

Ask the Pastor

“Pastor, what has been the biggest change you have seen in over 30 years of service to the church?”

I would say the biggest changed I have witnessed in my professional life has been the practice and act of Marriage as a religious event or service. In my first few years of work in the church in the early 1980's, it was not uncommon for a typical church to schedule a wedding every week for the 3 summer months, depending on the size of the church.

In 30 or so years, a typical “church” wedding is now more of the exception rather than the norm. Society and cultural trends bear this out. Fewer and fewer couples today ever bothered to get “married” in the first place. The 2010 census reports that 7 out of 10 new “households” formed since 2000 are either unmarried people living together, those united by some sort of State Civil-Union laws or other groupings of people. The traditional male-female, two-parent family with kids is now a minority in the nation. Only 4 out of 10 households fall into that category. The biggest single family grouping now is a single mother raising kids. In 2010, only 4 out 10 live births happened to a two-parent family. The vast majority of children are now born into a single mother household. So all these factors, divorce, other types of coupling come into play.

In my time here in Lambertville, outside of church folks or children of seeking to get married, the vast, vast majority of inquires we get for a “church wedding” have nothing to do with the faith of the individuals concerned. They only want a “church” wedding because we hold XXX number of people; they make their reservations at the Station so it is easy, and for reasons other than faith or religion. For every 10 of these request, maybe I will agree to take one or two. The vast majority are far better suited just to go see a Justice of the Peace, or go to Las Vegas to be honest.

In general society and culture has been getting more secular, less religious, less concerned about religious behaviors, and let's be honest, unmarried couples living together is a much more socially accepted behavior than in times past. Lambertville is not some little island or a plastic bubble. The same trends that are in secular culture in general are so here. In fact I would say Lambertville is far more secular, progressive, ill religious, call it what you will, than New Jersey in general, or the nation for that matter.

As a church, we will stand for certain values and ideals in the culture. We are to witness the full Gospel of Jesus Christ to Lambertville, or anybody else who darkens our doors. Christian marriage is Christian marriage, the Bible is the Bible. That does not change. What has changed, at least in my professional life, has been how outside society and culture deals with and understands that Gospel. If they do not know that, shame on us and shame on the church.

Pastor Gregory