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Wedding Planning Guide

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A TRULY SPECIAL

Welcome

The congregation and staff of the First Methodist Family extends to you our warmest congratulations and deepest prayers for your wedding. Our role in the wedding is to provide a loving and caring setting for the celebration of this holy covenant between you, as a couple, and Christ. We minister to members in the First Methodist setting in which your faith has blossomed. We minister to non-members with warm hospitality that treats you as one of our own. At all times we want to serve you with the love of Jesus.



THE WEDDING

Planning Guide

Because the marriage service is a service of worship, as well as one of covenant commitment, the following guidelines have been prepared to help you plan your wedding and to suggest procedures that are in keeping with the spirit of Christian marriage and sacred worship.

THE MARRIAGE

Covenant

The Service of Christian Marriage is a joyful and sacred ritual where two people, in the presence of their family and friends, vow before God to enter into a lifelong covenant of love and commitment, with Christ at the center of their union. What makes these promises lasting is our openness to the inward work and guidance of the grace of God as, together, we follow the guidance of his Son.

Because we hold these vows to be holy, we want to help you be prepared for the godly growth that marriage requires. Therefore, any couple being married at First Methodist must be Christian, desire a Christian wedding service, have appropriate pre-marital counseling sessions with a pastor, and promise to be active in a church home after the wedding. These expectations put you in the best position for the love of God to work in and through you, blessing your hearts and home for the years to come.

Pastor

Weddings at First Methodist will always be performed by one of the clergy on staff at the church. A pastor from another United Methodist church or other denomination may assist in the service, but First Methodist clergy will be in charge of the service. Requests for the addition of a guest pastor should be made well in advance of the wedding date to the Church Event Coordinator, who will get approval from the Senior Pastor.

The officiating pastor will lead the wedding rehearsal with assistance from a designated member of the wedding guild. If it is desired that the pastor and spouse attend the rehearsal dinner and/or wedding reception, please extend the invitation well in advance of the wedding date.



Booking Procedure

Wedding dates are reserved by talking with the Church Event Coordinator who will check the church calendar for availability, tentatively put the wedding date on hold, and schedule an appointment with the couple. At this appointment, the Church Event Coordinator will go over the church's wedding procedures, answer questions, explain options, sign the wedding event contract, and receive the deposit for your wedding date.

During your initial meeting with the Church Event Coordinator, you are welcome to provide the name of a First Methodist pastor you would like to officiate your wedding. After the meeting, the Church Event Coordinator will meet with the Senior Pastor to have an officiating pastor designated for your wedding. If the pastor you request is unavailable to attend both your rehearsal and wedding, another pastor will be assigned to serve.

The Church Event Coordinator will send you a letter of confirmation or email verifying the date and time of your wedding and wedding rehearsal, location of your service, name of your officiating pastor, and receipt of the deposit. No date should be announced until you receive your confirmation letter from the Church Event Coordinator. Upon receipt of the confirmation letter, the bride and groom must make an appointment for a pre-marital conference with the officiating pastor.

It is suggested that the couple attend Sunday worship or other church ministries to become acquainted with the First Methodist clergy, taking the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with a pastor who can help you grow in Christ.



Church Event Coordinator

The Church Event Coordinator has been appointed to serve as a representative of the church regarding the wedding process and to act as a liaison to church personnel who will be involved with the wedding. Even though the Church Event Coordinator is not a professional wedding consultant, as an official member of the wedding guild of First Methodist, this person can give suggestions to make your experience joyful while also giving direction to assure the integrity of this special time of worship and celebration. All questions regarding policies and procedures should be directed to the Church Event Coordinator.

Wedding Guild

First Methodist is fortunate to have an outstanding Wedding Guild Ministry. A wedding guild member is assigned to each wedding to assist the officiating pastor during the rehearsal and the wedding service. They are both servants of Christ and representatives of the church for the wedding, with responsibility and authority to guide the service.

The officiating pastor will conduct the wedding rehearsal with assistance from the assigned wedding guild member. During the rehearsal, everyone will learn where they will stand or be seated during the service, practice the processional and recessional, and run through the liturgy. Any decisions for the wedding service that are left outstanding will be finalized during the rehearsal. The wedding guild member will help answer any questions that you may have.

