

Thinking *about*
getting MARRIED

Summerfield
UNITED **METHODIST** CHURCH

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Preface


It is always a delight for the church to share in the marriage of couples who are seeking to make a lifelong commitment to each other in the Name of Christ and in the Presence of God and God's People.

Throughout the planning process and the wedding itself, it is good to remember that the Marriage Service belongs to the Church, and is a liturgy in praise of God, seeking God's blessing upon the bridal couple and the assembled congregation.

A church wedding is, first of all, a worship service. In this worship, we praise God and we celebrate the gracious gifts which God grants to those who enter into marriage. The entire service is to give glory to God. This sense of praise to our Lord is the theme that is the foundation for all our wedding guidelines and practices here at Summerfield.

The Church Council of Summerfield United Methodist Church has adopted the following as a foundational statement for all weddings that will take place in this congregation or by its pastors in other locations:

“Resolved, that all marriage services should reflect our Methodist Christian understanding that they are services of worship. Thus, all texts, music and decorations will reflect our concern that the primary purpose of such a service is to give clear witness to what God has done, is doing now, and will continue to do for those who live in marriage. The marriage service will focus on our praise to God, our thanksgiving offered to God, and our receiving of God's gifts of grace and blessing.”

A close-up photograph of a bride in a white lace wedding dress, holding hands with a groom. The bride's arm and hand are visible, wearing a gold bracelet and a ring. The background is softly blurred, showing the groom's hand and the overall wedding scene.

What is marriage?

Marriage is a sacred covenant ordained by God for the honor and happiness of people. While marriage outside the church is recognized in society, the marriage ceremony conducted within the church becomes in a special way a public confession of the Christian faith.

A marriage conducted in the church is not merely a ceremony to honor two people in love, but is a public testimony to God's matchless love and providence at work in the couple's relationship. A Christian marriage is one where God is at the center of the relationship.

The church is not in the business of performing weddings. It is a community where marriages can be nurtured and grow in depth and maturity. Our desire is to inspire, encourage and equip couples to establish a Christian home and to enter into this sacred relationship not only committed to one another but with a firm commitment to Jesus Christ. The pastor has a sacred trust before God in this matter; therefore, the pastor reserves the right of exercising discretion as to whether or not she should marry a couple who apply for marriage at Summerfield Church.



The following guidelines and procedures are required at all weddings performed in this church.

Officiant:

The minister of this church coordinates all wedding services. Couples should make an appointment with the minister at least two months before their wedding for counseling and a review of the ceremony. All couples are encouraged to attend at least one of our Sunday morning church services that begin at 10:30 a.m., enabling them to experience the grace and beauty of God's presence in this sacred place. Membership at Summerfield is not a requirement to have a wedding here. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange the pre-marriage interview(s) with the Pastor at the earliest possible date. During the pre-marriage interview, the Pastor will share some perspective on the meaning of marriage and the marriage ceremony. You will find this to be an enjoyable and productive part of the wedding planning experience. The order of service will also be discussed during this interview. If you wish to provide a bulletin for your service, we suggest that you make arrangements with a local printer. Appropriate bulletin covers may be purchased through Cokesbury or Family Bookstores. The officiating Pastor should review the bulletin before it is printed. The church facilities are available for 10% of the total budget for the wedding, including all of the items below. There may be an additional expense for some counseling materials, musicians, and cleaning in some circumstances. If Holy Communion is celebrated within the marriage service, it must be open to the assembled congregation, and not limited to just the bride and groom, or the wedding party.





Marriage License:

A valid state marriage license must be obtained no less than 7 days and no more than 35 days prior to the wedding from the Milwaukee County Clerk in the Courthouse at 901 N. 9th St. room 105. Please bring the license to your wedding rehearsal.

