

POLICY FOR WEDDINGS
Wheeler United Methodist Church
Blountville, Tennessee

Introduction

Christian marriage is a sacred Christian covenant, and the wedding ceremony is an act of worship. “Covenant”, in contrast to contract, involves giving of self unreservedly in love to the other. The couple comes to this time to make public vows before God and the community of faith to love one another. In making those vows, they discover that their “union as one in Christ” is possible when Jesus Christ is the basis and bond of unity. They wedding ceremony is the time to ask God’s blessing on marriage and the couple’s new life together.

Planning your wedding should be a happy and exciting time, but we know it can also be a very hectic, busy time. We hope the information on the following pages will help you as you plan and make arrangements for your wedding.

While much of the information in this booklet will simply be guidelines, please note that there are some specific requirements and directives that must be followed for any wedding held at Wheeler United Methodist Church. Please read all the information carefully.

Please feel free to contact the church office at 323-7267 if you have any questions. We will be glad to assist you.

**Officiating
and
Participating
Ministers**

The ordained ministers who serve Wheeler United Methodist Church consider it both a duty and privilege to perform marriage ceremonies for members of our church.

While it is customary to have the clergy of this church officiate in the marriage ceremony, some couples wish to have another minister participate. An ordained minister from another church is welcome to officiate or participate, but in keeping with United Methodist Church policy, the invitation to a guest clergy must be extended by the pastor of this church.

While wedding coordinators selected by the bride and groom are given great leeway, the minister will be responsible for directing the wedding rehearsal.

**Premarital
Preparation**

Four sessions of premarital preparation by the pastor or by another qualified counselor are required of all couples who are married here in ceremonies in which the minister officiates. Appointments for premarital preparation must be scheduled well in advance of the wedding. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to contact the minister for an appointment.

The Ceremony

The traditional wedding ritual has been edited and refined through the years and changes should be considered only after careful and prayerful reflections. While any changes or innovations may be suggested to the minister for his consideration, he has the final determination about the ceremony.

The bride and groom may wish to ring the church bell signaling their union as husband and wife as they leave the sanctuary. This should be practiced at the rehearsal.

Music

Music is an integral part of the wedding ceremony. All music selected for the service should specifically direct attention to God, who sanctifies marriage. Special care should be taken to assure that the music is suitable and sacred. There is a great wealth of music written especially for this setting. It ensures the proclamation of joy, praise and thanksgiving that characterizes Christian marriage. Ordinarily, "popular" music, ballads, love songs, etc., are inappropriate in the context of Christian worship since they focus on romantic love rather than the worship of God. However, these songs often are wonderful addition to receptions. The church staff can offer suggestions if you desire.

Only music which lends itself to the dignity and reverence of the sanctuary will be permitted. All proposed music lyrics, music, and the means thereof, shall be submitted to the church office at least six weeks in advance and shall be subject to the approval of the church music director and minister.

Since the community which gathers for your wedding has an active role in giving their blessing to the marriage, as well as holding the couple accountable to the vows they proclaim, congregational hymns are encouraged. Vocal and/or instrumental solos are often a wonderful addition to any wedding. It is the responsibility of the soloist to contact the church musician (s) to assure adequate rehearsal time. No additional amplification will be permitted in the sanctuary. The participation of the guest organist is to be coordinated with the church organist.

In all cases, final decisions regarding the music for the wedding will remain with the Director of Music and the pastor. Every effort will be made to provide music that pleases the bride and groom.

The Wedding Director

Each wedding shall provide its own director for the ceremony. This person works closely with the minister at the rehearsal and is in charge of the overall conduct and participants. At the rehearsal, the director should call the wedding party together for introductions, remarks, and opening prayer by the minister. The handbook, "The Ultimate Bride's Guide", by Annette Spence Bender is recommended as a resource for the director. It can be borrowed from the church library. It is advisable for the director to confer with the minister prior to the wedding rehearsal.

Decorations

Decorations should be simple and carefully placed as to not hide the pulpit or altar. As in all church decorating, everything should direct attention to the altar.

- a. No decorations other than an appropriate floral arrangement can be used on the altar. No artificial flowers or greenery should be used on the altar. Protective cloth or plastic must be placed under all plants containing moisture.
- b. The candle sticks on the church altar must be used with candles provided by the church. These candlesticks shall not be decorated in any manner.
- c. Should there be additional candles, metal tapers must be used.
- d. All candles must be lighted and extinguished with the brass lighters/snuffers provided by the church.
- e. Furnishings ordinarily must not be removed from the sanctuary. If any furnishings are moved, prior approval by the pastor and/or Worship Chairperson are required.
- f. Thumb tacks or tape may not be used on any furnishings.
- g. A kneeling bench is available from the church, but it is not to be decorated in any way. The church also offers on loan and at no cost certain equipment in the sanctuary: small candelabra, standing candelabra, single candle holders for the chancel, and glass hurricane lamps for the sanctuary windows. Brass and silver urns (with extra fern stands) are available.
- h. The facilities will be available for decoration no more than 24 hours prior to the time of the wedding. If the facilities are required for other planned activities, this decoration time can be reduced at the discretion of the church office to no less than five hours prior to the service.
- i. The church does not have a Unity Candle. If you would like a Unity candle for your service, your florist must provide it.
- j. No other lighting except that which is already a part of the sanctuary will be allowed.
- k. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove all decorations from the church. Failure to do so shall result in loss of deposit. If you would like to contribute decorations to worship service, please contact the pastor.

