



# Grace United Church Gananoque

120 Pine Street  
Gananoque, ON K7G 1C7  
Phone: 613-382-2161  
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[www.graceunitedgananoque.com](http://www.graceunitedgananoque.com)

## MARRIAGE POLICY

*Last Updated: September 26, 2021*

### **Introduction:**

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage!

We celebrate with you both as you explore the possibility of solemnizing your marriage within a church context. It is our hope that this policy will give you a better sense of our beliefs and understandings of Christian marriage within both the United Church of Canada and Grace United Church, Gananoque. It also outlines for you the process of getting married in our community of faith, from your point of initial contact with us, to the big day itself and beyond!

This policy applies equally to all members, adherents, and non-members of Grace United Church.

### **Our Core Beliefs:**

At Grace United Church:

We see each and every person as a unique, loved creature of God.

We see God as faithful, loving, compassionate and just.

We are called to embody and model this in our own relationships with each other.

At Grace United Church:

We believe that God intends loving relationships to be faithful, responsible, just, healing and sustaining for all.

We believe that such relationships require preparation and nurturing.

We believe that relationships grounded in inclusivity, openness, respect, and equity, will be caring and loving.

At Grace United Church:

We believe that marriage is an act of worship and is a lifelong covenant between two people and before God.

We believe that when one person turns to another and promises to love them, there is an opportunity to feel and participate in the Divine Mystery and Presence. Wherever there are those gathered in the name of true love, God is there also.

We believe that marriage is a union in which two people can find their richest fulfillment of life, body, mind, and spirit.



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At Grace United Church:

We celebrate marriage as both a civil ceremony and a religious rite.

We celebrate marriage in the context of a Christian community of faith that is broad, diverse, and affirming.

We celebrate the marriages of those who have been previously divorced, annulled, or widowed.

We celebrate the marriages of those who have children, have no children, or have children from previous relationships.

We celebrate the marriages of those who regularly attend worship and those who do not.

We celebrate the marriages of inter-faith and multi-faith couples

We celebrate the marriages of couples of all sexual orientations, gender identities and races.

## **Important History and Background:**

In 1962, the United Church of Canada confirmed that divorce was not a barrier to marriage, but also confirmed the need for couples to be prepared prior to marriage.

In 1988, the General Council affirmed:

1. that marriage is a gift of God through which Christians make a covenant with each other and with God;
2. that in marriage we offer each other the promise of lifelong companionship, the rich expression of human affections and sexuality, and nurture for the children;
3. that marriage as an institution can undergird each relationship and provide stability for society;
4. the value of marriage and that the church must work both to redeem and care for the institution and to support those entering into a covenant relationship with each other.

In 1984, the General Council affirmed the church's acceptance of all human beings as persons made in the image of God, regardless of their sexual orientation. Additionally, it noted that all human relationships should be "faithful, responsible, just, loving, health-giving, healing, and sustaining of community and self."

In 2000, the meeting of the General Council committed itself to work towards the civil recognition of same-gender partnerships, and in 2003 moved to focus on recognition of same-gender marriages. When same-gender marriage became legal, it was possible for individual clergy and congregations to begin celebrating same-gender marriages.

## **Marriage Preparation**

You do not have to be a member of the church to be married at Grace United Church. We do ask, however, that you approach the ceremony with reverence, respecting the convictions of both the church and yourself. We invite you to attend any of our worship services which are held on Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. This will give you the opportunity to experience the worship life of our congregation, and to understand better your marriage as an act of Christian worship. We encourage you, when possible, to continue worshipping with us, so that you may come to a greater awareness of the ways God is present in your lives.



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We, at Grace United Church, commit to supporting you in your marriage, and part of that commitment involves intentional discussion about your relationship, and your hopes and dreams for married life. Therefore, each couple is required to meet with the minister at least twice in preparation for the wedding ceremony.

## **Marriage Ceremony**

All marriages conducted through Grace United Church must follow the governing laws of Ontario and Canada, and the policies of the United Church of Canada. A marriage ceremony performed by a Christian Minister is both a civil contract and a religious ceremony. The minister of Grace United Church is a registered religious official, certified to solemnize marriages within the province of Ontario. They are responsible for seeing that all legal requirements are met and that the policy and belief of the United Church of Canada is upheld. Couples who feel uncomfortable with this should consider a civil ceremony. Civil ceremonies are officiated by a judge, justice of the peace or authorized municipal clerk.

Our minister is available to officiate weddings both within the church building and at off-site locations. Regardless of location of the ceremony, all Grace United Church weddings will be conducted by our minister, except when they are away or otherwise unavailable.

Other ministers may share in the service, or in extraordinary circumstances, conduct the marriage ceremony themselves, but this must first be approved by the minister of Grace United Church.

All wedding requests are approved by the Session of Grace United Church, subject to the availability of the date.

## **Marriage Application and License**

All couples, upon initial meeting with the minister, will be asked to complete a marriage application form.

Upon receipt of this form, the wedding and rehearsal dates will be confirmed by the church office.

It is the couple's responsibility to acquire a marriage license, which may be obtained from the Town of Gananoque (Town Hall) or any municipality. Please ensure the church or the minister has received the license no later than 4 weeks before the date of the ceremony.

## **Elements of a Marriage Ceremony**

There are many different styles of marriage ceremony and they can be as simple or as unique as you desire. All aspects of the ceremony need to be discussed with and agreed to by the minister.

