

**10-02        On Amending W-4.9000, Marriage—From  
the Presbytery of the Cascades.**

**Source:** Presbytery                      **Event:** 221st General  
Assembly (2014)  
**Committee:** [10-02] Civil Union   **Sponsor:** Cascades Presbytery  
and Marriage Issues  
**Topic:** Unassigned                      **Type:** General Assembly  
Full Consideration

<http://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=4593>

## **Assembly Action**

*On this Item, the General Assembly, acted as follows:*

### **Approve as Amended**

Amended on the floor to insert "traditionally a man and a woman"  
after the words "two people" in the first paragraph

Electronic Vote - Plenary

Affirmative: 429

Negative: 175

Abstaining: 0

### **Final Text:**

**Amend Paragraph 5 to read as follows: [Text to be deleted  
is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to  
be added or inserted is shown with brackets and with an  
underline.]**

***"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. A  
couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall***

*receive instruction from the teaching elder, who ~~[shall]~~ [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. In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service."*

2. Add a new paragraph at the end to read as follows:  
[Text to be added is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

"[Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the session believes is contrary to the teaching elder's or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.]"

## **Committee Recommendation**

*On this Item, the Civil Union and Marriage Issues Committee, acted as follows:*

### **Approve as Amended**

[Counted Vote - Committee]

Affirmative: 49

Negative: 18

Abstaining: 0

### **Final Text:**

1. Amend Paragraph 5 to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with brackets and with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown with brackets and

with an underline.]

*"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. A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who [~~shall~~] [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. In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service."*

2. Add a new paragraph at the end to read as follows:  
[Text to be added is shown with brackets and with an underline.]

*"[Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the session believes is contrary to the teaching elder's or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.]"*

## **Recommendation**

The Presbytery of the Cascades respectfully overtures the 221st General Assembly (2014) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Amend W-4.9000 by striking the current text and replacing it with the following:

***"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.***

***"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.***

***"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. A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who shall 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. In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service.***

***"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.***

***"A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the statements made shall reflect the fact that the couple is already married to one another according to the laws of the civil jurisdiction."***