



A STATEMENT CONCERNING MARRIAGE AND OUR WEDDING POLICY

"God hath joined together"

First United Methodist Church
Pottstown, PA

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is the celebration of the arrival at a point in the lives of two individuals at which they decide to proclaim to society their desire to formally establish a marital union. Marriages does not begin (excepting the strictly legal aspects) with the vows of a civil or religious rite; rather, it is a developmental relational process. It is a process of union which begins with mutual acceptance in dating and continues beyond vow-taking in a growing understanding and interdependence.

Should a couple decide to proclaim their marriage in a religious rite, it should be clearly understood that vows do not magically make a marriage. The church's rite provides the couple an opportunity to witness to the community their desire to enter into a responsible union and to ask the church's recognition, response, and participation. In fact, it is the man and woman who are the "ministers" in the Service of Marriage. The clergyperson (apart from his office as a servant of the state) is a representative "witness" who has been empowered, through his office, to bestow the church's blessing on the marriage; he does not, contrary to popular opinion, "marry" the couple.

A man and woman who decide to proclaim their marriage in Christian rite have the exciting possibility of doing this in the context of the corporate worship of Almighty God.

DIVORCED PERSONS

We recognize the sincerity and reasoning of other denominations whose clergy refuse to marry persons who have been divorced. In some cases persons who have been refused the rites of marriage by one of these denominations will come to a United Methodist church. We do not feel that it is our purpose to keep the consciences of non-Methodist pastors clear; however, we base our decisions in these matters on the basis of now and the future rather than the past. We concur with the United Methodist position that divorce in itself is not sufficient reason to prohibit marriage.

However, it is to be understood that the minister will solemnize the marriage of a divorced person only when he is satisfied by careful counseling that (1) the divorced person is sufficiently aware of the

factors leading to the failure of the previous marriage, (2) the divorced person is sincerely preparing to make the proposed marriage truly Christian, and (3) sufficient time has elapsed between the divorce and the contemplated marriage for adequate preparation and counseling.

WHY A CHRISTIAN WEDDING

Since there are other legal and accepted ways of becoming married, a church is justified only when one or both persons are Christian church members and desire a service of worship. Non-Christians or those Christian couples who are determined to have a secular wedding (one with overemphasis on romantic, sentimental music, "impressive" decorations, flowers and clothing, no congregational participation, etc.) should consider renting a suitable hall and having a civil wedding. Since the vows are explicitly Christian vows, it would be a contradiction for a person to say "through the church of Jesus Christ our Lord," or "in the name of Jesus Christ" - openly identifying with Jesus Christ and the Church - if the person had not made a public commitment to the Christian faith.

SUGGESTIONS & REQUIREMENTS FOR CHURCH WEDDINGS

The wedding or marriage is both a social and religious event. It is the duty of the pastor to prevent social extravagances from obscuring the religious significance of the service. The Discipline of the United Methodist church requires the pastor to satisfy himself through interview and counseling as to the propriety of the marriage. The decision to perform a wedding shall be the right and responsibility of the pastor. Above all, the pastor must point out to the participants the fact that the wedding is a service of worship conducted in the presence of God. To aid the pastor in his task, the following standards are adopted:

- (1) The wedding service shall take place at the chancel of the church or other approved location.
- (2) The pastor shall be advised as early as possible when a couple is contemplating marriage. The date and hour of the service as well as the rehearsal should be set at the earliest possible moment to insure the necessary time and facilities can be reserved on the church calendar:

- a. It is expected that the pastor's services will be requested at least three months in advance of the proposed wedding day.
- b. The pastor is enjoined diligently to instruct those requesting his offices for their prospective marriage in the Christian significance of the holy estate into which they seek to enter. At the least, 2 -3 premarital sessions (1-2 hours in length) shall take place between the pastor and the couple to be married. The exact number of sessions will be worked out with the couple after the initial interview. Each couple is expected as often as required by the pastor. This will give time for reviewing with the couple the meaning of marriage, concerns of adjustment in the realms of growth together, finances, in-laws, sex, spiritual growth, and the relation of home and Church, etc.
- c. The pastor or his designated stand-in shall normally officiate at all Church weddings unless other arrangements have been approved by the pastor.
- d. The pastor would like the opportunity to be helpful in every way.

