

**SAMPLE
WEDDING/MARRIAGE PREPARATION
POLICIES AND PROCEDURE STATEMENTS**

Many local churches prepare statements of their policies and practices related to weddings and marriage preparation. Guidelines and suggestions for such documents are provided on pages 64-65 of the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor's Manual*. If your church already has developed a wedding/marriage policy, please send me a copy so we can post it here. If you do not have a policy, feel free to incorporate and modify ideas and materials from these samples to create your own local church or district or conference policy. When you have a policy, please share it with us all.

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Denton, Texas, First United Methodist Church

**Engaged/Wedding/Newly Married Policy and Procedures
for First United Methodist Church, Denton, Texas**

TO COUPLES PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE:

A wedding is for a day; a marriage is for a lifetime. A wedding, whether simple or elaborate, is a public worship service in which a man and a woman, in the presence of God and witnesses, pledge themselves to each other as husband and wife. The full text for the United Methodist Service of Christian Marriage is on pages 864-869 of the United Methodist Hymnal. Your wedding launches you into your lifetime marriage journey.

The more elaborate your wedding, the more excitement, stress, and work for all involved. Sound marriage preparation can help insure that the joy of your wedding is not later overwhelmed by disappointment, disillusionment, or divorce. Relationship, communication, and conflict management skills all can be learned and practiced within the context of marriage preparation. Effective marriage preparation guides you to clarify your goals, compare your expectations, and address your hopes and concerns.

The following are our minimum standards for marriage preparation, whether you are to be married by a UM pastor in FUMC Denton, or elsewhere. With your pastor, you may modify details to fit your own situation.

1. **If you have not already done so, contact a pastor as soon as you begin to talk seriously about marriage**, even before you are officially engaged. This provides opportunity to consider in depth the many dimensions of your lives and how they will fit together in marriage.

2. **Read and discuss** the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couple's Edition*, provided by your pastor. Based on I Corinthians 13, this workbook offers many helps for exploring how your life history, communication skills, goals, and lifestyles will contribute to and challenge your marriage.

3. **Talk with at least one or two experienced married couples.** These may be mentor or sponsor couples who have healthy marriages and have been trained to talk with you about your concerns, possibilities, and opportunities in marriage. Many churches have a Caring Couples Network or other group of trained mentor couples available to couples considering marriage.

4. Explore **Helpful websites:** Check your church library and websites for additional resources. "When You Get Married..." (Marriage booklet from Office of Attorney General):

English: http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/pdfs/premarital2002.pdf

Spanish: http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/pdfs/premarital_span.pdf

TO PASTORS, MENTOR COUPLES, AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS:

Minimum Pre-marital Sessions with Pastor (more as needed or requested) :

The pastor who will officiate at the couple's wedding (or other pastor or counselor) will participate in at least three sessions with each couple seeking to be married. Further suggestions and guidelines for these sessions are provided in the *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor's Manual*.

Session 1:

Pastor, in addition to initial discussion of wedding details and marriage topics:

Gives couple two copies of *GLCM Couple's Edition*, if not given earlier

Informs couple about available resources, workshops, and the Texas marriage booklet

Informs couple about church wedding policy (as appropriate)

Reviews wedding meanings, identifies resources in *GLCM*, builds relationship with couple

Connects couple with sponsor/mentor/caring couple

Invites couple to complete the Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire (MLQ, pp. 101-104 in *GLCM couple's book*) before the next session.

Session 2: (may be two separate meetings or one session split)

Pastor meets individually with the man and woman to give opportunity for each to consider any topics that they may want to discuss but may be hesitant to bring up with the partner.

Session 3:

Review meetings so far, explore further meanings of wedding, wedding vows

Discuss Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire, identify issues, ways to follow-up

Pastor may have additional session(s) for counseling or wedding details, as appropriate, with at least one follow-up meeting with couple within first year of marriage

Sponsor couple (See chapter 8 on “Mentor Couples” in *Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor’s Manual* for details and training suggestions):

- Contacts engaged couple (usually after their first session with pastor) to schedule meeting(s)
- Meets with engaged/newly married couple at least once a quarter or as needed to develop a relationship, give support, discuss *GLCM* and other issues
- Encourages couple to become involved in the church and in couples’ group or class
- Meets with engaged/newly married couples at least once each quarter.

Workshops and Seminars for pre-married and newly married couples (may be provided by church, district, or cluster of churches):

- Marriage Workshop at least once every year
- Class or group for nearly and newly married couples

Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couple’s Edition is available from Cokesbury, \$7 for a packet of two copies, one for each person to use.

Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor’s Manual, also available from Cokesbury, provides guidelines and suggestions for these and other marriage preparation and marriage ministry sessions and activities.