



Wedding Information

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF
FALMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

RECEIVING LINE

If you wish to have your receiving line at our church, you may use the Village Green or the front of the church--assuming the weather cooperates. Other alternatives are our church's vestibule [which can get crowded], or the lobby of our church's Fellowship Hall.

If your receiving line is to be at the church, you should decide the order in which participants stand, before you come to the rehearsal. Here is one possible order--adapted from Miss Amy Vanderbilt's book on etiquette.

Mother of the Bride

Father of the Groom

Mother of the Groom

Father of the Bride

Bride [to Groom's right]

Groom

**Best Man

Flower Girl

Maid/Matron of Honor

Bridesmaids

**Groomsmen [or Ushers]

**According to Miss Vanderbilt, formal receiving lines do not include the Best Man and Groomsmen, but it is common practice in our community to include them.

RECEPTION

Our church's Fellowship Hall is available for non-alcoholic wedding receptions. More information is available upon request.

A REMEMBRANCE

Some couples have found that a cup plate commemorating our church's Tricentennial serves as a nice remembrance of their wedding day in our church. These cup plates are displayed in the vestibule to our sanctuary, and may be ordered through our church office.

The First Congregational Church of Falmouth extends its welcome to you as you prepare for one of the most meaningful events in your lives--the day when you as a couple will exchange your vows before God, to enter into the sacred covenant of marriage together.

Our church is pleased to provide this special service of Christian worship for you and to celebrate your vows of love and faithfulness to one another. We hope that the information contained in this booklet will be helpful to you as you plan for that special day.

SCHEDULING

Ideally, our church office should be contacted more than 8 months in advance. All weddings are scheduled at the discretion of our Senior Minister, the Rev. Dr. Douglas Showalter, and on a "first come, first served" basis. No more than two weddings will be scheduled per day--weekend or weekday.

Of particular note to those who live outside the Cape area: Couples seeking to be married in our church must be prepared to schedule their required pre-marital counseling session on a Monday-Friday, and not on a weekend or a holiday.

CLERGY

All weddings in our church will be conducted by our Senior Minister, The Rev. Dr. Douglas K. Showalter. If he is unavailable, weddings will be conducted by one of our church's Honorary Ministers, the Reverends Al Allenby, Barbara Miner, Allan Page, Robert Singer, or Rev. William Tucker.

Clergy from outside our church may assist in the service, at the discretion and invitation of the Rev. Dr. Doug Showalter or his alternate. However, the formal pronouncement of the marriage and the signing of the legal license shall be done by the minister representing our congregation.

HONORARIA

The use of our church for a wedding is provided without charge to couples who are affiliated with our church. Couples not affiliated with our church are required to pay a fee of \$225.

Use of Church - \$225 (for couples not affiliated with our church)

Honoraria for personal services are:

Minister - \$225

Organist - \$180

Sexton - \$100

Services required of our Church Sexton exceeding the 3 hour allowance [adequate for most weddings] will entail an additional honorarium at the rate of \$25 for each additional hour or part thereof.

Couples are responsible to work out, on their own, all honoraria arrangements for participants in the service not directly provided by our Church, for example: assisting guest clergy, assisting guest organist, guest soloists/instrumentalists.

To reduce wedding day responsibilities, the marriage license and the honoraria should be brought either to the wedding rehearsal or to the church office during the week prior to your wedding. The wedding cannot take place until a valid license is received. Also, please make out separate honoraria checks.

FLOWERS

The church will be open one hour before your service. If your florist **MUST** make an earlier delivery, arrangements should be made in advance with our church office. This **COULD** entail an additional charge for the Sexton. Usually one, but sometimes two or three floral arrangements are used in the front of the chancel.

Tape is not to be used in placing bows on the pews; ask your florist about plastic pew clips. We have installed special eyes on the first six pews for pew bows; they can be tied on or a stick can be inserted. Also, you should inform your florist, that because of space considerations, we do not usually seat anyone in the very first pew. Parents and close family are seated beginning with the second pew.

PARKING

There is a parking lot to the left of our church. Use the asphalt driveway on the left hand side of the stone wall. Parking in front of the church during the wedding is allowed.

ELEVATOR

An elevator to the sanctuary is available for anyone in your wedding needing such assistance. The elevator is located immediately inside the church's portico entrance off the parking lot.

THE REHEARSAL NIGHT

The rehearsal should take no more than one hour. It should be scheduled to allow out-of-town participants to arrive punctually. In addition to the wedding party, it is also helpful to have the parents of the bride and groom present.

To save time, the decision as to the line-up of the bridesmaids and groomsmen should be made beforehand.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

The church will be open one hour before your service. Ushers should be prepared to seat guests one half hour beforehand. The bride and her party may use a room downstairs for dressing, or may wish to arrive at the church just before the wedding is to begin. The groom and best man should be in the church parlor at least 20 minutes before the service.

While the church does not prohibit the throwing of rice and birdseed outside the church for the bride and groom's exit, we request that it be avoided as it creates additional cleaning responsibilities for the Sexton. The blowing of soap bubbles has enjoyed recent popularity and there are several places that market small bottles specifically for weddings.

