

The First Congregational Church in Essex, CT
United Church of Christ
An Open and Affirming Congregation
6 Methodist Hill, Essex, CT 06426
860-767-8097 email office@essexucc.org
Rev. Kenneth D. Peterkin (ptrkn@comcast.net), Pastor
Karen Burzin, Office Administrator

Wedding Arrangements and Fee Schedule

This is written to those considering a wedding at First Congregational Church in Essex, CT, United Church of Christ. It contains answers to questions commonly asked and will provide information about the practices specific to this church.

The first question to be answered is: *Why is a Christian marriage desired in the first place?* The Church is not just a beautiful place to say one's marriage vows nor a place to be married only for reasons of tradition. The choice of a Christian marriage brings with it the belief that God is a part of the couple's relationship. It implies that the couple recognizes the need for God's grace to strengthen their life together.

How are wedding arrangements made?

After reading this booklet and agreeing that Christian marriage is the desire of both parties, the couple makes an appointment with the Pastor. At that meeting any preliminary questions are raised, and a wedding date is tentatively scheduled. During the time of preparation, it is hoped that the couple will be faithful in their attendance at Sunday worship. The couple will meet with the pastor at least three times; sometimes more meetings are required. During these meetings the couple will receive counsel about the nature of Christian marriage, and discuss issues related to marriage. After these discussions the pastor will give (or withhold) consent to officiate at the wedding and with consent, the details and design of the wedding service will be made.

Who may be married at First Congregational Church in Essex?

Affiliation and membership with the church is not required though it is encouraged. We welcome couples planning to be married into the congregation and the community and hope that they will attend worship regularly. We encourage you to otherwise involve yourself in a faith community.

When may weddings be scheduled?

Weddings may be scheduled when the church and the pastor are available and not during Holy Week, on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

What choices for the wedding are possible?

The wedding service will be designed and written by cooperative effort of the pastor and the couple. Friends or family may be invited to participate and the couple will be invited to choose Scripture and other readings as desired, the music, the vows, and other details that may mark the service as their own.

Who may officiate at a wedding?

The pastor of the church will officiate at weddings. Rarely will outside clergy be approved. If clergy from the outside of the parish are involved in the service, it is mandatory that they be invited to do so by the pastor at the church. No assumptions otherwise should be made. All arrangements should be made well in advance.

What music may be used?

The parish organist plays the organ or piano for weddings. Music for the ceremony will be decided in consultation with the parish organist. Soloists and other instrumentalists must rehearse with the organist before the day of the wedding. If additional rehearsals are required an additional \$25 fee will be required.

What about candelabra?

There are six floor standing candelabras which may be used; each takes seven candles. A fee will be adjusted for the number of candles used (\$4 per candle). There are five candle sconces on both sides of the center aisle available if desired.

What about flowers for the service?

Flower deliveries and set up by florists must be scheduled in advance. If desired, flowers may be left for the following Sunday worship in thanksgiving for the marriage and are then delivered to homebound members. Florists may only use pew clips which do not harm the pews.

What are the restrictions on photography and videography?

A wedding is a sacred and solemn event that should not be disrupted by photographers or videographers. Flash photography is not allowed during the ceremony. All guests should be alerted to this rule and be encouraged to take pictures later in the event. Videos may be taken from a fixed point in the sanctuary or from the balcony but not in any of the aisles or at the front of the sanctuary. Photographers must be unobtrusive and not distract from the service. Posed photographs may be taken in the church only for about 20 minutes after the service. **It is the responsibility of the couple to make these policies known to the photographer, family and friends. The pastor will stop the wedding in order to enforce this requirement.**

What happens at rehearsal?

The rehearsal usually takes place the day before the wedding at a mutually agreed upon time. It is imperative that the rehearsal begin on time; it usually takes forty five minutes. At the rehearsal, the wedding party will walk through the service. All who are in the wedding party must be at the rehearsal including parents and any friends who will be reading or participating in any fashion.

At the rehearsal, the bride and groom should have a written arrangement for the seating of their parents and honored guests and for the ushering of the mother and other hundred guests to their seats. They should also have decided who will be in the receiving line and in what order they will greet the wedding guests if they will greet at the church immediately following the service.

When should we arrive for the wedding?

Ushers arrive 45 minutes before the service; the groom and best man arrive 30 minutes before the service; bridesmaids, flower girls, ring bearers and parents at least 30 minutes before the service; bride and presenter of the bride may arrive 10 minutes before the service. These times are for planning purposes only and the bride is actually encouraged to be at the church 1 hour before in order to avoid greeting guests (if the traditional expectation of not being seen before the service is important). If the wedding party is not at the church fifteen minutes after the scheduled time of the ceremony, the wedding may be canceled.

What else might we need to know?

Runner length needed: 37 feet

Sanctuary & Balcony seats: 226 (approx. 170 can be seated in pews and on benches at the back of the sanctuary plus 30 in the balcony and 26 in the choir)

Neither rice nor confetti is allowed; bird seed, bubbles, flowers/petals or butterflies may be used only outside of the church building.

Parking is limited and guests should be encouraged to park along Prospect Street. Handicapped parking is available along the side of the church on Methodist Hill.

Brides and attendants are encouraged to dress prior to arriving at the church unless arrangements have been made to use the Cove View Room or the Fellowship Hall, in advance. Attire should be suitable for a church service.

A valid marriage license must be obtained in the Town of Essex or your Connecticut town of residence. In Essex, the license is valid for 65 days from the date of application. The license must be delivered to the church by the rehearsal or before.

Fees and Honoraria:

| | <u>Church Members</u> | <u>Non-Members</u> |
|--------------|-----------------------|--|
| Pastor: | Gifts accepted | \$500 |
| Organist: | \$150 | \$175 |
| Sexton: | \$75 | \$75 |
| Building Use | Donation | \$500-Sanctuary \$150-Fellowship Hall |

A deposit of \$500 for Non-Members is due before a commitment date is set

This fee is refundable in full if cancelled 90 days prior to the date.

If cancelled after that time half of the fee will be returned.

The minister, organist & sexton fees are to be paid no later than one week before the service (non-refundable). Checks should be made out to the individuals, personally.

Rev. 06/12/2019