

Guidelines and Policies for the Celebration of Weddings

**First Church of Christ, Congregational
United Church of Christ
511 Amity Road, Bethany, CT 06524
203-393-3116 www.bethanyfirstchurch.org**

We are here to guide and assist you in making your marriage a truly sacred occasion in your lives. Marriage, according to tradition and ritual, is “instituted of God, regulated by the commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, to be held in honor among all humanity.” Your wedding will mean more to you, and to your families and friends, when careful concern is given to this holy occasion. Certain policies have been established by the Board of Deacons to accomplish that purpose and to assist you and your families as you prepare for your wedding.

Scheduling

The Pastor should be consulted first in scheduling the church for use. He/she will help you with your personal wishes concerning the wedding. Preferably three (but at least two) sessions for counseling should be arranged, and the date for the wedding set before any other plans are made.

No weddings are scheduled at our church during the week between Christmas and New Year’s or during Holy Week.

Officiating

Normally, the Pastor will officiate at all weddings. If a family desires another clergyperson to conduct the ceremony, the request should be made to the Pastor. It is his/her prerogative to extend an invitation to the other clergy.

The Pastor will meet with the wedding party for rehearsal prior to the ceremony itself. Every effort should be made to schedule the rehearsal at a time when every member of the wedding party can attend.

The marriage license (obtained from the Clerk of the Town in which one of the wedding parties resides) must be in the Pastor’s possession before the ceremony; it should be given to the Pastor at the rehearsal if not before. The church will provide you with a certificate of marriage.

Music

Music is an important part of a wedding ceremony and should be in keeping with the reverence observed in the House of the Lord. All music shall be approved by the Pastor and the organist. The church organist has the right of first refusal.

Guest organists must be approved by the music director, and should consult with him/her concerning use of the church for rehearsal.

The organist should be consulted by the bride and/or groom about musical selections well in advance of the wedding date. If a soloist is desired, arrangements should be made with the organist for adequate rehearsal time.

Decorations

It is the responsibility of the engaged couple to make arrangements with a florist for the wedding decorations. The church suggests simplicity, with a minimum of decorations. Ribbon or single floral arrangements may be used to mark pews. No nails or thumb tacks are to be used on the church woodwork. Masking tape may be used, but not cellophane or other adhesives.

Floral displays may be left for use the following Sunday (after consultation with the Pastor), but pew ribbons, candelabra, and other decorations should be removed from the Sanctuary immediately after the ceremony.

Delivery of flowers on the day of the wedding should be scheduled in advance with the Pastor.

In consideration of the wild birds that may be harmed by its use, it is requested that rice not be thrown on the outside church steps. Many couples have found bird seed to be an appropriate alternative.

Photographers

Please instruct the photographer and guests that photography is not allowed in the Sanctuary during the ceremony, but pictures may be taken during the processional and recessional. Videotaping is permitted, but the operator must stay in a fixed position in the balcony, not move around during the service, and not use artificial light. Many couples have the photographer take pictures before or after the actual ceremony.

Wedding Reception

If the church hall is desired for the reception, arrangements should be made through the church office. It is suggested that arrangements for a reception be made at least eight weeks prior to the date of the wedding.

If refreshments are served by a caterer, the wedding party shall be responsible for the use of the kitchen and equipment, and for damage or breakage. Tables and chairs from the Hall are not available for loan off the church grounds.

Alcoholic beverages may not be served on the church premises, and smoking is not allowed in church buildings.

Families planning large weddings should plan to engage a constable for directing traffic on Route 63.

Monetary Fees and Contributions

When one or both members of the wedding couple are active members* of this church, the following contributions are suggested:

<u>Use of Sanctuary</u>	<u>donation at the couple's discretion</u>
<u>Use of Hall</u>	<u>donation at the couple's discretion</u>
<u>Minister</u>	<u>donation at the couple's discretion</u>
<u>Organist</u>	<u>\$100 rehearsal</u>
	<u>\$200 wedding</u>
<u>Custodian</u>	<u>\$50/hr</u>
<u>Soloist</u>	<u>to be arranged individually</u>

There is no fee charged by the Pastor for church-related families. Any gift to the Pastor is a token of appreciation for time spent, including counseling sessions, rehearsal, and wedding ceremony.

When neither member of the wedding couple is an active member of this church, the following contributions are required:

<u>Use of Sanctuary</u>	<u>\$200</u>
<u>Use of Hall</u>	<u>\$200</u>
<u>Minister</u>	<u>\$400</u>
<u>Organist</u>	<u>\$100 rehearsal</u>
	<u>\$200 wedding</u>
<u>Custodian</u>	<u>\$50/hr</u>
<u>Soloist</u>	<u>to be arranged individually</u>

Waiver of these fees can be made by application to the Pastor. No one is denied for financial reasons.

Wedding Information Form and Other Notes

Both members of the couple are required to sign the enclosed wedding information form agreeing, that they understand and will comply with these guidelines. Reservations for the church will be considered firm when the signed

* Active church members are those who, per the Conference by-laws Article 1, Section 2, give of their time, talent, or treasure to the church. Membership privileges are extended to a member's immediate family, which shall include spouse, children and parents.

wedding information form is received by the church office. Any variations to this policy can be made only at the Pastor's discretion.