

An ornate, symmetrical floral border in a light gray color frames the top and sides of the page. It features intricate scrollwork, leaves, and floral motifs, creating a classic and elegant design.

the MISTRESS *of* VOWS

REVEREND JUDY IRVING,
WEDDINGVOWSLASVEGAS.COM

BY BETH SCHWARTZ

Judy Irving is the marrying kind. She has donned a full-length fur coat to do it, she has worn a lei to do it, she has even hiked through Red Rock Canyon to do it. But none of these were her own matrimonial festivities. Irving is a non-denominational ordained minister who performs wedding and commitment ceremonies as well as vow renewals.

"I love doing it because people are so happy," Irving explains of her role in joining two people together for life. And she adds, "I get to meet the most unique people."

Irving has been making people happy since she became ordained in 1997, performing between 300 and 400 ceremonies. She has

done her duties wherever duty may call. "I have performed them at pools, in back yards, at Red Rock Canyon, at the Springs Preserve and Spring Mountain also. People like to get married outside. I have done them at Wynn, Palazzo, Venetian, the Secret Garden at Mirage, I have been all over the place. I even performed a surprise wedding that only the groom knew about. I wasn't sure how that one would play out but the bride was thrilled," says Irving of a mostly weekend activity she calls a hobby.

Irving's life, however, is not all vows, rose petals, and officiating. From 9 to 5, the reverend is an executive coach. "Most of what I have been doing in the last five or six years is

executive team building. I have kind of gotten away from the life coaching. As I evolved, the level of my coaching has evolved," she explains.

And even though she loves it, Irving didn't set out to be in the wedding business or in the business of God for that matter. "I am an ordained associate minister but that was not what I had intended. When I moved here in 1995 I was looking for a study group, I was looking for the *A Course in Miracles* study path. (*A Course in Miracles* is a self-study metaphysical thought system that teaches forgiveness as the road to inner peace and the remembrance of the unconditional love of God.) I visited various churches looking for the course. Someone told me that a church



had been formed with *A Course in Miracles* as its base, and A Place for Miracles is the name of the church. Never in my foggiest imagination would I have believed, I would have been in a church that is in a strip mall. But that's one of the things about Vegas, you never know what's around the corner.

"I went to the church to learn more about *A Course in Miracles*. The minister received guidance that she was to train others. At that particular time her class was full but then someone dropped out and due to my perseverance I got in. I was ordained in 1997 but did not practice as a minister, my intention was not to become a minister but just to learn. I merely did the duties of the church that I was supposed to do. I was really focused on my job as a life coach at the time."

It wasn't until several years later that it occurred to Irving that she should perform wedding ceremonies. And now she has

expanded to vow renewals and commitment ceremonies too. "When I first started doing weddings you just didn't hear about vow renewals. All at once they seemed to be really popular. I think people are looking for ways to connect with joy and love," explains Irving. "And they think, 'All their kids will be up there with them.' It's just such a joyous time."

With same-sex marriage being legalized in California and Massachusetts, Irving has seen an uptick in commitment ceremonies as well. "I am one of the few people in town who do commitment ceremonies. If people want to be joined, are committed to one another, and want to be together than there should be no gender distinction."

However, she does not do a lot of commitment ceremonies for Las Vegas. "I get most of my business from people coming from out of town. You would think since domestic

partnerships are legal here that I would do more local ceremonies," she says.

On 10/10/10, Irving performed a commitment ceremony inside Minus 5 Ice Lounge. "They gave us long fur coats to wear. It was fun. It was really such a unique experience. One of the grooms was wearing a kilt," explains Irving. "The couple selected Minus 5 because they had been to Vegas not long ago and thought it was unique and decided it would be a great place to be married."

The commitment ceremonies are very much the same as a regular wedding ceremony, according to Irving. "I just change the wording to partners in life. And instead of saying the commitment of marriage, I say the commitment you are making today. I change it to portray them. They want the acknowledgment of their love to be witnessed by friends and family." □