

WEDDING POLICY

BETHANY EMC

A Handbook of Policies and Guidelines for people considering a wedding at Bethany
Evangelical Missionary Church
160 Lancaster Street East, Kitchener, ON N2H 1N2

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Contents	Page
1. Introduction	3
2. Before You Set the Date	3
3. Biblical Guidelines	4
4. Preparation for Marriage - Counselling	6
5. Marriage License	7
6. The Wedding Rehearsal	7
7. The Wedding Ceremony	8
8. Receptions	9
9. Honorariums	10
10. A Typical Wedding Rehearsal	11
11. Request for Marriage at Bethany EMC	14
12. Staff Checklist	16
13. Wedding Application for facility	19

1. INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You are about to begin one of the most important stages of your life, and we want to provide as much help as we can.

We believe God's plan for marriage is that it be a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman and that when they marry, they become a new family unit. In our church we are intentional about helping couples build a distinctively Christian marriage. Marriage is a sacred institution that is meant to reflect the relationship Christ has with His Church, and we believe that the church should take steps to make divorce rare rather than routine.

Although not everything in this handbook will apply to your personal situation, we hope the following information will help you think through some of the issues involved in the wedding service, and give you a better understanding of how our church approaches this sacred institution created by God. You may not agree with everything you read here, but we feel a sense of urgency about setting a high standard for marriage.

2. BEFORE YOU SET THE DATE

Before you even set the date for your wedding, you should meet with one of the pastoral team.

Complete the Request for Marriage at Bethany EMC which will give us the basic information we need to begin the process. This form should be completed and submitted to the church office after all information in this brochure has been thoroughly read by both partners. We want you to know right up front what will be required so there is no confusion.

There will be a required interview with the Pastor you have requested to officiate the ceremony. Please bring your completed Request for Marriage Form to this initial interview. If a pastor other than one of Bethany's will be performing your marriage, a letter from that Pastor must be returned along with the Form. The letter should include the Pastor's name, present ministry involvement and a statement of their credential status.

After the Request Form has been submitted and the interview with the Pastor has taken place, the Director of Administration will confirm Bethany's involvement in your wedding day. At this point we will be able to finalize the proposed date and time for your wedding. Although we can tentatively reserve dates prior to this, we cannot finalize them until these steps have been completed. Please note that only members and adherents of Bethany can reserve weddings more than six months in advance.

Some engaged couples speak to a Pastor only after all the other details have been arranged. Sometimes they discover that the church is already booked or the Pastor may be out of town on the date they have chosen. In some cases, because of age, parental opposition, issues of former marriage that have not been resolved, or because of Biblical guidelines, in good conscience the Pastor may decline to perform the ceremony. If that occurs, we hope you will respect our decision. We do not stand in judgment of anyone, but we must do what we feel is right before God.

To avoid disappointment, please make contacting the church your first priority as it could take several weeks to process your request. This should be done before you announce the date publicly.

Ideally, the Pastor would like to have a minimum of three months' notice of your intention to be married, but we want to be as flexible as possible.

3. BIBLICAL GUIDELINES

There are a number of questions that arise in the preliminary stages of planning. We have tried to supply answers from the Bible.

3.1 What is marriage?

At Bethany EMC we believe that marriage is a monogamous, permanent relationship between one man and one woman – a bond of love that reflects the love of Christ for His people, a bond of sacrificial love where husband and wife become one flesh.

3.2 What is the nature of the marriage?

In Genesis 2 we find the first detailed reference to the first man and

woman. If we expect to grasp God's viewpoint of the marriage relationship, an understanding of Genesis 2:18-25 is crucial. We recommend that you read and study that passage in light of the following comments.

In Genesis 2:18 the Bible declares that it is not good for a man to be alone. In the original Hebrew, the language in which the Old Testament was written, the negative is most emphatic; therefore it appears first in the phrase. Literally it says, "Not good, is man's aloneness..." God, the Creator, saw man, His creature, in an isolated, alone-condition. He announced that Adam's solitary state was not good. God cared about Adam's "aloneness".

