

## SCHEDULING A WEDDING

In the United Methodist Church, the **decision to perform the wedding ceremony is the sole responsibility of the pastors.** No wedding can be scheduled or performed at First United Methodist Church without a pastor's approval. At times, in upholding the church's guidelines and their own understandings and convictions about Christian marriage, our pastors may need to decline to perform a wedding. The church supports the pastors in this decision. Under these circumstances, our inability to sponsor a wedding should not interfere with our friendship and our desire to help you in any way that we can as you seek to discern and to live out God's will for your lives.

When the bride, the groom, or their parents or guardians are church members of at least twelve months at the time the wedding is scheduled, we consider it a "member" wedding (when otherwise, a "non-member" wedding). Once the couple has spoken with a pastor and the pastor has agreed to perform the marriage ceremony, the wedding may be placed on the church calendar. **Non-member weddings, however, may not be put on the calendar until 180 days prior to the desired wedding date.** Generally, Sunday weddings and weddings during the Christmas season, the last week of the year and New Year's Day, and Holy Week will not be scheduled. **Please note also that Saturday weddings may not be scheduled for later than 5:00 p.m. due to necessary preparations for Sunday morning worship and activities.** At the time the church secretary places the wedding date on the calendar, the hour of the rehearsal and ceremony must be included, as well as a reservation for the Fellowship Hall, if needed.

## PREPARING FOR THE WEDDING

### Preparation for Marriage

The pastors congregation of the First United Methodist Church believe strongly in a complete program of spiritual and relationship preparation for marriage through counseling sessions with the pastor and a licensed counselor. Weddings should be scheduled with enough time to complete eight sessions prior to the wedding. **A fee covers the cost of the sessions and all the preparation materials and books.** In addition, a follow up session is included to take the place approximately eight weeks following the wedding.

At the initial meeting with the pastor, a calendar of sessions will be filled out and given to all parties.

### Marriage License

Marriage license in the state of Texas for a period of thirty days only and is issued for a fee to the bride and groom through a County Clerk's office. (Both the bride and groom must appear in person to apply for the license.) The license may be given to the pastor any time during the month preceding the wedding, but must be given to the pastor before the wedding service begins. **No wedding service can legally proceed without the marriage license.** After the service, the pastor will sign the license and give it to the church secretary for recording in the church's official records. The secretary will then mail the license back to the County Clerk for recording, after which it will be mailed to the couple for keeping.

## Wedding Team

The wedding team at First United Methodist Church is available to assist you in preparing your wedding. A wedding team member will be present at the rehearsal to assist the pastor in arranging the wedding party and coordinating the processional and recessional. The wedding team member will also be present at the service to assist with the processional and with any details the bride may need. Because the church provides these ministries, an outside wedding coordinator is unnecessary. Shortly after the wedding is scheduled, the couple should meet with a wedding team member to coordinate how they can best be of assistance to the couple.

## Preparing the Service

### The Form of the Service

In most cases, the wedding service will follow the forms approved by the United Methodist Church and found in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (pp. 864-869) and *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (pp. 115-133). If the couple wishes to use alternative wedding vows, the vows should be submitted to the pastor for review no later than thirty days before the wedding. All decisions regarding the worship service rest with the officiating pastor of First United Methodist Church. The pastor will work with the couple during their time together to design a service of worship that is personal and that brings God's perspective on Christian marriage to the wedding ceremony.

## Guest Ministers

**All weddings must have one of our ministers from First United Methodist Church, Alvin involved in the wedding service.** If the couple wish some other minister to officiate or otherwise assist our pastor(s) in the service, then arrangements should be made with our senior pastor so that he/she can invite the visiting minister. If other clergy officiate or assist, they and the wedding party must be willing to work carefully with our director of church operations and pastor to assure that all of the policies of our church concerning wedding and building usage are observed. The couple planning to be married should arrange a conference with the officiating minister at least two months in advance of the wedding date for the purpose of planning the wedding.

## Wedding Music

We are fortunate to have a professional pianist on staff who plays for weddings and who can assist you in selecting music. The couple is responsible for contacting the pianist and scheduling time to discuss and select music for the service. Music should be chosen in consultation with the minister and the pianist, keeping in mind that the wedding service is a service of worship. All musical selections must be approved by the pastor prior to the wedding, as the pastor is responsible for conducting a service appropriate to Christian worship. Instrumental and recorded music must also conform to this same character of appropriateness for the worship setting.

Guest musicians and soloists are welcome. If desired, the pastor, pianist or director of music can offer some recommendations to you. Honoraria for these persons are not assumed by the church, however, leaving the concerns of their fees to discussion between the couple and the musician.

