

SPRINGDALE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Marriage Policy

The Session and congregation of Springdale Presbyterian Church extend the love of Christ to you as you plan your Christian marriage. Springdale strives to be a welcoming congregation that is fully accessible physically and spiritually. Please refer to the following information about marriage as you consider Springdale for one of life's most important events.

Marriage

- Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community. (W-4.9001)*
- In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges. W-4.9002)
- The marriage service shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to this covenant and to the forms of Reformed worship, under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the Session (W-1.4004-.4006). In a service of marriage, the couple marry each other by exchanging mutual promises. The teaching elder witnesses the couple's promises and pronounces God's blessing upon their union. The community of faith pledges to support the couple in upholding their promises; prayers may be offered for the couple, for the communities that support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. (W-4.9004)

The responsibilities of the teaching elder(s) of the congregation

- If they meet the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a couple may request that a service of Christian marriage be conducted by a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who is authorized, though not required, to act as an agent of the civil jurisdiction in recording the marriage contract. (W-9.0003)
- A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who may agree to the couple's request only if, in the judgment of the teaching elder, the couple demonstrate sufficient understanding of the nature of the marriage covenant and commitment to living their lives together according to its values. (W-4.9003)

- Nothing compels a teaching elder to perform a marriage service that the teaching elder believes is contrary to the teaching elder’s discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God. (W-4.9006)
 - In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of other teaching elders or the Session of Springdale Presbyterian Church. (W-4.9003)
 - If a couple is from a Christian community of faith connected in some way to Springdale Presbyterian Church (e.g. the *Rabbouni Catholic Community* who meet in our building, *Innova Worship*, or another Christian congregation), the teaching elder(s) may mutually discern the couple’s readiness for marriage with the faith leader of that community.

The responsibilities of the Session of the congregation

- The Session has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service. (W-4.9003)
 - Nothing compels a Session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the Session believes is contrary to the Session’s discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God. (W.4.9006)
 - The Session of Springdale Presbyterian Church chooses to affirm the discernment of the congregation’s teaching elder(s) regarding requests for services of Christian marriage; and with the teaching elder(s)’ recommendation will approve the use of the building when both members of the couple sign the congregation’s building use and wedding agreements.

Please contact our teaching elder(s) for an appointment if you would like to request a service of Christian marriage.

**Items in parentheses refer to particular sections of the most recent Book of Order for the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. In our tradition, the term “teaching elder” refers to the minister or pastor and the term “Session” refers to the congregation’s governing board.*