On the day of the wedding, the goal of the guild is to relieve the wedding party of as much apprehension as possible. They bring the voice of caring clarity to this sometimes emotionally charged moment. As they provide you help, please afford them respect.



Marriage Preparation

You will need to meet, at least once, with the officiating pastor for a pre-marital conference to discuss both the wedding and marriage. The number of sessions will be determined by the officiating pastor.

Reservations

Saturday weddings are scheduled to allow adequate time for each service and those which may precede or follow it. The facilities are open to you two hours prior to the scheduled service. All belongings and decorations must be removed within one and a half (1½) hours after the scheduled beginning of the service. Rehearsal times are on Friday at 6 or 7 p.m. (special exceptions can be discussed with the Church Event Coordinator).

“Member Weddings” are so designated when the bride, groom, parent, grandparent, or guardian is a member of First Methodist Houston at the time the wedding is scheduled. Weddings may be scheduled no more than twelve months in advance and it is recommended that all weddings be scheduled at least three months in advance.

Due to the great demand for the use of the church facilities for weddings, it is suggested that reservations be made as soon as possible.



Marriage License

A marriage license is government-issued document that signifies that a couple is authorized to marry. It is the bride and groom's responsibility to appear in person at the County Clerk's Office to make application for and to obtain the marriage license. Check the website for the County Clerk's office you plan to visit in advance to obtain the amount of fees that will apply. (Please note that you can apply for your marriage license in whatever county is convenient. In Texas, you must obtain a marriage license no less than 72 hours before your wedding and no more than 90 days in advance. The license will expire if you don't get married within 90 days from the date of issue.)

The marriage license must be brought to the wedding rehearsal and given to the officiant. After the wedding service, the officiating pastor will obtain all the needed signatures on the license. Please note whether your license provides spaces for witnesses to sign and let the officiating pastor know who you would like to have sign as witnesses. It will be the officiating pastor's responsibility to mail the license to the County Clerk's office for recording, after which it will be mailed to the bride and groom for safekeeping.

Rehearsal

All wedding rehearsals are to be scheduled for the evening preceding the wedding at 6 or 7 o'clock. The rehearsal date and time are set with the Church Event Coordinator at the time the wedding is scheduled. You should plan one hour for the wedding rehearsal.

The bride and groom should insist that all members of the wedding party be prompt. Any delay will reduce rehearsal time since time scheduled for other rehearsals, weddings, and staff commitments must be met without delay. Each wedding party member who cannot attend the rehearsal will need a substitute selected by the bride or groom.

The following information will help create a smooth rehearsal and wedding:

- The officiating pastor will be in charge of the rehearsal with assistance from a designated wedding guild member. If you have a personal wedding consultant, she/he is invited to be present to become familiar with procedures outlined by the Pastor and wedding guild member.
- The bride and groom will have discussed the service and any special requests with the officiating pastor at the pre-marital conference.
- The rehearsal will take one hour or less.
- All attendants, as well as both sets of parents and other guests who will be formally seated (like grandparents), should be present.
- Any vocalists or instrumentalists secured outside the church music department must be present.
- All ushers should be present.
- We recommend that rehearsal dinners be scheduled AFTER the wedding rehearsal.

When you meet with the pastor for the pre-marital conference you will discuss the particulars of the service that will be celebrated.

Planning Your Wedding Service

You will work with the officiating pastor, Church Event Coordinator, and Church Organist to plan your wedding service. The officiating pastor will help with the order of worship and liturgy, and the Church Organist will assist with musical selections and scheduling and soloists and musicians who will be part of the service. The Church Event Coordinator will help keep everything moving.

Wedding Service Music

Music is a very special part of any wedding. Your selection of songs will set the tone of your wedding as nothing else can. It is a wonderful way of expressing the God-given love that has brought you to this day. As you think about the music, keep central the understanding that this is a Christian worship service. The text should have a sense of the sacred. Many lovely compositions are available, and the Church Organist will be delighted to help you with your selections.

Before selecting the music for your service, consult with the Church Organist regarding who is allowed to perform, what types of music can or cannot be played and where musicians should set up.

The wedding service music should begin about twenty minutes prior to the scheduled time of the wedding, setting the atmosphere for the guests arriving early.

The processional for the entrance of the bridal party may be enhanced when the bride enters or the bride may select a different piece for herself.

The recessional should be a joyous piece as the Bride and Groom depart arm in arm.

