

*First Congregational United Church of Christ*

# *Wedding Handbook*



**Pastors**

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*The essence of marriage is a covenanted commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the glad occasion on which two people unite as together in the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one presiding acts as an official representative of the church and gives the marriage the church's blessing. The congregation joins in affirming the marriage and in offering support and thanksgiving for the new family.*

*--Book of Worship, United Church of Christ*

Marriage is one of the great gifts that God has given to the human family. Some of the most beautiful experiences of joy and happiness are found in the marriage relationship.

Your desire to be married at First Congregational UCC indicates you want your wedding service to be a sacred worship experience. It means that you want God to be a part of the life you make together and the home you build.

This handbook outlines our policies for celebrating wedding services at First Congregational UCC. If, after reading the handbook, you would like to schedule your wedding with us, please submit a Wedding Date Request Form & Couple Info at [www.fccmoline.org/committed/weddings](http://www.fccmoline.org/committed/weddings)

May God bless you as you plan to celebrate your wedding!

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. J. M.', written in a cursive style.

# *Scheduling a Wedding at First Congregational UCC*

While many customs and traditions have secular origins, the purpose of a Christian wedding is worship before God: to acknowledge God's gracious love in which the marriage of two persons might grow, to hear words of guidance from Scripture, to pray for this marriage and all marriages, and to make a public promise of faithfulness to each other in the marriage vows. Couples desiring a wedding at First Congregational UCC should be willing to affirm these religious purposes when making arrangements for the church and presiding minister. If not, then a civil ceremony before a magistrate might be more appropriate.

## **Who can get married at First Congregational UCC?**

First Congregational UCC does not prohibit any couple who can be legally married from holding a wedding at the church. All weddings are subject to final approval by the pastor.

## **Pre-marital Counseling**

Pre-marital counseling is required for all couples married at First Congregational UCC.

Pre-marital counseling is to be arranged 6-8 months before the wedding date.

# *Fees and Services*

First Congregational UCC charges a flat fee and does not itemize the expenses of a wedding. The comprehensive for a wedding is \$1,500.

The following services are included in the wedding fee:

- A minister (provides pre-marital counseling, officiates wedding).
- An organist.
- 16 Candelabras and white aisle runner upon request.
- Programs published by the church office upon request.

The fee does not cover outside services, such as an instrumentalist instead of our organist or pianist. Florists, photographers, and additional musicians or ministers are paid directly by the couple. Any unused services do not result in a fee reduction.

The fee is not for rental of the church building but for services provided by First Congregational UCC.



The following church facilities are made available during the four hours allotted to weddings held at First Congregational UCC:

- The Sanctuary for the ceremony
- Limited dressing rooms for men and women

In addition to the comprehensive fee, a refundable security deposit of \$500 is required within 30 days before the wedding date including all other fees as well.

*\*Please contact a Pastor for Active Member fee pricing*

### **Payment Methods**

Checks shall be made to “First Congregational UCC.” Please note the couple’s names and the wedding date on the check for any necessary deposits. (2201 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue Moline, IL 61265, phone: 309-762-0787)

## *Planning the Service*

The marriage service is one of the most sacred and beautiful of all services of the Church. It is a worship service in which two persons in the company of their loved ones and friends pledge themselves to each other under the blessing of God and are united in Christian Marriage. Preparations should be made with this in mind. It is the desire of First Congregational UCC that the wedding be a memorable event—beautiful and meaningful. It is to this end that the following guidelines and policies have been established.

### **The Wedding Service**

The format for weddings at First Congregational UCC follows the order for marriage in the *United Church of Christ Book of Worship*. Couples, in consultation with the minister, may adjust the service to meet their family needs.

### **Clergy**

The pastor of First Congregational UCC presides over all weddings. Additional ministers may be invited by the presiding minister to also be a part of the service, should the couple request it.

First Congregational UCC’s minister will determine what role additional ministers will play and have final authority on all matters related to the service and the use of First Congregational UCC’s facilities.

The presiding minister will also direct the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including attendants, parents, additional clergy, readers and ushers, soloists and musicians, are expected to attend unless excused by the presiding minister. **REMEMBER:** Bring your marriage license to the rehearsal! The rehearsal cannot continue without the wedding license.



The presiding minister will meet with couples to plan the service. The couple will also meet with the wedding coordinator to finalize the details of the wedding bulletin and answer any questions. When you meet with the minister, you will be given information sheets for the Wedding Party List and Couple Information. The “Building Use” form helps the staff of First Congregational UCC prepare the building for couples. The “Order of Service” information will guide couples through decisions about the liturgy and will assist in planning sessions with the presiding minister.

The following sections describe some choices to consider in the planning of a wedding ceremony:

### **Readings**

The couple will work with the presiding minister to select scripture passages to be read during the ceremony. In addition to readings from the Bible, a selection from a secular source may be used if it is in harmony with the spirit of a Christian worship service and with the biblical understanding of marriage. Non-biblical material must be approved by the presiding minister. Couples frequently choose one or more friends or family members to serve as lectors.

