



# MARRIAGE

◊ *Wedding Policy, Application & Premarital Counseling* ◊

TERRA NOVA CHURCH

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. [Genesis 2:18,21-25](#)

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Thank you for your interest in a wedding at Terra Nova Church. We are excited to partake on this journey with you. This document aims to assist you in setting up a wedding and premarital counseling through Terra Nova Church.

If you have any questions at any point in this process or in the reading of this document, please contact our Executive Pastor, [Paul Gordon](#).

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND WITHIN

- Terra Nova's Perspective on Marriages & Weddings
- Guidelines for Planning a Wedding
- Terra Nova's Marriage Policy
- How to Apply for a Terra Nova Wedding
- What To Expect in Terra Nova Pre-Marital Counseling

## PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGES & WEDDINGS

Terra Nova believes that marriage is the union created by God between one man and one woman in order to glorify God through community, reliance and the provision of the future through children. Christian marriage should be between two believers. It is intended to be a life-long commitment as the couple follows Jesus together.

Marriage can be a wonderful and deeply satisfying commitment. A great marriage does not simply happen. It requires much intentional effort, including willingness from both parties to work at fostering intimacy, nurture and care. The foundation of Christian marriage is the love of God as expressed through Jesus Christ. The relationship of Christ and the Church is emblematic or foundational of marriage. His pursuit of, provision for, and purification of His Church are seen in the Bible as parallel to marriage between a husband and wife.

We learn about the joys and even struggles of life-giving love ultimately from God. Faith in, and openness to, God strengthens a couple's marriage.

Marriage vows that are spoken in the presence of spiritual leaders and one's community indicate the sacredness of two people's love; therefore a marriage service is first and foremost a worship service. In the presence of God Almighty, two people publicly confess their love for and their commitment to one another.

## **PLANNING THE WEDDING**

### **A Wedding as a Worship Service**

A Christian wedding is a worship service and is a time of great excitement and joy as two people express the solemn commitment that underscores a very special relationship. Through the use of ritual, the Christian wedding service gives expression to the love, respect, and commitment between two persons who desire to express themselves in such a way before family, friends and God. The following policies and guidelines are designed to enhance communication between the couple, the Wedding Coordinator/Planner, and the church staff. We truly want you to have a wonderful and meaningful wedding.

Since the wedding service is a worship service, all details concerning the wedding and related arrangements should conform to such practices and standards of good taste as are consistent with the Christian faith and Terra Nova Church. As you plan and organize your Wedding ceremony it is important to keep your officiant properly informed and to make your plans as early as possible. We remain flexible and open to celebrating weddings in a variety of ways as long as approved by the officiant in advance. A sample wedding service, along with possible wedding service components we regularly have included in ceremonies is found at the end of this document.

### **Pastoral & Staff Honoraria**

Please know that no one at Terra is in this to make money on people's weddings. We love being a part of weddings for people in the church. Compensation simply recognizes the time, energy and expense to those involved. In many cases, the participants are missing the bulk of their weekend with their own families to be with yours. Further, as you will see below, the pastors, and or key leaders of Terra, will be investing a notable amount of their time over the course of 6-8 pre- and post-wedding counseling sessions.

The fees that suggested below are assuming your wedding location is within a 30-minute driving distance of Terra Nova. If your wedding is further away, please adjust the fees and honoraria accordingly.

Pastoral Officiant: \$300

Musicians: \$200 per musician and/or sound technician.

Fees are due to the church 7 days before the wedding date. Checks should be made out directly to the people involved, not to the church.

If these fees will be a severe hardship, we are willing to work with you to determine a more feasible amount. To help determine the validity of the hardship, additional information about your wedding expenses may be requested (such as catering, photography, transportation, flowers, etc.).

### **Wedding Coordinator/Planner**

We strongly recommend that you retain the services of a Wedding Planner/Coordinator. This person often serves as a liaison, a guiding hand and a reference book for the wedding couple concerning the wedding service. You should find someone (this can be either a professional or a family/friend who volunteers in this capacity) whom you feel confident will be able to handle the service with graciousness and ease due to their organizational skills, experience, and desire to serve.

