

St. John United Methodist Church, Scott Depot, WV

Wedding Guidelines and Procedures

Your wedding will be one of the most sacred occasions in your life. You are coming together to establish a new home where the Lord will continue to show His love, grace, and purposes. In Christian marriage, you enter into a covenant which goes beyond the contractual arrangement that the state of West Virginia recognizes.

Our Hebrew-Christian tradition of *covenant* contains all the elements of a contract; drawing together, making an agreement, striking a bargain, etc. But a *covenant* contains more.

There is not only the legal, but also the sacred. Covenant marriage has an underlying belief that there is a God who is personal and who is involved in the affairs of humankind. Covenant marriage is more than an idea about God, but an act of God whereby God commits God's self to the marriage. We appeal to God for help, knowing that the commitment of marriage is incredibly difficult, as well as joy unspeakable. We recognize that it is God who first thought of marriage and established it for our welfare and happiness.

The marriage covenant is to be a visual reminder to a non-Christian (or post Christian) world of God's covenant with God's people. Covenant marriage also says that in obedience to God's call, we pledge our trust to one other human being.

The family of St. John United Methodist Church congratulates you and assures you of our continued prayers that your wedding shall be just what you want it to be, and that your life together as husband and wife will be happy and blessed.

1. Who may be married at St. John United Methodist Church?

- A. We encourage couples to be married in this church when either the bride or groom is a participating member of this church.
- B. Consequently, we encourage persons to be married in their own church. St. John is unable at this time to offer marriage services to others in the community. However, when circumstances make it impractical for a couple who are not members of St. John to be married in their home church, the pastor at his/her discretion, may make this church available.
- C. Recognizing the sin that fractures human relationships as well as the gracious work of a forgiving and reconciling God, persons who have experienced divorce are encouraged to be married in St. John Church.

2. In The United Methodist Church the wedding is the responsibility of the Pastor.

- A. No wedding shall be scheduled or performed without previous approval and/or counseling with the Pastor of St. John.
- B. Weddings are to be scheduled at least three months in advance.
- C. The couple may meet with the Pastor for premarital preparation. This begins with a survey completed on-line and discussed with the Pastor in one or more follow-up sessions. This preparation should begin as early as possible, preferably **before** a wedding date is set.
- D. Weddings on Sundays and Christmas Week will be by special permission only. Weddings during Holy Week (*the week before and including Easter*) and the week of The West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (*usually from Wednesday through Sunday of mid-June*) will not be considered except in special circumstances.
- E. If a pastor other than the appointed pastor of St. John is to participate in the Service of Christian Marriage, approval must first be obtained from the pastor of St. John and an invitation will be extended from the church office.
- F. Couples who are living together are requested to find separate housing upon entering premarital preparation. For The United Methodist Church such a lifestyle is incompatible with Christian teaching scripturally, historically, and theologically.

G. The preceding guidelines allow St. John United Methodist Church and the Pastor to remain faithful to their calling and, therefore, are not designed to be punitive, judgmental, or restrictive. The Pastor is not a justice of the peace and the church is not a wedding chapel. We are called by God to introduce people to Jesus, growing as disciples together.

- H. The wedding will be a Christian service, though this will still provide the couple with a high degree of flexibility and creativity. The official service of The United Methodist Church is the service that in most cases will be used. It can be found on pages 864-869 in The United Methodist Hymnal, or the church office will be happy to provide you with a copy of this service.

3. Decorations and Church Furnishings

- A. Experience has shown us that decorations in the Sanctuary must be kept simple. We discourage excessive use of flowers. The best rule of thumb: "Less is more."
- B. No flowers or decorations shall be attached directly to church furnishings or walls with tacks or defacing tape. Any candles provided by the florist or the couple must be dripless. All personal or rented items must be removed after the wedding.
- C. Church furnishings may not be moved without the permission of the Pastor. This includes but is not limited to the communion table, choir chairs, pulpit and musical instruments.

4. Photographs and Audio-visual Recordings

- A. Flash photography during the ceremony is prohibited, although photographs taken during the processional and as the couple leaves during the recessional are permitted. Most professional as well as amateur photographers use nonflash methods.
- B. Wedding photographs are encouraged to be taken *before* the ceremony for a number of practical reasons (i.e., courtesy to wedding guests who will otherwise be waiting, appearance of the wedding party, etc.). However, if necessary when the service is concluded, the wedding party may return to the sanctuary for photographs.
- C. Video taping of the service may be done only from a stationary and discrete position either from the balcony or the front of the sanctuary.

5. Dressing at the Church

- A. Members of the wedding party may use the church facilities for dressing on the day of the service. Use is limited to the rooms supplied. Smoking and alcoholic beverages are expressly forbidden.
- B. The wedding party must be responsible for removing all articles of apparel, boxes, and other personal items including any beverage and food containers from these areas immediately following the wedding (or after the reception if this is held in the church fellowship hall).
- C. It is advised that all possessions and valuables be safely secured during the time of the wedding ceremony. It should be understood that St. John United Methodist Church cannot be held responsible for any lost or stolen items.

6. Wedding Receptions at the Church

- A. Fellowship Hall is available for wedding receptions when not previously reserved.
- B. The church is not responsible for reception arrangements unless a church member, circle, or church group has undertaken this responsibility for the couple.
- C. It is the policy of The United Methodist Church “to affirm our long standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God’s liberating and redeeming love for all persons” (para. 72-I, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 1992). Therefore, no alcoholic beverages shall be served on church property.
- D. It is the position of The United Methodist Church to “recommend total abstinence from the use of tobacco’ (para. 72-J, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 1992). Therefore, no tobacco products shall be allowed on church property.
- E. No rice, birdseed, or confetti is to be used in the church or on the walkways of the church.

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