The church wedding service is a form of worship and is therefore sacred in nature. Any music which is used before, during, or after must reflect the sacred nature of the Holy Institution of Marriage. Listed below are some examples of the appropriate music. All music must be approved by the Church Organist.

Suggestions for Preludes:

| | | | |
|---|-------------|---|---------------|
| Air on a G String..... | J. S. Bach | O Perfect Love..... | Joseph Barnby |
| Aria in F major..... | Handel | Sinfonia (Cantata #29) | J. S. Bach |
| Canon in D..... | Pachelbel | Water Music Suite (three movements) ... | Handel |
| Finale (6th Sonata for Organ)..... | Mendelssohn | Psalm XIX | Marcello |
| God, My Shepherd Walks Beside Me (Sheep May Safely Graze)..... | J. S. Bach | The Rejoicing | Handel |
| Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring | J. S. Bach | | |

Suggestions for Processionals:

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Bridal Chorus | Wagner | The Rejoicing | Handel |
| Prince of Denmark March..... | J. Clarke | Trumpet Tune in D Major | H. Purcell |
| Psalm XIX | Marcello | Trumpet Voluntary in D..... | J. Stanley |
| Rigaudon | A. Campra | Rondeau..... | Mouret |

Suggestions for Recessional:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Final from Symphony #1..... | L. Vierne |
| Finale Jubilante | H. Willian |
| Fugue in E Flat Major | J. S. Bach |
| Allegro Maestoso | Handel |
| Psalm XIX | B. Marcello |
| Rigaudon | A. Campra |
| Tocatta from the Fifth Symphony | C. Widor |
| Rondeau..... | Mouret |
| Trumpet Tune in D Major | H. Purcell |
| Wedding March from a Midsummer Night's Dream | Mendelssohn |

Hymns

These may be sung by the congregation or played on the organ. Hymns are appropriate as either a processional or a recessional.

- All Creatures of Our God and King
- A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
- From All That Dwell Below the Skies
- Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee
- Love Divine, All Love Excelling
- Now Thank We All Our God
- Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Possible Wedding Solos

| | |
|--|--|
| The Lord's Prayer | Mallotte or other composers |
| Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring | J.S. Bach |
| God, My Shepherd, Walks Beside Me | J.S. Bach (sacred text with "Sheep My Safely Graze" tune) |
| Heart Ever Faithful..... | J. S. Bach |
| O Perfect Love | Barnby (found in almost any hymnal) |
| God Is My Shepherd | Dvorak (or any other of many settings of Psalm 23) |
| O Lord Most Holy ("Panis Angelicus") | Cesar Franck |
| Brother James' Air | Jacob |
| Be Thou With Them | J.S. Bach |
| In This Very Room | Harris |
| Alleluia | Mozart |
| Wedding Prayer | Dunlap |
| I Thank My God | John Ness Beck |

Soloists & Musicians

A Church Organist is provided as a part of your wedding service package. The Church Event Coordinator will schedule and put you in contact with the Church Organist to schedule a meeting. At least two months prior to your wedding date, the bride and groom should contact the Church Organist for an appointment to discuss music selections. The Church Organist will review, make alternate suggestions where necessary, and approve all music used in our setting.

Additionally, First Methodist Houston has the ability to provide a wide arrange of musicians and singers. The Church Event Coordinator will visit with you about your vision for music at your initial meeting. If you desire instruments other than the organ or piano (such as strings or brass) or if there is a specific musician or singer that you would like to participate in your wedding service, please let the Church Event Coordinator know so that the Church Organist can be informed.

The Church Organist will work with the bride and groom to coordinate all of your musical needs. Other instruments and singers included in the wedding service must be approved by the Church Organist. Once other instrumentalists and singers are secured, the Church Event Coordinator will provide you with their contact information. Payments for additional musicians will be the responsibility of the marrying couple.

The opportunities for music within the wedding service itself are limited. Sometimes a singer will sing one piece directly following a prayer or during the lighting of the unity candle, but it is generally preferred to incorporate most music into the pre-service music.

The singer should confirm the music at least one month before the wedding and should rehearse with the Church Organist one hour before the wedding. The singer is responsible for learning the music and for providing a copy for the organist in the key he or she wishes to sing.



SAMPLE WEDDING

Order of Worship

The officiating pastor will be in charge of the order of worship and will work with the bride and groom to plan the perfect service. A typical service will be shaped in the following way:

Gathering

While the guests gather, instrumental or vocal music may be offered.