Please know that officiants at Terra Nova do not act as Wedding Coordinators/Planners and therefore we cannot overstate our encouragement to have someone perform this role for you.

### **Music**

A Wedding Service is a time of joyous celebration where we celebrate God's goodness to the human family and lift to God our love and gratitude. As part of that celebration, music is often a part of wedding ceremonies. Music should be selected for suitability to a worship service of praise and thanksgiving, asking the eternal God's presence and blessing upon the marriage. The music should seek to convey the message that in a Christian marriage service the

bride and groom stand there, not simply as a couple, but as a couple before God. It is meant to be sacred, exhilarating, and an unforgettable event. Music that dismisses God's place in relation to the couple is inappropriate.

If you are interested in asking musicians at Terra Nova to participate in your service, or if you are interested in using instruments and sound equipment of Terra Nova, this must be requested and coordinated through our Worship Arts Director, [Rob Keparutis](#). Please know that musicians at Terra Nova are not employees of Terra Nova and therefore should you choose to utilize a musician there is often additional fees required to compensate the musicians for their time and travel.

### **Facilities**

As you are likely aware, Terra Nova does not own its own facilities. We rent both our locations in Troy and Saratoga Springs. If you would like to hold your wedding at Revolution Hall, in Troy, NY you will need to contact [Brown's Brewing Co.](#) directly.

If you would like to hold your wedding at First Baptist Church in Saratoga Springs, NY, you will need to contact their offices at (518) 584-6301, or email them at [fbcsaratoga@biznycap.rr.com](mailto:fbcsaratoga@biznycap.rr.com).

### **The Rehearsal**

A rehearsal for a public wedding is essential. Please communicate with your officiant the plans for a rehearsal that is at a time most convenient for all parties involved. Typically a rehearsal occurs the night preceding the wedding.

The rehearsal should start promptly at the stated time and should be organized and run by your Wedding Coordinator. Please do not schedule a rehearsal too early in the evening only to have a large number of participants arrive very late from work or travel. In most cases, the pastor is giving up his entire weekend to your wedding. Please respect his time by communicating very clearly to everyone the start time. The rehearsal will begin no later than 15 minutes after the planned start time. It is ideal if your Wedding

Coordinator/Planner guides you through the rehearsal with some assistance from the pastor at appropriate times.

Prior to the rehearsal and wedding, it is expected that all members of the wedding party will refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages. The couple is under obligation to make this policy known to other members of the wedding party. The reason for this expectation is that most problems experienced at weddings are alcohol related.

During this rehearsal, expect to practice the processional and recessional with the corresponding music and to become familiar with the venue and its amenities. Soloists or readings will be practiced at the discretion of the couple and comfort level of person performing each task. Know that the wedding vows, the teaching, and other personal pieces will not be practiced as to not take away from the actual wedding ceremony.

The Marriage License - obtained by the engaged couples - is given to the Wedding Coordinator/Planner at the rehearsal.

All members of the wedding party, parents of the couple and any readers, soloists or additional musicians should be present at the rehearsal.

## MARRIAGE POLICY

Because we are committed to building strong Christian marriages, we want to share the following guidelines and Scriptures. We have no desire to condemn or reject anyone - but we want to live within God's principles for marriage.

### **1. We require at least (5) counseling sessions prior to any marriage.**

Our goal is to have 8 counseling sessions - at least 5 of which are before the wedding. And we strongly encourage at least 2-3 additional sessions during the first year of marriage.

Please see below for details on Terra's pre-marital counseling process. It should be noted that it is not mandatory that the Terra Nova pastor who officiates your wedding will conduct the pre-marital counseling. There are several mature couples at Terra Nova Church who perform pre-marital counseling on the pastor's behalf. Also, if you are receiving pre-marital counseling from another church/pastor and having a Terra Nova pastor officiate the ceremony, we reserve the right to reach out to the church performing the counseling to discuss their pre-marital counseling program.

### **2. We are interested in performing biblical marriages, and if a divorce has occurred for either of the engaged couple, there must be a biblical basis for it.**

[Matthew 5:31-32](#)

If this applies to your situation, please indicate as such on your wedding application form (at the link provided on [this](#) webpage). A previous marriage and divorce does not necessarily exclude you from remarriage as we recognize there are a host of situations and circumstances that may be factors. Therefore, upon receiving your application, the appropriate pastor will share in detail Terra Nova's position on Marriage, Divorce, & ReMarriage and hear your story, help understand your backgrounds, and determine if the church can perform the wedding ceremony.