Most important of all, take time to enjoy this day! Rely on the minister conducting your service to lead you through it effortlessly, but very meaningfully. After your service, arrange to take your flowers with you so that you can enjoy them at your reception. Some may wish to leave flowers for our Sunday church service, which is certainly appreciated, but not expected.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE LITURGY

You will receive the order for weddings regularly used by the minister conducting your service. This service is designed to be dignified and worshipful. Without additional inclusions, it lasts about 15 minutes. Modifications to this service may be made, or another worship order substituted, with the approval of the minister conducting the service.

However, couples proposing extensive changes to the service should, after approval, be prepared to present an easy-to-read, "finished" copy, in at least size 14 bold type, for the minister to use at their rehearsal and service.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Be sure to bring this to your rehearsal or to the church office during the week prior to your wedding, as your wedding cannot be performed without it. Contact your local town office to learn the legal details of acquiring your license.

Generally speaking: Both parties to the marriage must file their intentions together, no earlier than 60 days before the wedding. There is a mandatory waiting period of three days to receive the license, not counting the day of filing intentions. Blood tests are required. The license can be obtained anywhere within Massachusetts and used in our church.

After your marriage the officiating minister will sign your license and return it to the town office from which it was issued--the same place you must go to secure your own copy, if needed.

In addition, after your service our Church will provide you with its own certificate of marriage.

GUEST REGISTRY

In our vestibule there is a writing stand available for a registry.

You may wish to secure a white aisle runner from your florist. The center aisle is 60 feet in length. If you are using an aisle runner, it should be inspected to be certain that it is secured to the center aisle rug. If the bride wishes a flower girl to drop flower petals during the processional, an aisle runner is **required**.

CANDLES

There are two service candles on the altar-table which may be used. If the couple wishes to have someone in their wedding party light the candles as part of their service, tapers with which to light them are found in the vestibule to the sanctuary. Otherwise, the altar-table candles will be lit by the Sexton approximately 15 minutes prior to the service. Candelabra rented from a florist may be used in the sanctuary area, but only if they are provided with drip cups. For safety reasons, no candles are to be lit anywhere else in the sanctuary, including window sills.

If the bride and groom wish a Unity Candle ceremony, the Unity candle, individual tapers, and holders must be provided by the bride and groom and should be placed on the altar-table prior to the ceremony.

PHOTOGRAPHY

To maintain the dignity of our wedding services, certain guidelines for photography have been established. You should instruct your professional photographer to consult with the officiating minister, on your wedding day, prior to the service.

Guidelines are these:

Up to and including the bridal procession, and after the kiss: photographs may be taken as desired.

When the service begins: still photography is restricted to the designated wedding photographer who may take pictures without flash, and unobtrusively, from either the back, vestibule door of the sanctuary or upstairs from the back of the balcony [near the organ].

A Video Camera may be used in the balcony to record the entire service, as long as the operator stays in place, and uses no auxiliary lighting. Usually this is done from the right front balcony over the lectern.

After the service: the wedding party may return to the sanctuary and take all the pictures desired. To assist our Sexton, please let the minister know in advance, whether or not you will be returning to the sanctuary for pictures.

ORGANIST

All organ accompaniment for weddings in our church will be provided by our Organist, Mrs. Patricia Crews, or, if she is unavailable, by alternates under her direction, and will be present at both the wedding service and the rehearsal. Extra rehearsals (i.e. with soloists) or time spent preparing specially requested music for the wedding may entail an additional charge for the organist's services.

Organists from outside our church may assist in the service, at the discretion and invitation of Mrs. Crews or her alternate. If an organist from outside our church is used, their presence is **strongly recommended** at the wedding rehearsal. If other musical arrangements are desired for the wedding, particularly for the processional and recessional (i.e. string quartet, harp), it is **strongly recommended** that the performing musician or a representative of the musical group be present at the rehearsal. This is for the emotional well-being of the bridal party, since the processional and recessional are practiced during the rehearsal and the musician(s) can plan the length of their music for such. All outside musicians should arrange to speak with the officiating minister prior to the rehearsal/wedding to discuss the minister's procedures for the rehearsal/wedding.

MUSIC

All music in the service is subject to the approval of the minister conducting the service. Additionally, specific requests for organ music should be discussed with the Church Organist in advance of the wedding rehearsal.

Ave Maria is a Roman Catholic song which is appropriate for ecumenical weddings when a Roman Catholic priest is assisting in our service. When a priest is not assisting, *Ave Maria* may not be used in the service, but may be played or sung in the prelude before the service.

Generally speaking, contemporary music is acceptable as long as it has an air of dignity appropriate to the occasion (i.e. *One Hand, One Heart* and *The Wedding Song*)

Guest soloists and instrumentalists are welcomed, subject to the above guidelines. A list of possible soloists can be provided, if requested.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

All couples will be issued a pre-marital counseling manual to keep and read through together at their own pace. Many couples have found this manual and its exercises quite helpful. The manual is specifically designed for United Methodist churches, but also is quite valuable for use in United Church of Christ congregations, such as ours.

One or more confidential pre-marital counseling sessions will be held to assist the couple in beginning their new life together. The prospective bride and groom should fill out, separately, their respective questionnaires, beginning on page 99 of the manual. The completed questionnaires should be sent to the minister prior to your first counseling session.

Counseling sessions should be scheduled by the couple several months before the wedding, and for a time other than a weekend or a holiday. Upon request, additional counseling sessions can be scheduled.