

Marriage Policy

St. Mark's United Church, Cannifton

Theological Understanding

Within the United Church of Canada, a marriage service is considered a service of worship. As worship is a matter under the control of the local congregation and clergy, decisions about marriage services rest there as well.

Within the United Church of Canada, there is great freedom and diversity in the shape of worship. However, as marriage services celebrated at St. Mark's are Christian worship, they will include the usual elements of such worship: prayer, scripture, music, preaching and a focus on the triune-God as revealed in sacred text and human experience.

Important Historical Events

In 1962, the United Church of Canada confirmed that divorce was not a barrier to marriage, but also confirmed the need for couples to be prepared prior to marriage. In 1988, the General Council affirmed

- that marriage is a gift of God through which Christians make a covenant with each other and with God;
- that in marriage we offer each other the promise of lifelong companionship, the rich expression of human affections and sexuality, and nurture for the children;
- that marriage as an institution can under gird each relationship and provide stability for society;
- 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.

The journey towards the celebration of same-sex marriage has both parallel and lead developments in Canadian society. In 1984, the General Council affirmed the church's acceptance of all human beings as persons made in the image of God, regardless of their sexual orientation. Additionally, it noted that all human relationships should be "faithful, responsible, just, loving, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self." In 1992, the General Council directed that liturgical resources for same-sex covenanting services be prepared and distributed through the church. In 2000, the meeting of the General Council committed itself to work towards the civil recognition of same-sex partnerships, and in 2003 moved to focus on recognition of same-sex marriages. When same-sex marriage became legal, it was possible for individual clergy and congregations to begin celebrating same-sex marriages. However, as all services of worship are under the joint authority of the local governing body and the clergy, a congregation must decide if it will undertake same-sex marriages.

Who is this policy for?

The celebration of marriage is part of the worship life of the congregation. This policy will help guide this part of the total ministry of St. Mark's.

The interpretation of this policy rests with the member of the Order of Ministry settled/appointed to St. Mark's, in conversation with the Christian Development Committee.

A brochure will be prepared from the policy that can be distributed to interested persons. Information will also be posted on the website.

Are there membership requirements or other restrictions?

There are no membership requirements related to the celebration of marriage through St. Mark's. St. Mark's welcomes all persons who may legally marry in the Province of Ontario, including same-sex couples.

How do I book a wedding and is a deposit required?

First contact the minister to confirm both her/his availability and the availability of the building and other staff. Once the date has been confirmed, couples are asked to make a non-refundable deposit of \$500.00.

Reserving a Date

Weddings will not be booked on Sunday mornings, unless they are part of service of worship open to all.

Wedding services are not scheduled on the following dates.

- Ash Wednesday,
- Maundy Thursday
- Good Friday,
- Easter Sunday,
- Monday following Easter,
- Christmas Eve/Day,
- Days that conflict with the meetings of Kente Presbytery and the Bay of Quinte Conference Annual Meeting.

Wedding services are not typically scheduled on the following dates, without the prior agreement of all staff involved.

- Family Day,
- Victoria Day,
- Canada Day,
- August Civic Holiday,
- Labour Day,
- Thanksgiving Sunday/Monday,
- New Year's Eve/Day

Rehearsals are generally scheduled one or two days in advance of the wedding service.

Where can the service take place?

Generally, the marriage service takes place in the sanctuary of St. Mark's United Church. A marriage service may take place outside the sanctuary, upon agreement of both clergy and governing body and provided it remains a service of worship.

What about music?

The musician hired by St. Mark's will co-ordinate all music, and the musician fee is required whether or not the musician performs the worship music.

Involvement of Other Clergy

The involvement of other clergy in the wedding service is only by prior arrangement and approval by the clergy of St. Mark's and the governing body.

Involvement by Family & Friends

Within the United Church of Canada, worship is the work of the whole community. Regular worship services include the participation of the gathered community through congregational song, singing by individuals and/or small groups, responsive prayer and reading, drama and many others expressions of Christian faith.

What are the costs?

The capital and operating budgets of St. Mark's United Church are paid for through the financial giving of members and friends and through fundraising efforts. Therefore, there are no fees for the worship planning, leadership and pastoral care provided by the minister.

For some members of the church staff, weddings represent additional work beyond their regular duties. Therefore, a cost-recovery fee is charged in order to compensate persons. The fees are charged regardless of the persons association with St. Mark's. The schedule of fees is updated on an annual basis.

What kind of decoration is allowed?

A variety of decorations are possible, the most common being floral arrangements. The only limitations are a restriction on the use of tape to affix decorations, and the use of confetti, rice, or similar.

At specific times of the year, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, there will be seasonally appropriate decorations in the sanctuary. Couples may choose to add to these.

Photographs & Video

Remembering the day of your wedding is important. Although photographs can be taken at different points of the service, the best photographs will be "posed" photographs taken at the time the document signing.

Can we hold a reception at the church?

Yes, wedding receptions can be held in the lower hall of the church. The United Church Women are available to offer catering from September through June.

What are our rules on outside caterers?

Outside caterers may be used, provided the caterer

1. Is properly insured;
2. Agrees to work with the Catering Supervisor;
3. Prepares the food off-site.
4. Agrees to clean the kitchen prior to leaving and remove all garbage from the premises.

Can we take photographs on the grounds?

We are blessed to have both a beautiful location on the Moira River and many committed members who maintain the attractive grounds. You are welcome to take photographs on site, both before and after the wedding.

What are the legal requirements for marriage?

To be married in Ontario you must be 18 years old, or 16 years old and have the written consent of both parents, and face no legal impediment to be married.

There are two ways to legally register a marriage in Ontario. The first is through the ancient practice called the Publication of Banns, whereby we announce the names of persons to be married during a regular service of worship. The Publication of Banns form is completed, and submitted to the Registrar General once signed by the parties, their witnesses, and the minister. There is no cost for the completion of the form. Banns may only be used where each of the parties are "in the habit of attending worship" at a church within Canada, and where neither of the parties has been previously married and the marriage has been dissolved or annulled.

The second way to legally register a marriage is by licence. A Marriage Licence can be purchased from the City of Belleville. If you are divorced, you will need the Court File Number of your divorce. On the day of the wedding service,

the minister will complete the balance of the form and register the marriage with the Province of Ontario.

When does the policy come into effect?

This policy comes into effect on the date it is adopted by the Unified Board, and will apply to all wedding services booked after that date.

Schedule of Fees

Schedule A contains the list of fees related to wedding services held at and through St. Mark's United Church, Cannifton. Schedule A will be reviewed and amended annually.

Sources:

"Marriage: Chronology of Marriage and Equality Rights in the United Church", <http://www.united-church.ca/exploring/marriage/chronology>, United Church of Canada, accessed December 2013.

"Marriage: Marriage Policy Statements", <http://www.united-church.ca/exploring/marriage/statements>, United Church of Canada, accessed December 2013.

"Marriage: Congregational Marriage Policies", <http://www.united-church.ca/exploring/marriage/policies>, United Church of Canada, accessed December 2013.

Marriage Policy of Parkminister United Church, Waterloo, Ontario

Weddings at Church of the Redeemer, Toronto