

The First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC

81 High St.,

Suffield, Connecticut

Phone: (860) 668-7223 Fax: (860) 668-1429

E-Mail: office@firstchurchsuffield.org

Website: www.firstchurchsuffield.org

Senior Pastor

Minister of Music

Administrative Secretary

Event Coordinator

The Rev. Bridget Fidler

Brian Parks

Bonnie K. Yosky

Sue Mayne

Lynne Cigal

*Church Office Hours: Weekdays, 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
(June-August summer hours: 9 a.m. - 12 noon)*

Congratulations!

The Staff and congregation of First Church rejoice with you in your decision to get married. This brochure contains information that will help you in planning the many facets of a religious wedding service at this church.

Though we look forward to working closely with you in the creation of this special ceremony, please keep in mind that you hold a great deal of responsibility in this process. The couple is responsible for contacting and meeting with the pastor and musicians, arranging for programs when used, meeting deadlines for payments, arranging vendor access with the office when needed, and so forth in a timely manner. Answers to frequently asked questions can be found in this brochure and we are available as listed above to help with other concerns.

Care of the Building

It is expected that all the facilities of the church will be given careful use and respect by the wedding party and guests. No rice, confetti, or birdseed may be thrown inside or outside the church. No smoking is allowed inside the church building.

Behavior

We celebrate with you and your family and friends on the day of your wedding. However, we ask that wedding participants refrain from drinking alcoholic beverages before or during the ceremony.

Legal Documents

The couple must have a marriage license issued within a 65-day period of the wedding by the Town Clerk in the town that the ceremony is being performed. The license must be brought to the wedding rehearsal, or, if there is no rehearsal, to the church office the day before the wedding. The minister will give the couple a Certificate of Marriage following the ceremony.

Fees

The following fee schedule applies to weddings at First Church. For active church members or their children, there is no fee for the use of the Sanctuary or Chapel for a wedding. When neither the bride, groom, nor their parents are active members, a Sanctuary or Chapel use fee must be paid when the date is confirmed with the Pastor. It is refundable only until 6 months before the scheduled date of the wedding. All other fees are payable no later than the wedding rehearsal.

Payable to:

- Officiating Pastor Clergy honorarium
 - Members: \$300.00
 - Non-Members: \$400.00
- (Visiting ministers should be reimbursed directly)

(see page 7 for additional fees)

Church Decorations continued

Two candles are regularly provided on the communion table. A Unity candle stand is available but Unity candles themselves are the responsibility of the couple.

Wedding Programs

Couples may choose to have printed programs for their wedding, including the order of the service and the names of the bridal party and other participants. The minister will work with the couple to prepare a program if used. These may be done by a printer*, or in the church office for a fee. As there are many options for paper, design, and layout, couples should make initial choices with the printer or office 2-3 months before the wedding so materials can be ordered.

* Please note that if programs are printed outside the church office, the final draft should be coordinated with the officiating pastor.

Wedding Directors

Occasionally, couples engage the services of a wedding director to assist them in their planning. Wedding directors are welcome at the church, with the understanding that the wedding service itself is under the direction of the church staff.

Photography

Because the wedding is a service of worship, we request that professional photography taken during the service be done by professionals. This prevents the enormous distraction of having someone moving in the aisles during a sacred ceremony.

Videotaping is also allowed, if done discreetly and with the prior knowledge of the minister.

Being Married In a Church

Historically in our society, weddings have taken place in churches because Christians have believed that marriage is a sacred covenant between a man and a woman, one which is appropriately solemnized and celebrated in a place of worship. A Christian marriage ceremony is one in which God is understood to be present and active, blessing the union of husband and wife. It includes prayers, readings from Scripture, and other elements of the traditions of the Church. It is a service of worship presided over by an ordained minister, with a tone of reverence, spirituality, and joy.

Therefore, a wedding that takes place in a church sanctuary is different from one which takes place elsewhere. The church is not just a building that happens to be suitable for the occasion, but a powerful symbol of a spiritual commitment and of religious traditions. The appropriate questions to be asked when a couple wishes to be married in the church do not have to do with size, location, convenience, or aesthetic appeal, but with the reality for that couple of the spiritual dimension of the marriage covenant.

Generally, it is appropriate that a couple be married in their “home church,” that is, where one or both worship. If neither attends any church, there may be circumstances when it would be appropriate for them to be married at First Church. This is discussed and explored with the minister during an initial meeting.

Reserving the Church

Both the sanctuary and the smaller chapel are available for weddings at First Church. When a couple first calls the church regarding their wedding plans, a note is made of the tentative date on the church calendar.

NO DATE IS FIRM UNTIL CONFIRMED
BY THE CHURCH OFFICE AND THE PASTOR

There are several dates annually when weddings may not be scheduled, due to the fact that the church facilities are in use for other events. Prospective brides and grooms will be informed about these dates.

