

First Hamilton CRC
Marriage Preparation and Wedding Policy- approved June 24, 2015

Guiding Principle:

First Hamilton CRC recognizes that Christian marriage consists of a man and a woman, both of whom profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, covenanting together in a lifelong, exclusive relationship of love and fidelity with each other.

Practices & Procedures:

1. Consistory will only approve and all clergy employed by or whose ecclesiastical credentials are held by First Hamilton CRC will only officiate weddings and civic wedding ceremonies that are in conformity with First Hamilton CRC's stated recognition of Christian marriage.
2. Consistory will ordinarily approve and First Hamilton CRC clergy will ordinarily agree to officiate weddings of First Hamilton CRC members when:
 - a. at least one person in the couple is a member of First Hamilton CRC;
 - b. both the man and the woman are confessing members in good standing in a Christian church and ordinarily attend worship services every Sunday;
 - c. they are not living together before marriage and are committed to sexual purity before marriage and sexual faithfulness within marriage;
 - d. they intend to become members in the same congregation as husband and wife; and,
 - e. they agree to participate in a marriage preparation course facilitated by a First Hamilton CRC clergy.
3. At their discretion, Consistory may also approve and Pastors may agree to officiate weddings where one member of the couple is not a confessing member of a Christian church, if he or she demonstrates:
 - a. true faith in Christ through evidence of spiritual fruit, or
 - b. a sincere desire to pursue communicant membership in a Christian church, or
 - c. an ongoing willingness to meet with the pastor for discipleship in the Christian faith.
4. At their discretion, clergy employed by or whose ecclesiastical credentials are held by First Hamilton CRC:
 - a. must consult with Consistory before agreeing to officiate or declining to officiate any wedding or civil ceremony;
 - b. may decline to officiate weddings, for reasons including but not limited to the following: concerns regarding the engaged couple's well-being and readiness for marriage, the pastor's work load capacity, and other personal and family commitments; and,
 - c. may agree to officiate weddings of non-members that conform with the Consistory's stated recognition of marriage.
5. All couples seeking to be married under the authority of First Hamilton CRC or to have their wedding officiated by clergy employed by or whose ecclesiastical credentials are held by First Hamilton CRC agree to participate in marriage preparation course prior to their wedding day.
 - a. The marriage preparation course will ordinarily be led by the clergy who will officiate the wedding;
 - b. At any point during the counseling process, the officiating clergy, in consultation with Consistory, reserves the right to delay the wedding or to refuse to solemnize the marriage for weighty biblical reasons;

- c. Discernment regarding an appropriate format for a marriage preparation course is entrusted to the officiating clergy in order to best attend to the needs and circumstances of the particular couple seeking to be married.
6. Those seeking to have a wedding under the authority of First Hamilton CRC or officiated by clergy employed by or whose ecclesiastical credentials are held by First Hamilton CRC will ensure that
 - a. the ceremony is Gospel-centered and faith-affirming, with the Word of God remaining liturgically central to the service;
 - b. the ceremony is conducive to worship;
 - c. the forms and vows approved by the Christian Reformed Church influence the content of the ceremony;
 - d. songs that those in attendance are asked to sing during the ceremony will be overtly Christian in content.
7. Weddings of non-members utilizing First Hamilton CRC's property
 - a. will conform with Consistory's stated recognition of marriage.
 - b. will comply with First Hamilton CRC's building use policy.
8. The following fee scale will be utilized in relationship to marriage preparation courses and weddings:
 - a. For clergy employed by First Hamilton CRC, the time involved in facilitating marriage preparation courses is considered part of the pastor's normal employment and compensation. No fees are required.
 - b. For clergy whose credentials are held by First Hamilton CRC, the fee for a marriage preparation course will be arranged directly between the clergy member and the engaged couple.
 - c. Ordinarily, the couple seeking to be married will provide the officiating clergy with an honorarium of at least \$150.00 plus any travel related expenses. The officiating clergy has the right to reduce or decline this honorarium at their discretion.