Processional

During the entrance of the wedding party, there may be instrumental music, or a hymn, a psalm, a canticle, or an anthem.

The pastor and groomsmen usually enter from the side after seating the Bride's Mother.

The order of entrance down the main aisle is typically:

1. Seating Guests
2. Seating Grandparents
3. Seating Groom's Parents
4. Seating Bride's Mother
5. Bridesmaids
6. Maid of Honor
7. Flower Girl and Ring Bearer
8. Bride and Bride's Father (or escort)

Greeting

Pastor to people:

Friends, we are gathered together in the sight of God to witness and bless the joining together of _____ and _____ in Christian marriage. The covenant of marriage was established by God, who created us male and female for each other. With his presence and power Jesus graced a wedding at Cana of Galilee, and in his sacrificial love gave us the example for the love of husband and wife. _____ and _____ come to give themselves to one another in this holy covenant.

Declaration of Intention

Pastor to the persons who are to marry:

I ask you now, in the presence of God and these people, to declare your intention to enter into union with one another through the grace of Jesus Christ, who calls you into union with himself as acknowledged your baptism.

Pastor to the man:

_____, will you have _____ to be your wife, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

Man: I will.

Pastor to the woman:

_____, will you have _____ to be your husband, to live together in holy marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Woman: I will.

Response of the Family

Pastor to the bride’s father or representative of family:

Who presents this woman for marriage?

The father or escort responds:

Her family and I.

Response of the Congregation

Pastor to people:

The marriage of _____ and _____ unites their families and creates a new one. They ask for your blessing. Will you, by God’s grace, do everything in your power to uphold and care for these two persons in their marriage?

People: We will

Prayer

God of all people, you are the true light illumining everyone. You are the way, the truth, and the life. You love us even when we are disobedient. You sustain everyone who will follow you with your Holy Spirit. We rejoice in your life in the midst of our lives. We praise you for your presence with us, and especially in this act of solemn covenant; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture Lessons

A hymn, psalm, canticle, anthem, or other music may be offered before or after the readings.

Suggested Scripture Lessons:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Genesis 1;26-28, 31a | Song of Solomon 2:10-14, 16a, 8:6-7 |
| John 2:1-11 | Philippians 2:1-2 |
| Ruth 1:16 | Matthew 5:1-10 |
| John 15:9-17 | Philippians 4:4-9 |
| Isaiah 43:1-7 | Matthew 7:21, 24-27 |
| Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 | Colossians 3:12-17 |
| Isaiah 55:10-13 | Matthew 22:35-40 |
| 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 | 1 John 3:18-24 |
| Isaiah 61:10-62:3 | Mark 2:18-22 |
| Ephesians 2:4-10 | 1 John 4:7-16 |
| Isaiah 63:7-9 | Mark 10:42-45 |
| Ephesians 4:25-5:2 | Revelation 19:1, 5-9a |

Message

A sermon or other witness to Christian marriage may be offered.

Intercessory Prayer

Eternal God, creator and preserver of all life, author of salvation, giver of all grace, bless and sanctify with your Holy Spirit _____ and _____, who come now to join in marriage. Grant that they may give their vows to each other in the strength of your steadfast love. Enable them to grow in love and peace with you and with one another all their days, that they may reach out in concern and service to the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Exchange Of Vows

The woman and man face each other, joining hands. One of the following vows, or another agreed upon by the Pastor and the bride and groom, are exchanged.

Suggested Vows:

Vows Option: #1:

Man to woman:

In the name of Jesus, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:

In the name of Jesus, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Vows Option: #2:

Man to woman:

In the name of Jesus, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife, and I promise before God and all who are present here to be your loving and faithful husband as long as we both shall live. I will serve you with tenderness and respect and encourage you to develop God's gifts in you. This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:

In the name of Jesus, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my husband, and I promise before God and all who are present here to be your loving and faithful wife as long as we both shall live. I will serve you with tenderness and respect and encourage you to develop God's gifts in you. This is my solemn vow.

