

Proposed Middleton Baptist Church Wedding Policy
Approved by MBC Board of Deacons September 2011

All staff of Middleton Baptist Church must adhere to this policy when solemnizing marriages of any kind and all outside officiants at weddings conducted at/through Middleton Baptist must adhere to this policy as well.

All staff of MBC have the right to refuse to solemnize a marriage, if doing so would be contrary to his or her religious beliefs.

As a Christian church, under the Lordship of Christ as head of the church, and under the authority of the inspired Word of God as the standard of our faith and practice, we hold the following Biblical convictions about marriage:

- 1) Throughout the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, God ordained marriage as a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19: 5-6; Ephesians 5:31; Romans 1: 26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9);
- 2) Sexual intimacy is legitimate only within the bounds of marriage (Hebrews 13:4, Gal. 5:19);
- 3) Christian marriage is not simply a contract between one man and one woman, but is a covenant ratified in the presence of God (Malachi 2:14);
- 4) Marriage is best enjoyed and experienced with God as Lord of the relationship (Ecc. 4:12)
- 5) Divorce is never God's perfect will for marriage (Malachi 2:16), however due to sin in the relationship divorce does at times occur. There are four circumstances in the Scriptures under which remarriage is permitted once divorce has occurred: i) divorce occurred prior to conversion (2 Corinthians 5:17), ii) divorce occurred because of sexual unfaithfulness by spouse (Matthew 19:9), iii) desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15), iv) former divorced spouse is deceased (Romans 7:3);
- 6) The Scriptures make it clear that a Christian should not be joined with a non-Christian because of the incompatibility of their spiritual lives, we believe this includes marriage (2 Corinthians 6:14);
- 7) Based on these Biblical convictions about marriage, as a matter of belief, doctrine and religious practice, Middleton Baptist Church reserves the term "marriage" for the covenant relationship between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Due to these Biblical convictions regarding marriage we ask that by requesting Middleton Baptist Church to be part of their marriage preparation and wedding plans that the following be true regarding a couple's intention to be married through our church:

- 1) That you desire God's blessing upon your marriage;
- 2) That you desire that Jesus Christ and the Word of God be a key focal point of your ceremony;
- 3) That you desire that God be an important part of your marriage.

It is our desire to prepare couples for a strong, lasting, and God honouring marriage. It is also our desire that the sharing of our space for this special occasion might go smoothly for both the couple and the church. To these ends we require the following:

- 1) All weddings are to be arranged with a Pastor at Middleton Baptist. If another pastor outside of MBC is to officiate at the wedding this must first be arranged with the senior pastor of MBC and the officiating pastor must adhere to this policy.
- 2) The couple must participate in pre-marital sessions to be arranged by a pastor from Middleton Baptist. Special circumstances (ie. couple lives away, couple is not living close enough to one another to attend sessions together) can be discussed to arrange alternate methods of delivery.
- 3) Where possible, the couple are to regularly attend services (at least twice a month) at Middleton Baptist at least three months prior to the wedding ceremony. If the couple lives away, they can attend a church approved by a Pastor at Middleton Baptist.
- 4) If one member of the couple is not a Christian and the other is an effort will be made to clearly explain the gospel message to the unbelieving partner with the hope that they will come to faith in Christ, but no marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian will be performed at Middleton Baptist
- 5) In cases where the couple has already engaged in sexual intercourse before exchanging their wedding vows, by their desire to be married through Middleton Baptist, we assume that they wish to make this wrong a right. This being the case in order to demonstrate a repentant heart and to respect the fact that God intends sexual intercourse to be celebrated only within the confines of marriage we request that couples must remain celibate and refrain from sexual activity at all times during the pre-marital period.
- 6) If a divorced person does not meet the Biblical criteria for remarriage, acknowledging that other extenuating circumstances often relate to divorce, the Pastor will determine if the wedding should take place. Middleton Baptist, realizing God's position on divorce, (*Malachi 2:16*), and that God is forgiving (*Psalms 103:12*), requests that the Pastor include in the determination process the following criteria: i) Reconciliation with the former spouse is not a possibility (Romans 12:18), ii) The divorced person has repented and displays a changed heart and attitude (Psalm 51:10), iii) The divorced person has sought forgiveness from God and his or her former spouse (Colossians 3:13)
- 7) The minimum fee for a wedding at Middleton Baptist is \$300.00. This includes: rental of sanctuary, janitorial services, sound system operator, pastor, and materials for pre-marital sessions. Optional additional costs include: pianist/organist - \$100.00, soloist - \$100.00. Honorarium for any other persons involved in the wedding should be worked out with the pastor. There will be a **deposit** of \$150.00 required at the time of booking, the remainder of which is due one week prior to the date of the wedding.
- 8) Music chosen for the ceremony should reflect the sacred ceremony that a wedding is.
- 9) The church does not provide candles, aisle clothes, pillow for ring, etc. Nails, tacks and screws are not to be used on walls, furniture or chairs. If candles are used adequate provision must be made to protect church property from candle drippings. All decorations must be removed in time for regularly scheduled church services.
- 10) The designated photographer is asked to respect the dignity of the ceremony and refrain from using flash equipment at inappropriate times during the ceremony. It is the usual procedure to request that guests not take pictures during the ceremony.
- 11) Rental requirements for other areas of the church may be discussed with the senior pastor and the facilities rental coordinator. Areas not requested for are off limits. No food or drink are permitted in the sanctuary. No alcoholic beverages will be allowed on the church premises at any time. Smoking is prohibited within the church building at all times. Rice

or confetti will not be thrown on the church premises. All damage caused is the responsibility of the group requesting use of the facilities.

- 12) Church functions will have priority over weddings at all times unless the wedding was scheduled through a pastor prior to planning the church function. An application for church use will need to be filled out and reviewed in order for your date to be reserved.
- 13) The couple must sign an agreement with the Church, agreeing with this Policy document. Failure to comply with the agreement will result in a cancellation of the wedding at Middleton Baptist.