

**REQUEST FOR MARRIAGE
Policies, Guidelines, and Expectations
FIRST REFORMED CHURCH
SHELDON, IOWA**

The Elders of First Reformed Church have established the following policies, guidelines, and expectations for couples from both within and outside the congregation who are considering the use of the worship space and associated facilities of First Reformed Church for their wedding ceremony. They are set in accordance with the beliefs of First Reformed Church and in our desire to elevate the institution of marriage.

First Reformed Church values strong and healthy families and passion for Jesus Christ. We believe that at the core of a strong and healthy family is a strong and healthy marriage where both the husband and wife are believers in Jesus Christ. We believe these expectations encourage positive behavior which will help ensure that each marriage is given every possible opportunity to succeed. We hope that each prospective couple preparing for marriage will consider their own values and expectations for marriage alongside those of First Reformed Church to determine if the worship space and facilities of this congregation are where they want to be married.

This document shall be reviewed by the engaged couple with the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or designated Elder of First Reformed Church before a date is secured on the FRC calendar.

Instructions:

1. Both the bride and groom shall initialize each section to acknowledge that each clearly understands that policy, guideline, or expectation.
2. Both the bride and groom along with the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or designated Elder for First Reformed Church shall sign the completed form.
3. If both the bride and groom have initialized and signed the form, a copy of this document shall be made a given to the engaged couple.
4. If both the bride and groom have initialized each section and signed the form, then a calendar date for the wedding ceremony shall be secured on the FRC calendar.

B: _____

G: _____

1. Weddings in the church building will ordinarily be limited to baptized or communicant members of the First Reformed Church. Requests for use of the church facilities from those outside the membership of the First Reformed Church must be submitted to the Church Privilege Chairperson and approved by the Church Privilege Committee and the governing board, the Consistory.
 - a. If a couple requesting marriage is not a member of a church, they will be asked why they wish to be married in a church and specifically this church.
 - b. The pastor or elder will explain that if a couple seeks to come before God for His

blessing in their marriage, we would expect that they also be concerned about worshipping and serving Him with fellow believers.

B: _____

- 2.** The Pastor of the First Reformed Church will ordinarily perform a marriage in the First Reformed Church when at least one of the parties is either a baptized or communicant member or a relative of a communicant member of the church.

G: _____

B: _____

- 3.** Both parties seeking marriage must consent to and cooperate in pre-marital counseling. Permission to use the facilities of the First Reformed Church for a wedding will not normally be given and the pastor of the First Reformed Church normally will not officiate at a wedding unless both persons agree to this.

G: _____

B: _____

- 4.** A minimum of four months and at least 6 sessions of marriage preparation are required with a pastor of First Reformed Church, your chosen clergy, or another Christian counselor, unless there are circumstances that prohibit this. Practical concerns like church scheduling, the pastor's schedule, and adequate time to do pre-marital counseling require this. During these sessions, the necessary topics of conversation and instruction should include: a clear explanation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, how the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Church is the pattern for Christian marriage, budgeting, family of origin issues, conflict resolution, goal setting, and communication. If you will be married within the facilities of First Reformed Church by a pastor other than from our staff, you will need to show the Pastor of First Reformed Church, that you are receiving marriage preparation from your pastor or other counselor.

G: _____

B: _____

- 5.** It shall always be left to the discretion of the pastor as to whether or not he will perform a marriage. If he does not feel that he can perform a marriage in good conscience, he shall consult with the elders. If the elders agree that the pastor cannot in good conscience perform this marriage, then he shall not be required to do so. The Board of Elders will support him in that decision.

G: _____

B: _____

- 6.** The pastor of the First Reformed Church normally will not perform a marriage if the parties are living together. The pastor may perform their marriage if the parties agree that living together prior to marriage is contrary to the will of God and be willing to live apart for the remaining time leading up to their wedding.

G: _____

B: _____

7. The Elders of the First Reformed Church normally will not allow the church building to be used by parties who are living together nor abstain from sexual contact prior to the wedding ceremony. The Elders may allow the church to be used if the parties agree that living together and sexual contact prior to marriage is contrary to the will of God and be willing to live apart for the remaining time leading up to their wedding and/or be repentant of any past sexual contact outside of the marriage relationship.

G: _____

B: _____

8. If a couple is willing to live apart for the remaining time leading up to their wedding but this is practically or financially impossible, after consultation with the couple, the church may offer assistance to make living apart possible.

G: _____

B: _____

9. If a couple begins to live together after the pastor has agreed to perform their wedding and their wedding date has been approved for the church, the pastor may decline to perform their wedding and they may forfeit their right to use the church.

G: _____

B: _____

10. In a marriage in which one of the parties is NOT a professing Christian and/or has not been regularly involved in a church, the pastor may perform their marriage if the parties can agree to the following conditions:

G: _____

- a. The member of the church must affirm his/her commitment to maintain the promises they made to God and His church when they made profession of faith and agree to raise whatever children they may have in the church.
- b. The member of the church must affirm a willingness to live with the non-Christian spouse in such a way as to demonstrate faithfulness to Christ.
- c. The non-Christian must assure the partner of a willingness not to interfere in the partner's practice of the Christian life or in the raising of their children in the Christian faith.
- d. Both parties must agree with the use of a liturgy in their ceremony that allows for beliefs and promises which both parties can affirm with honesty.

B: _____

11. A wedding ceremony officiated by a pastor of First Reformed Church or hosted by First Reformed Church is a Christian worship service and must be ordered with this in mind. It must include God's purpose for marriage, declarations of commitment, prayer for the couple, scripture, a message from that scripture, and vows. Any music and/or personal readings must agree with the Scriptural teachings of the meaning of a Christian marriage, bring glory to Jesus Christ rather than shame, respects people of all ages and the institution of marriage, and does not glorify or condone sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship. All elements of the wedding ceremony must be discussed with

G: _____

the pastor and agreed upon with him.

B: _____

12. When a request for marriage comes from one or both who have been divorced, the pastor will discuss with the couple the following factors:

G: _____

- a. The person must recognize their own responsibility in the failed marriage identifying personality traits or behavior patterns which may have contributed to the divorce. These traits and patterns may have to be modified in order to build a healthy new marriage.
- b. Repentance for their responsibility in the failed marriage and an acceptance of God’s forgiveness.
- c. A willingness to forgive the former spouse. Anger and bitterness must be released.
- d. The person must be faithful in fulfilling their obligations to the former spouse and children.
- e. The person must be willing to make the new marriage a distinctively Christian marriage that depends on Christ and be willing to become active in a Christian church.

B: _____

13. The Elders of First Reformed Church believe the human institution of marriage is created by God for the benefit of humanity and all creation. In light of His revelation in the Old and New Testaments, the gospel of grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ and the specific teaching that Christian marriage is a reflection of the relationship of Jesus Christ and his Church, the Elders believe that Christian marriage is defined by the Lord to be between one biological man and one biological woman with the intention of being married for life. All wedding ceremonies performed in the worship space and associated facilities of First Reformed Church, or by one or more of its pastors shall abide by the above definition of marriage. All other forms of marriage are strictly excluded.

G: _____

I have read the above regarding my marriage and ceremony at First Reformed Church and I agree to abide by these policies, guidelines, and expectations.

BRIDE NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

GROOM NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

FRC REPRESENTATIVE

SIGNATURE

DATE