

# Wedding Policies

## The First Church of Christ in Hartford (“Center Church”)

We are honored that you have chosen to be married at Center Church, and it is a privilege to be a part of this important chapter in your life. It is our hope that in preparing for your wedding you will not only become closer to one another, but closer to God and to our community of faith.

Couples wishing to be married at Center Church, members and non-members alike, are ordinarily expected to:

- Participate and complete pre-marital counseling
- Conduct their wedding according to the church’s policies and procedures

### **Weddings: Christian Worship Services**

All weddings at Center Church are Christian worship services. While the pastor will design the liturgy with the couple, the Christian nature of the service is non-negotiable. Music also must be chosen with this in mind.

### **Scheduling**

Couples who are not members of Center Church must attend one regularly-scheduled worship service before meeting with the pastor to schedule the wedding. The pastor will endeavor to perform weddings of church members, their children and those who are not members of the church at their mutual convenience. Generally speaking, no weddings are scheduled on Sundays, holidays, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, during Holy Week, during our conference annual meeting or in the event of a previously scheduled church commitment.

Weddings are conducted solely at the discretion and availability of the pastor.

### **Reservations**

Reservations for a wedding must be made through the Church Office. General details of the wedding, including premarital counseling, the rehearsal and the reception should be discussed with the pastor before the date is confirmed on the church calendar. If you are planning a reception at the church, arrangements to reserve the Church House should be made at the same time that the wedding ceremony itself is scheduled.

### **Officiating**

The pastor of the church will officiate at all weddings. If the couple wishes another member of the clergy to participate, the invitation must be approved and extended by the pastor of Center Church.

The pastor does not assume that the role of officiant at a wedding service necessarily includes an invitation to the rehearsal dinner or to the wedding reception, nor should couples feel obligated to include the pastor in this part of their celebration. If the pastor’s

presence is desired for either of these events, a direct invitation, which includes the pastor's spouse or partner, should be extended at the same time as other guests.

### **Meeting With The Pastor**

After the wedding has been scheduled, the couple should schedule the first pre-marital conference with the pastor. Pre-marital counseling is intended to help prepare the couple for the challenges of married life, as well as to plan the ceremony itself. Three to five sessions will be scheduled at this meeting.

### **Music**

Since a wedding is a service of worship, music chosen for the service should be appropriate; meaning, it should direct attention to God and express the faith of the church. It is customary for the church's director of music and the arts coordinate and lead the musical expressions in worship. Center Church has three keyboard instruments from which music may be led: organ, piano, and harpsichord. Other instruments and instrumentalists, as well as vocal soloists and ensembles, may be included, subject to the approval of the Director of Music.

The couple should contact the director of music and the arts as soon as the wedding has been scheduled. He or she will schedule a consultation session with the couple, in which music for the service will be chosen, including any music to be offered by supplemental musicians (instrumentalists, vocalists, choirs). Center Church maintains active relationships with many professional musicians and is willing to engage their services for your wedding. These professional singers and instrumentalists will have their own fees, which will need to be remitted prior to the start of the service. In order to maintain consistent communication and bring forth the best musical result, the director of music and the arts will coordinate all aspects of the contracting and work of supplemental musicians.

Supplemental musicians may be required to provide the music they are to perform to the director of music and the arts (original prints from the publisher only; no photocopies are permissible). It may be necessary to schedule additional rehearsal time, for which there will be fees that will be determined by the director of music and the arts and the supplemental musician(s). *All fees related to musicians may be found on page 4.* Volunteer supplemental musicians will be expected to act in a professional manner via pre-service communication and preparation, as well as the rendering of music in the service itself.

### **Decorations**

In decorating the sanctuary, simplicity is best. The sanctuary of the church was designed appropriately for worship. It does not require decorations to make it suitable for a service of Christian marriage. Carpets and furniture shall be protected against candle drippings and water spilling from flower arrangements. Seasonal displays and liturgical equipment placed by the church for regular worship are not to be disturbed. The common areas of the church building (entryways, stairways, and main hallways outside the sanctuary) are not to be decorated. No nails, thumbtacks, or tape are to be used on the furnishings in the sanctuary. The throwing of rice or birdseed is prohibited. (Bubbles or rose petals are permitted: bubbles outside only; rose petals inside, only on a runner.)

