

## **WEDDINGS AT FIRST & CENTRAL**

### **PREFACE ON MARRIAGE**

In Baptism, each Christian is claimed in the covenant of God's faithful love. Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community. In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.

A wedding is a service of worship where God is glorified, the good news of Jesus Christ is proclaimed, marriage vows are made, and prayers are offered for the couple, the community, and the world.

Couples whose lives have been shaped by the worship life of the church may choose to make their vows around pulpit, font, and table, in response to these central means of grace. Since Christians may worship anywhere, however, marriage vows may be made and witnessed in any place. A Christian wedding includes scripture and may also include reminders of Baptism and the celebration of Communion.

The opening of the wedding service serves to welcome people and to frame the occasion, offering a Christian view of marriage. A couple may enter the worship space together, separately, escorted by family, or accompanied by friends.

Because Christians understand marriage as one area of life in which people live out their faith, a Christian (or interfaith) marriage service includes the reading of scripture. In so doing, it links a couple's story to the story of God and God's people. A sermon on one or more passages of scripture may be preached and is best understood as a proclamation of the Word to all who are gathered, not only the couple. Vow making is the central act of a wedding. When both members of a couple are Christian, they may choose to make their vows at the font, as marriage is one way in which Christians live out their baptism. While the two people marrying are the primary actors, the gathered congregation also plays an important part in witnessing the vows. A wedding, then, is a significant time in the life of two people and also the community.

When the assembly prays for a couple, we declare the faithfulness of God, give thanks for the grace of Jesus Christ, and invoke the power of the Holy Spirit to uphold and bless the marriage.

A couple may opt to celebrate Communion as part of the wedding service. If so, an invitation must be extended to all Christians who are present, reflecting our understanding of the Lord's Supper as a meal of the community and not just of one or two individuals.

Music may be sung or played at various times throughout the service. Normally a couple will consult with the presider and church musician to choose music that is worshipful and especially fitting for the occasion.

In preparation for the marriage service, the minister asked to lead the service will meet with the couple to discuss:

- the nature of the Christian commitment, ensuring that at least one is a professing Christian
- the legal requirements of the state
- the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage
- the nature and form of the marriage service
- the vows and commitments they will be asked to make
- the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship
- the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist the couple in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

If, after discussion with the couple, the minister is convinced that the level of commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding is so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the minister will assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony. In making this decision, the minister may seek the counsel of the Session, First & Central's governing body.

## **POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

### **A. Pre-Marriage Counseling**

1. Pre-marriage counseling must be arranged with the Pastor performing the ceremony. Ordinarily, this counseling will include at least three meetings with the couple. Therefore, arrangements should be made at least three months prior to the day of the wedding.
2. Counseling provides an opportunity for the Pastor and the couple to become better acquainted. It is also an important time for the couple to discuss with the Pastor many of the issues and concerns facing married couples in our day. During these times of sharing, areas discussed will include: plans and goals, mutual support and responsibilities, time and financial planning, family relationships, sexual relationship, adjusting to married life, and the role of religion and faith in marriage.
3. It is the couple's responsibility to make themselves available for this counseling.

## B. Scheduling

1. The date and time of both the wedding and the rehearsal, if needed, must be set in consultation with the Pastor.
2. It is expected that First & Central clergy and staff will perform all marriage ceremonies.
3. First & Central welcomes the participation of additional clergy. However, this must be cleared with the Pastor before any invitation is extended.
4. Because a wedding is a service of worship, church facilities are not available for weddings that do not involve First & Central clergy and staff.

## C. Music

1. All music-related arrangements must be made through First & Central's Minister of Music. The couple is responsible for contacting the Minister of Music as soon as possible after the wedding date has been set in order to schedule a consultation related to music for the wedding.
2. Ordinarily, First & Central's Minister of Music will provide organ music for weddings. If other musicians (e.g., vocal soloist(s), trumpeter) are desired, they must be approved by and arranged for by the Minister of Music. Other musicians should not be invited until he/she has been consulted. The Minister of Music will coordinate rehearsal times with any additional musicians.
3. In selecting music for the wedding, it should be kept in mind that ceremony is a service of worship.

## D. Photography

1. Flash photography is not permitted during the wedding service. The Pastor will be glad to remain after the service for posed photographs. Non-flash photographs during the service may be permitted if arranged for with the pastor.
2. If there is a designated wedding photographer, either professional or volunteer, she/he must remain at the rear of the sanctuary or chapel behind the last person in the congregation or in the balcony of the sanctuary at all times. The photographer should plan to meet with the Pastor briefly before the ceremony to review these ground rules.

