



## *Gower Street United Church*

# *Marriage Policy and Procedures*

### **Purpose**

To provide direction for ministers, office staff and volunteers, and the public on wedding ceremony policies and procedures of Gower Street United Church.

### **Policy**

- ✚ A wedding ceremony at Gower Street United Church is first and foremost a service of Christian worship. It is therefore understood that Christian worship involves God (however one understands God) in the commitment and covenant that is made. Thus, a wedding service is celebrated by asking God's blessing on the union of two people who love each other, to the exclusion of all others.
- ✚ Gower Street United Church is an Affirming community of faith that celebrates the marriages of couples of all sexual orientations and gender identities.
- ✚ Gower Street United Church celebrates the marriages of previously divorced people and couples of different religions.
- ✚ Marriage is also a civil act; thus, the service includes the following:
  - a question regarding legal impediment;
  - a declaration of mutual consent to the marriage;
  - the presence of witnesses;
  - a declaration by the presiding person that the marriage has taken place;
  - the signing of the legal documents of the marriage.

## Procedures/Guidelines

There are many aspects to planning your wedding day. The following procedures and guidelines are intended to help you prepare for your wedding ceremony.

### Responsibilities for the Couple

- ✚ Complete the Gower Street United Church marriage application form (link found on the welcome page) and return it to the church office. Contact the office prior to completing the application to confirm that your intended date is free.
- ✚ Upon receiving a letter of approval, pay the required \$200.00 deposit to hold your date and time.
- ✚ Arrange a meeting with the minister 1-2 months prior to the wedding. Your ideas for the service will be discussed, and United Church resources will be made available to you. You will plan your service in consultation with the minister, so that it feels right for you. There is no formal requirement for marriage preparation, but you are encouraged to discuss any questions with the minister.
- ✚ If you are requesting an additional minister, or an alternate minister to preside over your ceremony, they must contact the Gower Street United Church minister prior to the wedding date. If the presiding minister is of another religion, the minister from Gower must attend the wedding ceremony.
- ✚ Arrange a meeting with the Organist, Carl Goulding (709-368-1020) or [organist@gowerunited.com](mailto:organist@gowerunited.com) to discuss and plan music selections for your ceremony soon after your wedding date is confirmed.
- ✚ Obtain a marriage license. **A marriage license is only valid for 30 days.** The application can be obtained online at [https://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/birth/getting\\_married/app\\_marriage.pdf](https://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/birth/getting_married/app_marriage.pdf) or in person from a marriage license issuer in your area.
- ✚ Once obtained, bring the marriage license and associated documents to the church office for processing. At this time, please pay the balance of the fees associated with the wedding service. The fee schedule is listed below.
- ✚ Book a wedding rehearsal for two days prior to the wedding service.
- ✚ We welcome the thoughtful participation of photographers and videographers. Please ask the photographer to speak with the minister concerning movement, location and timing of photos/video filming.

- ✚ Respect the sanctity of the church by ensuring that you and your wedding party abstain from alcohol or illicit drugs during the wedding rehearsal and marriage ceremony. It is a legal requirement that the wedding couple not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

### **On your wedding day**

- ✚ The custodian will arrive at least 60 minutes prior to the service. Decorations may be placed in the sanctuary at that time. Please notify the church office if you plan to decorate and arrange to have all decorations and personal items removed from the sanctuary and vestibule within thirty minutes following the service.
- ✚ Arrange to have ushers arrive between 45-30 minutes prior to the service, as guests will begin arriving.
- ✚ The families of the couple should arrive approximately 10 minutes before the service.
- ✚ The wedding party should arrive approximately 5 minutes before the service.
- ✚ Photographs should be completed within 30 minutes following the service.
- ✚ We ask that the receiving line occur at the reception as the church vestibule becomes congested, creating a fire hazard.
- ✚ The use of rice, flower petals and confetti are prohibited on church property as they are very difficult to clean up. The use of bubbles is recommended for outside of the church building.

### **Responsibilities for the Minister**

- ✚ Review and approve/deny the marriage application. Discuss reasons for denial with the Worship and Sacraments Committee and the couple.
- ✚ Meet with the couple to discuss and plan the wedding ceremony, and address any questions arising that may concern marriage preparation, or inability to pay wedding fees.
- ✚ Attend and guide the wedding party through the wedding ceremony rehearsal.
- ✚ Officiate at the wedding ceremony.
- ✚ Find an alternate minister if the pre-determined minister is unable to officiate.
- ✚ In cases where additional, or alternate ministers are requested, meet with the minister(s) to discuss the wedding ceremony, and roles for each minister.

