

GUIDELINES FOR WEDDINGS at Bethany United Methodist Church

Welcome to the church family called Bethany. It is the prayer and hope of the members and the pastors that your wedding day will be one of joy. What follows is an attempt to answer some of the typical questions asked and give some guidelines as you prepare for your wedding. We hope you will find this brochure helpful.

IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED?

In America, weddings are regulated by each of the states and are performed by religious and non-religious officials. United Methodist Church weddings therefore are performed by ordained or approved clergy acting as agents of the State of Wisconsin. We United Methodists understand a church wedding as the offering of a blessing on a marriage and the beginning of life-long pastoral and congregational care for a couple and their family. A church wedding is sacred and is to be encouraged.

Marriages in United Methodist churches are not for our members alone. All who are married in church are understood to be requesting religious oversight of their marriage. If this is not the couple's desire, they should appropriately seek a secular officiator for their marriage ceremony.

In an effort to serve our own congregation, priority is given to those persons who are members of Bethany UMC and their immediate families. Non-members and members are married at our church at the sole discretion of the pastors.

THE FIRST STEP: CONTACTING THE PASTOR

When you have decided on the date for your wedding, contact the pastor to confirm his/her availability and the availability of the church. The date may not be secured on our calendar until the pastor approves it.

The pastor will want to meet with you for preliminary discussions about your wedding. Both parties should plan to attend this first session. Discussion will include beginning pre-marriage counseling, the start of the ceremony planning, and generally a time to get much better acquainted with one another on the readiness for marriage. Concerns and issues can be raised for further conversations between the couple and the pastor.

Once the date and time of the wedding are agreed to and placed on the church calendar, that date and time belong to the couple and other wedding arrangements can be made with assurance. Bethany has never "bumped" a couple with a confirmed date. Sometimes when weddings are projected far into the future, it may not be possible to determine which pastor will officiate. This might be due to plans

for other church events which have not yet been finalized. If a commitment is made to the couple that they may have their wedding at Bethany, they can be assured that a pastor will be available to them and they will be given the name of that pastor as soon as possible. Most often it is possible to determine which pastor will officiate when the date is set.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

General Information

1. The Service of Marriage is a worship service and is offered by Bethany as a part of its ministry. Marriage is a sacred and holy event. The order of service will be based on the United Methodist "Service of Christian Marriage." (See pages 864-869 in the United Methodist Hymnal.)
2. While your wedding is very personal, it is also a matter of deep importance to the Christian Community, the Church. You are encouraged to bring your ideas concerning the service to the pastor for discussion. Together we will decide what will be included in your service. It is hoped the final wedding service will feel very much like "your" service. The involvement of other persons in the service, either lay persons or clergy, will only be with the officiating pastor's consent. In the case of clergy, the officiating pastor must agree to invite their participation.
3. The music for the service should be appropriate to the occasion. Information regarding wedding music, suggested hymns, and the names of organists is available upon request.
4. Recording the service (audio, video, or photographic) is permitted but should not detract from the religious emphasis of the service. Flash photography is often done during the processional and recessional, but not at other times in the service. The pastor will be happy to re-enact portions of the service for your photographer, upon your request. "Available light" photography has worked well from the balcony. Video cameras should be stationary during the service and located at the pastor's discretion. There are two video sound jacks which tap into the sound system to enhance recording the complete service.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING AND TESTING

A minimum of two face-to-face counseling sessions with the Bethany pastor chosen by the couple is required. These sessions explore the history of the relationship and strengths and weaknesses of the couple for marriage. The United Methodist's views of marriage and family are discussed. The final counseling session focuses on planning the details of the wedding service itself.

To assist in the thorough gathering of information, the couple is asked to meet with a professional counselor to take a basic premarital inventory (*Prepare*). Several local counselors are available to do this testing and names will be provided at the

first counseling session with the pastor. A fee (usually \$100 to \$150) is charged by the counselor. This is to be paid directly to the counselor. A formal report is written by the counselor and sent to the pastor. A release of information form will need to be completed with the counselor to share this confidential information. The counselor's *Prepare* report needs to be in the pastor's hands before the final pre-marital counseling session takes place.

WEDDING FEES

It is our belief that persons should compensate the church and the staff for their time in preparing and presiding for their wedding. If there are financial hardships, these concerns need to be raised with the pastor early in the counseling process. No person will be denied pastoral services for a wedding because of inability to pay.

Two standard fees are charged. Members pay \$650 and non-members \$700. These fees cover pastoral time, custodial services, and secretarial services. Use of the sanctuary, preparation rooms, and gathering areas is included. Preparation and plain paper copying of worship bulletins may be done by our office at no charge. The standard fee does not include candles but does include use of candelabra if desired.

Weddings performed at a place other than Bethany UMC will include a \$200 fee for pastoral services. Fees for use of other facilities need to be negotiated directly by the couple themselves.

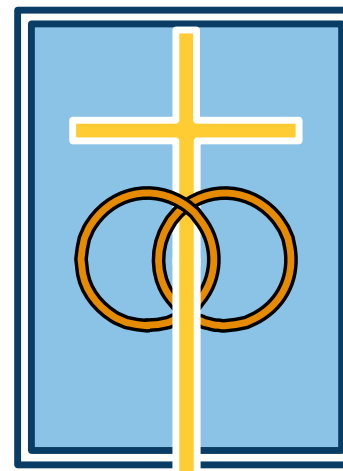
All fees are to be paid by check to Bethany UMC and marked "wedding fee." Payment is expected no later than at the wedding rehearsal.

Our standard fee does not cover the services of musicians and singers. The couple will need to negotiate these services and fees directly with the musicians. Payment is made directly to them. These fees also should be paid by the time of the rehearsal. To protect our musical instruments, only musicians approved by the pastors and music director of Bethany church will be permitted.

THE WEDDING LICENSE

The State of Wisconsin requires persons getting married to obtain a Wisconsin wedding license. This is done at the Office of a County Clerk. **The license should be brought to the church prior to the rehearsal.**

Wedding



Guidelines

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