3. If video recording is desired, the camera and all other equipment must be placed in the balcony at the rear of the sanctuary. A hand-held camera may be used at the rear of the sanctuary or chapel behind the last person in the congregation. A fixed, unstaffed camera may be set up in the choir area to focus on the couple. Additional lighting is not permitted.
4. Photographers and videographers must stay out of the aisles and behind the congregation at all times.

E. Flowers

1. Simplicity is encouraged. The use of elaborate or excessive decoration is strongly discouraged. The use of tape or any other adhesive to attach flowers and/or other decorations to any surface is not permitted.
2. Flowers may not be placed on the communion table in the sanctuary. Ordinarily arrangements are placed on two flower stands in the sanctuary or one stand in the chapel.

F. Candles

1. Pew candles are available for use along the center aisle.
2. All candles will be provided by the church. (See fees section)

G. Rehearsal

The rehearsal is intended to ensure that the members of the wedding party understand the flow of the ceremony, have clarified any questions regarding individual roles and responsibilities in the service, that the procession and recession are properly ordered, and that the ushers/greeters understand their responsibilities.

**Please note that the Pastor performing the ceremony will direct the rehearsal. Direction by wedding consultants/directors is not permitted.**

## H. Miscellaneous

1. The marriage license must be brought to the church office **at least one week prior** to the wedding date.
2. Weddings at First & Central always begin on time; therefore the wedding party should plan to arrive at the church no less than thirty minutes prior. Facilities are available for Bride(s) and Groom(s) to dress or otherwise prepare for the ceremony.
3. Throwing rice, birdseed, rose petals, confetti, or other items is not permitted either inside or outside the church building.
4. For safety reasons, neither aisle runners nor luminaries (candles in bags lining the walk and/or stairs) are permitted.
5. First & Central is not responsible for any articles left behind.
6. All First & Central facilities are smoke- and alcohol-free. Smoking and the possession/consumption of alcohol is prohibited everywhere in the building and on its grounds. The possession and use of any illegal drug or weapon—licensed or not—is also prohibited in the building and on its grounds. Violation of any of these rules may lead to removal of the offending person(s) and possible termination of the event.
7. The building will be open and available sixty minutes prior to the scheduled wedding time. Arrangements for earlier/additional access must be agree to in advance and require additional payment of twenty dollars per hour for custodial coverage.

## I. Facilities for Reception

1. Memorial Hall (located beneath the sanctuary, capacity 200) may be reserved for wedding receptions.
2. The church's kitchen may be used by caterers for the serving (not cooking) of food for the reception. In such a case, the caterer must provide all kitchenware needed and must leave the facility as it was found.
3. Access to Memorial Hall and/or the kitchen on other than the wedding day may be arranged and may require an additional fee as discussed above.

**FEES**

**A. Members of the Congregation**

**At least one member of the couple must be an actively participating member of First & Central for at least one year prior to the initial wedding inquiry, or, be a baptized Christian and the child or grandchild of a current actively participating member.**

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|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Sanctuary or Chapel:                              | no charge                           |   |
| 2. Custodian:  | \$200.00                            | Rehearsal and Wedding   |
| 3. Ceremony Coordinator:                             | \$200.00                            | Rehearsal and Wedding   |
| 4. Organist:   | \$200.00<br>\$30.00                 | Wedding<br>additional fee for each<br>rehearsal with soloists or<br>other musicians |
| 5. Soloist:  | \$200.00<br>(if arranged by Church) |   |
| 6. Trumpeter:  | \$250.00                            |   |
| 7. Pastor:   | Honorarium at member's discretion   |   |
| 8. Use of the DuVal Room,<br>Memorial Hall, Kitchen: | no charge                           |   |
| 9. Candles:  | \$50.00                             |   |

Please note that membership status is determined at the time of the initial wedding inquiry. Note also that any wedding held on or adjacent to a holiday (for example, but not limited to, Christmas, New Year's Eve/Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Fourth of July) will be subject to a \$750 premium.

## **B. Non-Member**

Weddings for non-member couples are available for a set fee of \$3,000. The package includes the following:

1. Sanctuary
2. Pastor
3. Organist
4. Soloist
5. Trumpeter
6. Custodian
7. Ceremony Coordinator
8. Candles

Please note that membership status is determined at the time of the initial wedding inquiry. Note also that any wedding held on or adjacent to a holiday (for example, but not limited to, Christmas, New Year's Eve/Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Fourth of July) will be subject to a \$750 premium.

## **C. Payment of Fees**

1. A non-refundable payment of one half the total cost of the wedding package is due at the time wedding date(s) are placed on the church calendar. No date will be held until payment is received.
2. Payment of all fees not covered by the deposit discussed above must be made in full at least one month prior to the service.
3. See the church website or the church office for a wedding application document.