

Marriage			
Source: Session	Authority: Session	Original Approval Date: March, 2007 Last Review Date: November, 2012	Next Review Date: November, 2017
<p>Purpose of Policy:</p> <p>To express the congregation's understanding of marriage and to provide guidelines for marriage services within the bounds of its ministry.</p>			
<p>Theological Rationale:</p> <p>Eastminster United Church is not in the business of marrying people. We participate in marriage services as a function of our mission to provide spiritual and personal support to members of the congregation and others in the community. This marriage policy therefore expresses a desire to provide the best possible assistance to couples who have decided to get married. While marriage is not a sacrament of The United Church of Canada, it has a sacramental value which should be reflected in the planning and conduct of all marriage services.</p>			

1.0 Affirmations in Regard to Marriage:¹

- 1.1 We affirm that marriage is a gift of God through which Christians make a covenant with one another and with God. In marriage we offer one another the promise of lifelong companionship and commitment, rich expression of human affections and sexuality, and if there are children, to provide for their love, nurture and care.
- 1.2 We affirm the value of marriage and that the church must work both to redeem and care for the institution and to support those entering into a covenant relationship with each other.
- 1.3 We acknowledge that marriage can also be destructive. Marriage as an institution is shaped by cultural attitudes that have at times been patriarchal and oppressive; these attitudes have found expression in exploitation, abuse and violence. Marriage is not to be idealized or idolized as an end in itself.
- 1.4 We affirm that this unity is a creation of God and is greater than the two individuals. It creates holy ground that needs to be nurtured and cherished.
- 1.5 We affirm that sexual intercourse in marriage is intended to be
 - a profound expression of the whole person
 - a yearning for total union with the other
 - a creative and holy expression in and with the other.
- 1.6 We acknowledge that sexual intercourse may be exploitive, using the other for one's gratification.
- 1.7 We affirm that marriage from a Christian perspective is based on faithfulness expressed through
 - choosing each other above all others
 - risking and being vulnerable in the relationship
 - willingness to put into the relationship the patience, understanding and work required to help it grow
 - accepting and nurturing the other for his or her unique gifts; putting the other before one's own interests in a lifelong commitment that is spiritual, emotional and physical.

and that these intentions are most fully achieved and symbolized when sexual intimacy in marriage is exclusive.

- 1.8** We recognize the commitment that is present in many relationships other than marriage, and that the church is called to minister to people in these relationships as in others.
- 1.9** We affirm that the church is called to emphasize and work for the essential values in marriage and family that contribute to the wholeness of people, and to challenge those forms and attitudes that limit and degrade personal worth, even when the culture supports them.

2.0 Affirmations in Regard to Qualification for Marriage at Eastminster

- 2.1** We affirm that we cannot claim a full and complete understanding of God and God's intentions and that we must continue to grow and learn as individuals and as a faith community. With humility, therefore, we attempt to discern God's will for ourselves and for those we would serve.
- 2.2** We affirm that we must not judge one another and that it is our duty to help couples discern if it is God's will for them to consecrate their relationship in a service of Christian marriage.
- 2.3** We believe that all couples granted services of marriage within this faith community must be willing to accept our understanding of Christian marriage and agree to comply with the requirements established by the Session of Eastminster United Church.
- 2.4** We affirm that elders are called by God and elected by the congregation to give leadership in the congregation on matters of spirituality and faith, and to ensure adequate provision for faithful and effective pastoral care. Therefore, all marriage services within the ministry of Eastminster United Church must be approved by its Session. It is the duty of the elders to discern the will of God concerning whether a request for marriage should be granted.
- 2.5** We recognize that the formal blessing or celebration of unions other than Christian marriage may be an appropriate function of the congregation's ministry with its members and others, and that discretion in these matters is given to the congregation's Order of Ministry personnel.

3.0 Requirements for Marriage Services

- 3.1** All couples married within the ministry of Eastminster United Church shall be required to acknowledge their spirituality, participate in the planning of the service, and attend a marriage preparation program.

- 3.2** Acknowledge their spirituality.

Although church membership is not required, couples are expected to recognize their spiritual background and the extent to which religious upbringing has shaped each individual. Couples are advised of the advantage of association with a church family and, if not active in a church and resident in the community, they are encouraged to become involved in the life of Eastminster Church.