## **Photographs**

Flash photographs may be taken during the processional or the recessional only. During the ceremony, existing light photographs may be taken from a place in the sanctuary that does not disturb the wedding ceremony, nor obstruct the guests' view. Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary following the wedding or in the sanctuary before the wedding, provided they are completed one-half hour before the service. Video recordings may be made from a place in the sanctuary that does not disturb the wedding ceremony or the guests' view. It is up to the couple to instruct their photographer/ videographer on the policies of the church, which will be explained at the rehearsal.

## **Rehearsal**

Normally, a rehearsal is scheduled for all weddings the evening before the wedding. If another date is desired, this can be arranged with the officiating minister. The entire wedding party should attend, along with parents of the couple. Rehearsals will begin on time, so please make every effort to arrive early if possible.

## **Marriage License**

A couple must have a valid Connecticut marriage license to be married, and it must be given to the officiating minister no later than the rehearsal time. Call the appropriate municipal department to get specifics as to the licensing process.

## **Conduct**

Since the wedding is a service of worship, reverence is expected on the part of all present. Smoking is not permitted in the church. Alcohol may not be served or consumed in the church. The service may be postponed if members of the wedding party and guests are behaving inappropriately.

## **Cleaning**

After the service, the church will be cleaned by the church custodian. The wedding party is responsible to pay for this service. The wedding party should also designate someone to pick up items left behind, including decorations, personal items, and clothing hangers.

## **Printed Bulletins**

If printed bulletins for the wedding are desired, it is the responsibility of the couple to have them typed and duplicated. A fee will be charged for bulletins that are printed by the church. The officiating minister will determine with the couple the amount and content of such a bulletin.

## **Miscellaneous:**

1. Urge all members of the wedding party to be on time (meaning 10 minutes early) for the rehearsal and the wedding. Avoidable delays are an imposition on the time of the wedding party, guests, and the minister(s) and musicians. Allow time to park, get into the building, and get settled.
2. If the Minister and musician(s) are expected to attend any of the social functions associated with the wedding, invitations should be extended well in advance.

3. It is the responsibility of the bride to give the decorator, visiting musicians and photographer a copy of regulations that relate to their functions.
4. Center Church is a tobacco-, alcohol-, and drug-free facility. No tobacco products will be used inside church buildings, including rooms used as dressing rooms by the wedding party.
5. Any damage incurred is the responsibility of the wedding party.
6. Our sanctuary safely seats 300. Use of the balcony is not permitted.
7. Food and beverages can only be consumed in the basement of the Meeting House. No food is allowed elsewhere, and all rooms should be left as they were originally found.

**Fees**

Operating and maintaining Center Church’s beautiful facilities requires significant resources. The church staff is supported by the local church. Since virtually all the events associated with a wedding happen outside the regular hours specified in terms of hire, the time they spend working and preparing for your wedding must be compensated. The honorarium paid to the pastor covers the counseling sessions, rehearsals, service preparation, and the wedding itself. The fee for the use of the church is to help defray electrical and heating costs and wear and tear.

A schedule of fees is listed below. Wedding fees will be paid directly to pastor, organist and custodian. All payments for weddings must be sent to the Church Office at least a week prior to the wedding date.

NON-MEMBERS:

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|---------------|--|
| 1. Church Use | \$800.00   |
| 2. Minister   | \$500.00   |
| 3. Custodian  | \$150.00 (Meeting House only – includes rehearsal fee)                     |
|               | <i>or</i>  |
|               | \$300.00 (Meeting House, rehearsal fee, and reception)                     |
| 4. Organist   | \$350.00 (base fee, which includes one consultation session and rehearsal) |
| 5. Bulletins  | \$ 1.00 each   |

MEMBERS:

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| 1. Church Use | \$500.00   |
| 2. Minister   | \$350.00   |
| 3. Custodian  | \$120.00 (Meeting House only – includes rehearsal fee)                     |
|               | <i>or</i>  |
|               | \$220.00 (Meeting House, rehearsal fee, and reception)                     |
| 4. Organist   | \$250.00 (base fee, which includes one consultation session and rehearsal) |
| 5. Bulletins  | Free   |

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