But the Creator did more than declare a problem. He announced a solution: "I will make him a helper suitable for him". It is a beautiful picture of a dignified, necessary role filled by one whom God would make and bring alongside the man. In God's original design the plan was to have each partner distinct and unique, needing each other and therefore finding fulfillment with each other.

3.3 Should a Christian believer marry someone who does not believe in Jesus Christ as Lord?

The following Biblical teaching must be carefully considered in order to answer this delicate question with love and concern for the individuals involved.

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will be with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'" 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 NIV

We believe that God does not want men or women who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, to marry unbelievers. That would compromise harmony and fellowship with Christ. In good conscience our pastors will not likely marry a couple if one is a genuine believer in Christ and the other is not.

3.4 Can a divorced person marry again?

The answer to that question is "yes, under certain conditions permitted in

the Scripture". However, each situation must be evaluated in light of the Scriptures and the circumstances surrounding the divorce. We do not sit in judgment of anyone at any time. We simply want to be faithful to what the Bible teaches regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage.

Therefore, wedding services for those previously married and divorced, or for those who are presently living together, will be prayerfully considered by the Pastor and Ministry Council upon application. In the event of an agreement to proceed with the service, the Pastor will immediately counsel the couple regarding their present situation and, with them, arrange an appropriate service based upon the Biblical understanding of marriage.

3.5 May a couple get married if they are living together out of wedlock and having sexual relations?

Our pastors will consider marrying a couple that is living together, but each situation will be examined in light of the circumstances. Normally the pastors will request a couple to separate and/or abstain from sexual relations until the wedding day. If children are involved, then special consideration may be given.

4. PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE (COUNSELLING)

In light of the high rate of divorce in our society today, marriage preparation is crucially important. We require couples who wish to be married at Bethany to take pre-marriage counselling. Homework assignments are part of this process. The current fee for counselling is \$75 per couple.

If Prepare/Enrich materials are used by your counselor, an additional fee of \$50 will apply. For this you will receive a professional assessment of several key areas of your relationship.

Special consideration will be given to couples where the groom or the bride lives outside the area, but even then, they will be expected to take some kind of pre-marriage counselling where they live.

We hope this whole process will be viewed as an investment of time and energy into a life-long relationship.

5. MARRIAGE LICENSE

Marriages at Bethany are conducted with the use of a marriage license. We do not publish banns in our church. A license may be obtained from City Hall not more than 90 days before the wedding. It must be in the hand of the Church Secretary at least 10 days before the wedding.

Licenses can be obtained from the City Clerk's Office, 200 King St W., Kitchener ON N2G 1A7.

When securing the license, if you both cannot be present, the one securing the license must produce proof of the age of the other.

6. THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

Normally, a day or two before the wedding, a rehearsal is held. All those in the wedding party should attend, including the ushers, sound technician, candle lighters, readers, soloists, musicians, etc. The rehearsal will last about one hour. Flowers may be brought to the church that evening for the next day, or other arrangements can be made with the office.

We welcome and encourage your input about the ceremony during the planning stage, but we must try to avoid major last minute changes at the rehearsal.

7. THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Marriage is a "holy estate" instituted by God and sanctioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, the activities that take place inside the sanctuary should reflect the holiness of marriage.

We hope the marriage ceremony will be a very joyful and meaningful service for you. At our church, it is a service in which you as a couple, with your family and friends, consciously come before the living God and ask Him to guide and bless your life together.