Vows Option: #3:

Man to woman:

_____, in the name of Jesus, I _____ take you to be my wife from this time onward, to join with you and to share all that is to come, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, and in all our life together to be loyal to you with my whole being, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:

_____, in the name of Jesus, I _____ take you to be my husband from this time onward, to join with you and to share all that is to come, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, and in all our life together to be loyal to you with my whole being, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Vows Option: #4:

Man to woman:

In the name of Jesus I, _____, take you, _____ to be my wife and I promise before God and all who are present here to join with you and to share all that is to come: to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and respond, to serve you with tenderness and respect, to encourage you to develop God's gifts in you; and in all our life together to be loyal to you with my whole being. as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Woman to man:

In the name of Jesus I, _____, take you, _____ to be my husband and I promise before God and all who are present here to join with you and to share all that is to come: to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and respond, to serve you with tenderness and respect, to encourage you to develop God's gifts in you; and in all our life together to be loyal to you with my whole being. as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Blessing And Exchange Of Rings

The pastor says:

These rings are the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying to us the union between Jesus Christ and his Church and the uniting of _____ and _____ in holy marriage.

The pastor prays:

Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings, that they who wear them may live in your peace and continue in your favor all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Man to woman:

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Woman to Man:

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Celebration of Marriage

The wife and husband join hands. The pastor may place a hand on, or wrap a stole around, their joined hands.

Pastor to husband and wife:

You have declared your consent and vows before God and this congregation. May God confirm your covenant and fill you both with grace.

Act of Response (Optional)

A unity candle may be lit.

A doxology, hymn, or anthem may be sung.

Communion may be celebrated by the congregation.

Blessing of The Marriage

The husband and wife may kneel, as the pastor prays:

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in making your church a covenant people through our Savior Jesus Christ and for consecrating in his name the marriage covenant of _____ and _____; that in it is represented the covenant between Christ and his church. Send, therefore, your blessing upon _____ and _____, that they may surely keep their marriage covenant, and so grow in love and godliness together that their home may be a haven of blessing and peace: Grant that their love for each other may reflect the love of Christ for us and grow from strength to strength as they faithfully serve you in the world. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let their love for each other be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their heads. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their lives and in their deaths. Finally, by your grace, bring them and all of us to that table where your saints feast for ever in your heavenly home; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

May be spoken or sung as a solo.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The pastor may use the words of Ruth (1:16) as the first words the couple speaks to one another, spoken in unison. Here a hymn or psalm may be sung.

Dismissal With Blessing

Pastor to wife and husband:

May the Eternal God keep you in love with each other, so that the peace of Christ may abide in your home. Go to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.

Pastor to the People:

Bear witness to the love of God in this world, so that those to whom love is a stranger will find in you generous friends. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Declaration of Marriage

The couple may turn and face the congregation.

Now that _____ and _____ have given themselves to each other by solemn vows, with the joining of hands, and the giving and receiving of rings, I announce to you that they are husband and wife; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate. Amen.

Kiss

The Pastor may say:

_____ you may now kiss your bride.

Introduction of Bride and Groom

The Pastor will introduce the man and woman as husband and wife, with words, such as:

It is with great joy that I introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Groom's First Name and Bride's First Name
Couples' Last Name.

(This introduction should be adapted to however the man and woman would like to be referred to as a married couple.)

Recessional

Instrumental music will be played or a hymn sung as the couple, the wedding party, and the guests depart.

Wedding Service Program

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to develop and print the wedding program. Before it goes to print, the program should be sent to the officiating pastor to review the Order of Worship.

Here is a sample order of worship for the wedding program, based on the sample service above:

- Processional
- Greeting
- Declaration of Intention
- Response of Family and Friends
- Scripture Reading
- Message
- Exchange of Vows
- Blessing and Exchange of Rings
- Blessing of the Marriage
- Dismissal with Blessing
- Declaration of Marriage
- Kiss
- Introduction of Bride and Groom
- Recessional

Photographer & Videographer

Photographer:

First Methodist Houston proudly offers photo and video services in-house, however third-party photographers and videographers are welcome. The Church Event Coordinator will arrange a free consultation with the in-house media director to discuss the many options First Methodist Houston has to offer.

Videographer:

First Choice Ministries, the communications and media arm of the church, is available to record your wedding service. First Choice has the expertise to produce a quality recording of your wedding that you will cherish forever.



Guidelines

As a historic property, and a house of worship, First Methodist Houston has strict guidelines for photography and videography. While our in-house team are aware of the rules, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of these guidelines to your photographer. The Church Event Coordinator can assist you in this if needed.

