

# A Guide to Weddings

*Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*☐

Colossians 3:14

## Welcome to Weddings at Christ Church

At Christ Church, we consider it a privilege to be part of the celebration of marriage. Our role in the wedding is to provide a loving and caring setting for the celebration of this holy covenant between you, as a couple and Christ.

The congregation of Christ Church congratulates you on your impending marriage and wishes you happiness in your new life together. We hope that your wedding will be a sacred and beautiful occasion, and that participation in Christ Church will be a part of your new relationship together.

The ministers and staff wish to extend every possible assistance to you so that your wedding will be a truly memorable, spiritual and meaningful celebration. This booklet is to help familiarize you and your family with the wedding policies of Christ Church. Please read through it carefully before scheduling your wedding. Any questions regarding policy in this booklet, or for more information, contact James Faith, Executive Director of Program Ministries, at 979-690-4673.

## The Marriage Covenant

The Service of Christian Marriage is both a joyful and sacred ritual in which a man and a woman vow before God their commitment to each other and their desire to be united by the Church in a new and lasting relationship with Christ as a partner.

## Receive God's Blessing

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.  
For if they fall, one will lift up the other;  
But woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.  
Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?  
And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one.  
A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

## SCHEDULING A WEDDING

### The Wedding Coordinator

Once you decide to have your wedding in our facility, you will be working with the church's wedding coordinator who will be your liaison with Christ Church. When the wedding date is confirmed, your coordinator will contact you. Your coordinator will be present, and will direct the rehearsal and facilitate the wedding. The fee for this service will be included in the sanctuary fee.

### Scheduling the Date and Time

Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays at 11:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Rehearsals are scheduled on Fridays at 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. Members may schedule a wedding up to 12 months in advance. A wedding is considered to be a Member Wedding if the bride or groom or one of their parents has been an active member of Christ Church for at least 12 months. Non-members may book a date/time which will be held when the reservation form and the \$100 deposit have been received. **For non-members, the wedding date and time cannot be guaranteed until 6 months prior to the wedding.** From the time of the booking until 6 months prior to the wedding date, if a current Christ Church member requests a date and time that conflicts with the non-member date and time then the non-member will be asked to select an alternative date and/or time. If no conflict occurs then the non-member wedding date and time will be guaranteed and the balance of the reservation fee is to be paid in full.

When you book your wedding you are actually booking 5 hours at Christ Church. Your Friday rehearsal will last one hour. On your wedding day, Saturday, the church is available to you for 2 hours before the wedding start time and for 2 hours for the service and photos afterwards. 1 ½ hours are reserved before the wedding for preparations and pre-wedding photography. At 30 minutes before the service, photography must conclude, wedding party members are to return to the preparation rooms for last minute preparations and the ushers and house party are to be in their places in the Narthex to greet and escort guests. Additional time may be requested for use of the preparation room and may be granted if the space is available.

No weddings are scheduled for the weekends including or immediately preceding or following: Holy Week, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, **Spring Break**, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas. Other weekends may also be unavailable at the discretion of the church.

A date is not considered to be confirmed until a reservation form is completed and a security deposit of \$100 is paid, and for non-members, no conflict above has occurred.

## WEDDING RESERVATION FEES

	Sanctuary	Chapel or Garden	Fellowship Hall
Member	\$1,000	call for pricing	\$550
Non-member	\$1,500	call for pricing	\$700
Deposit	\$100	\$100	\$100

The \$100 deposit is due with the signed reservation form. The deposit is not part of the reservation fee. The deposit will be returned after the wedding, except in the case of damage to the church property, extra cleaning or if the wedding is canceled less than 30 days prior to the scheduled date.

The full Reservation Fee is due 30 days prior to the wedding.

The Reservation Fee includes:

- The services of the church organist/pianist (Sanctuary, Chapel or Garden Weddings)
- The services of the wedding coordinator
- The services of the sound technician (Sanctuary, Chapel or Garden Weddings)
- Custodial services
- Facility usage/utilities
- Minister's Fee (for non-member wedding)

The Reservation Fee does not include a fee for the minister for member weddings. An honorarium is appreciated. The exact amount is left to the discretion of the couple. It is appropriate to bring cash or a check made out to the minister and brought to the rehearsal.