That being the case, everything that is done in this ceremony should be appropriate for a Christian setting. Under Ontario law, no wedding may proceed if either the bride or groom is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

It is expected that members of the wedding party will recognize the fact that the church is the house of God and will conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the atmosphere of the place of worship. In keeping with this philosophy, we have set the following guidelines:

7.1 Wedding Attire

Wedding dress and attire should be in keeping with good taste and modesty. Your wedding is a worship service and those involved in the wedding are expected to respect the solemnity of the wedding ceremony. This will include not being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs. No Alcoholic beverages will be served on the church premises at any time and smoking is not permitted in the building. The party reserving the facilities is responsible to see that these rules are enforced. Failure to comply could result in the cancellation of your ceremony.

The Wedding Music

The music chosen should also be appropriate for such an occasion. Since this is a sacred wedding ceremony, we encourage you to choose only music that is appropriate for such a special occasion. Many songs from the theatre, radio, or television do not lend themselves to the worship experience, and are more suitably played or sung at the reception.

We have a number of gifted musicians who can assist you in the selection of suitable wedding music. There is much to choose from and your options are extensive. Please inform your soloist or special music guests of the above information. If you prefer to use CD music, please let us know.

7.2 The Wedding Photography

Photographs of the wedding party may be taken as the wedding party enters the church sanctuary at the beginning of the service, and during the recessional as they leave the platform. But once this service of worship begins, no flash pictures will be allowed. Photographers are welcome to take photos without flash, but they must stay out of the staging area. If the Bride and Groom want photographs of certain parts of the service (exchange of rings, vows, etc.) they may be staged after the ceremony.

If your photographer wishes to ask specific questions and exceptions of the

pastor, he/she is welcome to do so. No video lights will be permitted, and the video camera must remain stationary in the sanctuary.

8. RECEPTIONS ON SITE

It may be possible for you to hold your reception on site, provided the meal is catered and all other arrangements are in keeping with our policies and procedures. Please note that **no dancing** or **servicing of alcohol** is permitted at the wedding receptions held on our church property.

TYPICAL WEDDING REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

1. Introductions. Pastor introduces himself. Then Bride and Groom introduce everyone else.
2. Open in prayer.
3. Ground rules:
 - a. This is the Bride and Groom's party. The rest of us are here to make this day happen for them. They get the final say on everything—you can give input *if asked*, but they get final say. This is their day.
 - b. We need your co-operation so that everyone knows what they are supposed to be doing and when.
4. Go through the service verbally and then walk through the entire ceremony.
 - a. We often sign the register and the marriage license at the rehearsal to avoid the "dead air time" of signing the register during the wedding ceremony.

Note: Sound Technician should be at the rehearsal as well as performers of special music and readers.

TENTATIVE ORDER OF SERVICE

(not all of these elements must be included in the service, this list is meant as a guideline for what could be in the ceremony)

Prelude (piano, CD)

Candle Lighting

- Seating of Groom's parents (right)
- Seating of Bride's mother (left)
- Ushers and Pastor go downstairs
- Pastor and men come in from the Prayer Room

Note: Ushers are responsible to unroll the runner & light candles; Ushers, sound technician and musicians should arrive 45 minutes prior to the ceremony.

Solo optional If you plan to have lots of music, a few optional spots have been indicated on the order of service.

Welcome & Announcements The pastor welcomes the congregation on behalf of the Bride and Groom and their families, and makes any brief announcements about the ceremony or receiving line that need to be made. No rice or confetti in the building. No flash pictures once the bride is at the front of the chapel, etc.

The Call to Worship Processional: *attendants come in*

Presentation of the Bride: *to a different song* Congregation stands as bride comes in.

Prayer of Invocation: A brief prayer by the pastor to ask God's presence and blessing in this service.

Giving of the Bride If the Bride is being given away by her father or another relative or close friend this is where it takes place. (Response: "I do," or "Her mother and I.")

The Charge: The pastor's introductory remarks which describe the nature of Christian marriage.

