

WEDDING POLICY

of the
First United Presbyterian Church
Bellefontaine, Ohio

Christian marriage is a gift from God, instituted by God, ordained by God. It is by God's grace and mercy that two people are brought together, out of separate lives, to form one new life, together in God's love. The love of one person for another and the desire to be joined together in marriage is symbolic and representative of God's love for us in Jesus Christ and God's desire that we be joined to Him through Christ. Never is it more true than in Christian marriage that *"we love, because God first loved us."* (I John 4:19)

A Christian wedding is more than just a social event. . . more than just an act of the State... more even than just an act of the State and Church together, making legal the living together of two people. Christian marriage is, above all, an act of God. . . a religious covenant, in which vows are exchanged not only between the couple being married, but also between the couple and God. What the couple promises to each other in marriage, they are also promising to God.

Therefore, Christian marriage is an intensely spiritual and sacred experience. . . "being instituted by God, regulated by His commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, to be held in honor by all people." It is therefore a service of worship. . . a time in which the couple comes before God, together with their family and friends, to worship and praise God for bringing them together and to thank Him for the new life they will share. And it is a time to ask God's guidance and strength and blessing to be upon the couple throughout their lives together. *"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain."* (Psalm 127:1)

With these beliefs in mind, the Session and Pastors of the First United Presbyterian Church of Bellefontaine have established guidelines for all weddings associated with this church. These guidelines are not meant to be restrictive and prohibitive in any way; but are instead meant to maintain the proper attitude and perspective for the Christian wedding.

Being Married at 1st UPC

First United Presbyterian Church does not rent out the church for weddings. Under normal circumstances, the church is reserved for couples where one or both persons being married is associated with the life of the congregation in some way. If a couple not presently associated with 1st UPC desires to be married within the church, the couple needs to establish a relationship with the church through consistent worship and activity within the life of the congregation.

The Place of the Wedding

Christian weddings are a very important event in the life of the people of God and should normally take place within the surroundings of the gathered community who not only witness the wedding, but also take an active part in supporting and upholding the couple in love.

In addition, because the wedding service is an act of worship, it should normally take place within the church where the people of God usually gather to worship. While we do not believe that God is limited to just one place, we do feel that it is important for couples to be joined in marriage within the surroundings of the church where they have experienced the other important spiritual events of life.

Scheduling of Weddings

Under normal circumstances, all weddings should be scheduled with the Pastor(s) of the church **at least six (6) months** prior to the desired wedding date. This will allow time for the wedding to be arranged within the church schedule as well as for the Pastor to arrange his calendar for the appropriate date. If the desired date is unavailable, the Pastor will gladly work with the couple to arrange another suitable time.

At the same time that the couple schedules the wedding with the Pastor and the church, they should also **contact the church's Organist, Thomas Boone (593-0171 email tboone@core.com)** so that proper arrangements can be made for the wedding service and music.

Remarriage of Previously Married Persons

In the case where either the bride and/or the groom has been married previously, **a waiting period of at least six (6) months after the divorce has become final will normally be required.** Only under the most unusual of circumstances will the Pastor(s) consider marrying divorced persons prior to the six-month waiting period. Our church is not opposed to remarrying persons who have been divorced, but does feel that ample time is needed to consider and contemplate the meaning and seriousness of remarriage.

Counseling

Following the notification and scheduling of the wedding date, the Pastor(s) will then arrange with the couple for a **minimum** of three (3) counseling sessions to explore and discuss the meaning of Christian marriage, the commitment each person is making to the marriage, and to prepare the wedding service with the couple. Because this church and its Pastor(s) takes marriage seriously, it also expects the couple being married to do likewise, preparing themselves as conscientiously as possible for the commitment of marriage. These counseling sessions should be scheduled early during the six month "preparation period" and not be delayed until the final weeks before the wedding. It is the couple's responsibility to make themselves available for counseling at a time convenient for both the Pastor and the couple.

If the couple being married lives out of town and will be returning to Bellefontaine only shortly before the wedding, it is their responsibility to arrange for counseling with another minister where they are living and certify that they have engaged in that counseling before the Pastor(s) of The First United Presbyterian Church will marry them.

After counseling with the couple and discussing the meaning and significance of marriage, if the Pastor(s) feels that the couple is not ready for the obligations and commitments of marriage, he can and shall refuse to perform the ceremony. The determination of whom he will or will not marry is left totally to the Pastor(s) discretion.

Use of Church Facilities

The use of The First United Presbyterian Church for weddings and/or receptions will correspond to the general building use policy established by the Session.

Smoking is not allowed in any area of the Church. **No alcoholic beverages** may be consumed on the church premises. Anyone who comes to either the wedding rehearsal or the wedding service in any condition other than completely sober will not be allowed to participate.

No furniture or decorations may be moved in the sanctuary without the consent of the Pastor and/or the Session of the church.

Only the church's candelabra and candles may be used at the front of the sanctuary. Because of the narrowness of the center aisle, it is not recommended that aisle candles be used at all. Decorations for the wedding service should be kept appropriate to a service of worship.

Neither rice nor birdseed may be thrown anywhere on the church property, including the steps and sidewalks around the building. It is suggested that rice and birdseed be thrown following the reception.