Music:

The music director may perform music for weddings. Pre-recorded music is permitted. All music will reflect the spirit of Christian worship and be approved by the pastor. Couples will consult with the pastor at least two months in advance of the wedding ceremony. If a vocal or instrumental soloist is involved, a special rehearsal at the church will be scheduled at the discretion of the music director. Soloists are expected to have their music well-prepared. A maximum one hour rehearsal will be encouraged for each additional special piece of music. The bride and groom are responsible to provide any sheet music that they request for the organist, accompanists, or soloists – if they do not already have it. If you desire a vocalist or instrumental soloist, we will be glad to recommend some excellent ones to you. If desired, the congregation may be invited to join in the singing of hymns during the service.



Seating & Parking:

Weddings may be conducted in the main church Sanctuary, the courtyard, or any place where the arrangements conform to such practices as are in accord with Christian custom. The sanctuary seats approximately 250 people. Parking is available in Victor's parking lot (adjacent to the church property but cars must be gone by 4p.m.), at Metro Market (lower level-Juneau St. entrance – be a customer coming or going), and at Lincoln School (one block north of the church on Cass Street). An elevator is available for persons needing assistance.

Receptions:

The church Fellowship Hall is available for wedding receptions. Please check with the office for details and regulations. The bride and groom shall be responsible for any damage to the church property in excess of normal usage and wear, and for any excessive custodial services. If the reception is held at the church, it is the responsibility of the party preparing and serving the food to clean the kitchen and all equipment used. If you'd like recommendation on other facilities to rent in the Milwaukee area, we'd be happy to pass them along to you.

Receiving Lines:

Receiving lines may take place at the church. However, it is also proper etiquette after religious services to greet your guests at the place of your wedding reception. Rice, confetti, birdseed, or grain may not be thrown inside the church building. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to see that this is made known to the wedding party and guests.



Photographs:

This church respects the sacredness of God's presence during the wedding service and the desire to capture that for the future. Photographs are therefore permitted during the actual ceremony. However, during the ceremony flash photos are not permitted. Natural light photos may be taken from the balcony or the back of the sanctuary. Pictures may be taken immediately afterwards, in concert with the minister and your photographer. Any photographs taken before the ceremony should be completed 20 minutes before the wedding is to begin. Video cameras may be set up in the balcony and/or in the choir loft in the Sanctuary . Video cameras are not to be placed or held in the front of the church or in the center aisles at any time. A camera may be set up in front of a side aisle wall. The videographer must understand this prior to the wedding. If a video camera is set up in the choir loft, the operator should be seated during the service and not stand by the camera. The operator may step up to the camera to adjust it when the wedding party enters the chancel, but the operator must then sit down again for the rest of the service. Photography lighting is not permissible. One suggestion to save time and inconvenience to your guests, is to schedule all or most of your photo session before the wedding to avoid long delays between the service and reception.



Decorations:

Plans for flowers or other decorations must be discussed with the minister before final arrangements are made with a florist. Decorations must be simple and tasteful. If you have a flower girl and want her to toss petals, please be sure they are silk flowers or use an aisle runner (real flower petals stain the carpet immediately when stepped on). If desired, a runner may be supplied by your florist. Flower stands are available for your use. If you desire to use a kneeler for the wedding prayer, please advise the Pastor prior to the rehearsal. Decorations must be placed so as not to damage walls or chancel furnishings.

Smoking & Alcohol:

All areas of the church (inside) are smoke free. Use of any tobacco products or alcohol inside the building is strictly forbidden. Alcohol is not permitted anywhere on church property and the pastor may refuse to perform a ceremony if any of the participants are intoxicated. Please make sure your guests understand these rules and are respectful of them.

Rehearsal:

Rehearsal usually takes place on the afternoon or evening before the wedding, unless the ceremony is very small. The minister, organist and/or music director will be there to assist you. It usually takes no more than one hour. Prior to the rehearsal the couple shall furnish the pastor with a list of the wedding party. The wedding party should all be present and on time. Allow ample time for travel if guests are arriving from out of town and make sure they have directions to the church. NOTE: Please make sure all guests are respectful of the sacredness of the church and wear proper attire to the rehearsal. All fees are to be paid at the rehearsal (unless otherwise specified).



Adopted by Pastoral Staff and Council in March 2011
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