

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

| | |
|--|---|
| Section 1 – Marriage, Handfasting, Handparting and Divorce | 2 |
| Subsection 1a – Marriage | 2 |
| Counsel | 2 |
| Marriage Records and Legal Documents | 2 |
| Hard Copy Archives | 3 |
| Database Archives | 3 |
| Subsection 1b - Handfasting | 3 |
| Documentation and Archives | 4 |
| Subsection 1c - Handparting | 4 |
| Documentation and Archives | 4 |
| Subsection 1d - Divorce | 4 |
| Documentation and Archives | 4 |
| Subsection 1f - Marriage Equality | 4 |
| Section 2 - Memorial Rite | 5 |
| Documentation and Archives | 5 |
| Subsection 2a - Ancestor Rite | 5 |
| Subsection 2b - Pet Memorials | 5 |
| Section 3 - Child Blessing | 6 |
| Documentation and Archives | 6 |
| Section 4 - Ordination | 7 |
| Subsection 4a – Qualification | 7 |
| Subsection 4b – Clergy Responsibilities | 8 |
| Section 5 - Healing Rite | 9 |
| Section 6 - Exorcism | 9 |
| Section 7 – Other Rites of Passage | 9 |
| Section 8 - Banishment | 9 |

Section 1 – Marriage, Handfasting, Handparting and Divorce

Subsection 1a – Marriage

Marriage is a covenant commitment of two adults with rights, responsibilities, duties, and obligations, which is not to be entered into lightly.

Persons wishing to be married within Ecumenicon Fellowship must fulfill the following:

1. Meet with an Ecumenicon clergyperson on at least 3 separate occasions to ascertain: the stability of their relationship, their understanding of the seriousness of the commitment and its legal ramifications, and to write, with help, their wedding vows.
2. Must receive from the State and County in which they reside, where possible, a State Marriage License or Civil Union license. Although Ecumenicon currently is only licensed in Maryland, many of our clergy have local licenses in Pennsylvania, DC, Virginia, Ohio, and other jurisdictions, depending on the state.
3. Must be coming to such a ceremony of their own free will, with no coercion from any outside source. Each person coming to this commitment must come without other ties that prevent their free participation. Formal divorce decrees from the State must be presented, and formal Divorce decrees from any other religious body which may have obligated either party must also be obtained and a copy inserted in the Ecumenicon archives.

Counsel

Ecumenicon will provide appropriate counsel for the couple being joined including:

1. Basic rites of marriage for the couple to choose from.
2. A discussion with the couple of the current laws in their jurisdiction.
3. A finalization of a wedding service which takes into account the couples' wishes, and appropriate input from their families.

Marriage Records and Legal Documents

Ecumenicon will produce the following for each couple so joined:

1. A Certificate of Marriage (two copies, one for the couple and one for the church records.)
2. A signed copy of any legal documents (Certificate of Marriage, Civil Union document, or other binding instruments).

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

3. A copy of the wedding service (two copies, one for the couple, and one for the church records).

The Certificate of Marriage will record, at minimum:

1. The names of the two persons being joined.
2. The address or addresses of the two persons being joined.
3. The name and address of the Ecumenicon clergy performing the ceremony.
4. The date and place of the service
5. Two witnesses provided either by Ecumenicon Fellowship, or by the couple.

Hard Copy Archives

Ecumenicon will keep an archived copy of all Certificates of Marriage, Marriage, Civil Union documents, and Wedding Services in a folder for each service so performed for later archival and retrieval. Any couple, or legal authority where appropriate, may obtain a copy of the documents upon request and paying an appropriate archival fee.

Database Archives

Ecumenicon Fellowship will keep a database of all persons joined by our rites in a master database, searchable by names, dates, place of performance, and place of archive, so that records may easily be retrieved.

Subsection 1b - Handfasting

Handfasting in Ecumenicon Fellowship is a formal religious joining of two persons wishing to explore a long-term relationship. It is the parallel to a formal announcement of engagement in the secular world and should be considered in just such seriousness.