(3) All arrangements pertaining to the Service of Marriage shall be made in full consultation with the pastor.

- a. Excessive or extravagant floral displays shall be discouraged.
- b. The usual proprieties with regard to floral displays shall be observed. For instance, flowers shall not obscure, be higher than, nor detract from the cross. The altar must never be hidden behind a bank of flowers or

greenery. No flowers are permitted on the altar except two moderate size bouquets.

- c. Pew ribbons, white aisle runner, or aisle candles are not provided by the church.
- d. Music shall be chosen in consultation with the minister and organist, keeping in mind that the wedding is a service of worship.

(4) The service shall be developed through the guidance of the pastor working with the couple. It will be based on the service as found in The United Methodist Hymnal with the necessary additions to make it a complete worship service.

- a. Appropriate scripture selections.
- b. The congregational nature of the Lord's Prayer shall be preserved.
- c. Generally other items that may be included: a call to worship, various hymns, an invocation, a confession, an affirmation of love, a brief meditation, possible responsive readings, declaration of marriage, etc.
- d. See copies of various sample orders of worship available in the pastor's office.

(5) The congregation's established policy concerning fees for the pastor, organist, sexton, and the use of the building is found at the end of this document.

(6) The regular organist shall play for wedding held in the church unless other arrangements are made that are acceptable to church policy. This generally means that a guest organist may be used if approved by the church organist. Instruments other than the organ or with the organ may be used where appropriate.

(7) When the Sacrament of Holy Communion is requested,

this service shall be provided at a time other than the service of marriage unless the whole congregation is invited to partake.

(8) The rehearsal will be used for instruction of the entire wedding party in the meaning of the wedding service in addition to rehearsal of the mechanics of the service.

(9) The marriage license and any fees must be in the pastor's hands one week before the wedding can take place. Embarrassment will be avoided if this is accomplished as requested.

- a. In preparation for this sacred service, the pastor will begin the rehearsal with prayer. It is expected that all participants in the rehearsal and service will conduct themselves in a manner that reflects respect for all concerned.
- b. Immediately prior to both the rehearsal and wedding, no one in the wedding party is to consume any alcoholic beverages, etc. The bride and groom are obligated to make this rule known to the wedding party.

(10) The use of a social director or professional consultant is unnecessary and the practice is to be discouraged.

(11) The minister shall instruct the photographers, video persons, etc., as to acceptable activity during the service:

- a. Flash pictures may be taken during the processional and one during the recessional.
- b. No other flash photographs may be taken during the actual service.
- c. The wedding party may return to the chancel after the service for posed pictures.

The Pastor has final authority and may use his discretion in applying the foregoing suggestion, rules, and fees.

God bless the Bride and Groom. Let us help you have a happy and blessed wedding day and a life together of Christian love and understanding.

FEE SCHEDULE

A schedule of fees has been established for the use of the church and to compensate the lay staff for their additional work.

	<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>NON-MEMBERS</u>
Pastoral services	No Charge	\$300.00
Church organist (planning & rehearsal) (additional \$50.00 if working with soloist)	\$150.00	\$200.00
Sexton	\$75.00	\$100.00
Use of church	No Charge	\$150.00
Use of hall for reception	No Charge	\$150.00

WEDDING ITEMS PROVIDED AT COST

Wedding bulletins (per 100).....	\$15.00
Time and supplies to do wedding bulletins.....	\$30.00

WEDDING NOTES

Payment of fees should be placed in marked, sealed envelopes and brought to the church office on the Monday prior to the wedding. This will be unsealed settled after work has been completed.

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