

We at Saint John United Church of Christ want you to know how pleased we are that you are considering our church for your marriage ceremony. Marriages are very special services of worship for the couple, for their families and for their friends. Thus, the church is concerned with making sure that this special worship service which you are considering will be a significant moment in your lives as well as an appropriate service of worship for this church.

The Book of Worship of the United Church of Christ reminds us that...The essence of marriage is a covenanted commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the glad occasion on which two people unite as partners in the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one presiding acts as an official representative of the church and gives the marriage the church's blessing. The congregation joins in affirming the marriage and in offering support and thanksgiving for the new family.

To help you plan for your wedding and to know the traditions, requirements, and expectations of the church, we have prepared this guide for you. It is our joy to work together with you to make this special day a joyous one.

**How to begin:**

Download and submit the forms, call, or email the church office and indicate your interest in being married at the church. Return the completed and signed Building Use and Wedding Information Forms to the Church's Office Administrator. After it is received, you will be called by the Pastor to schedule an interview. All services held at our facility are considered extensions of our worshipping body, thus all weddings must be officiated by our clergy. If you wish to invite a visiting pastor to also be involved in your wedding, please let the Pastor know from the beginning.

You may ask the Office Administrator to "pencil-in" a tentative date for the rehearsal and wedding service on the master calendar of the church. This date remains tentative until after the couple has sent in their deposit, their application has been approved, and secured a schedule for their pre marital counseling sessions.

**Premarital counseling:**

Those desiring to be married at St. John United Church of Christ commit themselves to a series of premarital counseling sessions with the pastor. This typically entails (3) 1 hour sessions with the pastor, in which the time is split between planning and discussing details of the ceremony, personality and relationship survey, and conversations about the marriage relationship.

Please note: All arrangements are to be deemed tentative until the second interview in the series has been completed. The Pastor is the sole arbiter of whether or not a proposed or scheduled wedding will occur at St. John United Church of Christ, and will communicate any indications to the contrary to both parties involved immediately and directly.

**Expectations:**

A wedding at St. John United Church of Christ is a Christian service of worship. We presume you desire to be married in a church because you are a person of faith. The wedding is a time of praise, prayers, and invoking God's presence and blessing. Those not comfortable with a wedding in the context of a community of faith should request information from their town/city clerk about others in the state who can officiate at weddings.

Policies and procedures:

1. OBTAIN a) this booklet, b) the Wedding Application form, and c) the schedule of fees from the Office Administrator. Return the completed and signed Wedding Application to the Office Administrator.
2. THE PASTOR, upon receiving your application, will call you to schedule an interview. At that interview, dates will be discussed but remains tentative until the premarital counseling process has been completed.
3. THE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH WILL OFFICIATE AT ALL WEDDINGS that take place at St. John United Church of Christ. Guest clergy (e.g., relatives or friends who are Pastors) may be invited to take a part in the service, but only at the discretion of and invitation extended by the Pastor of St. John United Church of Christ.
4. REHEARSALS: All participants must be present and on time for the wedding rehearsal. Bring with you: the marriage license and any special items to be used. Allow one full hour for the rehearsal. Out of respect to staff members present, please inform all members of the wedding party that the rehearsal will start on time, even if members of the wedding party or family have not yet arrived.
5. PREVIEW THE PREMISE, if you are unfamiliar with our church and its facilities. The building is normally open 1-4pm on Mondays, 9a-12pm Tuesday-Thursday.

Photographers:

There will be ***no flash pictures taken during the ceremony, either by guests or by professional photographer.*** Your photographer is permitted to take flash pictures during the Processional and the Recessional, and may take available light photos during the as long as it is not disruptive to the service. Photographers (or others) may not walk around or be up front during the service. Please request your photographer to consult with the Pastor prior to the service.

Consider whether you would like most of your photographs taken before or after the ceremony. Some wedding parties favor taking photographs before the ceremony to insure that all members of the party are present and to avoid long delays between the ceremony and the reception.

#### Printed Order of the Service

A printed order of the marriage ceremony is not necessary, although it can be helpful to your family and friends as well as a keepsake. This may be done by you or can be done by the church office (for an additional fee).

#### Unity Candle

A unity candle adds beauty and meaning to a service, signifying how the two lives and lights become one. You are responsible for providing the unity candle, tapers, and holders.

#### Flowers and decorations:

Since the beauty of the Sanctuary is its antiquity and simplicity, floral and other decorations are best kept to a minimum. Decorations on the end of pews are not permitted. Please refer to the Building Use Policy for more information.

*Birdseed, Confetti & Rice:* Birdseed, confetti and rice may not be used inside the church buildings or elsewhere on the premises. Bubbles may be used outside only.

### Alcoholic beverages

Alcoholic beverages of any kind are prohibited on the church premises. Please note: The Pastor will not conduct a ceremony if it is apparent that either bride or groom has been drinking, no matter how small an amount may be reported to have been consumed.

### No Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any of our buildings.

Food and beverages are not permitted in the Sanctuary.

### **Planning Checklist:**

- Get and read this booklet, Application, and Fee Schedule from Office Administrator or church website.
- Return completed and signed application to Office Administrator.
- Meet with the Pastor (Pastor will call you after receipt of Application).
- Schedule follow-up sessions with Pastor.
- Set-up rehearsal (usually evening before wedding)
- Contact your florist. Explain to florist when and where to deliver all arrangements. Make sure anyone preparing decorations or flowers understands church wedding policies.
- Contact your photographer and inform them of church wedding policies prior to ceremony.
- Plan and schedule reception.
- Obtain marriage license(s). You are responsible for complying with all state laws in application for the license.
- Deliver marriage license to the Pastor at rehearsal.
- Take a deep breath, relax, and enjoy the beauty of this day in anticipation of your new life together!