

Campus Ministry Office
Augsburg College
Theology & Practice of Marriage
Adopted: Fall 2013

THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;
for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Song of Solomon 8:6*

Marriage is a gift from God. In the biblical witness, we experience God's gift of marriage for the intention of companionship, joy, and the strengthening of the human family. As God's holy and beloved, we were created to function and thrive in relationships. Marriage is a unique relationship - a sacred and public covenantal promise - that binds two individuals together in loving, supporting, and nurturing relationship for the sake of the world. Jesus affirmed the covenant of marriage and revealed the fullness of God's loving, supporting, and nurturing relationship with the world. As Lutheran/Christian people, we believe that God's incarnational love was fully revealed through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus and God's ongoing love through our relationships with one another. Marriage is part of this relational testimony to God's embodied love. That is, those united in marriage are called and blessed to bear witness to God's love through the grace of Christ Jesus. This happens in the fullness of relationship: joy and sorrow, plenty and want, sickness and health, offense and reconciliation, living and dying. The profoundly vulnerable and lovingly intimate relationship of marriage is a gift from God.

Marriage is also a human institution. The covenant of marriage is entered between two people with the public declaration (vows) of love and fidelity. When two people enter into this holy commitment, they pledge their faith and trust to each other and to God. The gathered assembly surrounds the couple to express their support of this covenantal act and to offer their prayers and praise to God for the commitment being enacted for the well-being of the whole human family. Together with the couple, the whole assembly through the Holy Spirit gives witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus.¹

PRACTICE OF MARRIAGE

God loves human life so much that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). We know, therefore, that God's love embraces us totally, including our sexuality. We also know that God created each of us not only as individuals, but also as people who live in a variety of social communities and contexts. In response to God's love for us, we seek life-giving relationships with others and create social structures and practices that support such relationships. ELCA Social Statement on Human Sexuality, 2009

¹ Portions of this section were adapted from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006) 286.

The Campus Ministry Office at Augsburg College is firmly rooted in the Christian church as part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]. As a Lutheran ministry at a Lutheran college, we strive to put our theological convictions of an incarnational and reforming-faith into practice as we encounter the ever-evolving context of the 21st Century. Therefore, our practice of marriage as a Campus Ministry at Augsburg College is:

1. Rooted in the theological and biblical confessions of the Lutheran church;
2. Embraces the fullness of God's gift of love for all people;
3. Honors the missional trajectory of the ELCA;
4. Upholds Augsburg College's commitment to be a "Reconciling in Christ" community welcoming all people into fullness of the body of Christ. And,
5. Abides with the marriage laws of the State of Minnesota that, as of August 1, 2013, legally recognizes same-gender civil marriages.

What does this mean for the practice of marriage at Hoversten Chapel at Augsburg? The Campus Ministry Office, leaning into our Lutheran traditional and biblical understanding of God's love in Christ, honors and celebrates the ELCA's 2009 social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*.² After years of careful discernment, study, and prayer around issues of sexuality, the ELCA adopted this statement that permits congregations and worshiping communities and their clergy to bless permanent life-long same-gender relationships if they believe God is calling them to do so. The Campus Ministry Office believes God is doing just that!

As a "Reconciling in Christ" community and institution, Augsburg College and the Campus Ministry Office strive to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual individuals and their families as full participants in the life of the church. Therefore, our practice of marriage includes welcoming same-gender couples to be married at Hoversten Chapel on the campus of Augsburg College. This is a legal reality in the State of Minnesota as of August 1, 2013; we welcome and celebrate this new legal reality in our state as we offer pastoral and community support to all God's children who desire to enter into the public, covenantal relationship of marriage.

Therefore, the Campus Ministry Office of Augsburg College steeped in the Lutheran tradition and living into the "Reconciling in Christ" commitment will recognize, host, and allow its ordained clergy to preside at same-gender marriages, following the same policies and procedures used for opposite-gender marriages in our church and in accordance with the laws of the State of Minnesota.

If you are interested in being married at Augsburg College, you are encouraged to contact Event and Conference Planning at Augsburg (612-330-1019) or visit the website at <http://inside.augsburg.edu/events/> for further information. If you have questions about Campus Ministry's theology and practice of marriage, you are welcome to contact our office at 612-330-1732.

² The full ELCA social statement can be viewed at <http://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Human-Sexuality>