

First Presbyterian Church of Bay City, Michigan, welcomes you and your wedding party as you initiate plans for a most memorable and meaningful day in your lives.

“Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.”¹

Your Christian Marriage Bay City First Presbyterian Church

Your wedding in a church is a religious and holy service with deep spiritual significance. We will do everything possible to make the planning and celebration meaningful and memorable as is fitting for such a sacred occasion. These guidelines have been developed to aid both us and you. You will find them workable and helpful in the many preparations which are before you and your families as you plan for this occasion. Confirmation of your plan to be married in First Presbyterian Church indicates that you accept and agree to abide by these guidelines.

Membership Guidelines

The Christian wedding is a service of worship in God’s House. Your decision to be married in the church is a sign that you wish your vows to be witnessed before God, and that you desire to make a public promise of faithfulness to each other before your family and friends.

It is hoped that a couple seeking marriage at First Presbyterian Church share a common Christian faith and that either the bride or groom is a professing Christian.

A couple seeking marriage should demonstrate their Christian discipleship and will be considered a member by meeting at least one of the following criteria:

1. One or both are active members of First Presbyterian Church for at least two (2) years prior to the wedding, or
2. One or both are children of parents who are active members of First Presbyterian Church.

Non-members are welcome to inquire about a wedding ceremony at our church. The decision to perform any marriage rests finally and entirely with the pastor in response to the pastor’s call to ministry and in concert with the agreement of the Session.

Divorced persons wishing to remarry must demonstrate readiness for remarriage and competence to fulfill obligation to all persons involved in the former marriage.

¹Book of Order W-4.9001

Setting the Date

Because of the careful planning which is necessary for all weddings, we recommend that you consult with the church office as early as possible in advance of your intended wedding date. To schedule the tentative date and time for your wedding, your first step is to phone the church office. The administrative assistant will obtain from you and provide you with basic information and inform the ministerial staff. You will need to pick up the Wedding Guidelines Packet. After completing and returning the Wedding Reservation Form and a **\$100 deposit** to the church office, the wedding date and time will be reserved on the church calendar.

No weddings are scheduled on Christmas Day or Good Friday through Easter. The church will be available to you for a total of three (3) hours on the day of your wedding. The building will be open for you 1 ½ hours prior to the wedding ceremony and 1 ½ hours from the time the wedding service begins. Please plan preparations and photos accordingly.

The wedding may be held in the sanctuary, which seats 825 guests, 500 on the main floor and 325 in the balcony, or in the Chapel which seats 80 guests and can be expanded with seating in the Chapel narthex. Weddings at other locations are allowed at the discretion of the pastor(s) officiating.

Rehearsals are usually scheduled on Thursday or Friday prior to the wedding, most often at 6:00 p.m.

Your Pastor

The officiating pastor at all weddings performed at the First Presbyterian Church shall be a member of the pastoral staff. In special instances, the church is pleased to welcome clergy of other churches or faith traditions if the wedding couple requests this arrangement. However, the wedding couple should discuss the issue of visiting clergy with the officiating pastor well in advance, so that the necessary credentials may be submitted to the Session for approval and the courtesy of an invitation to the visitor may be extended.

Education and Counseling

First Presbyterian Church takes seriously that the wedding is a Service of Worship before God and under the power of the State of Michigan; therefore; pre-marital counseling is an essential part of preparation for marriage. This discussion is equally important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce. The couple being married is expected to meet with the pastor, at a mutually convenient time, for the initial meeting and two or three marriage preparation conferences. These conferences will include discussion of the following:

1. the nature of the couple's Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian,
2. the legal requirement of the State,
3. the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
4. the nature and form of the marriage service,
5. the vows and commitments to their lives of discipleship,
6. the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
7. the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

Call the church administrative assistant (989-892-1591) to schedule the initial meeting. It is expected that both partners will take advantage of these opportunities. Marriage is held in high regard by the church and represents a serious and joyful step of relationship for the couple. The church, through its pastor, wants to do everything it can to recognize and support this union.

Recognizing the fact that the State has the authority to dissolve marriages, the church's responsibility for education and counsel before marriage also extends to any problems involved in remarriage after divorce.

Marriage License

The marriage license, which is valid for thirty (30) days, must be presented to the administrative assistant no fewer than three (3) days prior to the rehearsal date. Three (3) copies of the license

are issued. The officiating pastor will sign all three, giving one to the couple after the marriage and filing the other two (2) with the County Clerk's office.

The Wedding Hostess

The wedding hostess acts as a representative of First Presbyterian Church, and she will coordinate all activities surrounding the ceremony. After the initial planning with the pastor, the wedding hostess will be available to meet with the bride before the wedding to answer questions related to the rehearsal and the ceremony. Together with the officiating pastor, she will attend the rehearsal and the wedding, instruct the ushers concerning their duties, guide the proper seating of the parents and the proper order of the processional, etc. In addition to working with the pastor and coordinating the wedding activities, she is available to answer questions from photographers, videographers, and florists regarding specific guidelines. Should you retain a bridal consultant, his/her services will be limited to an advisory capacity.

The wedding hostess will open the building before the wedding so that the florist and wedding party will have access to the building.