1. A handfasting is usually, by tradition, for a year and a day (one solar year) to ensure both honest assessment and, if children are produced, a clear understanding of parentage.
2. A couple are pledging themselves, in whatever terms they agree to, for the time period allotted. If, after a year and a day, they choose to part company, they may be released from their vows, without prejudice, with a formal Handparting. Only if the both agree should the next logical step of Marriage be considered. While not every couple coming to Ecumenicon Fellowship to formalize their Marriage goes through Handfasting, this rite is offered to help couples in their search for stability.

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

Documentation and Archives

A Handfasting Certificate will be produced stating the names of the couple being joined, the date of joining, the duration of the contract, and renewal conditions. This information will also be recorded in the Ecumenicon Fellowship archives.

Subsection 1c - Handparting

Sometimes a couple, upon honest reflection, cannot remain in a commitment. Ecumenicon offers a formal rite of handparting for both couples which have been handfasted, and those who have been married. This formalization is to help all concerned walk gently away when a relationship is ended. This rite is not lightly done, but it is offered to help both release a couple when their trial period has ended, or release those in a marriage when they must part company.

Ecumenicon Fellowship realizes that sometimes one party or another is unable to appear at a handparting, due to deep-seated estrangement. The formal handparting is offered to one member of the couple as a formal spiritual release of energies so that neither party will be bound to continued anger.

Documentation and Archives

A formal Handparting Certificate will be signed by the officiating clergy and both parties, and a copy will be given to each party and one retained by Ecumenicon Fellowship for its archives.

Subsection 1d - Divorce

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes that sometimes relationships end, sometimes by default, sometimes through civil circumstances, sometimes by abandonment. In any case, no marriage can survive if trust is broken or a relationship is no longer sustained. Ecumenicon Fellowship has an obligation, in such cases, to enable a formal release from obligations by both parties from their religious vows, and to help the couple in formally releasing each other from legal obligations.

Documentation and Archives

Ecumenicon Fellowship will issue a Divorce Decree, a Rite of Git, or equivalent title depending on tradition as a record that the relationship has ended. A copy of the Divorce Decree will be given to each party in the relationship ending, and a copy kept for the Ecumenicon archives. Ecumenicon will also record the date of divorce in its database in case either party may wish to be joined to another through Ecumenicon Fellowship.

Subsection 1f - Marriage Equality

Ecumenicon Fellowship goes on record to say that marriage is a covenant between two consenting adults, without a barrier to either party on account of gender. Either party to the marriage may be male, female, transgender,

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or intersex, with the same seriousness of obligation, the same rites and ceremonies, and the same respect and dignity being accorded to the relationship. The marriage is between the parties concerned, witnessed by Ecumenicon Fellowship as a community, but only the couple, in the long term, create or continue the sacredness of a marriage.

Section 2 - Memorial Rite

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes that the departure of a loved one from this life is often filled with many hopes, dreams, regrets, and memories. The Memorial Rite is recognized as one of our church's offerings to both those who are passing, and those who will be left behind.

Many types of memorials exist, from formal wakes, to scattering of ashes, to a simple graveside service. All are considered equal, and require the same care and attention to detail, particularly when a death has been sudden, as the persons left behind may be in shock, or unable to focus on all the details.

Documentation and Archives

Ecumenicon Fellowship is preparing a memorial book of rites to help all Ecumenicon Clergy be prepared for a variety of religious traditions and their necessary obligations in release.

At minimum, a Memorial Rite should record the name of the person being mourned, the date of death, and the place of the memorial service, scattering, or graveside service. Such records are recognized by both federal and state law as legal records for insurance, death benefits, and other needs, so archival copies must be kept carefully.

Subsection 2a - Ancestor Rite

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes the ongoing relationship between those living and those no longer visible on this plane. Once a year, on or around October 31, Ecumenicon Fellowship will celebrate a formal Ancestor Rite to welcome home all of our departed loved ones. Each congregation is encouraged to formally gather and to make known publicly their rites for those who may have died without memorial.

