

Your Graystone Wedding

Congratulations on your engagement! This is an exciting time in your life and we celebrate with you. We believe that marriage is designed by God and blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ to capture God's richest blessings as you walk through life together. By making an application to be married at Graystone you are demonstrating that you want God to be part of your life and marriage. As such there are certain things you need to know about what we believe about marriage and to what you are committing yourself.

First, as stated in Scripture and in our Constitution we believe that *"marriage is a union between one man and one woman designed of God to last so long as they both shall live."* (Gen 1:27, 2:24, 25) This basic understanding of marriage is not only foundational to the church but also to society. The vows taken in the wedding service are intended to be lived out for a lifetime. It is then that couples find satisfaction, joy, and strength.

Second, our Constitution states that *"Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character; for the propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* (Eph 5:22, 23) This is a powerful statement of the purposes of marriage. Marriage is for mutual strengthening and companionship as couples face the joys and challenges of life. Marriage is to build character. This means it is designed to make each other better spiritually and morally. As Gary Thomas says in his book *Sacred Marriage*, "the primary goal of marriage is not to make us *happy*, but to make us *holy*." To be holy is to be fully alive to God and thereby most satisfied. In other words happiness is a by-product of holiness. Without holiness happiness cannot be attained. It is our desire that you be holy and thereby experience God's greatest joy and satisfaction.

Marriage is also for procreation and the passing on of faith from one generation to another. Children are a blessing of God in marriage, not an inconvenience to be put delayed or avoided. As such, having children is to be desired and planned for; God willing. A primary role of marriage is procreation as stated in Genesis 1:28 "Be fruitful and multiply..." The psalmist also wrote "Children are a gift from the Lord... blessed is the man whose quiver is full." Psalm 27:3,5. As God brings children into a couple's lives their task is to raise their children in the instruction of the faith. In order to do this a knowledge of faith is assumed and expected in a Christian marriage. Instruction in faith is not relegated to the church or to someone else but a proactive exercise in the home. Participation in a Church is also expected to aid in further teaching your children.

Third, by seeking to be married in the Church we assume that you desire to follow Christ and make God a part of your marriage and home. This is further stated in The Westminster Confession of faith as follows:

"But no marriage can be fully and securely Christian in spirit or in purpose unless both partners are committed to a common Christian faith and to a deeply shared intention of building a Christian home. Evangelical Christians should seek as partners in marriage only persons who hold in common a sound basis of evangelical faith."

In other words, the bride and groom are to share a common faith in Christ. This is not referring to any particular denomination but of a solid understanding of salvation in Christ and what it means to grow as Christians. Because the marriage relationship is so intensely intimate the scripture admonishes us to not be "unequally yoked." (II Cor 7:14,15) When both husband and wife are standing firm in Christ and growing spiritually there is unity, depth of love, purpose, and strength that a believer and unbeliever cannot share.

Fourth, your wedding is a Worship service *“to affirm the divine institution of marriage; to invoke God’s blessing upon those who enter into the marital relationship in accordance with his word; to hear the vows of those who desire to be married; and to assure the married partners of God’s grace within their new relationship.”* Your marriage at Graystone is more than a civil contract. It is a covenant sealed with your vows before God and those present. Therefore your service will include the following:

An invocation asking for God’s presence and blessing as you seal the Covenant relationship.

Worship music as fitting the occasion. Secular music is not appropriate in most cases. All music must be approved by an appropriate representative of Graystone (i.e. pastor, music director, wedding coordinator.) Any questionable music will be decided upon by the officiating Pastor.

Scripture readings pertinent to marriage. Also any prayers or poetry used must be in accord with biblical faith and practice, and in line with the practices of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Wedding vows that speak of your unending commitment and obligation to one another as described in scripture.

The use of appropriate symbols is permissible and recommended (i.e. a unity candle, a cord of three strands, candles as a sign of God’s presence.) Any other symbols must be approved of by the officiating Pastor.

A pronouncement by the clergy of your bond as husband and wife.

A benediction asking for God’s blessing on you as you face the adventure of life together.

Fifth, we encourage each couple to be actively engaged in a Bible-teaching church in which you are encouraged to grow in your faith. Being part of a worshipping community that is committed to Christ and growing in faith is a *must* for you to strengthen your marriage and help you live out your covenant vows. Of course, if you live in the area we would love to have you worship and grow at Graystone. However, if there are other considerations in your choice of a church home, then we encourage you to be faithfully active wherever God leads you.

Approved by Session August 18, 2015