The Alpha Room (on the second floor) is available if the bride and her attendants wish to dress at the church. The Heritage Parlor is available to the groom and groomsmen.

The Marriage Service

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the pastor and the supervision of the Session. Our church is guided by the directives of the Presbyterian denomination. Copies of the service traditionally used in First Presbyterian Church are available in the church office. If any modifications are desired, they should be discussed with the pastor. Couples may wish to write their own service or portions of it. This may be done under the direction of the pastor. The pastor will be responsible for the final approval of all plans for the service.

The purpose of Christian marriage is to acknowledge marriage and the family as gracious gifts from God and to celebrate with joy and gratitude your acceptance of these gifts. Christian marriage also affirms your life together as a couple as well as your responsible participation in the wider structures of family and human society. Thus it is appropriate that family and friends be invited to share in your celebration and happiness.

The ceremony itself in all its aspects, including music and decoration, is an act of worship. The primary focus is to be on God and God's blessing of the marriage. You and your guests should keep this uppermost in mind in the planning and conduct of the entire service.

Holy Communion

Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires prior approval of the Session, through the pastor, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table be extended to all professing Christians. The elements, provided by the family, are to be served by the pastor and ordained elders.

Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is under the direction of the officiating pastor and the wedding hostess. It normally takes place the evening before the wedding and lasts approximately one hour. All members of the wedding party are expected at the rehearsal; parents of the bride and groom should also be present. It is important that the rehearsal begin on time.

No food or drink is allowed in the sanctuary or chapel. No smoking is allowed in any part of the church building. Alcoholic beverages and/or drugs are not permitted within the church building or on the grounds at any time. Please inform wedding attendants and family members of this ahead of time.

While this is a joyous occasion, an attitude of reverence in both attire and conduct is expected within the house of God.

Remember...the marriage license must be presented to the administrative assistant no fewer than three (3) days prior to the rehearsal date.

Music

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer.

The Christian tradition provides the setting of the service. The language, architecture, symbolism, and music combine to express the faith not only of the couple being married, but also of the Christian community which is the church. For these reasons, operatic selections, art songs, popular and musical theater songs, as well as some of the old wedding standards, should be carefully examined.

The Director of Music, or the pastor, must approve the music, musicians, and soloists for the service. The selection of music for your wedding service should be made in consultation with him/her. A conference can be arranged through the church office as you coordinate the rest of your wedding plans with the pastor.

Playing of the organ or piano for all church weddings is the responsibility of the church organist. Special requests from a wedding party for an organist/pianist other than the church organist will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Special requests should be submitted to the Director of Music. Day and time of access shall be at the discretion of the church organist and the Director of Music.

Bridal Party

A lounge area with restroom facilities and full length mirror will be available for the bride and her attendants.

The groom and groomsmen will have access to a waiting area near the sanctuary. The pastor and the wedding hostess will offer the groomsmen guidelines for ushering and other responsibilities at the rehearsal.

Children are welcome to participate in the worship service, but keep in mind that participation can become stressful and overwhelming for them. It is sometimes appropriate to include them in the processional and recessional only.

The church cannot accept responsibility for any clothing or personal items left in the dressing areas. All personal articles must be removed from the facility the day/evening of the ceremony within the time designated for your wedding ceremony.

Again...No smoking is allowed in any part of the church building. Alcoholic beverages and/or drugs are not permitted within the church building or on the grounds at any time.

Decorations for the Wedding Service

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshippers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life. Our beautiful sanctuary for worship requires only simple decorations; and therefore, flowers and decorations must be in keeping with the dignity of the church.

One suggestion is to use either a central bouquet, for which the florist can supply a wire flower stand tall enough to stand immediately behind the Communion Table, or two large bouquets on stands available at the church. Except for the unity candle, no flower arrangements or decorations may be placed on the Communion Table. A pair of seven-candle candelabra is available for which candles may be purchased for the church. Any additional candles must be approved in advance. Candles must be drip-less and precaution taken to prevent wax from dripping on the candelabra and floor.

Care must be taken so that furnishings of the church are not marred by water or careless handling of pots and vases. No decorations are to be fastened with tacks, wires, or tape. Nothing damaging to the building or the furniture will be permitted. If planning bows to indicate reserved pews, we suggest that ribbons or plastic floral clips be used to attach them.

An aisle runner (52 feet in length), can be supplied by a florist, rental agency, or other source. A kneeling bench is available if desired.

When weddings take place on Saturday, flowers are often left for the church service on Sunday. This designation should be made on the wedding information form, and the church office advised, so that an appropriate word of thanks may be printed in the church's Sunday bulletin.

Photographs

In order to protect the worshipful atmosphere of the marriage service, the following guidelines have been established for taking pictures. Family, friends, and the professional photographers are required to abide by these guidelines. **It is the couple's responsibility to instruct guests regarding these guidelines.**

Since the wedding ceremony is a most sacred covenant, photography should not disrupt any portion of the worship service. **NO** flash photography is permitted during the worship service proper. This includes the professional photographer and guests. Flash photography may only be taken as the wedding party enters the sanctuary and during the recessional.