Rehearsal Dinner and/or Reception

If the couple desires to have their Rehearsal Dinner and/or Wedding Reception at the church, someone who is familiar with the church kitchen needs to be involved to insure proper use of the

facilities and property. Please contact the church office for the names of persons to contact regarding the use of the church kitchen, dishes, equipment, etc. All Rehearsal Dinners and Wedding Receptions must conclude NO later than 8:00 p.m.

Planning the Wedding Service

The officers and Pastor(s) of 1st UPC rejoice when couples and their families take a marriage service seriously and want to plan a service that expresses their own meaning and convictions within the framework of the Christian tradition. It is our hope that marriage services at the church will seek for integrity within a total Christian life and include qualities of joy, reverence, and commitment. It should always be remembered, however, that the Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God and should therefore be planned accordingly.

The Pastor(s) will gladly counsel and work with couples concerning alternate forms and styles of weddings if it is so desired. However, the final decision as to what is and is not appropriate for a wedding service shall be left to the discretion of the Pastor(s).

Wedding Coordinator

Judy Wical is our wedding coordinator and can provide valuable assistance in preparing for and carrying out the wedding ceremony. Couples are encouraged to contact her as early as possible in the planning process. She can be reached at 599-5664.

Services of Another Minister

All weddings conducted at First United Presbyterian Church MUST include the participation of one of the Pastors involved in the life of the church. It is assumed that under normal circumstances, the Pastor(s) of The First United Presbyterian Church will officiate all weddings connected with the church. If, for whatever reason, one of the pastors associated with the life of 1st UPC is not involved in the wedding, **an authorized church representative, such as the Wedding Coordinator, MUST be present for both the rehearsal and wedding ceremony** in order to insure that the service proceeds as smoothly as possible. There will be **no exceptions** to this requirement.

Wedding Music

Remembering that the wedding service is also a worship service, the couple is reminded to select music appropriate for the occasion. Such music shall be reverent and direct attention toward God in whose name the wedding occurs. Both the minister and the church organist (if his/her services are desired) will be glad to work with the couple to choose music that is appropriate for a wedding setting. The church reserves the right to review and possibly veto requests for inappropriate music selections.

Vocal, instrumental, piano and organ music are all appropriate for the wedding since the Psalms call for us to worship God with all kinds of instruments. However, in keeping with the setting of worship, there should normally be no amplified music other than that of the organ or that, which comes over the church's public address system. If pre-recorded accompaniment for a vocalist is desired, it should be submitted for approval well in advance of the rehearsal. Under normal circumstances, the church's organist, **Mr. Thomas Boone**, shall play for all church weddings. He can be contacted at 593-0171 or tboone@core.com. If the services of another organist/pianist are desired, approval must be given well in advance of the wedding date. Any person playing the church's organ must be trained & experienced in playing PIPE organ. No permanent changes may be made to the established stops & pre-settings on the organ. If the church's sound system is needed during the wedding service, one of the church's sound technicians should be contacted to operate the system during the rehearsal and wedding.

Wedding Photographs

Since a wedding is a worship service, we do not allow flash pictures to be taken during the service. Brides and grooms, with their families and the ushers, are requested to make this policy known to the official photographer BEFORE the service and to all relatives and friends who attend.

The official photographer may take flash pictures of the attendants and the bride as they come down the aisles, but is requested to be as unobtrusive as possible and move quickly from the area once they are in place. If photographs are desired during the service, the photographer may take non-flash, time-exposure pictures from the rear of the sanctuary or balcony only.

The wedding party is welcome to group for as many pictures as desired either prior to or following the service. The videotaping of the wedding service is allowed and encouraged as long as the camera is placed unobtrusively in the balcony area.

Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is normally scheduled the night prior to the wedding and is under the direction of the officiating Pastor(s) or in coordination with the church’s authorized representative if the church Pastor is not present. Such rehearsals will normally take about an hour.

The couple is asked to encourage all participants to be at the rehearsal ON TIME so that arrangements may proceed smoothly. It is expected that all attendants and participants in the wedding service WILL BE AT THE REHEARSAL unless there is some unusual extenuating circumstance.

The wedding license and wedding fees for non-members must be in the hands of the minister at the time of the rehearsal. No wedding will ever be conducted without the license in hand.

Fees: For church members or their families there is no fee for the use of the church.

It is suggested that a token of appreciation be given to the following persons:

- *Church organist if his/her services are used: \$75-\$100 depending on the number of selections played and the preparation time required.
- *Custodian: \$100 is suggested when only the sanctuary is involved for the ceremony or \$200 when the sanctuary and fellowship hall are used for both wedding and reception.
- *Sound System Person if his/her services are used: \$50-75

For non-members who desire marriage in the church, the following fees will be charged:

Use of the Sanctuary	\$200.00
Use of the Sanctuary and Church Fellowship Hall	\$300.00
Use of the Chapel	\$100.00
Church Organist	\$100.00
Pastor.....	\$100.00
Sound Technician (if sound system for the sanctuary is needed)\$	75.00
Custodian (Sanctuary use only)	\$150.00
(Sanctuary and Church House use)	\$250.00
(Rehearsal--if needed for opening the building)	\$50.00

All fees are to be paid no later than the time of the rehearsal.

We are most appreciative of your understanding and cooperation with these guidelines. It is indeed a happy privilege for us to be of help to you in planning your wedding and we pray that God's richest blessings will be with you and the home you are establishing.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace,
both now and forever more! Amen!*