

FREMONT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Christian Marriage



It is Fremont's desire to be compassionate and supportive of those desiring to join together in the Christian bond of marriage and to follow God's will for each individual couple and for the church. Fremont also understands that, in our current culture, there are numerous views of the institution of marriage, many of which conflict with what God originally intended in the Biblical witness. We believe the Bible to be God's Word and that to understand and obey His will leads to the greatest human flourishing. We long for the Church as well as society to conform to Biblical standards of marriage, but our ultimate desire is that, through the gospel, people may come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord of their lives and receive His gift of eternal life. We also know that, having come to believe in Him, we enjoy His blessing by walking with Him according to His Word.

When God created us male and female, He also instituted the ordinance of marriage in which one man and one woman are bound together for life in a solemn covenant, which beautifully illustrates God's covenantal relationship with His chosen people. Marriage was instituted in creation, codified in the Levitical law and compared in the Old Testament prophets to a relationship between God and his people. The wisdom literature discusses the unique unity of this relationship and Jesus explained the original intention and core elements of marriage. Several New Testament Epistles give explicit instructions on this union. In this unique relationship, the married couple seeks to remember, celebrate, and model Christ's love for His Church and His Church's devotion to her Lord and to serve one another with godly affection. The Church views marriage as a profound spiritual institution established by God.

Ordained pastors have historically served as agents for the secular government in solemnizing marriages, including the approval and signature of the marriage license on behalf of the "state." Marriage in the eyes of the American civil government and in the eyes of the American church have been somewhat intertwined. Today in our mainly secular society, the view of marriage has changed dramatically. As a result, the holiness and meaning of marriage and the pastor's role in establishing that covenant are now inconsistent with the government's view. A pastor faithful to God's design for marriage as defined in the Bible may not in good conscience be able to act as an agent of the government to affirm a marriage and may be exposing himself/herself to potential legal or other form of harm in doing so.

Given the importance of marriage in the Biblical witness and Fremont's commitment to honoring God's intention, Fremont adopts the following policy and practice regarding marriage:

- Fremont shall provide worship services celebrating the Christian marriage of a man and woman called together in marriage by God. Any Celebration of Christian Marriage shall not constitute a legally binding civil union on behalf of

any governmental entity and shall have no legally binding authority for governmental purposes.

- The church and/or the pastor leading the worship service will not be responsible to obtain, coordinate or sign a license of marriage issued by the State. Should the couple desire also to be legally bound in a civil union created by a government agency, couples will be required to schedule a civil service with the appropriate county agency.
- Any agreement to participate in, sponsor or set a date for a Celebration of Christian Marriage shall be made by a Fremont pastor only after the couple meets with that pastor.
- The pastor may, in his or her sole discretion, decline to make church facilities available for and/or decline to officiate at a Celebration of Christian Marriage when, in his or her judgment, there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral or legal reasons.
- Only duly ordained clergy shall officiate at a Celebration of Christian Marriage held at Fremont or sponsored by Fremont at another location. If a couple desires that a member of the clergy that is not a Fremont pastor officiate, assist or participate in the Celebration, that pastor must be formally invited by the Pastor/Head of Staff in order to participate. The guest pastor shall abide by this Policy on Marriage without exception.
- The officiating pastor shall require a minimum level of pre-marital counseling (amount determined by the pastor) to be accomplished with the couple by the pastor or by a qualified counselor approved by the pastor.
- Every Celebration held on the campus of Fremont shall be coordinated by one of Fremont's Wedding Coordinators, who will assure that these policies and other policies of the church be honored.
- Additional guidelines and practices for Celebrations of Marriage are detailed in the Marriage brochure and shall be honored by all participants.