During the service, the photographer may take pictures from the back aisle and the balcony. Movement during the service must be discreet and **NO** photographs may be taken **during the prayers, vows, or scripture readings.**

After the ceremony, when the wedding party reassembles for photographs, the wedding party should be reminded to cooperate with the official photographer to allow him/her to complete the task as quickly as possible. As a reminder, the three-hour time period reserved for the wedding includes the time for photographs to be taken.

Please give you photographer "Guidelines for Photographers." If you photographer has any questions, he/she is encouraged to call the church office.

Video Tape

Video recordings are permissible. The videographer shall be as inconspicuous as possible. The videographer must stay in one place, or as directed by the pastor. If videotaping is done from the choir loft, the video camera must be on a tripod and unattended.

All videography must be done with existing light. The church's video system can record your service for a modest fee. If you wish, you may make an audiocassette of your marriage service. Please discuss details with the pastor.

Please give your videographer the enclosed "Guidelines for Videographers." If you videographer has any questions, he/she is encouraged to call the church office.

Bulletins

If worship order bulletins are desired for the congregation, they can be secured locally and commercially printed. To avoid interrupting the ceremony, we advise the following be included in your printed wedding bulletin: **"No photographs may be taken during the prayers, vows, or scripture reading."**

Following the Wedding

Receiving Line

Receiving lines may be formed in several areas, i.e., the Narthex, front lawn, front corridor, or Commons. Please work with the wedding hostess and etiquette guidelines for proper order of participants in a receiving line. If you prefer to dismiss your guests from their pews in the sanctuary, this can also be done most graciously.

Reception

Rooms and spaces of varying size are available if you wish to have your wedding reception at the church. Fellowship Hall, Memorial Parlor, the Courtyard, and the Commons are areas to consider. Please refer to the building use policy, available from the administrative assistant, and the reception fee schedule. Keep in mind that previously scheduled functions will take priority and, therefore, it is suggested that reception arrangements be made at the same time you reserve the church for your wedding.

Additional Information and Church Policies

Honorarium

The pastor's honorarium acknowledges the pastor's extra duties, guidance, counseling, leadership, and supervision of the entire wedding process. The Session recommends a minimum honorarium of \$250 be paid for these services of the pastor.

Guest Book and Gifts

A stand is available if you plan to have a guest book. It is advisable to have a designated family member or friend attend the book and be responsible for any gifts that may be brought to the church for you.

Parking

There are two parking lots on the north side of the building. The sanctuary has handicap accessibility from the main entrance on Fifth Street. Additional parking is available on the side streets and at nearby businesses (if not open for business).

Administrative Assistant

At least one week prior to the wedding, the administrative assistant should be notified in writing through the church office concerning any needs as arrangement of chairs, tables, or public address system for the reception.

Building Policy

In keeping with the spirit of worship, the marriage service should reflect quiet dignity and great joy. Ushers are to help all guests understand the following:

- Alcoholic beverages and/or drugs are not permitted within the church building or on the grounds at any time.
- Smoking is not permitted in any part of the church building.
- Rice, confetti, or similar items are not permitted to be thrown in the church building or on the grounds. Birdseed and bubbles are allowed outside.

Wedding Fee Schedule

A \$100 deposit is required to confirm your wedding date. The check should be made payable to First Presbyterian Church, noting that payment is the wedding deposit, and send to the church with the completed Wedding Reservation Form. Tentative dates will be held for a maximum of one month. The reservation is not regarded as complete until this deposit has been received and ceremony time established.

Your deposit will be refunded in full one month after the wedding, provided that the service required no extra cleaning and no damages were incurred. Wedding parties may avoid additional fees by cleaning up materials and litter in dressing areas.

Remaining fees are due and payable one week prior to the wedding date. Individual checks will be made out to First Presbyterian Church and the pastor. On the memo line, please not the bride's last name and date of wedding.

SERVICE	FEE
• Active Member, for two or more years:	
○ For support staff, including custodian and wedding hostess	
○ Sanctuary wedding	\$120
○ Chapel wedding	\$120
○ Courtyard wedding	\$120
• All others: Fee includes use of facility, custodian and wedding hostess	
○ Sanctuary wedding	\$600
○ Chapel wedding	\$395
○ Courtyard wedding	\$370
• Organist/Pianist	\$150
• Soloist/Instrumentalist	contract individually
• Candles	
○ Unity Candle (if provided by the church)	\$25
○ Pair of Candelabra (14 candles)	\$35
• Videotaping	\$100
• Member Reception	
○ Fewer than 100 people	\$100
○ More than 100 person	\$150
• Non-member Reception	
○ Fewer than 100 people	\$175
○ More than 100 persons	\$250
• Honorarium for Pastor	\$250
TOTAL	\$ _____

Approved: 9/2011

CHURCH STAFF
who will be working with you

PASTOR	Dr. Jeffrey Weenink
BUILDING SUPERVISOR	Ron Wardynski
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC/ORGANIST	Anna Leppert-Largent amllargent@yahoo.com
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	Carol Collins
WEDDING HOSTESS	Assigned
CUSTODIAN	Ron Wardynski

Office Hours: Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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