Guests & Cell Phones:

First Methodist prohibits the use of cell phones during the wedding service; however, your guests are welcome to take photos before and after the service as well as in the common areas, the lobby, the reception hall, etc. Only designated professional photographers and videographers are allowed to capture photos and video during the service.

Before the Wedding:

Photographers are welcome to photograph the wedding party beginning two hours before the service. Please keep in mind if the ushers are included in your pictures they need to be free to welcome people no later than thirty minutes before the service and the pictures with the remaining wedding party need to stop no later than fifteen minutes before the service.

Sanctuary & Service:

Your photographer will be allowed access to the sanctuary 2 hours prior to the service, and 1 1/2 hours after the service for portraits. Your photographer is allowed to capture portraits immediately following the service. During the service your wedding party may be photographed as they process down the aisle. Photographers will be asked to keep a respectful distance from the bride, groom and pastor during the service. Photographers will also be asked to be mindful of guests, and to not distract from the service as it takes place. The bride and groom may be photographed as they recess after the service. Your pastor will be happy to pose with the bridal party after the service.

After the Wedding:

Photographers are required to complete their work within the scheduled time-frame (up to 2 hours before and 1-1/2 hours after the start of service). This time limit permits the cleaning and preparation of the facilities for other services and facilitates the wedding party's timely arrival at the reception.

Grand Exit & Send Off:

First Methodist Church has several beautiful exits to choose from for your official send off photos. Your Church Event Coordinator will present the options to you prior to the wedding. Sparklers or bubbles are allowed. We do not allow anything that leaves behind debris. We have special up front parking for a getaway car if you plan to have one. Since First Methodist Houston sits on the busy Main Street, it is important to schedule the time for your grand exit photos to allow security to clear the area and have the getaway vehicle in place.



Portrait Session:

If you would like to schedule to have a portrait taken ahead of your wedding, you may use the church facility without charge. Please schedule this time with the Church Event Coordinator.

Guidelines for Ushers:

Ushers are asked to inform guests that no pictures may be taken during the wedding service. Please add this note to your wedding program.

Respect for the Church

The church facilities are sacred space, a holy place set apart for worship and fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ. Please respect this space, the heart of our church, and graciously accept the direction of the pastor, the Church Event Coordinator or member of the wedding guild.

Use of tobacco products or possession of illegal substances are not permitted on the premises. The wedding guild member or the pastor has the responsibility and authority to enforce this provision and cancel the wedding if necessary.

It is the responsibility of the couple being married to assure that all facilities are respected, left clean, and undamaged. We cannot provide storage for items left over the weekend. All decorations and rentals must be removed within 1 ½ hours following the service or reception. Please assign a friend or family member to this duty.

In all matters about the facilities the Church Event Coordinator and the wedding guild member represents the church and counts on your full cooperation.

1320 MAIN



Bride's Room

A Bride's Room is available to the wedding party for dressing two hours before the wedding. It includes a private restroom. Arrangements for refreshments you wish to provide need to be made with the Church Event Coordinator. No alcohol or smoking is allowed in this space. If a bride has five or more attendants, it may be necessary to make arrangements with the Church Event Coordinator for additional nearby space.

Nothing of value should be left in the Bride's Room. The church cannot assume responsibility for loss. A family member or friend is to be responsible for watching personal belongings during the wedding.

Personal belongings of the bride and her attendants are to be removed within one and a half (1½) hours after the wedding begins, to accommodate other weddings scheduled. A friend or relative of the bride should be selected for this responsibility.

Groom's Room

A room is provided to accommodate the groom and his attendants. Again, no smoking or alcohol is allowed in this area.

Decorations

Please give a copy of these instructions to the florist and decorator. (Ask the Church Event Coordinator for help.) You are also responsible for their observance.

Decorating at First Methodist Church may start two hours before a wedding and should be finished about one hour before the wedding begins. No altar or chancel appointments (Bibles, pulpit and choir chairs, etc.) may be moved. All decorations are to be removed immediately following the wedding. You must hold the decorator responsible for any damage to the building or furnishings

Altar

The Bible and candles remain on the altar.

