



# Celebrating Marriages & Relationships

St. Mark's United Church 115 Orton Park Road, Toronto, ON, M1G 3G9

(416) 439-8623 [www.st-marks.ca](http://www.st-marks.ca)

We are delighted that you are considering St. Mark's for your church wedding, covenanting service or anniversary celebration!

At St. Mark's and in The United Church of Canada we know human relationship to be one of the gifts of God. We affirm this gift and give thanks to God for it. With God we are grateful that you have found in and with each other a relationship, which affirms, nurtures and sustains you. This is indeed a blessing!

All of our relationships, our most public and communal and our most personal and intimate are informed and nurtured in our faith values. We understand that these values call us into relationships that are just, generous, respectful, mutual, and nourishing. As Christians we see these expressed most fully in the life and being of Jesus, the Christ, who teaches that we love one another as God loves us.

In our most intimate relationship with a chosen partner we benefit from rituals that allow us to publicly profess our love for the other, entering into a covenant with each other, and with God, to live in love, with God as our helper.

In the presence of God, and with those assembled, we commit ourselves to live in a relationship that sustains and nurtures both partners and that is marked by mutual respect and honour, shared goals and values, interests and commitment.

What is it that most encourages you in your relationship? In what ways does it sustain you in your relationship with others, in the work that you do, in who you are and who you are becoming? In what ways do you sustain and nurture your partner? And how is it that your sense of God's presence in your life enables you to give of yourself to care for and to love your partner?

Christian weddings at St. Mark's include a profession of love, belief in God, and the signing of a legally binding contract under the laws of the Province. A Service of Covenanting is similar though does not include a marriage licence and is not legally binding. Both are celebrated in a service of worship in which the couple asks God's blessing and seeks the support and care of those assembled. The commitments are entered into with the hope of being life-long. Declarations are spoken and the couple exchanges vows and symbols of their vows. The services include prayers, readings, and acts of thanksgiving.

Again, Congratulations and welcome to St. Mark's!



## The Service

At St. Mark's the rites of Christian covenanting and marriage are open to straight, gay and lesbian couples.

Couples are not required to be members of the congregation nor are there restrictions on the marriage of people who are divorced or who are currently living with each other. It is required that at least one member of the couple be Christian and that the couple do wish to enter into this covenant with each other and with God.

Services are held in the sanctuary of the church. It is a comfortable setting for small, intimate gatherings as well as for services with as many as 175 guests. Our staff members are available for weddings at other locations.

Couples will meet at least twice with our Minister to discuss their plans and expectations and to work with him or her in shaping the service.

After the initial meeting, the Minister will determine whether or not to extend an offer to the couple to proceed with the ceremony at St. Mark's.



Normally the Minister of St. Mark's will preside at the service with the assistance of the Wedding Host and with the Music Director providing the music leadership.

Marriage and covenanting ceremonies are celebrated in the context of an act of worship. Flash photography is permitted only during the processional, during the signing of the documents, and during the recessional. Guests are asked to refrain from taking photographs, while a professional photographer may only take non-flash photographs from the back of the church, at the other times. Videotaping is permitted from a single camera on a tripod in the location designated by the Minister or Wedding.

No confetti, rice, or other material may be thrown in the building or on the church property. Rehearsals are normally held the evening before the ceremony, and everyone participating in the service is required to be in attendance.

The couple is advised to discuss music with the Director of Music at least one month prior to the ceremony. Special music must be presented to and approved by the Director of Music at least one month prior to the ceremony. Soloists and accompanying musicians must also meet with the Director of Music at least one month prior to the ceremony for rehearsal and approval by him or her.

The Schedule of fees is as follows.

To St. Mark's United Church	\$300.00
To the Minister	\$250.00
To the Organist (Ceremony)	\$150.00
(Each Rehearsal)	\$50.00
Wedding Host	\$150.00 Host (Mandatory for weddings with over 12 people)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$850.00</b>

A deposit of \$300 is required at the time of booking. All other fees are due in separate envelopes of cash at the final planning meeting with the minister (normally 2 weeks before the wedding). A cancellation fee of \$200 will apply if the ceremony is cancelled within 30 days of the wedding.

St. Mark's does not offer a formal Marriage Preparation program. Instead, information is provided on specific pre-marriage topics, and resources are made available for personalizing the wedding service. The Minister will work with the couple on completing the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) which is a relatively short, non-invasive, self-report questionnaire used to measure and describe people's preferences. After more than 50 years of research and development the current MBTI is the most widely used instrument for understanding normal personality differences.

Couples marrying require the appropriate marriage license from the Province of Ontario. It should be presented to the minister at the final planning meeting.

Wedding policies at St. Mark's are set by the Church Board. This policy was last revised January 2011.

So, after all of this, what do you do first? Call our church office -- 416 439 8623 -- and arrange an appointment with our minister. He or she will guide you from there!

Again, congratulations on your wedding plans and welcome to St. Mark's. We are honoured to be part of the celebration of your covenant, marriage or anniversary.

**St. Mark's is called to be a progressive, inclusive and life-affirming Christian community of faith within the United Church of Canada.**



An "Affirming Congregation" is one that has intentionally reflected on what it means to be inclusive & that has evaluated its openness to the ongoing work of being intentional about how it welcomes and includes others within the life & work of the church. All barriers to those wishing to be a part of the congregation are explored, particularly, though not only, those around issues of sexual orientation & gender identity.