

Introduction

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well being of the entire human family.

While marriage is a civil contract, for Christians marriage is also a covenant through which a couple is called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

This booklet has been prepared to assist couples in their wedding arrangements at Presbyterian United Church of Christ. While some items may not apply to your wedding, we encourage you to ask questions along the way.

We look forward to getting to know you better and to sharing in this joyous occasion in your lives!

Scheduling Your Wedding

The first step in scheduling your wedding is to meet with the pastor of the church. The pastor will discuss the following items with you:

- The nature of your Christian commitment
- The legal requirements of the state
- The privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage
- The nature and form of the marriage service
- The vows and commitments you will be asked to make
- The relationship of these commitments to your lives as disciples
- The resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist you in fulfilling your marriage commitments

This discussion is equally as important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

If the minister senses after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, and Christian understandings are present and that the decision to marry is wise, the date will be confirmed. This should be done at least six months in advance of the wedding date.

The Christian Service of Marriage

Christian marriage is normally celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship.

As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister and the supervision of the session.

The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service focusing upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. Typically, the Presbyterian Order of Worship will be followed, which includes:

- Entrance
- Sentences of Scripture
- Statement on the Gift of Marriage
- Prayer
- Declarations of Intent
- Affirmations of Families / Congregation
- Readings from Scripture
- Sermon
- Vows
- Exchange of Rings / or Other Symbols
- Prayer
- Lord's Prayer
- Announcement of Marriage
- Charge & Blessing

Officiating Pastor

The pastor of Presbyterian United Church of Christ is expected to be the officiating minister at all weddings held in the church. (Book of Order W-4.9003) Others may be invited to participate in the service at the discretion and invitation of the pastor and session. The officiating pastor will have authority over all details of the rehearsal and marriage ceremony.

Premarital Counseling

Couples should contact the pastor to set up premarital counseling sessions at least 3 months prior to the wedding. The Prepare/Enrich Program, designed to help couples develop a strong and growing relationship, will be used. While counseling is included in the pastor's fee, there is a charge for the inventory instrument and scoring. If distance prohibits counseling with the pastor, the couple can arrange for counseling through another minister or professional counselor, to be approved by the pastor.

Music

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. The officiating pastor must approve music.

Ordinarily the church organist plays for all weddings in the church where organ music is

desired. If the organist is unavailable, she will secure another competent musician in consultation with the couple. If the couple would like to provide their own organist, he/she must be approved by the Music Director.

The couple usually chooses soloists, pianists or other musicians. If a soloist plans to be accompanied by the church organist, they are expected to make arrangements for practicing.

Rehearsal

Normally, it will be necessary to have a rehearsal. This will help the participants to know what to do in the service. One hour should be allowed for the rehearsal.

All members of the wedding party are expected to attend the rehearsal. This should include the parents of the bride and groom and the ushers.

The following must be brought to the rehearsal:

- Marriage License
- Candles to be used in the ceremony
- Wedding Fee Payments

Decorations

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers' consciousness of God and

reflect the integrity and simplicity of the Christian life.

The church has 2 candelabras if the couple chooses to use them. High quality, drip-less candles are required and need to be provided by the couple.

All decorations, flowers and personal items are to be removed from the church immediately following the wedding.

Photographs

Photographs may be taken before and/or after the wedding service. To preserve the dignity and worshipfulness of the service, there shall be no flash pictures in the sanctuary from the end of the processional until the recessional. Non-flash pictures may be taken discreetly if they do not distract from the worship service. The presence of the photographer/videographer should be as unobtrusive as possible during the ceremony.

Sound System

Authorized personnel from the church will operate the sound system. The sound operator will be at the rehearsal to coordinate music, DVD's and other requests.

Fees

When the couple meets with the pastor they will be given a fee schedule. Basic charges include

building use, organist, janitor, sound operator, wedding coordinator, pastor and counseling. A refundable deposit will be required at the time of scheduling the wedding. Fees are to be paid prior to the rehearsal.

License

It is desirable that the marriage license is obtained at least three days before the wedding. Information concerning other requirements can be secured at the County Treasurer's Office. License will be signed following the ceremony and sent in by the church administrative assistant the following business day.

Other Policies

- No alcohol on the premises.
- No smoking in the building.
- Saturday weddings are not scheduled after 5 p.m.
- Use cloth-covered wire on pews; tape and tacks are forbidden on wood.
- No rice – birdseed may be thrown outside only.
- Clean up is required immediately following the ceremony.
- Food is to be limited to the kitchen and fellowship hall areas. Absolutely no food or beverages allowed in the chapel or sanctuary.