Flowers

Large floral arrangements in liners may be used in the vases that are a part of the chancel area. If desired, additional arrangements in tall containers on either side of the altar are quite effective. The decorator may seek the advice of the Church Event Coordinator regarding placements of arrangements and must accept direction in situations deemed unacceptable (e.g., camera placement, potential fire hazards). Flowers and decorations are not to be attached to the pews or any other woodwork with anything but ribbon or padded clamps made for that purpose. Floral clay, tape, wire, tacks or other metal objects are not to be used.

Candles

The church furnishes the candles used on the altar. Candelabra rented through a florist may be placed on either side of the pulpit, on the floor level inside the altar rail, and in the choir loft.

A large sheet of clear plastic must be placed under the candelabra to protect the floors. Candelabra may not be placed on the carpet. Candles must be encased in metal tubes or be the votive type. No unprotected or exposed candles may be used. Candles or flowers may not be placed on or near the piano or organ. A Unity Candle may be used, if desired, and the church can provide a Unity Candle stand and candles upon request of the Church Event Coordinator.

Reception

Catering

You have the freedom to choose the caterer of your choice from the church's list of caterers who have been vetted by the church and know the policy of the church related to food and drink. The Church Event Coordinator can give you details.

Outside Rentals

Additional items (tableware, glassware, furniture, lighting, entertainment/talent, etc.) may be arranged through the Events Manager, your licensed Caterer, or Event Planner and must be decided no later than 3 weeks prior to the Event Date. If these items are handled directly by you, your licensed Caterer, Event Planner, a specific delivery time must be made and a late night pick up may be required. Please see the Church Event Coordinator for available outside rental options.

Prep Kitchen

Prep Kitchen use is available to licensed caterers only. They must present a certificate of liability (COL) Cooking is not permitted however warming is. Your licensed caterer arrives prior to your event and stays until after your event to clean the kitchen and all food areas. They are responsible for bussing all plates and glassware etc.

Decorating

Arrangements for decorating any of the facilities must be made with the Church Event Coordinator to be sure no other activity will be in the room after it has been decorated.

Security

One security officer and one off duty policeman are included in your event package from one hour prior to start time until the completion of tear down. Additional security officers are provided for guests counts of 75 or greater at an additional cost.

Facility Capacities

| <i>Downtown Facility</i> | <i>Use</i> | <i>Capacity</i> |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Chapel | Wedding | 90 |
| Sanctuary | Wedding | 1200 |
| Fellowship Hall | Reception | 300 |

QUICK ANSWERS TO Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can we have a wedding at First Methodist if we are not members?

A: Absolutely!

Q: How far in advance may a wedding be booked?

A: Weddings may be booked one year in advance of the selected date.

Q: What days and times are weddings booked at First Methodist?

A: Weddings are held Downtown on Saturdays at 11 a.m., 3 p.m., or 7 p.m.

*Wedding bookings within three months of date may have flexibility of times.

Q: Are there reception facilities available at First Methodist?

A: Yes. Reception facilities are available for weddings scheduled.

Q: How many people will the sanctuary hold? The chapel?

A: The main sanctuary Downtown will seat 1200 and the chapel will seat 90.

Q: What parking facilities are available at First Methodist?

A: A parking lot is available Downtown located at the corners of Travis/Polk/Milam at no charge to those attending the wedding.

Q: May we request a particular pastor for the wedding?

A: Yes, you may request any pastor from our staff during your initial consultation with the Church Event Coordinator. The final decision will be made by the Senior Pastor. A pastor from another United Methodist Church or another denomination may assist with the approval of the Senior Pastor.

Q: May we choose our music and musicians?

A: Yes, however all music and musicians must be approved by our Church Organist.

Q: Is marriage counseling required?

A: Yes. The couple is to meet at least once with the officiating pastor to discuss the wedding and the marriage.

Q: Can you tell me more?

A: Of course! Please contact the church at 832-668-1800 and ask to speak to the Church Event Coordinator.





Our Prayer For You

May you give praise to God whose gentle plan has drawn you together in love.

May you give your heart to God who fortifies you to keep faith with one another.

May you give your weaknesses to God who will defend you from every enemy.

May you give your strengths to God who will save you from yourself.

May you give your home to God who will build it
into a place of welcome, of mercy, and of care.

May you give your future to God whose providence supplies your every need.

May you give your lives to God who will use your union to serve a broken world.

May you give your souls to God who will give you eternal peace.

For together in God all of life is blessed!



The Historic
first methodist
HOUSTON

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