## **Music**

Music is an important element in the wedding of many couples. At Grace United, we have the capacity to play pre-recorded music through our sound system, and can accommodate most special music requests (soloists, duets, performances by outside musicians). If you would like to enlist the services of our music director, Paul Harding, you can contact him at 613-382-2405 or



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[organist.in.gan@gmail.com](mailto:organist.in.gan@gmail.com) Our music director would be happy to meet with you and discuss the wide variety of possibilities of music available for your wedding. Paul is very adaptable and helpful.

## **Decorations and Flowers**

Decorations and/or flowers are the responsibility of the couple to arrange.

The use of rice or confetti is not allowed in the sanctuary or on church property. You, or a family member, are encouraged to bring decorations and flowers to the church on the date of the rehearsal. If you would prefer to do this at another time, you may contact the minister or the church office to make suitable arrangements.

All seasonal decorations and furniture within the sanctuary will remain in place, and all wedding decorations must be easily removable. It is the couple's responsibility to remove decorations and flowers. Please ensure someone is designated to do this following the ceremony and/or reception.

## **Photography & Videography**

Photographs and video are a wonderful way of celebrating and capturing the joy of your wedding day. Friends, family, and other guests are certainly invited to take pictures before and after the ceremony; during the ceremony they are asked to be considerate of other guests.

If you are hiring a professional photographer or videographer, please inform them that they are welcome to take pictures and video in the sanctuary and the church grounds before and after the ceremony.

Please remind your photographer/videographer that any use and placement of tripods and equipment should be discussed with the minister.

## **Involvement of Family and Friends**

We recognize that there are many different family configurations, and our minister is happy to work with you, the couple, to include children and other significant individuals in the ceremony, if you wish. Honouring and remembering those who have passed away or are unable to be present with us may also be something for you to consider.

If you have a friend or family member who is a minister, you may wish for them to be involved in the ceremony. Any such requests should be discussed with the minister.

As required by law, every marriage must be witnessed by two persons over the age of 18. These are most often close friends or family members of the couple.

## **Unity Candles, Sand Ceremonies and other Rituals**

Some couples like to include rituals within their wedding ceremony that reflect the coming together of their families and lives. These might include the lighting of a unity candle, the



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blending of coloured sand or something similar. Please feel free to ask the minister about these rituals and they will provide resources to help you find something that is meaningful to you both.

Occasionally, couples also like to include a service of Holy Communion within the wedding ceremony. This is a sacrament of the church that acknowledges the transformative and living presence of God within our lives. In the United Church of Canada, we celebrate an open table, which places no barriers upon the receiving of communion. Anyone who feels called to partake is invited to consume the bread and juice. If you are interested in including communion as part of your ceremony, please let the minister know.

## **Wedding Rehearsal**

Once a date for the wedding has been agreed upon, the rehearsal date will be scheduled. Typically, this happens a day or two before the ceremony. All members of the wedding party are encouraged to attend, and you may invite any other guests you wish. The wedding rehearsal is an opportunity to become familiar with the ceremony, sanctuary and to ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities.

## **Alcohol, Tobacco and Cannabis**

Grace United Church does not permit the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis on the property.

According to Canadian law, a couple must be completely unimpaired during their marriage ceremony. If the minister has any suspicions that the couple or the witnesses are impaired the wedding will be postponed.

## **Marriage Certificates – Post-Ceremony**

There are three documents that are completed during the wedding ceremony – the marriage license, the Grace United Church marriage register, and the Record of Solemnization of Marriage.

Following the ceremony, the minister will mail the completed marriage license to the provincial government to be registered. The marriage register is kept at Grace United Church as a secondary record of the marriage, and the Record of Solemnization, along with the Church Marriage Certificate, will be given to the couple as their personal record of the marriage.

After the ceremony (4-6 weeks), you may contact ServiceOntario if you wish to apply for a formal, permanent marriage certificate, which will then be mailed to you.

For more information, visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/getting-married>



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## Wedding Application

Date of Wedding \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Rehearsal Date & Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### Applicant:

Name in full \_\_\_\_\_

Address in full \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: Never Married \_\_, Widowed \_\_, Divorced \_\_; Age \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ Home Church \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name at Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name at Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplaces: (1<sup>st</sup> parent) \_\_\_\_\_ (2<sup>nd</sup> parent) \_\_\_\_\_

### Joint Applicant

Name in full \_\_\_\_\_

Address in full \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: Never Married \_\_, Widowed \_\_, Divorced \_\_; Age \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_ Home Church \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name at Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name at Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplaces: (1<sup>st</sup> parent) \_\_\_\_\_ (2<sup>nd</sup> parent) \_\_\_\_\_



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**Names of Children:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address after wedding:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Information**

**Number in Wedding Party** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attendants in Waiting** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Other Attendants** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Flower Bearer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ring Bearer** \_\_\_\_\_

**Scripture Readers:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Musicians/Soloists:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Participants:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Preferred Readings and Music:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Unity Candle: YES/NO**

**Members involved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sand Ceremony: YES/NO**

**Members involved:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Communion: YES/NO**



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## **Personnel Fees**

**Minister:** \$350 - **Rehearsal Fee** \$75

*(plus, mileage at \$0.50/km over 200 km if at another venue)*

**Music Director:** \$200

**Custodian:** \$75\*

*\*If the wedding falls on a holiday weekend, custodial fee increases to \$125.00.*

*All fees are due at the time of marriage license delivery.*