful voice and rendition. The chorus sang "Marry Us" (words by Philip Littell and music by Robert Seeley). The words are as follows:

I who would serve you, I your love would earn.
I who would love you, I would be loved in return.
I who am created, Lord, by your touch and word,
Perfect image of my God, I would be seen and heard.
What we promise is our prayer; Let us love, for aye,
Each other care for all our lives. Marry us today.
In the sight of God and man, Two are now as one.
We affirm this visibly, Man is not alone.
To our Father's house we come to rejoice and pray.
We live and die like all your sons, Marry us today.
It was so powerful sung by 50 gay men! Their second song "O Perfect Love."

The Congregational minister did a masterful, sensitive and creative job in his wording of the short service and seemed most at ease about the whole thing. Samuel's parents and all of his siblings, their spouses, and children attended. The nieces and nephews of the grooms were assigned to decorate the getaway car. They did a great job complete with two male 'arrow' symbols on the driver's window. They had 'fairy dust' (glitter confetti) to throw on them as they got in the car and had put it all through their suitcase too.

The church service was so full of electricity—positive electricity—that it felt like you could cut it with a knife. It was very moving to watch the gay attendants and the chorus during the service. Their anticipation, joy, and emotion were palpable as they watched

two of their own having a gay church wedding. Most of them were our age or older and one could imagine that they had dreamed of weddings and families since childhood and were finally witnessing the culmination of that dream. Tears flowed often, but just as often they were bursting with exuberance. Witnessing that emotional release will be one of our most poignant memories of the wedding.

We rode to the hotel with several gay men. When we got into the car one of them burst out, "I want to have a church wedding!" and the others agreed. And the man who said it was a Hindu!!

At the reception in the Marriott Hotel ballroom, each guest was greeted and photographed with the grooms as we proceeded through the receiving line. Then the doors to the ballroom were opened and we were seated at five rows of tables with four tables in each row, according to a seating chart. The rows were identified with helium balloons of a rainbow color—red, orange, yellow, blue and green. Each table in the row was named for a tint of that row's color—eg., amber, tangerine in the orange row. I thought it was very creative and it certainly facilitated quick seating.

The meal was delicious. The wedding cake was plain frosted tiers with the space between filled with fresh flowers. The BGMC sang again at the reception. I don't have the title or the words, but it was a beautiful song sung as a father's lullaby to his children about his dream for their happiness when they grow up and about how some people love women and some love men.

The other most poignant memory will always be of Samuel's retired Adventist minister father surprising him at the end of the toasts by going up on the reception platform beside Samuel and asking to say a few words. English is not his first language and he was choosing his words slowly. He stood before those 200 people and expressed how proud he was of Samuel and welcomed Andrew into their family.

When the words came out of his mouth, "I am so proud of my son" a gay man sitting beside us audibly gasped and broke down sobbing in his partner's arms. Needless to say, there was not a dry eye at our table. I later learned that this gay couple had had a wedding a few years previously and none of this man's family had attended the wedding. The memory of that man (in his 50s's I suppose) so starved for his father's affirmation still brings tears to my eyes and will burn in my memory the rest of my life. What a gift of love Samuel's family was able to give!