## Flowers and Decorations

The sanctuary of the church is designed for worship and contains appropriate symbols and furnishings. Therefore, excessive decoration of the sanctuary is unnecessary. Flowers, candles, plants and other decoration in the sanctuary must be kept simple and must not obscure or damage existing sanctuary furnishings or decor. For example, flower arrangements may be placed on the altar table only if the altar cross and candles are not disturbed, and candelabras or other candles may be placed beside the altar, but not on the table itself. No decorations may be placed in front of the altar itself. Of course, all decoration must at all times be consistent with a Christian worship setting. If you have any questions regarding your decorating plans, please ask the pastor or a wedding team member in order to avoid last-minute surprises.

When decorating the church, we ask that you observe the following precautions:

No flowers or decorations should be attached directly to walls, floors or furnishings with nails, screws, staples, tacks or tape.

Candles must be used with drip cups. All carpets and other surfaces must be protected from wax drip.

Protective cloths or plastic must be placed under all plants containing moisture.

The couple should arrange a specific time with the church office for florists, family members and others to decorate. The church will generally be open during business hours (8:30\_4:30) on weekdays. ***If the wedding is on a weekend, the church will open for decorating and for the arrival of participants up to two hours before the time of the service unless otherwise arranged with the office.*** Additional utilities fees will apply for additional time. If families wish to leave wedding flowers for use in worship on the Sunday following the wedding, arrangements should be made with the church office no later than two weeks prior to the wedding. (An acknowledgment will be placed in the Sunday worship guide.)

All decorations must be removed immediately following the departure of the guests so that the sanctuary and other facilities are available for other use as soon as possible. Please do not leave any equipment or personal items on the premises, as First United Methodist Church is not responsible for any property brought to the church at any time before, during or after the wedding.

### NOTE:

The Sanctuary will be open 2 hours prior to the scheduled wedding start time. Decorations can be set up the day prior to the wedding depending on the wedding team member's availability. Additional fees will apply if more than 2 hours needed for non-members (see fee schedule).

## THE REHEARSAL AND WEDDING DAY

### The Rehearsal

At the time they place the wedding date on the church calendar, couples should schedule the rehearsal date and time with the church office in consultation with the officiating pastor. Usually, wedding rehearsals are scheduled for the evening preceding the wedding.

The officiating pastor of First United Methodist Church will direct the wedding rehearsal. A member of the wedding team will also be present to assist the pastor and the wedding party during the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party should plan to arrive before the scheduled rehearsal time. If all are punctual, a rehearsal should last no longer than forty-five minutes.

## Dressing Rooms

The church provides these rooms for the wedding party's use on the wedding day:

- *The Parlor* at the east end of the church opposite the Fellowship Hall is available to the bride and her party for dressing, and
- *The Library* located in the children and youth wing is available to the groom and groomsmen for dressing.

Food and drink should not be taken into the dressing rooms. Please remember to remove all personal belongings after the wedding and to clean up and return the rooms to their original order.

## Photography and Videography

Because the wedding ceremony is both a celebration to be remembered for a lifetime and a worship service in the sanctuary of our church, we ask that professional photographers as well as family and friends observe these courtesies:

No flash photography during the worship service.

Time-exposure pictures may be taken during the wedding service, provided the photographer remains in the rear of the sanctuary or in the balcony.

If the wedding party desires pictures in the chancel area, these may be staged prior to or following the service.

Photographers should check in with the pastor on the day of the wedding.

With our multimedia technology in the sanctuary, the church is able to videograph the wedding service for the couple. (There is a fee for the video technician.) Any other video recording is permitted only at the discretion of the pastor. If other videography has been cleared with the pastor, it must use stationary equipment located in a discreet position such as in the balcony, in a side aisle or behind the pulpit.

## Receptions

The Fellowship Hall is available for wedding receptions when not previously reserved. Please note, however, that no alcoholic beverages may be served or consumed on the church property.

The couple is responsible for designating friends or family members to oversee cleanup after the reception. The kitchen and Fellowship Hall must be clean and returned to their original order once the reception has concluded. ***In decorating for the reception, please remember that nails, screws, staples, tacks and tape may not be used on the walls, floors or furnishings.*** Also, please do not remove any furnishings from the Fellowship Hall.

***For reasons of safety, environment and cleanup, no rice or confetti may be used at the reception.***

Bird seed may be used instead, but only outside the church building. Of course, all bird seed must be swept up afterwards.

### NOTE:

Facility will remain open 3 hours after scheduled start time of wedding for receptions. Decorations can be set up the day prior to the wedding depending on the wedding team member's availability. Additional fees will apply after 3 hours for non-members (see fee schedule).