



Policy Guidelines for Ministers who Officiate at Weddings

Introduction:

The regional Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement (MEGaP) Committees are responsible to the General Conference and to provincial authorities for the conduct of those authorized by The Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) to be licensed to solemnize marriages. The MEGaP Committees, through the Director of Personnel who authorizes the issuing of licenses, are to ensure that ministerial practice is consistent with the expectations of the Denomination and the provincial Marriage Acts.

In order to positively witness to the Lord Jesus Christ and not to bring shame upon the testimony of His church and to respond to several expressions of concern, the National MEGaP Committee passed the following guidelines for the ministers of the FMCiC to follow with respect to the solemnization of marriages:

1. Ministers are expected to have a current copy of the Marriage Act of the province in which they minister and to be familiar with its regulations. (A copy can be obtained from the provincial government website or by contacting your area MPP/MLA's office.)
2. Ministers are expected to be familiar with and keep the guidelines of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada* with respect to marriage (see ¶630).
3. As outlined in *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*, ministers are expected "to see that all candidates for marriage have received premarital guidance, using materials consistent with denominational teaching." (see ¶630.3.1.1 and 2). Because of the need to ensure that there is adequate time for proper premarital counseling (at least three sessions by the minister or a qualified counselor), ministers must balance committing to officiate at weddings outside the congregation with ensuring that other pastoral responsibilities are not neglected.
4. Ministers are to use only Christian wedding ceremonies and only in settings and under circumstances that give reverence to this sacred event. As a minimum, a Christian ceremony must contain the reading of Scripture, prayer that invokes the name of Jesus Christ and vows in which the couple covenant before God and the state to a life long, exclusive faithfulness to each other. While weddings in settings other than the church sanctuary are permitted and all are to be warm, joyful events, ministers are to ensure that ceremonies are conducted appropriately and in a manner that brings honor to the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Ministers may marry unbelievers to each other, but they are expected to use the premarital sessions to graciously but carefully explain the sacred covenant of marriage that they will be taking and that a Christian ceremony will be used.

-2-

6. In light of the doctrine and polity of The Free Methodist Church in Canada, ministers may not conduct a Christian blessing of a union between a same-sex couple, nor perform a legal marriage of a same-sex couple. Such blessings or marriages may not be performed in the facilities of Free Methodist churches. See ¶630.3.1.9 and 630.3.1.10 of *The Manual of The Free Methodist Church in Canada*.
7. Ministers are not allowed to perform civil ceremonies, using the marriage license authorized by The Free Methodist Church in Canada. The license the denomination authorizes is for religious ceremonies. Civil ceremonies are the work of judges, justices of the peace, and marriage commissioners.
8. Ministers are not allowed to advertise, in any manner, that they will perform marriages (e.g. specialized business cards, newspaper ads, websites, etc.). This has the appearance of careless pastoral work and personal greed. Those who wish to generate income in this way should surrender their licenses to perform religious marriages and apply for marriage commissioner licenses.