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Same-sex marriages uncommon

By Julie Naughton
Senior Editor

Couples in other states may request same-sex marriages, but none have requested one in Nebraska, said Susan Starcher, administrative aid for the Lancaster County Clerk.

Starcher said her office had never received a marriage license request from a same-sex couple and no records are kept by the state on requests for same-sex licenses.

"We've always been told it isn't legal," she said.

Tye Baker, secretary of the Gay-Lesbian Student Association at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said gay and lesbian couples might not ask for licenses because they know it isn't legal.

"There's no law saying specifically that it's illegal, but it's worded in a strange way," Baker said.

Massachusetts has a "domestic partnership" law, which allows same-sex couples who have lived together for at least one year to be legally recognized. Domestic partners are then eligible for certain benefits, such as married student housing, Baker said.

Although many assume that states with large gay populations, such as California or Florida, allow same-sex marriages, that isn't the case, Baker said.

"If it were allowed," Baker said, "everyone would be moving to California or Florida."

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Tye Baker
secretary
UNL Gay-Lesbian Student
Association

Baker added that California, despite the large gay population in San Francisco, actually is far behind other states in terms of gay marriages. However, San Francisco has city ordinances that prohibit discrimination against gays, Baker said.

On a national level, gays and lesbians applying for marriage licenses have had little success. During November, one of the latest testings of the law was filed in Washington.

Two gay men, Craig Dean and Patrick Gill, applied for a marriage license and were turned down. They filed a \$1.25 million lawsuit charging the city with acting maliciously by denying the license request. In addition to the money, their suit also seeks the issuance of a marriage license.

In the early 1970s, gay couples in Minnesota, Kentucky and Washington state filed lawsuits seeking issuance of marriage licenses, according to the Advocate, a national gay rights magazine. All were turned down. Like

Washington D.C., none of the states have laws that specifically restricted same-sex couples from marriage, but in each case, judges declared "that marriage was historically and intrinsically limited to heterosexuals."

Because they cannot get married, many couples are filing powers of attorney, giving their partner the right to take care of them and their affairs should they become incapacitated, Baker said.

"They're assigning certain rights that say in advance 'this is who I want to take care of me, this is who can visit me,'" Baker said.

No laws have been established to divide property after a partner's death, Baker said.

"People are stating very explicitly in their wills what they want done with their property," Baker said.

Although same-sex marriages are not legal in the eyes of the state, some churches will perform a marriage ceremony for same-sex couples. The Unitarian Church allows such marriages, and will perform them in Lincoln, Baker said. Metropolitan Community Church in Omaha also performs same-sex marriages, Baker said.

"Although the ceremony is not legally recognized, the church recognizes them," Baker said. "It's a ceremony for the couple and their friends, to let everyone know that they're committed to each other."

None of the major denominations allow such marriages.

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Wedding invitation extended to God despite problem of mixed religions

By Dionne Searcey
Staff Reporter

Without religion in a marriage, something is missing, local religious leaders said.

Jim Pennington, minister at the University Lutheran Chapel/Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, 1510 Q St., said that when two people get married they become one flesh. They are emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually one, he said.

"If there's no spiritual aspect — there's a part that's missing," Pennington said.

Scott Pixler, campus minister for College/Career Christian Fellowship, 1633 Q St., agreed and said married couples rely on God throughout their life.

"(Couples) recognize that the real security of their marriage is dependent on their relationship not only with each other, but with the Lord," Pixler said.

He said the Bible spells out specific roles for husbands and wives

to follow.

Couples know they will let each other down throughout their married years, Pixler said, and they need to be able to forgive each other.

Sometimes conflicting religious views can pose difficulties.

Most churches don't discourage mixed-religion marriages, Pixler said, but marrying someone of a different faith may present problems later in life.

"A devout Christian and a devout Muslim are going to have problems," he said.

Father Rudy Oborny, a priest at St. John's Catholic Church, 7601 Vine, said a Catholic spouse must promise to try to raise children in the Catholic Church.

He said that if a Catholic's spouse isn't Catholic, problems could develop.

Pennington said the spouse's family can also be antagonistic and want the new son- or daughter-in-law to be part of the same family religion.



Pixler said that when couples come from different religious backgrounds they should "come to an agreement or agree to disagree."

Whether religion plays a role in the lives of couples or not, they still tend to marry in churches, Pixler said.

Pennington said, "It's tradition not because they want God's blessing. It's the thing to do."

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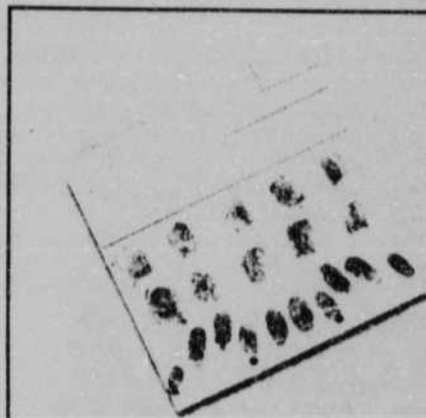
woman's wedding set.

If a man chooses a plain gold band, he'll spend an average of \$75 to \$225. An engraved ring averages \$100 to \$250, he said. The average diamond men's ring costs \$400 to \$500, but there also are many in the \$200 to

\$400 range, he said.

Trepanier said college couples spend an average of \$1,200 to \$2,500 for the woman's wedding set. College men spend an average of \$450, he said.

Trepanier recommended that couples shop for their wedding rings at a store they trust. He suggested couples do a little reading about stones and grading systems before shopping.



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