### **Vows**

A list of suggested vows is found in the Order of Service booklet. Couples may choose one of these, or may write their own vows. Written vows should be consistent with the biblical understanding of marriage and should make clear that the promises are a life-long commitment. They must be submitted to the presiding minister for approval at least one month before the wedding.

### **Music**

The pastor will refer the couple to a church musician to help with the selection of music and will consult with the couple regarding their selections as needed.

The music for a wedding typically consists of the following:

- Prelude, as the guests are arriving and being seated.
- Processional, as the wedding party enters the Sanctuary.
- Recessional, as the wedding party leaves the Sanctuary.
- Postlude, as guests leave the Sanctuary.
- Appropriate vocal or instrumental solos and congregational hymns, may be used.

While the church provides a musician as part of the flat fee for weddings at First Congregational UCC, some couples may wish to invite other instrumentalists or vocalists to perform special music. When this is the case, the couple will be responsible to pay these special musicians directly.

### **Programs**



As part of the services of the church, standard wedding programs will be printed by the staff of First Congregational UCC by request. The program outlines the service and list the wedding party. The information must be given to the church office **one month** prior to the wedding in order to allow ample time for review and printing.

Bulletins will be printed on ivory or white cardstock unless the couple provides specific paper at their own expense.

## *Use of the Building*

In all matters pertaining to the building, authority rests with the presiding minister. Everyone associated with the wedding, including the wedding party, guests, and contracted service providers, are expected to abide by the policies of First Congregational UCC.

### **Accessibility**

A wedding rehearsal is held the evening before the wedding and lasts about one hour. The doors will be opened approximately 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal.

Wedding parties may use the building for up to, but not exceeding, 4 hours on the wedding day. Use begins 2 hours before the scheduled start of the wedding service. For example, a wedding scheduled for 2:00 p.m. allows the wedding party to use the building from noon until 4:00 p.m. Any deliveries, such as from florists, or set-up by photographers must be completed during the 4-hour window. Should time go over the allotted time frame of 4 hours, \$25 will be taken from the security deposit.

### **Church Etiquette**

- No tobacco or alcohol is allowed on the premises of the church or the parking lot.
- The pastor will cancel the rehearsal or wedding service if any member of the wedding party is “under the influence.”
- No rice, bird seed, confetti or similar materials are allowed on church grounds.
- Please leave the church in relatively clean condition.

### **Decorations**

Part of the joy of holding a wedding at First Congregational UCC is the beauty of the Sanctuary. Some items for decorations are provided by the church and couples may also decorate.

Arches are not permitted.



The color of paraments and vestments used for the wedding service are the color for the season of the church year during which the wedding is conducted.

The furnishings in the Sanctuary may not be moved or altered for the wedding service.

The altar and clergy seats are not to be decorated; however, ribbons or flowers may be attached to the pews upon consent of the custodian or presiding minister.

No adhesive tape or clamps that will scratch the pews or remove the varnish will be allowed.

Under no circumstances are rice, birdseed, or other similar objects to be strewn about the church or its grounds.

Couples must arrange to have a member of the wedding party remove decorations prior to leaving our facilities. Florists are thanked in advance for their cooperation in the observance of this policy.

## *Preparing for Your Wedding*

The following is a timeline of appointments and tasks to be completed to help weddings at First Congregational UCC run smoothly. For further explanation of the following tasks, please consult the referenced sections and pages in the wedding handbook.

### **To request your wedding date:**

- Complete the “Wedding Date Request Form & Couple Info” online at the church’s website, [www.fccmoline.org/committed/weddings](http://www.fccmoline.org/committed/weddings), and wait for an approval response/ letter.
- After an approval letter is received a non-refundable booking deposit of \$200 is due to the church within 7 days of receiving the approval letter.

### **6-8 months before your wedding:**

- The pastor will contact the couple; pre-marital sessions will be scheduled.

### **3 months before your wedding:**

- Contact wedding coordinator to begin planning the wedding ceremony.
- Select music for the wedding ceremony, to be approved by the music coordinator.

### **1 month before your wedding:**

- Final meeting with the presiding minister
- Turn in “Order of Service” and “Wedding Party” forms if you did not submit during meeting with the presiding minister and wedding coordinator.
- All fees and security deposit is due to First Congregational Church office.



**3 weeks before your wedding:**

- Return “Building Use Form” with payment of remaining fees.

**1 week before your wedding**

- Proof the wedding bulletin, which is normally sent to the couple electronically as a .pdf for review and direct any changes or adjustments to the wedding coordinator.

**1 day before your wedding:**

- Wedding Rehearsal
- The presiding minister provided by First Congregational UCC will direct the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including attendants, parents, additional clergy, readers and ushers, soloists and musicians, are expected to attend unless excused by the presiding minister. **REMEMBER:** Bring your marriage license to the rehearsal!

**Within 14 days following the wedding:**

- The refundable damage deposit will be returned – if the church is left in appropriate condition.