Some couples choose to leave the altar flowers for the church's use. This is certainly not required, but is always appreciated. If you decide to give the flowers to the church, sufficient notice should be given to the church office so that an appropriate acknowledgement can be printed in the bulletin.

**Photography,
Sound, Video**

In all instances, remember that the wedding ceremony is a worship service. Families will naturally want the occasion recorded in photos, but under no circumstances should the integrity of the service be compromised. It is the responsibility of the bride to see that all photographers, professional or family and friends follow these guidelines so that the wedding ceremony proceeds with dignity and in the spirit of worship. **If a worship bulletin is to be used, it should contain a statement disallowing photography during the ceremony.**

No photographs are to be taken from inside the sanctuary at any time during the ceremony. The ceremony begins when the mothers are seated and ends when the bride and groom reach the narthex. Time-exposure photographs (no flash) may be made during the ceremony if they are taken from the narthex. The only exception to this requirement is that flash photographs may be made by the designated official photographer from the end of the aisle near the narthex at the time of the processional and recessional.

If pictures of the wedding party in the chancel area or at the altar are desired, the pictures must be made before the wedding or after the conclusion of the ceremony.

Video cameras are permitted to be used during the worship service but only if placed in the rear of the balcony or placed in the choir loft and left unattended. The camera and /or tripod should not block or distract in any way persons worshipping in the service who are also seated in the balcony.

Receptions

The Family Life Center is available for receptions following weddings at Wheeler UMC. Arrangements for the reception, if held at the church are to be made through the church office as soon as possible after the wedding date has been set.

No alcoholic beverages are allowed at wedding receptions held at Wheeler UMC. Smoking is not permitted in any part of the church building.

A small custodial fee is required for use of the Center. However, it is the responsibility of those persons preparing the wedding reception (family or caterer) to clean the rooms which have been used, as this is not a service included in the custodial duties. (see Building Policy) Caterers will not be allowed to use stoves, ovens, dishwashers, utensils, silverware or plates, cups and saucers of the church. Refrigerators may be used for storage.

The church has tables and chairs available for use. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to make arrangements to set up and take down.

No rice or confetti will be thrown by members of the wedding party, either in the church building or on the church grounds. Flower petals may be used in the sanctuary aisle if an aisle cloth is used. If birdseed is used, it must be distributed and used outside the building.

Reservations (An application for scheduling weddings at Wheeler UMC is included in this manual.)

Every effort will be made to give priority to members of the church but they should schedule their weddings and receptions at least four months in advance. After this time non-members applications may be received.

In order to rule out the possibility of conflicts of dates, the sanctuary or chapel may be reserved for particular dates only after staff consultation. A tentative clearance may be given by phone, but a final reservation can be confirmed only when the application has been completed, returned to the church office, and the date entered on the church’s master calendar. All scheduling is to be done through the minister and is subject to his discretion.

Weddings may not be scheduled on the following days: Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Palm Sunday, and during Holy Week. It is strongly recommended that couple not schedule weddings during the season of Lent since these forty days are devoted to repentance, fasting, confession of sin and contrition, not the joy and grace usually associated with a wedding.

Nursery The families of the bride and groom are encouraged, at their own expense, to provide the necessary personnel to staff a nursery for infants and young children during the ceremony.

Custodial Fees All persons using the facilities of Wheeler United Methodist Church for weddings, except for very small weddings, shall use the services of the church’s custodian. Since the church does not expect the custodians to provide services for weddings, rehearsals, rehearsal dinners, and receptions, fees will be assessed for those who need custodial services:

Wedding.....	\$100.00
Reception.....	\$50.00

The above fees will be charged all persons requiring these special services to the custodial, regardless of their affiliation with Wheeler United Methodist Church.

Persons desiring the services of the custodian are to make direct contact with him/her concerning what services they wish, room arrangements, schedule, equipment, etc.

Fees

<u>Fee</u>	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>
Deposit	0.00	100.00
Sanctuary	0.00	50.00
Rehearsal dinner		
Kitchen (limited Use)	0.00	20.00
Kitchen (extended use)	0.00	50.00
Family Life Center	0.00	50.00
Reception		
Kitchen (limited use)	0.00	20.00
Kitchen (extended use)	0.00	50.00
Family Life Center	0.00	100.00
Music Director/Choir	as negotiated with Music Director	as negotiated with Music Director
Organist/Pianist—rehearsal	20.00/hr	20.00/hr
Organist/Pianist—wedding	75.00	75.00
Custodian—wedding	100.00	100.00
Custodian—reception	50.00	50.00

*"Member" is applicable when bride, groom, or parents of either are members of the church