Declaration of Intent

The bride and groom signify their intent by responding to the pastor's questions with a vocal affirmation. (Special **music or hymn**) *optional*

Scripture Reading Pastor's Comments

Exchange of Vows (or vows and rings together) Many variations exist today, from traditional language (*thee and thou*) to more contemporary. Although it is nice to have your vows memorized, it is not advisable to try to say them from memory. The stress of the wedding day is enough without this added pressure.

Exchange of Rings

Christ Candle (or unity candle) (Special music) *optional* during the candle lighting ceremony. Note: suggest using soloist here, lots of time for candle and register signing.

Prayer of Dedication

Pronouncement of Marriage

Kiss

The Benediction

Introducing the Couple

Recessional

Musical Postlude

Ushers escort people out

REQUEST FOR MARRIAGE AT BETHANY EMC

(Please **PRINT** legibly in ink)

Requested Wedding Date: _____

Time: 11:00 am ↑ 1:00 pm ↑ Sanctuary

Reception Time & Location _____

BRIDE:

Full Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

email _____ Bus. Phone: _____

Full Address: _____

Age: _____ Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth: _____

Citizenship: _____ Denomination: _____

Occupation: _____ First Marriage? Yes ↑ No

If not, please explain (ie. Divorced, widowed): _____

Do you regularly attend Bethany EMC ? Yes↑ No↑

If not, where do you attend? _____

Father's full name: _____ Birth Place: _____

Mother's full name (maiden): _____ Birth Place: _____

GROOM:

Full Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

email: _____ Bus. Phone: _____

Full Address: _____

Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Citizenship: _____ Denomination: _____

Occupation: _____ First Marriage?: Yes↑ No↑

If not, please explain (ie. Divorced, widowed) _____

Do you regularly attend Bethany EMC? Yes↑ No↑

If not, where do you attend?: _____

Father's full name: _____ Birth Place: _____

Mother's full name (maiden): _____ Birth Place: _____

We have carefully read all of the information in the wedding package and agree to abide by the policies and guidelines contained therein.

_____ **Groom's Signature**

_____ **Bride's Signature**

_____ **Date**

To be completed by Church Office:

Rehearsal Date & Time _____

Pre-Marriage Course Date _____

Approval Date _____

Officiating Pastor _____

Date License received _____

License must be purchased at City Hall at least one month before the wedding and will be completed by Officiating Pastor.

WEDDING CHECKLIST TO BE COMPLETED BY CHURCH OFFICE

Bride: _____

Groom: _____

Contact Information: _____

Wedding Date Requested: _____

Time of Ceremony: _____

Officiating Pastor Requested: _____

Sanctuary (specify): _____

Review of Getting Married at Bethany EMC Handbook with Couple:
Date: _____

Board Approval required: yes _____ no ↑ _____

Date, Time & Location of Pastoral Interview:

Scheduled time for Marriage Preparation Course/Counselling:

Marriage Prep Course (\$75.00) ↑ Date Paid:

Prepare/Enrich Assessment (\$50.00) ↑ Date Paid:

Receipt of Marriage License (10 days prior to ceremony):

Scheduled Wedding Rehearsal: _____

Discuss Wedding Music: _____

Discuss Wedding Photography: _____

Discuss Facility booking – rooms required:

Details of Reception following ceremony on site:

Staff for Open/Lock Up of facility:

Set Up and Tear Down Time required:

Details of Set up/Tear Down:

Name of Volunteers required for set up & tear down:

Questions to ask regarding Set up Details:

How many guests will be attending (chair requirements)

Will the bride be walked down the aisle with both parents? (Width and number of aisles):

Will musicians be participating in the ceremony? (Pianist, harpist, flautist, etc):

How large is the wedding party? (Space required at the front of the sanctuary)

Will there be refreshments or food items served at any time? (Tables, equipment):

Will there be any special technical needs? (Power point, etc):

Will there be floral or other deliveries at the church? (Arrangements to receive):

Date Room Set Up Diagram received:

List Equipment Request received:

Rental/Room Usage Form received:

Date Final Confirmation of Wedding Arrangements sent:
