

Lambeth United Church

A Congregation within the United Church of Canada

COVENANT OF MARRIAGE AND LIFE PARTNERSHIP Approved July 2006

Introduction

Welcome to this stage in your life-journey! For you to be considering the celebration of one of life's most intimate relationships means you have reached a point that is truly exciting, profound and challenging. It is hoped our understandings and policies will be of help in your important decisions and planning. The information contained herein is referenced by the official policies of Lambeth United Church as approved by action of the church Council in June 2006.

Toward an Understanding of Christian Marriage/Covenanting

For Christians, our relationship with God and with each other is rooted in our understanding of 'covenant'. We know God as faithful, loving, and just. We are called to embody this in our own relationships.

Relationships cannot thrive and grow in isolation; they need the nurture, support and accountability of community. Covenants of marriage and life partnerships are public, and have profound and lasting effects not only on the couple but also on the society of which they are a part. Relationships grounded in inclusivity, openness, respect, and equality will be caring and loving. When one person turns to another and promises to love them, there is an opportunity to feel the Divine mystery and presence. By promising to live in faithful human covenant with another, there is potential to know, in part, God's faithful covenant with all God's people.

In the United Church, covenants of marriage and life partnership are part of the worship life of the pastoral charge and come under the responsibility of the Worship Committee.

The Worship Committee has the ultimate authority to decide if a wedding ceremony is to take place in the sanctuary or not. The law of the United Church makes it clear that the minister, in the performance of weddings, is under the direction of the local congregation.

As the Church, we celebrate such covenants in the context of the public worship of God. Spirituality is an important part of human relationships, and to have a marriage/covenant marked and celebrated within the Church is to acknowledge a decision to share life together based on the faith that we are sons and daughters of God. By promising to live in faithful human covenant, there is potential to know God's faithful covenant with all God's people.

For couples who do not have an interest in the Christian understanding of marriage/covenant, or commitment to the life of faith, a 'civil ceremony' presided over by a Marriage Commissioner is an option. Such information may be available from the minister of Lambeth United Church.

Information About Marriage/Covenant Services

Couples seeking the celebration of Marriage/Covenants at Lambeth United Church are normally those of whom at least one is already associated with our Community of Faith personally, or through their family's involvement, or are interested in making our church the base for their faith-journey, and that of their life together. However, the congregation has made clear, it's desire to be open, through negotiation, to many who do not, as yet, have a permanent faith community.

It is expected that initial inquiries about Marriage/Covenant Celebrations should be made at least six months in advance of the proposed date. The more 'lead-time' there is prior to the ceremony, lessens the chance of disappointment.

Marriage/Covenant Services are not held on Sundays. Other occasions that are usually not for booking include: Easter Saturday, and the weekends closest to Christmas Eve/Day. It is also to be recognized that other specific weekends may not be suitable for such bookings depending on yearly and seasonal advanced plans in the life and work of the Congregation.

In accordance with United Church 'ministerial ethics', services of Marriage and Covenant at Lambeth United Church are presided over by the Ordained Minister who is in covenant with this particular congregation through Middlesex Presbytery. Other arrangements may be considered only after consultation with and at the discretion of the congregation's 'Ordered Ministry' personnel.

Use of guest ministers to assist in weddings performed at Lambeth is permitted only in consultation with the Minister of Lambeth United. The use of the building with another minister being ‘brought in’ to perform the ceremony is not permitted.

The Licence

The wedding ceremony is performed under the authority of an Ontario license, which may be obtained from city hall, London or any other municipal office. The marriage license and pre-addressed envelope, must be brought to the church office two weeks prior to the wedding.

Banns

Banns of marriage may be read in the Church if the parties to the wedding are members of the United Church of Canada, and have never been previously married. Please ask the minister for more information.

Marriage/Covenant Services in locations other than the church building are matters to work out in consultation with the Minister (e.g. homes, gardens, parks). A guiding principle for location is the understanding that the Marriage/Covenant is a Service of Worship. The minister holds his/her provincial licence to perform marriages because she/he is in a covenant relationship with a pastoral charge. Therefore, any marriage ceremonies performed by the minister should be affirmed by the appropriate body of the church. It is the principle and practice of our current minister that all wedding ceremonies must have the approval of the Worship committee.

