Wedding Policy (Approved by Board of Trustees October 2008)

 Congratulations on your upcoming wedding! Our church is pleased that you are considering the celebration of your wedding and the beginning of your married life together at the United Methodist Temple (UMT). It is our hope that this wedding policy will give you the guidelines needed to make your wedding plans and ceremony go as smoothly as possible.  Please read this policy carefully and ask any questions you might have. Our pastor and wedding coordinator have a great deal of experience with weddings, and they will assist you in all pertinent aspects of the planning. We look forward to working with you and hope that the next months will be filled with joy and blessings and anticipation as you begin to prepare for your life in Christ together.

The Wedding as Worship

A Christian wedding is, first and foremost, a worship service, honoring God and celebrating His good gifts of love and marriage; recognizing His rightful place at the center of your marriage; and seeking His blessing upon your marriage. God is the active force in your union as husband and wife, for as Jesus said in reference to marriage, “...what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Matthew 19:6) Therefore, elements of the service should have Christian spiritual significance or symbolism. Even though the pastor has the final say as to the order and elements of the service, we endeavor to work with you to make the wedding a meaningful worship service.

Consultation with Pastor  At UMT

We are interested in the kind of marriage you are creating and not just the wedding ceremony. We want to help you have the very best start possible on what we pray will be a wonderful lifelong relationship as husband and wife. Involvement in premarital counseling sessions with the pastor is required of all couples. We encourage your openness, your honesty, your questions, and your willingness to grow. To that end, all counseling sessions are strictly confidential. We value this opportunity to get to know you better and to assist you in laying a firm foundation for lifelong commitment to each other.  In circumstances where the bride and groom live outside of this area, a different pastor in their locale may conduct the premarital counseling sessions, but it is necessary that the two pastors be in contact with each other.

Guest Pastor

At the discretion and invitation of our pastor at UMT, guest pastors from another Christian faith may officiate or assist in the wedding ceremony, but they must comply with the UMT wedding policy.

Scheduling of Rehearsal, Wedding, and Reception

Upon a couple’s desire to marry in our church they will need to come by the church office to pick up a copy of the wedding policy. After reading the wedding policy, the first thing a couple should do is to contact the church secretary at 409- 962-5762 to check that the wedding date you have selected is available on the church calendar, and then arrange a meeting with the wedding coordinator and one with the pastor. The pastor will answer questions regarding the wedding policy, schedule the date of the wedding (in consultation with the wedding coordinator), and arrange for premarital counseling. The wedding coordinator will work with the pastor and the couple to design the worship service, and she will set the appropriate fees according to the policy.  Member couples will pay one-half of the calculated fees (non-refundable) at the time of the reservation, with the balance due six weeks prior to the date of the ceremony. Non-member couples will pay a $300 deposit (refundable after the wedding if no damages occur) plus one-half of the calculated fees (non- refundable) at the time of the reservation with the balance due six weeks prior to the date of the ceremony. Only when the wedding reservation form is completed and signed by the couple and the pastor, and when the appropriate deposits are paid is the wedding officially placed on the calendar.  After the wedding date is cleared on the church calendar, the couple is to arrange a meeting with the wedding coordinator. The coordinator will discuss plans for the marriage ceremony, including the rehearsal, and reception if applicable.  Member couples (where at least one individual or a parent/guardian is a current member for at least 1 year) may schedule a wedding up to one year in advance. Non-member couples may only schedule a wedding up to four months in advance.  In order to assure that our church staff have adequate time to spend with their families, weddings will begin no earlier than 10 a.m. and no later than 7 p.m. Receptions at the church shall last no longer than 2 hours, including removal of all personal belongings. No wedding or rehearsal will be scheduled on the following days: Sundays, Holy Week (the week prior to Easter Sunday), Memorial Day weekend, July 4th, Labor Day weekend, Thanksgiving Day and weekend, the week prior to and including Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, or New Year’s Day. Wedding and reception set-up must be done within the normal business hours of the church.

Planning Your Wedding

UMT has a seating capacity of 400 persons in the sanctuary, with pipe organ, grand piano, sound and video systems available. The chapel has a maximum seating capacity of 40 persons, with piano available. The wedding courtyard has a seating capacity of approximately 40 persons. An accompanist or a portable CD player may be used in the chapel or wedding courtyard, but the couple is responsible for that on their own. The bride’s room is available for sanctuary weddings, and for larger wedding parties, an additional adjacent room is available, too. A classroom is available for the groom and his attendants. Our gymnasium, Scott Hall, is available for large receptions or rehearsal dinners. And our banquet room (the Wesley classroom) and the Coffee Bar area are available for smaller receptions or rehearsal dinners. We do not allow the use of tobacco products or the consumption of any alcoholic beverages on our church campus. The couple is responsible for any damage to the buildings, grounds, or furnishings.

