

STATEMENT  
ON  
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

*"Let brotherly love continue...  
let marriage be held in honor among all."  
Hebrews 13:1 and 4*

**When coming to the Newton Presbyterian Church for the solemnization of their wedding vows in a service of worship, couples should be aware of the following policy of the congregation as adopted by Session on November 12, 1987.**

1. Marriage is part of the Creator's plan for humankind, reflecting His observation that *"It is not good that the man should be alone."* (Genesis 2:18) So God made a *"helper fit for him"* (Ephesians 5:31) and ordained that husband and wife should become *"one flesh."* (Genesis 1:27, 2:24) As Jesus stated as Re-Creator of His Father's world, *"What therefore God has joined together let no one put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6)
2. Marriage is intended by God for the life-long companionship, growth, spiritual edification and mutual partnership of a man and woman, complementing each other and enjoying fully the Creator's good gifts of sexual fulfillment, family life, and shared happiness. (1 Peter 3:7)
3. The Creator's purpose in establishing marriage does not, however, reduce those who are single to a second class status in His church. (Galatians 6:2) It is the responsibility of the Christian family to embrace all, receiving, encouraging, helping, and supporting one another so that marriage becomes not a barrier to fellowship but that couples and families, and indeed the entire church community, are places of openness and acceptance for all.
4. Nor does the Creator's purpose in establishing marriage as a lifelong partnership exclude those who have experienced the heartbreak of broken relationships and severed families. It is particularly the responsibility of the family of God to support those who are experiencing the disruption of divorce, who struggle as single parents, and who need to be reassured of God's redemptive purposes in Christ.
5. Those who have lost their spouse through death, especially those without immediate family, are a particular charge on the Christian community: helping them through the grieving process, offering support both material and spiritual, and providing alternative structures for sharing and fellowship through the extension of Christian love and compassion.
6. It is important that our church provide Biblical instruction on sexual morality, marriage, and family responsibilities, given the permissiveness of our society, but to do so with compassion, sensitivity, and with an awareness of God's mercy and grace to all of us as we struggle to become the initiators of the new order that is His Kingdom. (1 Timothy 5:3-5) The Biblical teaching on sexual intercourse being the exclusive expression of married love needs constant affirmation. Young people need to be helped as they face key decisions - prevention being better than cure. Couples contemplating marriage and the setting up of a Christian home need careful counsel from pastor and a more experienced couple who can provide continuing encouragement.

7. Weddings then are a small part of a much wider commitment that Newton Presbyterian Church makes to the establishment of a Christian home: the congregation undertakes both through its shared life together and through the pastoral services it provides to counsel, educate, encourage and strengthen the marriages and family life of its members. Each wedding in the church involves a commitment of the couple and of the congregation to help one another attain God's standards for fulfillment of His creation order of marriage. (*Titus 2:15, 3:18b*)
  
8. **For their own sake as well as that of the wider faith community, it is important that couples coming to the church to be married in a service of worship have meaningful links with the congregation both before and after the ceremony.** (The exception to this would be where bride or groom have been a part of the church, have moved away, and are returning to be among their family who are active in Newton Presbyterian.) Because those about to be married or newly married are themselves involved in the church, the congregation can then responsibly be committed to be an encouragement as they work through the initial stages of marital adjustment, have children (should their union be so favored), and as they establish a Christian and Christ-centered home.
  
9. **To sustain such a commitment, the elders, as representatives of the entire church, approve all weddings held in the building.** This is done on the recommendation of a member of the pastoral staff. As they do so each couple accepts an obligation to be involved in appropriate premarital counseling. This will be set in consultation with the staff member concerned. Where couples are already cohabiting, there needs to be an open discussion of the circumstances, possible separation before a wedding (if there are no children), and the freedom to ask for, and receive, Christ's forgiveness and mercy so that a fresh beginning can be made in their relationship that will be in accord with Biblical principles.
  
10. Couples may come who are yet to be fully convinced of the Christian gospel but are open to faith, others who are new to faith in Christ, while still others who have matured in their walk with Jesus. Each couple will be taken as they are on their faith journey, accepted and loved. However, where one partner is a convinced believer and the other is not, such a union cannot be blessed in the service of worship which is a wedding and is clearly contrary to the teaching of God's Word.
  
11. In the case of divorce, couples seeking remarriage will have the cause of their previous separation discussed, for each circumstance is different. Some have become Christians subsequently, others evidence genuine contrition and have demonstrated repentance after a reasonable lapse of time, while still others have been the victims of unfaithfulness, abuse, or a change in their previous spouse. The minister(s) and Session will examine each case on its own merits, apply Biblical criteria, and ensure absolute privacy in their discussion and decision. They will always remember that the church is the community of the forgiven, and those who receive mercy must themselves be merciful.

Having read the *Statement on Christian Marriage and Procedures for Arranging a Wedding at Newton Presbyterian Church*, we agree to respect and abide by the policies and procedures laid out in those documents.

Groom's Signature	Date	Bride's Signature	Date
Officiating Pastor's Signature	Date	Wedding Date	