Should you desire the addition of a vocalist or instrumentalists, it is the couple's responsibility to procure these services. The organist can offer suggestions if needed.

## PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

### Premarital Counseling

A wedding is a brief ceremony that leads to a lifetime of marriage. Your future happiness as husband and wife is important to us. As stated in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, all couples are required to receive premarital counseling. Premarital counseling is intended to enrich your relationship and better equip you to deal with key relationship issues in healthy, positive ways. In counseling you will talk about the challenges that all couples face and learn to capitalize on your strengths and experiences. Common issues faced by every couple (finances, communication and conflict) are addressed.

### Meeting with the Minister

All couples are required to meet, at least once, with the officiating minister for a premarital conference to discuss both the wedding and marriage issues. The minister will advise the couple if they determine that additional meetings, prior to the wedding, are necessary. Typically there are three sessions with the minister.

### Officiating Minister

Guest ministers are welcome to preside over weddings, with approval of Christ Church's Senior Pastor. Assistance by a member of the church's clergy is required if the guest minister is not an ordained United Methodist minister.

### Marriage License

For weddings performed at this church, the marriage license may be obtained in any county in the state of Texas. A marriage license is not valid until 72 hours after the date of issue. Please give the marriage license to the wedding coordinator at the rehearsal. The church office will return the license to the County Clerk.

## THE WEDDING PARTY AND PARTICIPANTS

It is helpful for the bride to make a list of all members of the wedding party to give to the Wedding Coordinator. The list should be in order of how the wedding party will stand and how the family will sit. We encourage all wedding participants to attend the rehearsal.

### Escorts for the Seating of the Grandparents/Parents

We recommend that the escorts for the special seating be groomsmen, ushers, or a family member or friend. The escorts should not be asked to escort several people in a row but should alternate with other escorts if they are to seat multiple people. When escorting a couple, the escort walks with the lady on his arm and the gentleman follows behind. When escorting a gentleman, the escort simply walks beside the gentleman unless he requires support for which the escort would offer his arm. The groom may escort his mother. The father of the bride should not escort anyone except the bride.

### Readers

Wedding party members who are to read scripture selections, poems, or other appropriate items will be seated at the front of the Sanctuary throughout the wedding service and are encouraged to wear appropriate attire. We recommend that the readers not be required to have other responsibilities during the wedding service.

### Ushers

At least one usher is recommended for every 50 guests. You may include all or some of your groomsmen as ushers. The groom and best man should not be included.

### House Party

The members of the House Party often hand out the programs before the wedding and assist with the guest book (pages) by making sure that it is transported from the church to the reception. The House Party are encouraged to wear appropriate attire and may be seated prior to the beginning of the Wedding or may be included in the Special Seating just before the grandparents and parents are seated. The members of the House Party are not escorted but will process in pairs or single file.

### Children

Most often the children serving as Flower Girls or Ring Bearers process and take their place standing in front of the attendants. When the bride and groom move to the altar then the children will take their seats in the second or third row beside a parent or grandparent. Or, the children may process directly to the pew where they will sit with a parent or grandparent until it is time to recess behind the bride and groom. At the end of the service they will step into the aisle and recess immediately behind the bride and groom.

### Flower Girls

Flower girls may carry silk flowers secured in a basket, a pomander or a small nosegay but may only drop silk petals.

### Ring Bearers

The ring bearer may carry a pillow with "ceremonial" rings attached but may not carry the bride or groom's wedding rings. The Best Man and Maid of Honor should carry the rings and give them to the minister at the proper time.

# THE REHEARSAL AND WEDDING CEREMONY

## The Rehearsal

All wedding rehearsals are held on Friday afternoons and will last just about one hour. The entire wedding party should arrive 15 minutes before the assigned rehearsal start time so that the rehearsal can begin right on time.

The items to be brought to the rehearsal:

- The valid marriage license and the return envelope (if there is one)
- The honorarium for the minister
- The payment for the soloist
- The printed programs
- The guest book and pages and pens
- The Ring Bearer pillow

## The Wedding Ceremony

All weddings conducted at Christ Church follow “The Service of Christian Marriage II” (Traditional Service) or “The Service of Christian Marriage I” (Contemporary Service) found in the United Methodist Church Book of Worship. On occasion, alternative liturgies may be considered. Ministers will work with you to help you gain understanding of the vows, declaration and commitments contained in the services.