### **3. We will not marry a couple if one person is a Christ-Follower and the other is not.**

[2 Corinthians 6:14](#)

We believe that marriage is a gift from God given to all people. Men and women, who may not even know the Giver, marry and receive this gift. Marriage unites two people into one and we believe that because of the weight of this union, Scripture commands to all those who know the Lord to not marry outside the faith.

**4. We do not marry couples who are living together or are involved sexually already and unwilling to refrain until the wedding day.**

1 Corinthians 7:8

We believe what Scripture teaches about the importance of keeping the physical intimacy of sexual relations within the confines of a committed and biblical marriage. This can be a challenging discussion or possibly come across as judgmental - but our heart behind this policy is to establish proper expectations of marriage before the marriage and to do so based on a biblical basis. As pastors of a local church we frequently counsel with husbands and wives who struggled through this during the engagement and the resulting impacts to the marriage.

**5. We do not marry a couple if either person does not have the blessing of their parents. The age of the persons involved may alter this situation.**

Exodus 20:12

We think Scripture is clear in its call to honor our parents. Should this be a potential issue with your current situation, please indicate as such to your possible officiant so we can understand the circumstances and background.

**6. We do not marry couples if either person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs (other than those prescribed by a doctor) before or during the rehearsal and/or wedding.**

Romans 12:3 & Ecclesiastes 5:1-5

Scripture reminds us to be sober-minded and it also reminds us to let our yes be yes, and our no be no. There is no greater covenant that we enter into in life than the marriage covenant and so we should seek to be clear and resolved when celebrating marriage vows.

## TERRA NOVA WEDDING APPLICATION

Please use the following [link](#) to complete the Terra Nova Wedding Application.

Upon completion and receipt of the application, you will receive a response from Terra Nova Staff based on the information in your application.

## PRE-MARRIAGE COUNSELING AT TERRA NOVA

Our goal is to have 8 counseling sessions - at least 5 or 6 of which are before the wedding. And we strongly encourage at least 2-3 additional sessions during the first year of marriage.

As mentioned, the pastor who is officiating your wedding, or another staff/volunteer at Terra Nova may conduct your pre-marital counseling.

The following is a template of our Pre-Marriage counseling. Depending on who conducts your sessions, the exact resources, scriptures, and questions may vary slightly. This is provided to help you be aware of what is covered and also to fill in during your first session with your counselors so you know what is expected.

### Book Resource

- [The Marriage Builder](#) by Larry Crab
- [The Meaning of Marriage](#) by Tim Keller

### Meeting Topics

- Getting to Know Each Other/Stories/Counseling Expectations
- Foundation of Marriages

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Book Chapters to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Scriptures to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions to Consider/Contemplate Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Roles in Marriage

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Book Chapters to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Scriptures to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions to Consider/Contemplate Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Communication

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Book Chapters to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Scriptures to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Questions to Consider/Contemplate Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Love

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Book Chapters to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Scriptures to Read Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Questions to Consider/Contemplate Ahead of Time: \_\_\_\_\_

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Life Maps

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A Life Map Guide will be provided you to help you understand and prepare for this night.

*Beyond the above Sessions, your counselor may customize other sessions that can cover a variety of topics based on your background and situations (i.e. Money & Marriage, Divorce & Remarriage, Parenting & Marriage, etc.).*

### Other Resources

While all these resources may or may not be used during your premarital counseling, the following are resources we would commend to any married couple.

Sermons:

[Terra Nova Marriage Series](#) (3 sermons)

[“What Does the Bible Say About Sex?”](#) (from the FAQ Series)

[“Marriage, Divorce, & ReMarriage - Luke 16:14-18”](#) (from our Gospel of Luke series)

Books:

[This Momentary Marriage](#) by John Piper

[What Did You Expect](#) by Paul David Tripp

[Sacred Marriage](#) by Gary Thomas

[Intended for Pleasure](#) by Ed & Gaye Wheat