

Introduction

This is a policy statement regarding religious beliefs of the Hope Evangelical Community Church concerning marriage and human sexuality and our policies based upon the necessary application of our faith to life and practice.

What We Believe About Marriage and Human Sexuality

We believe, based on the teaching of the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments, that marriage is an institution ordained by God from the foundation of the world, and intended as a lifelong union of one man and one woman. This idea is supported by the account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. Genesis 1:26-28 provides that God created man in His own image, both male and female. The passage implies that a unity of one man and one woman is in some way necessary to fully represent the image of God in mankind.

Genesis chapter 2 provides a more detailed account in which God created the first man, Adam, and decided that it was not good for him to be alone. (Genesis 2:18). God indicated that He would make “a suitable helper for him.” God brought all of the animals to Adam, but none of them was a suitable helper for him, so God then created Eve, the first woman, from part of Adam himself. God did not create a second man to be Adam’s helpmate, or an assortment of multiple women, but rather one woman. Together they were man and wife and had “no shame” or sin in their union with each other. (Genesis 2:15-25).

Jesus, the fully divine and fully human incarnation of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, reaffirmed the teaching of the Old Testament when He said, as recorded in Matthew 19:4-6, “Haven’t you read, he replied, that at the beginning the creator made them male and female and said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

The Apostle Paul, writing authoritatively under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, states in Ephesians 5:22-32 that marriage is not merely a human institution, but is a special divine metaphor that is supposed to illustrate the union of Christ and the church. For this reason also, only a union between a man and a woman can be a proper marriage because a union between two men, two women, or one man and multiple women or any collection of people could not properly reflect the relationship between Christ and His church.

I Cor. 6:9-11 condemns a variety of lifestyles including those associated with adultery, prostitution, and homosexuality. The Bible condemns all forms of sexual immorality and encourages Christians to flee from it because of its destructive effects, and because the body of the Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit. (I Cor. 6:12-20).

Romans 1:18-32 makes it clear that it is not only sinful to engage in homosexual unions, but also to approve of such sins in others or encourage their practice. As a result, in order to maintain our consistent Christian witness, we cannot sanction, approve, or promote in any way adultery, fornication, pornography, pedophilia, polyamory, polygamy, bestiality, or homosexual unions. This is made clear also by countless other verses throughout the Old Testament as well as by these and other passages in the New Testament.

Our church follows what the Bible reveals as the "sure foundation" of the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles (Matthew 7:24-29 and I Corinthians 14:37). The church is called to teach and practice these teachings and is not at liberty to depart from them for a different authority if it is to authentically bear the name "Christian." Though we strive to live peaceably with all people and to obey legitimate government authority, in instances involving matters as foundational as marriage we must ultimately obey God rather than man if the two come into conflict (Acts 4:18-22).

Sexual activities outside of marriage, including but not limited to fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, pedophilia and bestiality are inconsistent with the teachings of the Bible and the church. Lewd conduct, transgender behavior, and the creation or distribution or viewing of pornography are incompatible with God's intention.

Our Faith Based Policy on Marriage and Human Sexuality

As a result of these above described religious beliefs and our belief in the need for a practice of fidelity to these beliefs, it is our policy that the facilities of this church may not be used for any ceremony that in any way approves of, solemnizes, supports or allows a same-sex union or a polygamist or polyamorist union, a union which is of too close an affiliation of blood according to biblical standards (Leviticus 18:1-18), or any union which, in the judgment of the Elders, in some way constitutes child abuse. It is also the policy of the church that no pastor or member of the church staff shall officiate at any ceremony designed to solemnize, promote, create, or approve of such a union. Nor may any member of the church enter into such a union without being subject to church discipline.

A civil government's sanction of a union will be recognized as a legitimate marriage by the church only to the extent that it is consistent with the definition of marriage found in this Policy Statement.

Church Practices Derived from This Policy

Clergy

1. Ordained clergy or licensed ministers¹ employed by the church shall agree with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church.
2. Only duly ordained clergy or licensed approved by this church shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on church property.
3. Clergy employed by the church shall be subject to dismissal for violating this statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality or by officiating at a marriage ceremony that violates the letter or the spirit of this policy.

Applicants for weddings performed by church staff:

1. Applicants wishing to have a ceremony performed by a member of the clergy employed or clergy approved by the church or to use the church facilities for their wedding shall affirm in writing the statement of faith regarding marriage and human sexuality and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
2. Applicants shall participate in premarital counseling by clergy or counselors employed by this church or other persons who, in the sole opinion of the pastoral staff of the church have the appropriate training, experience, and spiritual understanding to provide such counseling. All pastoral staff, counselors or other persons providing premarital counseling shall affirm in writing the statement of faith of this church on marriage and human sexuality.

Use of Facilities:

1. Any marriage performed on church premises shall be officiated by an ordained or duly licensed member of the clergy. Any officiant not employed by Hope Evangelical Community Church shall serve at the discretion of the pastor / pastors/ or Elder Board.
2. Clergy officiating marriage ceremonies on church premises, whether or not employed by the church, shall affirm their agreement with the statement of faith on marriage and human sexuality adopted by this church and conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
3. Clergy and staff assigned by the church to implement the procedures contained in this Marriage Policy may, in his or her discretion, decline to provide church facilities for, and/or decline to officiate at a ceremony 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.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Pastors Signature _____ Date _____

¹ Clergy as used in this document means ordained clergy and licensed ministers.

