

## APPENDIX A

# *Living Rock Church Marriage Policy<sup>1</sup>*

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It is our desire that your marriage becomes the happiest relationship possible, and that it be all God intended it to be. We believe God created man and woman, and from the beginning intended that one man and one woman be joined in marriage so that each might give what the other lacked alone.

Since God designed the marriage relationship, it makes sense that He knows best how to build a happy marriage. As we read His Word, we are able to discern basic principles which must be understood and applied if we hope to experience joy and fulfillment in marriage. Ignoring these principles could result in failure and frustration in the marriage relationship.

Because we are committed to building strong marriages, and not just performing ceremonies, we have adopted the following guidelines. Our purpose is not to condemn or reject anyone, but to comply with God's biblical principles for marriage. We pray, whatever your circumstance, you will seek to bring your marriage and family plans in accord with His will.

1. An LRC pastor will not perform a wedding on or off the LRC property without board approval. In addition, use of LRC property for any wedding requires board approval.
2. Any paid Living Rock staff member who is licensed to perform weddings may do so only for LRC members or regular attenders. An exception to this policy would require approval by the elder board.
3. Approval of any wedding request will be based upon a consistent application of this policy, and the Christian and Missionary Alliance denominational statements and policies that relate to and define biblical marriage. Our official "Statement on Human Sexuality" is found in the Manual of C&MA, and on the official C&MA website, at this link: <http://www.cmalliance.org/about/beliefs/perspectives/human-sexuality>
4. All couples who desire to be married at LRC will agree to a minimum of 6 marriage counseling sessions beginning 4-6 months before the wedding. This can be done with the pastor or an approved mentor couple. The State of Minnesota will reduce the marriage license fee from \$110 to \$40 if a couple completes 12 hours of premarital counseling. These counseling sessions will include:
  - Paying for and taking a premarital inventory called *Prepare* (cost: \$35).
  - Discussing the inventory follow-up assignments.
  - Writing and agreeing on a first-year family budget.
  - Other biblical instruction, required reading, and discussion as assigned.

*"By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."* Proverbs 24:3-4

5. LRC will not proceed with a wedding unless each person believes in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

*"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"* -2 Corinthians 6:14

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this outline and Scripture is based on the Shively Baptist Church Marriage Policy (Used by Permission).

6. To help insure the time needed for healing and possible reconciliation, in most cases no remarriage after divorce of a spouse will be performed until at least two years have passed from the time the divorce is finalized.

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* Matt. 11:28-29

*“Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”* Psalms 90:12

7. LRC realizes that a re-marriage is just as valid and sacred to God as a first marriage. We also acknowledge that in a second marriage, the couple has much to overcome. Scripture allows remarriage under certain conditions. Therefore, LRC will not perform a second marriage unless biblical and relational conditions are met. These conditions can be fully explained by meeting with the pastor:
- Did the divorce occur prior to faith in Christ? *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* 2 Corinthians 5:17
  - Is reconciliation with the former spouse a possibility? *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”* Romans 12:18
  - Was the divorce due to sexual unfaithfulness by either spouse? *“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”* Matthew 18:9
  - Have you sought forgiveness from your former spouse? *“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”* Psalms 51:10 and, *“Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”* Colossians 3:13
  - Was the believing spouse deserted by the unbelieving spouse? *“But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.”* 1 Corinthians 7:15
  - Did the former divorced spouse die? *“So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.”* Romans 7:3
  - Do you agree that divorce is against the will of God, and have you repented of your part in the divorce? *“I hate divorce” says the Lord God of Israel.* Malachi 2:16
  - Have you considered the benefits of remaining single (or remaining a single parent until the kids are grown) and devoted to the Lord? *“This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.”* 1 Cor. 7:35
8. In case of premarital pregnancy, a formal LRC marriage may or may not be performed, depending on the maturity of the persons involved and other considerations. The final decision to perform the ceremony will be determined by the pastor.

*“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy and not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”* Hebrews 13:17

**ABORTION:** We believe that abortion ends a human life, the life of an unborn child. Abortion leads to deep regrets as well as long-term physical, spiritual, and emotional consequences.<sup>2</sup> If an abortion is being considered, we will encourage pro-life counseling, an ultrasound, or adoption options.

