

**Planning a Wedding at
First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ**

Reserving the Church

When the couple calls the church office regarding their wedding plans, a tentative note is made of the requested date on the church calendar. However, no date is firm until the couple has had its first meeting with the minister.

Meeting with the Pastor

A couple will need to meet with the pastor two or three times prior to the wedding. During the first meeting and the second meeting, if necessary, the pastor will wish to become acquainted with the couple and engage with them in pre-marital **counseling**. During the final meeting, the pastor and couple will discuss the content and order of the wedding service.

About the Wedding Service

A wedding ceremony is a sacred service of worship. During the ceremony planning meeting, the pastor will discuss with the couple the basic elements of the service, possible modifications and participants.

The Officiating Pastor

It is usual for the pastor of the church where the wedding is to be held to lead the ceremony. Should he/she not be available for a particular date, he/she will help to make arrangements for another minister.

In rare instances, a couple may wish to invite another minister to officiate or participate with the pastor. This is possible as long as the pastor has been consulted and is the one to guest minister. Pre-marital counseling will, in this case, be conducted by the officiating minister.

Music

Music plays a very significant role in the wedding service. In a church wedding, the following guidelines are to be respected:

- The use of the church organ, piano, and sound equipment is overseen by the Director of Music. You may use one of the approved organists listed on the rental form. If you would like to use a guest musician, our Director of Music must first be contacted and he/she must extend approval and information about the space and instruments to that musician.
- The couple will need to arrange for a mutually agreeable time for a meeting with the church organist. She/he will discuss with them musical selections for the service.

Legal Documents

The couple must have a marriage license preceding the wedding. The license must be given to the officiating minister before the wedding rehearsal. A minister cannot perform a wedding ceremony without a marriage license. Following the wedding ceremony, the officiating minister will give the couple a *Certificate of Marriage* from the church.

Wedding Bulletin

Couples may choose to have printed programs for their wedding. The officiating minister will assist the couple with its preparation. Programs may be done by a printer or by the church office for a fee of \$25, with paper and/or bulletin covers being provided by the couple.

Flowers and Decorations

The church will be open one hour before the service for the delivery of flowers. After the ceremony, they may be taken by the wedding party. Pew markers and an aisle runner may be used and are available from a florist or a craft store.

Photography

No flash photographs may be taken during the religious service itself. This prevents the enormous distraction of a photographer moving down the aisles or on the altar during a sacred time. Photographers are welcome to photograph the wedding party during the processional and recessional, and re-create any part of the ceremony afterwards. Videotaping is allowed as long as it is done discreetly and the videographer remains stationary.

The Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is held the evening before the day of the wedding for the purposes of “walking through” the ceremony and finalizing any details. All members of the wedding party must be present.

Care of the Church

It is expected that all the facilities of the church will be given respectful use by the wedding party and guests. Only birdseed may be thrown, and only outside the church. No smoking, alcohol, or illegal drugs are permitted anywhere on church property.

Fees

Fees are listed on the rental form. It is requested that they be delivered to the church secretary at least one week before the wedding service. Checks should be made out to appropriate persons and dated on the wedding day.