Pre-Marital Counseling Requirements

What We Believe:

Marriage is one of the most important commitments a person can make. Aside from your decision to follow Christ, no other decision will have as great an impact on your life. It is our belief here as pastors that the reason so many marriages are failing in our time, is because far too many churches have failed to recognize their responsibility to properly equip people to enter in to the marriage relationship. It is our goal then, to attempt to fulfill that obligation to the best of our ability before we commit to performing a marriage ceremony for you.

As ministers of the gospel performing wedding ceremonies are not something we are obligated to do. This means that if we feel that you and your fiancé are not ready, or should not be married for any reason, we will decline to perform your wedding or continue the pre-marriage counseling. In a Christian marriage, two individuals are making a vow to God to fulfill to the best of their ability, all that God requires for their marriage as outlined in the Bible. Because of the great significance and importance of the marriage vow, all parties should approach marriage prayerfully, patiently, and honestly.

What We Require

There are situations in which we reserve the right and refuse to perform any wedding or begin pre-marriage counseling.

- If one of you are not a believing Christian, The Bible clearly teaches that we are not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- If the two/or one of you are currently married already. (polygamy)
- We do not do same sex weddings do to the bible referring this as sin and an abomination unto God

The following is a list of requirements that must be met before we will agree to perform your marriage. We will strictly adhere to these requirements without exception.

1. As we have already mentioned, in order to be married both the bride and groom must be born again Christians who are actively living for the Lord.
2. Each couple must complete the attached Pre-Marital Questionnaire before counseling will be scheduled.
3. After you have submitted your questionnaire, an appointment will be made to meet with a pastor, in order to determine whether we will continue with the process.
4. Before a final date is set, the couple must complete a minimum of three pre-marital counseling sessions with the pastor.
5. The pastor providing the counseling must approve of the wedding before we will agree to continue with plans such as the final date, rehearsal time, etc.
6. The purpose of pre-marital counseling is to better prepare you for the marital relationship. We would hope that every marriage we perform would be honoring and glorifying to God. Even though you are a Christian, don't expect for your marriage to automatically be without problems or difficulty. It will take work, and commitment to walking in the Spirit, and obeying God.
7. A Christian wedding is a sacred event. Therefore, the entire ceremony must be conducted with reverence, and centered on Jesus Christ. All parties must be appropriately dressed, and the music glorifying to God.

Pre-Marital Questionnaire (His)

This questionnaire must be filled out completely and turned into the church office. After being reviewed, an appointment will be made to meet with a pastor, at this time we will determine whether or not to begin the pre-marriage counseling.

NOTE: We reserve the right to discontinue the counseling and planning process at any time, at our discretion.

Both you and your fiancé need to complete a questionnaire.

General Information

Have you set a tentative date for your wedding? ____ If yes, when? _____

Personal Information

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Fiancé's Name: _____ Age: _____

Marital Status

Have you been married before? ____ If yes, how many times? ____ For how long? ____

Are you: Divorced ____ Widowed ____ Separated ____

Is your divorce final? ____ If not, when? ____

Do you have children from a previous marriage? ____ If yes, how many? ____

What are their ages? _____

If divorced, why was your previous marriage terminated?

Are you currently both living together? _____

Were you born : Male _____ or Female _____

Engagement Period

How long have you known each other? _____ How long have you been going together? _____

How long have you been officially engaged? _____

Religious Background

Are you a Born Again Christian? _____

If not would you be interested to know? _____

Briefly describe what it means to be Born Again: _____

Do you regularly attend a Church? ____ If yes, which one? _____

For how long? _____

Please answer the following questions as completely yet as briefly as possible. Remember that our goal is to help you prepare for marriage. Therefore be honest with your responses. Don't simply write the answers you think we expect.

1. Write a definition of "Love". _____

2. How do you know you "love" your fiancé? _____

3. How have you prepared for marriage?

Have you read Christian books? _____

If so, please list them. _____

Have you listened to cassette tapes on Christian marriage? _____

If so, please list them. _____

Have you attended any classes? _____

If yes, please describe them. _____

4. What do you expect from marriage that you cannot have staying single? _____

5. Give some reasons why you want to marry your fiancé. _____

6. What do you see as your role in the marriage? _____

7. What do you see as your mates' role in marriage? _____

8. With so many marriages failing today, why do think yours will succeed? _____

9. How do other members of your family feel about your fiancé? _____

Please Note:

Performance of marriage ceremonies is an accommodation to the body, NOT an obligation. It is understood that entering into pre-marital counseling is **NOT** an agreement of approval to be married by the pastor. Pastors are **NOT** obligated to meet any wedding date set prior to the completion of counseling.

We are not, nor do we claim to be "Professional" Counselors. Our counsel is based solely on God's Word, the Bible. Be sure you thoroughly understand our position, before signing below:

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above, and that all of the information filled in is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

SIGN _____ **DATE** ____/____/____

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