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<sup>2</sup> See [www.abort73.org](http://www.abort73.org)

9. We understand that many couples may be new in their walk with Christ, and may not yet know all His instructions on sex, money, and lifestyle. But we are committed to equipping you for doing marriage God's way.

The church should live in the world as a holy and distinct people. We are called to repent and be transformed people (Rom. 12:1-2). A recent 2003 poll of born-again Christians suggests many believers in Christ are no different than the world around them:<sup>3</sup>

- 49% said they thought it was fine for people to live with each other outside of marriage
- 35% had no problem with sex before marriage
- 28% found nothing wrong with pornography
- 33% felt there was nothing morally wrong with abortion

Joe Dallas says, "So many of the volatile issues of the day, such as same-sex marriage, living together before or apart from marriage, divorce and remarriage, even abortion, largely have to do with the concept of the family... the people who responded to the poll certainly did not get their responses from the Bible; they were informed by cultural trends."

We require that once a Christian couple has entered into premarital preparation with LRC, they agree to the biblical standards of remaining celibate and thus not live together at any time prior to the wedding ceremony. The pastor will not perform the ceremony if the couple is living at the same address or not remaining celibate.

*"It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."* 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; 7-8

10. It may be best under some circumstances to expedite a wedding. The pastor will discuss this with the couple if they are willing to submit to Christ's call for purity.

**Yes, we agree to the Living Rock Church policy, and God's design, for our marriage. We would like to take the next step for marriage preparation at Living Rock Church.**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF ELDER APPROVAL OF POLICY: 07/02/13

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<sup>3</sup> From Hank Hanegraaff, President, *Christian Research Institute*, Feb. 8, 2011 email

## THE MANHATTAN DECLARATION: A CALL OF CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE<sup>4</sup>

*The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Genesis 2:23-24*

*This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 5:32-33*

In Scripture, the creation of man and woman, and their one-flesh union as husband and wife, is the crowning achievement of God's creation. In the transmission of life and the nurturing of children, men and women joined as spouses are given the great honor of being partners with God Himself. Marriage then, is the first institution of human society—indeed it is the institution on which all other human institutions have their foundation. In the Christian tradition we refer to marriage as "holy matrimony" to signal the fact that it is an institution ordained by God, and blessed by Christ in His participation at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. In the Bible, God Himself blesses and holds marriage in the highest esteem.

Vast human experience confirms that marriage is the original and most important institution for sustaining the health, education, and welfare of all persons in a society. Where marriage is honored, and where there is a flourishing marriage culture, everyone benefits—the spouses themselves, their children, the communities and societies in which they live. Where the marriage culture begins to erode, social pathologies of every sort quickly manifest themselves. Unfortunately, we have witnessed over the course of the past several decades a serious erosion of the marriage culture in our own country. Perhaps the most telling—and alarming—indicator is the out-of-wedlock birth rate. Less than fifty years ago, it was under 5 percent. Today it is over 40 percent. Our society—and particularly its poorest and most vulnerable sectors, where the out-of-wedlock birth rate is much higher even than the national average—is paying a huge price in delinquency, drug abuse, crime, incarceration, hopelessness, and despair. Other indicators are widespread non-marital sexual cohabitation and a devastatingly high rate of divorce.

We confess with sadness that Christians and our institutions have too often scandalously failed to uphold the institution of marriage and to model for the world the true meaning of marriage. Insofar as we have too easily embraced the culture of divorce and remained silent about social practices that undermine the dignity of marriage we repent, and call upon all Christians to do the same.

To strengthen families, we must stop glamorizing promiscuity and infidelity and restore among our people a sense of the profound beauty, mystery, and holiness of faithful marital love. We must reform ill-advised policies that contribute to the weakening of the institution of marriage, including the discredited idea of unilateral divorce. We must work in the legal, cultural, and religious domains to instill in young people a sound understanding of what marriage is, what it requires, and why it is worth the commitment and sacrifices that faithful spouses make.

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<sup>4</sup> This excerpt is taken from the Manhattan Declaration, <http://manhattandeclaration.org>