Subsection 2b - Pet Memorials

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes the bond that humans make with the animals under their care and recognizes the need to create memorial services for our departed companions. Ecumenicon will prepare, upon request, appropriate memorial services, and will search out pet cemeteries, where available.

Once a year, Ecumenicon Fellowship will celebrate a Blessing of the Animals rite, both to bless those companion animals who are currently living, and to

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

gather in the spirits of those who have departed. Each community within Ecumenicon Fellowship is encouraged to celebrate this rite with appropriate gatherings in the month of August.

Section 3 - Child Blessing

A child is blessed and named in many religious communities within a short time after birth to formally welcome them into the spiritual community. Whether the rite is called christening, baptism, naming, child blessing, or welcoming, the intent is the same, to formally introduce a child to its wider family and to introduce the wider religious community to the child in a formal commitment of care and love for as long as the child is connected to the community.

Ecumenicon Fellowship is preparing a book of rites to help all Ecumenicon clergy be prepared for a wide variety of child blessing ceremonies, and their necessary rites and obligations. Where needed, Ecumenicon Clergy should cooperate with clergy of other faiths to best recognize and celebrate any new child in the community.

Documentation and Archives

A record should be kept of the child's name, his or her birth parents, his or her adoptive parents (if appropriate), the date and place of birth of the child, and the date of blessing. As these records are recognized by both federal and state law as legal records, they should be kept in archival hard copy and cross-referenced in a database keeping such records.

Section 4 - Ordination

Please note that Ecumenicon Fellowship does not require any candidate to give up any prior affiliations to any other organization, nor bar any candidate from pursuing training under any other program.

Subsection 4a – Qualification

All petitions should be sent to trustees@ecumenicon.org for review by all Trustees in office.

1. The petitioner must have clearly demonstrated the capacity to function in worship as a religious leader, as follows:
 - Ritual construction and presentation.
 - Presentation of religious education in one's path.
 - Presentation of instruction at the annual interfaith retreat.
 - Demonstration of continuing religious education.
2. The petitioner must be accepting of faith paths not his/her own.
3. The petitioner's capabilities to function in the desired office must be recognized by the ordaining body, the Trustees.
4. The petitioner must have been a member in good standing (dues-paying member) of Ecumenicon for a year and a day before petitioning for ordination and throughout the duration of the candidacy (if prolonged more than a year and a day).
5. As a demonstration of his/her qualifications, prior to ordination, the petitioner must have functioned in the desired office for a year and a day.

Evidence of prior qualifications from another organization shall be considered, as long as the petitioner has been a member, in good standing, of Ecumenicon for a year and a day.
6. The petition presented to the Trustees must include:
 - The title of the appointment the petitioner seeks;
 - The qualifications he/she believes necessary to perform in that position; and,
 - His/her demonstrated ability in fulfilling those qualifications. The demonstrated ability portion of the petition will include formal class room training/degrees, seminars, pathway training in the subject, and on-the-job training, as well as actual experience in the field.
7. All petitioners are asked to produce a service project during their minimum year and a day intern period, documenting their qualifications and activities appropriate to the office. The records of this service

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

project are kept in archival copies so that future interns have models to follow.

8. The above are minimum requirements. Other activities may be individually assigned by the Trustees.

Subsection 4b – Clergy Responsibilities

While all clergy may not be trained in the same office, nor have the same focus of ministry, they all have certain rights and responsibilities conferred upon them by state custom and by legal jurisprudence.

1. Clergy Identification Cards. As clergy are often called upon in emergency situations, a Clergy Identification Card will be produced by Ecumenicon Fellowship to uniformly identify those who choose to serve as clergy within the Fellowship and the wider world. This card will have, at minimum, the clergy's name, picture, the legal address of Ecumenicon Fellowship, and a contact phone number and e-mail address. We will sustain confidentiality by providing blind e-mail addresses through the Web site if requested.
2. Right of Witness to a marriage, handfasting, handparting, divorce, child blessing, house blessing, or other rite of Ecumenicon Fellowship. If called upon as the representative of Ecumenicon Fellowship, they are expected to create records as called upon in the above sections to identify all such rites.
3. Hospital Visitation. Any clergy in Ecumenicon Fellowship will be identified to public health officials if any such person contacts the Trustees or Board of Directors for verification of status.
4. Prison Visitation. Any clergy in Ecumenicon Fellowship will be identified to legal enforcement officials for prison visitation if any such person contacts the Trustees or Board of Directors for verification of status.
5. Chaplaincy. Clergy within Ecumenicon Fellowship are encouraged to apply for chaplaincy programs at hospitals, military posts, or other appropriate venues. Ecumenicon Fellowship will do everything in its power to enable a candidate for such an office in appropriate education or letters of referral.
6. Responsibility of Confidentiality. Clergy confidentiality for persons under their counseling care is sustained; however, in accordance with public policy, Ecumenicon Fellowship is fully considered a mandatory reporter in respect to proven and reported child abuse or sexual abuse. Child abuse or neglect is any recent act or failure to act: resulting in imminent risk of serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation of a child (usually a person under the age of 18, but a younger age may be specified in cases not

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

involving sexual abuse) by a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare. Also see Section 8. Banishment.

7. Uniform Rates. So that clear responsibilities are maintained and Ecumenicon Fellowship does not become perceived as a "marriage mill," a uniform rate for witness to a marriage will be required by all clergy, with a portion of the monetary fee reserved as a donation to Ecumenicon Fellowship as the ordaining body. Clergy are considered self-employed under the current tax code and all other income beyond Ecumenicon Fellowship's portion are considered taxable income. State laws vary on how much a justice of the peace charges, and discussion will be necessary on this matter for each occasion and its location.

Section 5 - Healing Rite

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes that there are many modalities of healing, and many ways of viewing health. Within our Fellowship, we encourage all members to explore and promulgate healing and wholeness. As healers may be called upon from time to time to visit hospitals, or help the grieving, we encourage documentation and ongoing classes through our congregations and annual conference on healing modalities and aids to understanding.

Section 6 - Exorcism

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes that spirits of nature, ancient memories, or other forces may sometimes make a place uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous. Ecumenicon Fellowship will train its clergy to help in rites of exorcism to address all negative forces in an area in appropriate manners.

Section 7 – Other Rites of Passage

From time to time, a person may be going through a life transition that should be formally recognized. This may be a coming of age for a person going from youth to adulthood, a person graduating from education, a person going through a life cycle change (menopause, andropause), or any other rite.

Ecumenicon Fellowship recognizes the need and encourages all clergy to come up with appropriate rites of passage and to record them for the education and nourishment of all in the Fellowship. An archived book of rituals is being prepared for this consolidation.

Section 8 - Banishment

For certain grievous crimes, such as willful child molestation, Ecumenicon Fellowship will formally banish the known and proven perpetrators from the Fellowship by a formal rite of banishment. Ecumenicon Fellowship is under legal obligation as a reporter to respond to any confessions of molestation with

ECUMENICON RITES AND RITUALS - DRAFT COPY FOR DISCUSSION

seriousness, and to actively prevent reoccurrence of such matters. Upon conviction of molestation, the Trustees of Ecumenicon will gather and formally banish the person from Ecumenicon's safety. A decree will spell out the charges, and a letter will be entered into the archives and given to the perpetrator formally restraining them from participation in Ecumenicon Fellowship activities until such time as they have served appropriate legal terms, received all appropriate counsel, and are deemed safe by legal authorities to be in community again. Only the Trustees have the right to formally banish a person from Ecumenicon activities, and only by unanimous consent of the current Trustees may the person be formally welcomed back into its fold and participate in Ecumenicon-sponsored activities.