



# Wedding Policy

*"So they are no longer two, but one.  
Therefore what God has joined together,  
let man not separate." - Matthew 19:6*

Congratulations! We are very happy to learn that you are considering using the facilities of Good News Bible Chapel for your wedding! Please read the following carefully. It presents several important policies and practices of Good News Bible Chapel regarding weddings. Please call the Chapel office at 508-226-2916 or send e-mail to [elders@gnbc.org](mailto:elders@gnbc.org) with any questions.

## **God's design for marriage**

We believe the Bible teaches that marriage is a foundational institution of society, instituted by God as a for the benefit of all, Christians and non-Christians alike, for personal companionship, social stability, personal moral purity, and as the ideal environment for raising children. We believe the bible teaches that marriage is designed by God as a life-long union between one man and one woman.

Specifically, marriage is designed by God for loving, supportive companionship and procreation. *"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him... For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh'." - Genesis 2:18 & 24.*

The Bible also teaches that marriage is a symbolic picture of the loving and sacrificial relationship between Jesus Christ, the "bridegroom," and his church, "the bride." *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." - Ephesians 5:25-27.*

The Bible teaches that marriage is intended by God to be a permanent, life-long commitment. Jesus said: *"For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. Consequently they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." - Matthew 19:5-6.*

Finally, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 clearly teaches that followers of Jesus should not be "unequally yoked;" that is, born-again Christians should not intentionally marry a non-believer. The spiritual foundation of a marriage must be united and strong, not divided. From a practical standpoint, the marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian poses potential for significant problems with personal priorities and values, decision making, finances, and child rearing.

### **Attendance required**

As a general rule we perform weddings only for those who are regular attendees of Good News Bible Chapel. "Regular attendees" usually means three out of four Sundays on average. In rare cases, special circumstances may warrant bypassing this policy. The GNBC Elders will review the particular circumstances and make this decision. Please call the number above or email the address above to open this conversation.

### **Pre-marriage counseling**

Any of the Elders (and certain authorized individuals) are authorized by the Chapel, and by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform weddings. Any couple being married at Good News (or elsewhere by someone authorized by GNBC to perform weddings) is required to participate in multiple pre-marriage counseling sessions. Those living at a significant distance must make other approved local arrangements for pre-marital counseling. Talk with an Elder about the options.

These pre-marriage counseling sessions may include the use of a relationship diagnostic tool and will discuss building a Biblical understanding and foundation for marriage. Typical pre-marriage counseling conversations include discussion of the roles and responsibilities in marriage, handling finances, communication skills, resolving conflicts, sex and family planning, and managing expectations before and after marriage.

### **Questions regarding divorce and remarriage**

The Bible is very much opposed to divorce as it is a departure from the ideal design of God for marriage; *"So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate"* (Matthew 19:6). In Luke 16:18 Jesus states that *"Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."*

At the same time, we do understand that divorce is a sad reality in many relationships. The Bible does outline two exceptions for remarriage after divorce: first, in the case of unfaithfulness to marriage vows (See Matthew 19:9), and second, when a non-believing spouse divorces their believing partner (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). It is our policy not to participate in a remarriage where there have not been any Biblical grounds for the divorce. Divorced persons requesting remarriage should first discuss this with the Elders.

The Elders thoughts on this are well covered in Jay E. Adams' book *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible* (Zondervan Publishers, 1980). We recommend this book for your consideration. Again, please call the number listed above or send an email to the email address above to open this conversation.

## **Living together and pre-marital sexual involvement**

If you are already living together we request, based on the authority of the Bible, that you confess this as sin to God and cease living together *as if* you are married until you *are* married.

Also, if you are already engaging in sexual relations, we ask you to stop. The primary reason for this request is that the scriptures teach that we are not to engage in premarital relations. Fornication (sexual intercourse between any two people not married to each other) is clearly prohibited in the Bible. See: 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-21; Hebrews 13:4; etc.

A second reason for asking you to stop sexual relations before marriage is to find out if your relationship is built on something other than just the physical relationship.

We will not participate in the marriage of those who are deliberately breaking God's Law, unless there is heartfelt repentance, including the desire to walk in obedience to God demonstrated by living separately and cessation of sexual relations.

## **Setting the date and securing use of the buildings**

There are four steps for setting the date and securing the use of the Chapel buildings and grounds:

1. The date and time should first be discussed with the Elder you would like to officiate at the wedding (usually the person who conducts your pre-marital counseling sessions), to be certain that there are no schedule conflicts.
2. Then ask the Deacon who serves as the Facility Manager to check to see if the building is available on the date(s) and times you desire (including a date and time for a wedding rehearsal and the wedding and/or reception). Your pre-marital counselor can introduce you to the Facilities Manager.
3. A decision also needs to be made as to whether the reception will be held in the Good News Activity Center in order to hold this time open as well.
4. You must sign a "Church Building Usage Agreement" and turn it in to the church office.

## **Use of the Chapel buildings**

- Any person assisting or participating in the ceremony or reception shall be expected to dress appropriately and modestly.
- The desire by the couple to invite an additional Officiant to co-participate in the service must be discussed and approved by the Elder(s) ahead of time.
- Music for the service will be appropriate, God-honoring music." Music for the reception, if held at the Chapel, will be in good taste and appropriate for use in a church building.

- While you may use musicians of your own choosing for the service, musicians from Good News are available with appropriate notice and schedule availability. Your pre-marital counselor can help you with this choice.
- Decorations should be in keeping with the dignity of the wedding service. Nothing should be used that will mar the facilities, furnishings or woodwork in any area of the church. All decorations must be removed immediately following the service/reception as the room(s) will typically be used the next day for Chapel services. All fragments of adhesive tape must be removed from windows, walls, doors, tables, chairs, etc. Your pre-marriage counselor can help you identify the team to do this clean up for you, maybe while pictures are being taken.
- Drip-less candles may be used. Bird seed and rice are allowed outside the building only.
- It is the responsibility of the wedding party to see that all Chapel owned furniture and equipment are returned to their proper places when finished with them. We suggest the couple assign a “clean-up” team to put things back together as they were. A clean up fee may be assessed if significant janitorial work is required.
- The Chapel sound system shall be operated only by qualified church personnel who should be scheduled well in advance. Your pre-marital counselor can help you arrange for this.
- There is to be no smoking or consumption of alcohol anywhere on the Chapel campus.
- We request no dancing at the wedding reception if it is held in The Activity Center. We realize that this may require you to choose another facility. Allowing dancing at weddings sets a precedent for dancing in the Activity Center that is not allowed.

### **Fees**

- The standard fee for use of the Auditorium and other rooms for a wedding rehearsal and ceremony is \$125. The fee for the use of The Activity Center for a wedding or a reception is \$125. These fees help to cover the costs associated with cleaning, the set-up and break down of seating, etc. In rare cases, these fees may be waived.
- It is customary but not required to offer a monetary gift to the person performing the pre-marital counseling and wedding ceremony, and to any musicians and sound technicians involved.

Adopted, May, 2005. Modified September 2009 and October, 2012.