

Franklin United Church Marriage Policy

(October 2004)

Marriage Policy

It is our desire that your marriage be the happiest relationship possible, and all that God intended it to be. Recognizing God's intent for marriages to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:21-23), Franklin United Church takes marriage very seriously.

God created man and woman and from the beginning intended that they be joined in marriage so that each might give what the other lacked alone. Since God designed the marriage relationship, it only makes sense that he knows best how to build a happy marriage.

As we read His Word, we are able to discern basic principles which must be understood and applied if we hope to experience joy and fulfillment in marriage. Ignoring these principles could result in failure and frustration in the relationship.

Because we are committed to building strong marriages, we want to share the following guidelines. Our purpose is not to condemn or reject anyone, but to comply with God's principles for marriage.

Only licensed clergy will officiate marriage services at Franklin United Church.

1.) Marriage Preparation

In order for our church to better prepare couples for a life-long marriage, all couples who desire to be married at Franklin United Church will agree to a minimum of six premarital counseling sessions with the pastor. The first session is an interview where the pastor gets acquainted with the couple. After the interview the pastor will consult with the church council to make a final decision. If the council grants permission, at a convenient time the couple will meet with the pastor five times to discuss such topics as spirituality, commitment, finances, conflict, forgiveness, etc.

For couples who do not live in the area but wish to be married at Franklin United Church, other satisfactory arrangements may be made.

2.) Faith Commitment

Couples who wished to be married at Franklin United Church must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and be committed to establishing a Christian home.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)

3.) Divorce

To help insure the time needed for healing and possible reconciliation, no remarriages after divorce of a spouse will be performed until at least one year has passed from the time the divorce was finalized.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29)

Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)

4.) Remarriage

Franklin United Church realizes that re-marriages are just as valid and sacred to God as first marriages. Acknowledging that even the most optimistic statistics indicate that second marriages have at least a 60% divorce rate and that these marriages usually dissolve after six years, we desire to help your marriage with every opportunity to succeed. Therefore, divorced persons may be considered for marriage at Franklin United Church should they meet one of these Biblical criteria:

- Divorce occurred prior to conversion: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he or she is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- Divorce occurred because of sexual unfaithfulness by the spouse: *I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.* (Matthew 18:9)
- Desertion by an unbelieving spouse: *But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.* (1 Corinthians 7:15)
- Former divorced spouse is deceased: *So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.* (Romans 7:3)

If a divorced person answers negatively in all cases, acknowledging that other extenuating circumstances often relate to divorce, the pastor and church council will determine if the wedding should take place. Franklin United Church, realizing God's position on divorce, ("*I hate divorce,*" says the Lord of Israel. Malachi 2:16), and that God is forgiving (*As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.* Psalm 103:12), includes in the determination process the following criteria:

- Reconciliation with the former spouse is not a possibility: *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.* (Romans 12:18)
- The divorced person has repented and displays a changed heart and attitude: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.* (Psalm 51:10)
- The divorced person has sought forgiveness from the Lord and his or her former spouse: *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* (Colossians 3:13)

5.) Premarital Pregnancy

In case of premarital pregnancy, the marriage may or may not be performed depending on the maturity of the persons involved and other considerations. The final decision to perform the ceremony will be determined by the pastor and church council.

6.) Remaining Celibate

Once a couple has entered into premarital preparation with Franklin United Church, they will agree to remain celibate until the wedding ceremony.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 7-8)