

## Guidelines for Couples being Married in Stonewall United Church

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*"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, rich expressions of human affections and sexuality, and nurture of children. We affirm that this unity is a creation of God and is greater than the two individuals. It creates holy ground on which the two and all others must walk carefully and gently, yet forthrightly and with courage. It has boundaries, between them, and with others, that may not be trespassed. It takes precedence over other relationships. It calls for that caring which heals hurt and tends growth."*

May God bless you as you prepare for your wedding. To assist you in your planning, we ask that you read and consider the following information carefully.

Requesting to be married in Stonewall United reflects a desire for a Christian, rather than a civil, wedding. The service offered by the church is, by definition, spiritual in nature. If you prefer to be married without reference to God, faith, the Bible, or prayer, you may prefer a civil wedding. If so, we would be happy to refer you to a marriage commissioner who will perform a beautiful ceremony at the place of your choosing.

Marriage is an adult responsibility, and we will treat you as adults. The decision to marry is yours and you will bear the consequences of your choice. Our minister, therefore, will not act as a judge over your relationship, but rather as a resource person who can help you have a very meaningful wedding. You do not have to leap through hoops to prove that you deserve to be married. So long as you wish to marry each other, we will honour that request.

You as an adult will make the decision about marriage preparation classes. We do not require you to take marriage preparation courses. Instead, we simply let you know that the statistics enthusiastically endorse the value of such workshops: 8/20 marriages in Canada today end in divorce; 1/20 couples who have made the investment in a marriage preparation course later divorce. So, we encourage, but do not require, you to enrol in such a course before or after your wedding. We recommend the "Marrying Well" Seminars in Winnipeg and can be reached at (204) 956-4550 or [marryingwell@mts.net](mailto:marryingwell@mts.net).

### **License**

You will require a Vital Statistics "Marriage License and Registration of Marriage" form which can be obtained from Vital Statistics, 254 Portage Avenue or from Crown Prints here in Stonewall.

**The marriage license should be delivered to the church office at least one week prior to the wedding. It must be present for the wedding to begin.**

Please note that it is now the policy of Vital Statistics that a copy of this form will not be given to the couple. Couples needing proof of marriage may apply to Vital Statistics for a marriage certificate. The marriage license is valid for three months only; hence there is no point in trying to get one too early. If you have been previously married, you will be required to present your original Decree Absolut or an original Death Certificate to the issuer of licenses before you will be issued another marriage license.

## **Music & Musicians**

Selections of music for your wedding - hymns, solos, instrumentals - should be appropriate for a spiritual, Christian service of worship. Our minister should be informed of your selections. It is your responsibility to contact the church organist or other musicians and to confirm selections with them.

## **The Ceremony**

When you meet with the minister who will be presiding at your wedding, options for the worship service will be discussed. All wedding services at Stonewall United have the following things in common: reading(s) from the Bible, blessing of the parents/family (the bride is not “given away”), and blessing of the friends/community.

If one or both of you are bringing children into this new relationship, consider their involvement in the wedding ceremony. In some cases, children and their new step-parent exchange vows and rings. Your children could also participate as ring-bearer, flower-girl, scripture reader, usher. Some children/youth have read a message to their new step-parent that they have written themselves. In other cases, the children may be ambivalent about (or even hostile to) this new relationship and their attendance may be asking a lot of them. Give it thought, and discuss with your children what would feel comfortable for everyone.

In choosing a ring bearer and/or flower girl, keep in mind what is fair. While we welcome and delight in children, you should really consider whether it is fair to ask a two year old to walk down the aisle in strange clothes in what may be a strange environment! Remember you’re also asking that same child to stay in good clothes and not run around or do anything else kids like to do most of your wedding day – to say nothing of the endless photography sessions! Some children will enjoy just such a thing, for others, it is a trial.

A recent death may be honoured by lighting a memorial candle in memory and to invoke the spirit of a loved one. This may be done by the couple or the minister, with the minister making a simple announcement (e.g. “This candle is being lit in memory of and to welcome the spirit of Edward’s grandfather, George.”). This has been a moving and important part of the ceremony for those who have experienced a recent loss.

The participation of another licensed clergy-person, who may be a member of your family or a close friend, is also a possibility. This is arranged in consultation with our minister, who we require to be the presiding minister at the ceremony.

If the date requested for your ceremony occurs while our minister is on vacation and is unable to officiate, another licensed minister may be invited to officiate. In this case, you must write or email your request to the Church for the Church Council’s approval, it will be your responsibility to secure and safeguard the church marriage register, in consultation with the church office.

## **Rehearsal**

Typically, this should be arranged with our minister to take place on the Friday before a Saturday wedding. If at all possible, ALL those involved in the ceremony - attendants, musicians, videographer/photographer, and readers - should attend. Rehearsals usually last about 45 minutes. It may be convenient to place your decorations/pew markers in the church at that time.

### **Consideration for the Sanctuary**

The church building is the spiritual home for a worshipping congregation. Treat the sanctuary the way you would treat a friend's home. Please don't use tacks, staples, tape or glue to place pew markers or decorations - ties or elastic loops work best. Please don't remove the furnishings, hymn books or wall hangings. Please ask your musicians to leave the organ settings the way they found them.

The church has a selection of wedding banners that may be hung on the walls for your wedding.

### **Information for Invitations & Service Programs**

Please remind your guests in your invitations that all of the churches are scent-free places of worship and they should refrain from wearing perfumed products.

Please remind your guests in your service programs that they should not use confetti or rice or have bubble mixture inside or near entrances to the building.

### **Photography**

The wedding is a service of worship. After the bridal party has entered the sanctuary, the minister will ask the congregation to refrain from taking any further pictures until the bridal party is leaving the sanctuary.

The official Photographer is permitted to move around on the main floor but not on the platform at the front of the church in order to take pictures during the procession and recession. During the service, the Photographer may take photos without flash from the back of the church or side aisles. Pictures may be staged after the service is completed if desired.

The Videographer is permitted to move around on the main floor but not on the front platform in order to film the procession and recession, as well as the signing of the documents. Otherwise, the Videographer will remain in one location during the course of the worship service. No supplementary lights are allowed.

*It is your responsibility to ensure your photographer/videographer is aware of and will respect this policy.*

### **The Big Day**

Your ushers should be present at the church at least 45 minutes before the wedding, in order to welcome your guests. The wedding party should arrive at least 15 minutes beforehand.

During the ceremony, the couple and two witnesses are required to sign legal documents. In accordance with provincial law, these people must not consume alcohol before the service. It is against the law for a minister to marry a Bride or Groom if either is intoxicated. Should this situation occur, an announcement will be made indicating that the wedding will not take place on that day. Bride and Groom will then be advised to make an appointment with the minister to discuss the possibility of booking another wedding date. Intoxicated witnesses must be replaced.

### **Reception**

The minister normally does not attend receptions. If you wish to have the minister attend you may extend an invitation. If the Minister is expected to offer the blessing (say Grace) at the Meal, please confirm this with him.

## **Fees**

Booking of facility: \$250.00 (\$50.00 for Administration Fees is required whenever our minister is involved regardless where the wedding is conducted, Building Rental \$150.00, Caretaker \$50.00). These fees cover the following: use of the church for the rehearsal and wedding, cost of care taking, and preparing your wedding service and filing legal documents.

Your wedding day will not be considered booked until the Stonewall United Church Application for Marriage and booking fees have been received. Wedding dates are booked on a first come first serve basis. The minimum time is 3 months in advance.

Organist: \$50.00

We can arrange for someone to play the piano or organ for your wedding service. This fee will be waived if you arrange for music to be provided either by taped music or someone to play.

Minister: \$100.00

A post dated cheque covering these costs must be included with the Application for Marriage form.