- 3.3** Participate in the planning of the service.

Since the service should reflect the beliefs, personalities and circumstances of the couple, they are required to help plan the details of the service, including music, readings and vows. The minister is responsible for ensuring that the service is liturgically appropriate and includes all elements essential to a Christian marriage.

- 3.4** Attend a marriage preparation program.

All couples, regardless of age or experience, are required to participate in some form of marriage preparation which addresses the following topics: communication, conflict management, spirituality and sexuality. It is not necessary to attend a program offered at Eastminster. If it is not possible to do so before the date of the wedding, the service may be held so long as the minister receives an explicit promise that the couple will meet this requirement as soon as possible.

4.0 Banns

4.1 Couples may be married by the publication of banns in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario. If they do not meet the legal requirements for banns, the marriage will be by license. If requested by the couple, the banns may be read without the authority of legal publication. Normally, banns are read at all services on the Sunday immediately prior to the wedding day. The couple may choose to have the banns read on more than one Sunday.

5.1 Location

5.2 Marriage services will normally be held in the sanctuary or in the McDowell Chapel. Church staff will normally not be available for services to be held outside the church building. However, the ministers are free to use their discretion if particular circumstances merit an exception to this policy.

6.0 Scheduling

6.1 Arrangements for marriage services will normally be made at least three months in advance. The congregation requires a minimum waiting period of five days. Couples requesting marriage will be advised in writing of the church's marriage policy and submit an application which includes signed assent to the requirements named above. As soon as possible, the minister will issue a written notice of confirmation and request a personal interview. Then, at the earliest opportunity, the minister will advise the Session which will authorize the wedding conditional on the terms of this policy.

When more than one wedding service is held in the same day, they will be separated by a minimum of ninety minutes. Unless other arrangements are made in advance with the caretaker, wedding parties and guests should leave the building by no later than thirty minutes following the end of the service.

7.0 Fees

7.1 There is a comprehensive fee for marriage services in Eastminster United Church which includes payments to staff, and a contribution to the cost of maintaining the church facilities.

7.2 The contribution portion of the marriage fee is waived for applicants who are regular supporters of Eastminster United Church.

7.3 The contribution portion of the marriage fee may be receipted for income tax purposes.

7.4 The amount of the comprehensive fee is set by the Church Council on recommendation of the Standing Committee on Ministry and Personnel concerning payments to staff and of the Standing Committee on Finance concerning the 'contribution' amount.

7.5 The comprehensive fee must be paid, in cash, to the church's Administrator prior to the rehearsal.

7.6 For 'private' services and services held away from the church building, the comprehensive fee may be adjusted according to arrangements with the officiating officer.

8.0 Music

8.1 The church's Minister of Music will be the organist for all weddings held at Eastminster Church. Another organist may be used only with the consent of the Minister of Music who will be nevertheless paid the same fee. The Minister of Music should be contacted at least one full month before the wedding date to discuss the selection of appropriate music. If she/he does not have the music for selections chosen, it is the responsibility of the couple to provide it at least two weeks before the wedding. Arrangements for soloists or other special music are the responsibility of the couple, in consultation with the Minister of Music.

9.0 Receptions

9.1 Arrangements for wedding receptions held at the church are made through the church office staff in accordance with Building Use Guidelines and in consultation with the United Church Women catering convenor(s). An additional fee is payable to the caretaker for extra work created by a reception in the church.

10.0 Decorations

10.1 Plans for decorations in the sanctuary should be made in advance with the caretaker.

11.0 Confetti

11.1 No confetti is allowed inside or near the church building. The couple may be charged for additional clean-up time or damages caused by confetti.

12.0 Photo/Video

12.1 For the sake of the couple and to protect the integrity of the service, every effort should be made to minimize the disruption or distraction of inappropriate photography and video taping. Couples are encouraged to choose a photographer to create a film record of the service. Photographs will normally be taken from behind the congregation and without flash. Before the service, videographers should consult with the caretaker who will assist them to tape with minimal impact on the service.

13.0 Bulletins

13.1 If requested, printed orders of service will be provided. Couples are required to provide the bulletin covers. Printing will be provided by the church staff. A donation is requested to help pay for printing costs.

1. from *Gift, Dilemma and Promise: A Report and Affirmations on Human Sexuality*, approved by the 30th General Council of The United Church of Canada, 1984