## **Responsibilities for Staff and Volunteers**

- ✚ The office manager liaises with the minister, organist, custodian and others to coordinate plans for the wedding ceremony.
- ✚ Applications for marriage are received, reviewed and processed within 2 weeks.
- ✚ Letter or E-mail of approval is sent to the couple within 2 weeks.
- ✚ Once the letter of approval is sent, the required deposit (\$200.00) is collected, and a receipt is provided. The couple is provided with the refund policy information.
- ✚ Ensure that the couple provides the marriage license and pays the remainder of the required marriage fees within 30 days of the wedding day.
- ✚ Arrange for a caretaker to be at the church at least 60 minutes prior to the wedding ceremony.
- ✚ Arrange for an audio system operator for the wedding ceremony.

## **Fees**

The wedding ceremony fee is \$750.00 which includes:

Minister

Organist

Custodian

Document Processing

Church Fee

Audio System Fee

## **Additional Charges**

Organist- each additional rehearsal with soloist is \$50.00.

Soloist- the couple engages and negotiates the fee separately.

Musicians (other than our organist)- the couple engages and negotiates fee separately.

Additional clergy or commissioner of marriage- the couple engages and negotiates fee separately.

## Contact Information

All enquiries may be made through the church office.

Office manager: Linda Hogan

Phone: 709-753-7286

E-mail: [office@gowerunited.com](mailto:office@gowerunited.com)

**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday 9:00-4:00. **Closed on Mondays and all Statutory Holidays.**

**Summer Hours:** 9:00-12:00 Tuesday to Friday

**Minister:** Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald

**Organist:** Mr. R. Carl Goulding, Phone: 709-368-1020 or e-mail [organist@gowerunited.com](mailto:organist@gowerunited.com)



A wedding is a very special occasion, for you, your families and friends. It is our privilege to be invited to share this time with you, and to work with you to make it just the way you want it. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

**Title:** Weddings/Marriages

**Responsible Committee:** Worship and Sacraments

**Date Approved:** May 31, 2019

**Review Due Date:** May 31, 2024

## Appendix A- Frequently Asked Questions

### **Do we have to be members to be married at Gower Street United Church?**

You do not, although we appreciate it if you have some connection with Gower. If you do not, we welcome you to worship with the congregation on a Sunday or two prior to your wedding so you can get to know the community. Sunday worship service is at 11:00, followed with coffee and conversation. Please check the Gower website or Facebook page as we worship in joint services with other downtown United Churches on select Sundays throughout the Summer.

### **Do we have to take a marriage preparation course?**

No. Some churches require a marriage preparation course be completed, and others recommend it. At Gower, we simply require you to meet with the Minister for a conversation and to plan the service.

### **Can we book a year in advance?**

You may, but we will not be able to tell you a year in advance which Minister will preside due to holiday schedules or other unforeseen circumstances. If our regular Minister is unavailable, we will find an alternate. Conversely, we prefer at least a three month notice when possible.

### **Where can we get a marriage license?**

A marriage license can be obtained online at [https://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/birth/getting\\_married/app\\_marriage.pdf](https://www.servicenl.gov.nl.ca/birth/getting_married/app_marriage.pdf) or in person at a Marriage License Issuer in your area. This information is available on the above Government NL website.

### **Can we choose our own readings?**

We encourage you to select your own scripture passage(s) as they reflect your values and the uniqueness of your wedding ceremony. A list of possible selections is included at the end of this document. **We discourage readings from other sources (poetry, songs, etc.), however, will allow if they have been approved by the Minister and Organist.** Given that you have chosen to be married in a church, we understand that you are people of faith who are entering a covenant relationship with each other, and with God. You are inviting your families and friends to join you in a worship service, and Gower's worship services use scripture as a way of clearly acknowledging that God is present.

### **Can we choose our own music?**

You will work with our organist, Carl Goulding to select music for your service. If you have a special song that you want played it should be discussed and cleared with him. Normally popular music is best reserved for your reception. You should contact the organist directly as soon as your date is set. This is *not* something we do at the office.

### **Can we ask our own musician(s)?**

Yes, but you must speak with our organist to ensure that what you are planning is acceptable for our church. Many couples have friends who appreciate being asked to play at their wedding. You may not want an organist at all, or you may want an organist with an additional musician. If you want the organist and a musician this can be arranged. If you want the organist to accompany a soloist, you must plan with him/her. If you want another organist, please discuss this with our organist.