The Person Who Officiates

Usually, the pastor of the church where the wedding is held will officiate at the ceremony. Should that person be unavailable on a particular date, he/she will arrange for another pastor.

Sometimes, a couple wishes to invite another minister to officiate at their wedding or participate with the host pastor. This is perfectly acceptable, *as long as the church's own pastor has first been contacted and is the person to extend the invitation to the guest minister.* Any pre-marital counseling sessions normally take place with the person who officiates.

If there is a visiting clergy performing the ceremony, a church representative must be present to represent the church at these weddings.

Meeting with the Minister

A couple normally meets with the minister two – three times prior to the wedding. These meetings are for purposes of getting acquainted, discussing the marital relationship, and planning the ceremony itself.

About the Wedding Service

As noted above, a wedding ceremony is a religious service of worship, and will be crafted as such. During the planning meetings, the minister will discuss with the couple the basic elements of the service and possible modifications. Couples take an active part in the shaping of their wedding service, thinking carefully about the choice of readings, the wording of their wedding vows, etc. The service typically lasts about fifteen to twenty minutes.

Music

As with Christian worship generally, music plays a very significant role in the wedding service. At First Church, several guidelines pertain:

- In addition to organ or piano music, the options include other instrumental or vocal music. Sung music may occur both before and during the ceremony.
- The use of the church organ is overseen by our Minister of Music, who will either play for the wedding or will hire another organist. The Minister of Music has right of first refusal.
- The Minister of Music or other organist will assist a couple with musical selections for the service.
- A couple may choose their own soloist, or work with the Minister of Music who can suggest a number of excellent soloists.
- * The organist and soloist do not normally attend the wedding rehearsal.

Rehearsals

A rehearsal is held one or two evenings before the wedding, for the purpose of “walking through” the ceremony and finalizing details.

Church Decoration

Couples may bring in a variety of floral decoration for the wedding, including pew markers. The church will normally be open 1 hour before the wedding for the delivery of flowers. Before the wedding, florists are also welcome to visit the building during church office hours if they choose. After the ceremony, flowers may be taken by the bridal party, or left for the church's use.

An aisle runner may be used in the ceremony. These are obtained from florists. (Note: the center aisle at First Church is approximately 60 feet long.)

Fees continued

- First Church of Christ:
 - Sanctuary use (non-members only) \$250.00
 - or
 - Chapel use (non-members only) \$100.00
 - Programs (optional) \$ 25.00 plus cost of chosen cover
- Organist \$300.00
- Event Coordinator \$100.00

Soloists determine their own fees and are reimbursed directly.

The Event Sexton will assist the minister with the rehearsal and wedding day coordination. The sexton is also responsible for meeting the florist, musicians, or others who need to arrive early for set-up. The sexton also cleans the church sanctuary before and after the wedding.

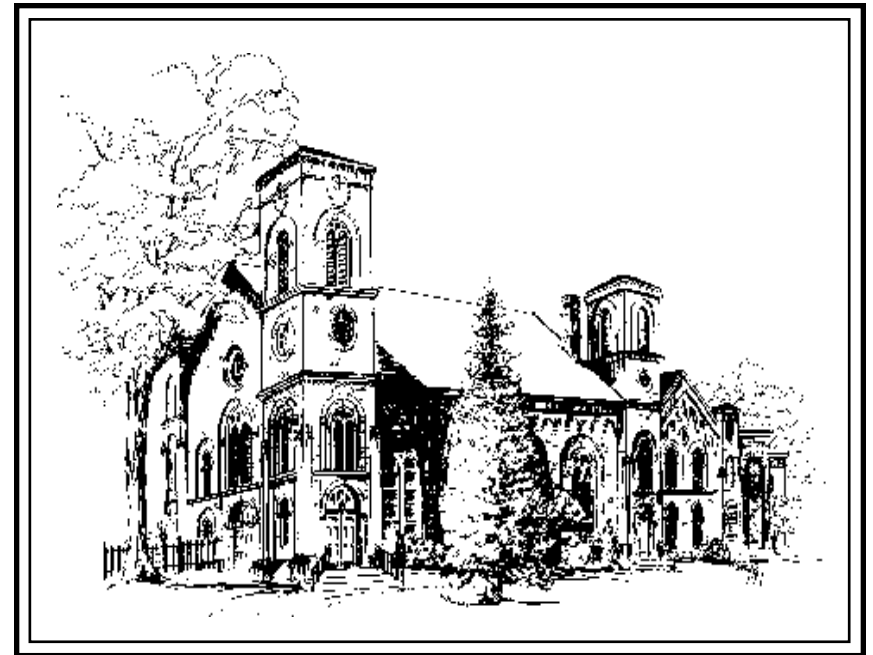
(booklet revised September 2011)



Planning a wedding

at

The First Church of Christ, Congregational



United Church of Christ

*81 High Street
Suffield, Connecticut*