

MARRIAGE POLICY

Marriage Policy for St. Paul's United Church, Oakville, Ontario

The members of St. Paul's United Church recognize that celebrating marriages in our sanctuary is a service of Christian worship, in which the couple asks God's blessing and seeks the support and care of those assembled, as they make a loving commitment to each other. We acknowledge and celebrate that context for every marriage ceremony conducted at St. Paul's.

United Church of Canada:

In its document, "Marriage: A United Church of Canada Understanding: 2005", the United Church describes Christian marriage in the following terms:

"Marriage is a union in which the covenant relationship can be expressed and mutually experienced. This will be a relationship of equal partners who freely choose willingly, gladly, and completely, to entrust themselves to each other and to be in relationship with each other. The love we offer the other in this covenant is God's gift to us. We are able to love because we are first loved by God."

"Marriage for Christians is a covenant made before and with God. God is a participant in the covenant. Because God is committed, faithful, and gracious, we are enabled to be so in our relationships. Indeed, the covenant exists because God offers it to us."

"The United Church has consistently affirmed the vast variety of human relationships that are possible."

"The church has repeatedly emphasized the need for preparation and enrichment for committed life partnerships and has emphasized values within marriage and family relationships that 'contribute to the wholeness of persons.'"

St. Paul's United Church:

St. Paul's Mission Statement, developed out of a visioning process, expresses our commitment to being a welcoming presence in the lives of all people:

St. Paul's United Church is a diverse congregation striving to be an inviting, accepting and caring Christian community where one feels welcomed, valued, and loved. Our personal faith is founded in God as revealed through Jesus Christ and sustained through the Holy Spirit. It is nurtured through worship, music, study, discussion, activities and fellowship. Enthusiasm for our faith encourages us to serve the community and the world in the spirit of Jesus Christ. (1999)

Policy Statement:

In keeping with the above commitments, we believe that any two people in a loving, committed relationship, who wish to celebrate their love in a service of Christian worship before God, may be married at St. Paul's United Church. This policy applies to all couples, regardless of race, creed, or gender.

Policy Review:

The Marriage Policy may be reviewed by the Worship Committee as required. Changes arising from this review are to be approved by the Unified Board.

Legal and Administrative Requirements:

1. All couples being married at St. Paul's must be legally entitled to do so. A valid Ontario Marriage Licence must be obtained from the Town Hall no earlier than 3 months prior to the wedding, and delivered to the church office **no later than two weeks** prior to the wedding.
2. If either of the wedding principals is thought to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, the Minister will cancel the wedding on the spot. This is the law.
3. Couples who marry at St. Paul's are strongly encouraged to meet with the Minister well before the ceremony. The final decision to marry a couple is subject to the Minister's discretion.
4. Visiting Ministers involved in any service in the sanctuary at St. Paul's must contact the current Minister to arrange details of the service.
5. St. Paul's Ministers may marry couples off site if that location is agreeable to both the Minister and the couple by prior arrangement. Fees are the same for the ceremony, but additional travel expenses apply.
6. Couples are responsible for booking their own organist or musician. Suggestions for an organist may be obtained from the church office. Visiting organists, musicians, soloists and any other special music must be pre-approved by the Minister conducting the service.
7. Flowers and candles used in the ceremony are the responsibility of the couple. Candelabra are available, but dripless candles must be used.
8. All bookings of the church, dates and times of the wedding, rehearsal and interview should be made through the Minister conducting the service. Times set for rehearsal and wedding **must be strictly adhered to** by the wedding party to avoid delays and disappointments.
9. The use of confetti is prohibited, both inside the church building and on the grounds.
10. The Minister officiating will advise about appropriate use of photography during the wedding ceremony.
11. The fee for a wedding at St. Paul's includes the Minister's honorarium, the rental of the sanctuary, the custodian, and office administration. The fee must be submitted **no later than two weeks** prior to the wedding.