### **Does Gower perform same-sex marriages?**

At Gower, we decree it a just, loving and holy act to marry couples of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Everyone is welcome here.

### **One of us is divorced, does that make a difference?**

No, it does not. We welcome you into your new partnership with joy.

### **Can our child participate in our service?**

We believe that this is a good idea if the child is old enough and wishes to participate. Speak to the Minister about how to proceed so that everyone feels comfortable.

### **Is there a way to welcome and honor the new relationship with step-children during the service?**

Absolutely. A part of the service can include vows from a new stepparent to stepchildren and vice versa, or the exchange of a token.

### **What are the rules for photography and videography?**

A marriage is a service of worship and should remain dignified. A photographer may take discreet photos during the service, from the sides or back of the sanctuary, without a flash. No

photographs should be taken by anybody during the exchange of vows. A videographer is welcome to set up in one location before the service begins, and to film without lights.

### **When can we decorate and when do we take down decorations?**

Decorations are welcome and may be placed in the sanctuary and vestibule up to one hour before the service. The decorations must be removed within 30 minutes after the service. Please advise the office of your plans to decorate prior to your wedding day as some accommodations may need to be made.

### **How long can we stay after the service for a receiving line and photos?**

We anticipate that you will be in the building approximately 30 minutes following the service. If you want photos taken in the sanctuary, this must be completed within that 30 minutes. We request that your receiving line occur at the reception as the vestibule is easily congested, creating a fire hazard.

### **Are there any circumstances in which our wedding would be refused?**

Yes. A Minister is not obliged to perform a marriage if in his/her assessment the marriage should not be performed. This decision would be made in consultation with the Chairperson of the Worship and Sacraments Committee, and with the couple.

### **Can we invite another Minister to perform the service?**

Yes, but this must be approved by the Minister at Gower Street United Church. We recommend that you contact our Minister and arrange a meeting to discuss this.

### **What is a Commissioner of Marriage?**

Marriage commissioners provide couples with flexible non-religious options for their wedding. Any person performing a marriage ceremony in Newfoundland and Labrador must be registered with the Vital Statistics agency.

### **Can you marry us at another location?**

The church is our first choice, but there are situations when another location might be considered. Please discuss this request with the Minister.



### **What happens if the Minister we want is unavailable?**

If the Minister you have been working with is unavailable due to unforeseen circumstances it is our responsibility to find a replacement.

### **What do we do if we cannot afford the fees?**

Speak with the Minister that you are working with. We don't want anyone turned away because they are unable to pay the fees.

## **Appendix B- Scripture Suggestions for Covenant of Marriage**

Genesis 1:26-28; 31a The sixth day of creation

Genesis 2:15, 18-24 Not good that a human be alone

Ruth 1:1-8, 14-17 Where you go, I will go I

Samuel 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a Jonathan makes a covenant with David

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12a Two are better than one

Song of Solomon 1:15-2.4 You are beautiful, my love

Song of Solomon 2:8-13 Love is strong as death

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 A seal upon your heart

Isaiah 61:10, 11; 62:3-5 As a bridegroom, as a bride

Jeremiah 31:31-34 The new covenant

Sirach 6:6-10, 14-16 True friends

Matthew 5:13-16 Salt and light

Matthew 7:21, 34-29 A house built on a rock

Matthew 19:3-6 Let no one separate

Matthew 22:35-40 Love, the greatest commandment

Mark 3:31-35 Jesus' true family

Luke 6:20-23 The Beatitudes

John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16 The Word became flesh

John 2:1-11 Wedding at Cana

John 13:34-35 A new commandment  
John 15:1-11 Jesus, the true vine  
John 15:9-12 Remain in Christ's love  
Romans 8:31b-39 God's love in Christ  
Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 New life in Christ I  
Corinthians 13:4-8a the gift of love  
Galatians 5:1, 13, 14, 22-25 The fruits of the Spirit  
Ephesians 3:14-21 Rooted and grounded in love  
Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-14 Live in love  
Philippians 2:1-11 The same mind in you as in Christ  
Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord  
Colossians 3:1-4, 12, 17 Clothe yourselves with compassion  
I John 3:18-24 Let us love, not in word, but in action  
I John 4:7-12 Love one another  
Revelation 19:1, 5:9 Marriage supper of the Lamb  
Revelation 21:1-6 The new Jerusalem

*And now these three remain: Faith, Hope and Love.*

*But the greatest of these is Love - 1 Corinthians 13:13*