## Personalize Your Wedding

Your selections of music, scriptures and/or other readings, soloist, additional musicians, congregational hymns and inclusion of select cultural traditional can personalize your wedding. The minister, wedding coordinator and the organist can assist with these additions.

## Music

Your wedding is a service of worship and the music you choose is an important part of that experience. It is important to confirm all of your music with the organist before you draft your wedding program. In selecting music you need selections for seating of the parents/grandparents, procession of the wedding party, procession of the bride and the recessional. In addition to those four selections you may request that other songs be included in the prelude and postlude music. The organist fee is included in your sanctuary fee. If you choose to use your own musician approval must be granted by the Director of Music and you are responsible for that complementation.

## RESPECT FOR THE CHURCH

The church facilities are sacred space, a holy place set apart for worship and fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ. Please respect this space and graciously accept the directions of the minister and the wedding coordinator.

### Please Do

Refreshments are allowed in the preparation rooms as long as care is taken to protect the furnishings in these rooms. For your convenience, we suggest that all items be in disposable containers as the church custodians will remove the remaining items when the room is cleaned.

### Please Don't

Christ Church is a smoke-free, tobacco-free and alcohol-free environment. Alcoholic beverages and drugs of any kind are not permitted on the Christ UMC campus including in private car and buses hired by the wedding party.

The scattering of rice and birdseed, the throwing of streamers, fresh flower petals or any other items is not permitted in the church or on the church grounds. The Flower Girl may not drop fresh petals in the aisle, only silk. Wagons, carts and pets are not permitted.

### Services which are not available

Christ Church is not able to offer childcare for guests at weddings or rehearsal. Church Nursery rooms are not available for use during weddings or rehearsals. The Cry Room is available during the wedding ceremony.

Deliveries of wedding associated items should only be scheduled during the allowed time of the wedding.

### Responsibility for safekeeping of personal items

Christ UMC is a large facility and is open to the public. Be aware of your personal belongings at all times. Christ Church cannot be responsible for personal items left unattended.

We encourage you to remove your personal belongings from the preparation rooms prior to the service. We highly recommend that you assign someone to place the items out of sight in the trunk of someone's car.

### Floral Decorations

Christ Church encourages decorations that enhance the beauty of the church Sanctuary. We wish to focus on the appeal of the church setting and avoid decorations that de-emphasize the symbols in the church, or detract from the simple dignity and elegance that should characterize a wedding service.

- Church furnishings may not be moved. Church seasonal decorations may not be moved. No decoration may be used which will hide the worship symbols in the chancel, such as the cross, the Bible, Pulpit, or lectern. Tacks, pins, nails and glue may not be used to fasten decorations to the furniture, furnishings or building.
- Floral installation should be scheduled with the wedding coordinator. Florists are expected to clean up clipping and other debris from their preparations leaving the Sanctuary clean and ready for the wedding service.
- Floral removal should be scheduled for immediately following the service and photography. All flower arrangements, vases, candle stands and other decorations used in the service should be removed and the Church property must be left in the condition in which it was found. Flowers remaining after the wedding will be distributed or disposed of.



## Pew Markers

Pew bows with greenery or flowers may be used in the Sanctuary. The pew markers may be attached by ribbon to the pew ends. Pew decorations may not touch the floor or be so large as to interfere with the procession of the wedding party down the center aisle.

## Unity Candle/Cross

The church can provide a table for the Unity Candle or Unity Cross. The florist or bride is responsible for providing the candles or the cross.

## Candles

Christ Church encourages the use of battery operated candles or candles in hurricane shades or votive cups. The use of any candles or candelabras must be approved in advance. **No candles may be placed in the aisles or on any carpeted surface.** The florist is responsible for furnishing any other candles to be used.

## Photography/Videography

Photographs may be taken either before or after the wedding. Photographs must conclude 30 minutes before the start of the ceremony. No flash pictures are permitted during the ceremony. The photographer should not be a distraction during the ceremony. The bride should instruct the photographer to speak with the Wedding Coordinator before the service in order to understand where it is appropriate from where to take pictures.