

Wedding and Domestic Partnership Preparation
by Rev. Angela Smith

Before officiating any weddings or domestic partnership ceremonies, all couples seeking my church's blessing and services, must effectively answer the following questions to the satisfaction of myself and their partner-to-be. Officiating can be done on location or virtually where permitted by law or solely recognized by the church with understanding regarding legal application of unauthorized unions. To request I officiate your wedding or domestic partnership, please e-mail rev@cope.church for more info.

THE DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP/MATRIMONIAL INQUISITION

1. Have you up until now and/or will you commit to absolute equal responsibility in all areas of domestic life with your partner? [Note: Have you split expenses and responsibilities equally and/or are you planning to do that going forward should you make it legal or official? Expenses are included in shared responsibilities. Mutual respect for everyone and seeing everyone as equal to yourself is necessary to avoid hypocrisy and resentment over time. So, in the event one of you sees your contributions as in-kind rather than financial to the partnership where the other partner sees their contributions as primarily financial, to avoid resentment figure out how many hours the in-kind party spends doing what in-kind contribution and the current hourly rate (high end if you wish) for each activity and compare that to the amount of money the other partner contributes to joint domestic expenses, then, where there lacks equanimity (i.e. in-kind partner spends 10 hours a week doing in-kind contributions with a maximum value of \$32/hour in most regions of the US making their contribution roughly \$1280 and the house/rent payment alone is \$1500, let alone the rest of the joint expenses, so my partner should contribute at least \$220 just to show splitting the cost of shelter and maybe cook more) address it to avoid resentment building over time. The number one cause of marital discord is about money. In addition, everyone should control their own money and respect who earned it.]
2. Have you begun family planning or is this a blended family union? [Note: If a blended family union with children from previous relationships, did you give the children time to get to know the new step-parent-to-be before stating they have to just learn to live with a stranger that they feel threatened by because so far they've only taken the one parent away and not really seemed interested in being part of the family? If that's the case, I won't officiate unless and until I'm relatively certain the children are comfortable with the new union. And, if both union bound parties have no children, are you in agreement about trying, maximum children affordable, and parenting?]
3. Have you spoken to an attorney about a prenuptial agreement, family planning agreement, or other terms to help prepare in the event a divorce becomes warranted? [Note: I'm not particularly comfortable officiating wedding or domestic partnership ceremonies/unions unless there is some prenuptial agreement protecting the interests of both parties in the event of a hopefully never warranted legal separation or termination of marriage. I prefer if a family planning agreement is included and expressly agreed upon.]

However, having a prenuptial and/or family planning agreement is not a pre-requisite for my officiating any ceremony. It is solely something I strongly and heartily advise everyone do even if you think it is a joke that will be something one of you laugh about when the other dies and you are searching through old documents while managing funeral arrangements.]

4. Do you love each other honestly or deceptively? [Note: In other words, do you love your partner faults and all or wish to exploit and manipulate what you see as your partner's potential?]

5. What vows do you wish for the service? [Note: Traditional (i.e. For better or worse....), COPE standard (it is short and sweet), or Write Your Own]

You can e-mail your responses to the above questions to rev@cope.church with subject "Officiate My Wedding" and I'll respond to get the details and check availability.