Fee Schedule

The schedule of fees is based on the relationship between the church and the individuals getting married. There is one schedule of fees for members and their immediate family (where either the bride or groom, or either of their parents or legal guardians is a member of UMT). The other schedule of fees is for extended family of church members or for non-members. The fee schedule appears on the following page.

Decorations, Candles, and Flowers

The sanctuary is a beautiful worship space designed to magnify the glory of God. Because of the liturgical integrity of the Sanctuary and Chapel, you should trust in their beauty to enhance your wedding. Symbols, furniture, and fixtures in the chancel area of the sanctuary cannot be moved without the prior approval of the pastor or wedding coordinator. The facility may be tastefully enhanced by a responsible florist no earlier than three (3) hours prior to the ceremony. Candelabra/s, unity candle, plant stands and other decorations may be placed in the chancel area with locations approved by the pastor or wedding coordinator.  Bows and/or flowers may be hung on the side of pews using pipe cleaners or plastic hangers in order not to damage the wood finish. No tacks, pins, glue, nails or tape of any kind may be used to fasten any decoration to the furniture or building. Any items that have been place in the sanctuary for your wedding are your responsibility and should be removed from the church building within one hour after the wedding ceremony. Any items belonging to members of the wedding party that are lost or misplaced are not the responsibility of the church. Every precaution should be taken by the wedding party to secure all valuables.



Music

Music that is sung or played has great power to give the worship service its character. Therefore, it is concern for the sanctity of the wedding worship service that prompts these musical guidelines. The use of sacred music ensures proclamation of Christian faith and hope. Such texts and music express the joy, praise and thanksgiving that characterize marriage in a Christian spirit.

The UMT organist can make suggestions to guide you in your musical selections if needed. The organist should be contacted as soon as possible after the initial conference with the pastor to secure her services. At least six weeks prior to the wedding, the choice of music and rehearsal schedules should be set and approved by the organist.

If the UMT organist is not available or you should wish to have a guest organist, ensemble or pianist, you should make these arrangements through the Director of Music Ministries.

Vocalist/s you select will be honored if the vocalist/s sing music appropriate for the ceremony. All vocalist/s are required to know the music in advance of rehearsing with the organist and are expected to be at the wedding rehearsal.

Sound System/Video System

The sound system is necessary during the ceremony and must be operated by trained persons. The wedding hostess will make arrangements for one of UMT’s trained operators to be present at the wedding rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. Refer to the fee schedule.

The video projection system must also be operated by trained persons. If this optional service is requested, the wedding coordinator will make arrangements for one of UMT’s trained operators to be present at the wedding rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. Refer to the fee schedule.

Photography/Video Taping

The United Methodist Temple recognizes the value of wedding photographs and video recordings as a lasting remembrance of this special occasion and will provide opportunities for photographs to be taken before and after the ceremony. No flash photography is allowed during the ceremony (from the point the mother of the bride is seated until the bride and groom leave the altar), so please advise friends and family not to take pictures during the ceremony. The photographer is not allowed in the chancel area during the ceremony for any photographs.

It is suggested that as many pictures as possible be taken before the wedding. In order to allow your wedding guests time to arrive and be seated, all pre- wedding photographs taken inside the sanctuary should be concluded no less than 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the service. Following the service a maximum of 30 minutes is allowed for photos. The photographer’s schedule should be made available for the wedding coordinator in order that she may assist in keeping the schedule within the approved time frame.

Videotaping of the service may be done privately, provided the cameras are stationary and do not require the use of distracting lights. Remote microphones, used to enhance sound quality, are not allowed. All video equipment must be set in place no later than one (1) hour prior to the ceremony.

It is the bride’s responsibility to advise her photographer and video recorder of these guidelines. Your choice of professionals must be approved by the pastor or wedding coordinator since individuals failing to abide by these guidelines will not be allowed to perform their services in future ceremonies at the United Methodist Temple.

Rehearsals

The rehearsal is an integral part of the preparation for your wedding and should proceed in an orderly manner. It is usually held the evening before the wedding day. The entire wedding party should attend the rehearsal. In addition to those standing with the couple, this includes ushers, musicians, readers, parents and grandparents. The rehearsal will begin promptly at the designated time and usually lasts an hour or less. The marriage license should be given to the wedding coordinator or pastor at this time. The officiating pastor, with the assistance of the wedding coordinator will conduct the rehearsal.

Miscellaneous

Smoking in the facilities and on the church grounds is forbidden.

Alcoholic beverages are strictly forbidden on the church grounds. The officiating pastor may refuse to perform the wedding if any member of the wedding party is under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

It is the responsibility of the person/s scheduling the wedding to inform all members of the wedding part concerning the guidelines contained herein.