A guiding principle in all the life and work of Lambeth United Church is a careful approach to the language and terminology used. In Marriage/Covenant Services, the use of ‘inclusive’ and ‘non-sexist’ language is encouraged.

Terms of Reference

“Service of Marriage” is defined in accordance with the legal definition now recognized by the Ontario Government and the Federal Canadian Government; that is: the joining together of two persons that is recognized by the issuance of a verified ‘marriage license’. The marriage of persons of the same gender at Lambeth United is permitted only if one of those persons or their parents are members of the congregation.

Marriage/Covenant Preparation Process

The Initial Interview

Parties inquiring about celebrating a marriage/covenant will first need to make an appointment to meet with the Minister. Additional time with the Minister will be booked

later on.

The Booking

After the initial interview, the Minister will give you details about how to book the event with the church office. This information will include Fees, Deposits, and Building Use Guidelines. It is wise to speak with the minister about possible dates for your wedding before you proceed with other plans. Reserving the Church well in advance can avoid disappointments.

The time of a wedding and rehearsal must be adhered to. Failure to be on time for either one not only causes inconvenience, but may cause the forfeiture of the event if another event is planned.

A Marriage/Covenant Event

All parties married through Lambeth United Church are expected to attend what is commonly called a "Marriage Preparation Course". It is understood this is a very important investment of time, effort and dollars to give persons helpful tools and insights for enhancing their ongoing relationship. Information on these courses will be provided to you during the initial interview with the Minister.

By action of the congregation it is now mandatory that all couples wishing a wedding ceremony at Lambeth United must complete a church sanctioned marriage preparation course.

Accommodation and Decorations

The church can seat about 300 persons. You may wish to use flowers, candles and other decorations for your service. All decorations must not damage the pews, walls or floor of the church. Flowers and other decorations may not be placed on the communion table. However, the placement of a unity candle, in a modest floral arrangement, upon the communion table may be permitted.

Our church has staff licensed (by both the Province of Ontario and the United Church of Canada) to perform marriage services within the church. At present that person is the Reverend Matthew Penny. He may be contacted through the church office.

Please call if you would like to enquire about beginning your married life in the midst of a Christian setting. Many of your questions regarding weddings may only be answered by contacting the minister who will conduct the wedding.

The use of confetti or rice on any Church property is prohibited.

Members of the wedding party and their guests must remember that the Church is a place of worship first. While all are welcome, those in attendance are required to conduct themselves accordingly while on church property. If anyone of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time the ceremony is due to begin, the ceremony will be automatically cancelled in accordance with the Marriage Act of Ontario Section 7.

Music for a service of worship at Lambeth is normally arranged with the Organist.

If you wish to use an outside source of music for the wedding it must be cleared with the Minister and the Organist. If you wish to use a soloist, then the music for the solo must be given to the organist well in advance of the ceremony and in the correct key.

The Organist does have the final say in the music which is used in worship at Lambeth United Church. Please know in advance that while flexibility is the key, respect is the rule. Please refer to the Music Director's information sheet.

And, it must be remembered that as a Christian community whose first service is to Jesus Christ, this congregation is under no obligation to perform any wedding ceremony.

A Final Word

The hope is that your Marriage/Covenant day will be a worshipful, memorable and wonderful day. The matters outlined here are offered with the intention of making the occasion more meaningful and significant for you.

Contact the church office for more information or to speak with a Minister.

For more information, call the church at 519-652-2093, or e-mail us at lambethuc@bellnet.ca.

Fees: see next page.

Lambeth United Church

Fees for Weddings for the 2009-2010 church year as approved by the worship committee.

These fees may change at any time without notice. However once a wedding is booked the fees for that wedding will not change.

Non- Members

Minister	\$300
Organist	\$300
Custodian	\$100
Use of church	\$200
Damage deposit	\$200 (refundable after event).

Members or their immediate family: i.e. children.

Minister	\$ 300
Organist	\$ 300
Custodian	\$ 100
Use of Church	\$ 0
Damage Deposit	\$200 (refundable after event).

Please note that all fees must be in to the church office a minimum of 7 days prior to the event.