

WELCOME!

So you want to get married and you're considering Lakewood? What a blessing! There are few happier occasions in life than the joining together of a man and a woman in the sacred bonds of marriage. And as a congregation of faith, we believe that from the very beginning, God has designed marriage to be a blessing indeed to couples who are willing to pledge themselves to each other in the sight of God, and to ask for His help as they enter into the joys and duties of life together.

The service of Christian marriage is thus one of the most holy and important rites which any pastor may celebrate under the authority and ordination of the church, and all ceremonies conducted within our congregation are times of worship designed to impart the deepest blessings of our Lord. In order for the service to maintain the significance it deserves, therefore, we have carefully and prayerfully thought through the following guidelines and policies and would ask that each couple considering a ceremony at Lakewood United Methodist Church do likewise. Our hope as a church is to indeed see the grace of God operative within each union which is conducted here, insuring not only a beautiful ceremony on your special day, but the beginning of a growing and healthy permanent union which will be the most enduring and satisfying relationship of your lives.

SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

Couples who are interested in being married at Lakewood United Methodist Church may check on the availability of desired dates by checking with the Office at 281-370-2273. Ceremonies may **not** be scheduled, however, until after an initial appointment with one of the pastors on staff, during which the pastor will go over the church's understanding of marriage as a sacred and lifelong link, as well as answer any questions which the couple may have about the biblical expectations for this holy covenant. As per the *Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, the decision to perform a ceremony shall be the "sole right and responsibility of the pastor," and it shall only be made after "due counsel with the parties involved." At times, in order to uphold our church's guidelines and their own convictions about Christian marriage, our pastors may need to decline to perform a wedding, and the church will support its pastors in this decision.

If all are in agreement, however, a reservation form may then be completed and a date may be placed on the church calendar for up to one year in advance for **members** of the church, defined as the bride or groom, or parents or grandparents of either who have been active members of Lakewood for at least six months. **Non-members** may schedule their weddings up to six months in advance, with a deposit required at the time at which the reservation is made in order to hold a particular date. ***Please note that all those being married should only announce dates after completing the reservation form and receiving a confirmation from the church.***

Weddings will not be scheduled during Holy Week or on Sundays, or on the following holidays: Christmas Eve or Day,

New Year's Eve or Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day or Thanksgiving Day and the weekend following. All evening weddings should be scheduled to begin no later than seven p.m. and should be concluded by ten p.m. Weddings held on the same day should be scheduled at least five hours apart.

FACILITIES

We are pleased to share our beautiful sanctuary at Lakewood with those wishing to be married in a Christian ceremony. Seating within the nave of the church will hold approximately 750 worshipers, with an additional fifty places within the choir loft in the chancel. The sanctuary offers a center aisle and is divided into four principle sections. The wedding party itself may be accommodated either inside the altar rail, arranged along the steps, or outside the rail, depending upon the number involved. Smaller weddings may also be scheduled in our Founder's Court, with seating for up to one hundred and fifty.

Subject to availability, those wishing to hold receptions at the church may do so in our Founder's Court or in Asbury Hall, designed to comfortably accommodate up to seven hundred standing, or up to five hundred at round tables.

Respecting the health concerns of all, as well as the historic witness of the Church regarding temperance, Lakewood UMC is a ***smoke-free environment*** and ***alcoholic beverages of any kind are not permitted anywhere on our campus***. Because of insurance and personnel issues, our nursery facilities are generally not available for use by the wedding party or guests during either the rehearsal or ceremony.

OFFICIATING CLERGY

A minister of Lakewood UMC will officiate at all weddings held at the church and will similarly be in charge of the rehearsal and ceremony, assisted by a member of our wedding team. Particular members of the pastoral staff may be requested by the wedding party at the time of the initial appointment, but the final assignment of an officiating pastor is subject to change for weddings up to four months in advance of the wedding date, or in cases of illness or emergency.

Guest ministers from other United Methodist churches or other denominations may assist at the discretion of the officiating staff pastor; however, the United Methodist service will be used during the ceremony. If a visiting pastor does not have a robe and white stole for the wedding, we will be happy to arrange for one to be provided. The name and address of the guest minister should be given to the officiating pastor at least two months prior to the ceremony so that a written invitation to that individual may be issued, in keeping with established ministerial ethics and protocol.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Because we take marriage seriously and wish to help build strong and lasting unions, Lakewood UMC recommends that couples seeking to be married in the church complete a minimum of three hours of premarital counseling, including the initial session and subsequent meetings, programs, or classes done either with the pastor or others of whom he or she may approve or suggest. More than this minimum may be recommended or required, and the names of qualified counselors may be provided by the pastor at the time of the

initial session. Couples will be responsible for the costs, if any, of such outside referrals, and the officiating clergy may request a summation letter from the counselor at the conclusion of such sessions. In addition, couples will generally be asked to complete a premarital inventory form and return it to the officiating clergy after the first meeting. The final session with the pastor will focus in on the details of the ceremony itself and any requests for changes or adjustments in such should be presented at that time.

Premarital counseling should generally begin three to five months prior to the ceremony and be completed no later than one week before the day of the wedding. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to contact the church office to schedule such appointments at the appropriate time.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

A marriage license within the State of Texas is valid for a period of thirty days only and generally may not be used within 72 hours (three days) of its issuance. Both bride and groom must appear in person at the office of a county clerk to apply for the license and pay the required fees. Licenses do not have to be issued by the county in which the ceremony is performed, but must come from somewhere within the state.

The license should be given to the officiating pastor at one of the premarital sessions or at the time of the rehearsal in order to reduce the stress of the wedding day, as no marriage can proceed without a license. Following the service, the pastor will sign the license and give it to the church office for recording in the official records of the church before returning it to the county clerk's office. The county will in turn mail the

completed form to the couple, usually within a week or two of the ceremony. Couples who need proof of marriage for travel overseas or other purposes should notify the church office prior to the ceremony so that a copy of the license can be made and given to them on the day of their wedding.

MUSIC

Because the Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God, all music in the wedding should represent the very best we have to offer Him in a suitable and reverent way. For this reason, secular music such as ballads, love songs, and popular tunes, are more appropriate at rehearsal dinners and receptions and should not be included within the ceremony itself. Whether of a classical or religious nature, ***all music selections must be approved in advance by the Director of Choral Arts or Church Organist*** who will be happy to meet with the bride and groom to suggest choices which celebrate God's goodness and love. As the presentation of live music is a part of our worship offering before God, pre-recorded or taped music is *not allowed* in wedding ceremonies held within our sanctuary.

Couples being married may choose between the organ or piano as the principle accompaniment for their ceremony. Only musicians from Lakewood will be allowed to play our organ, however, unless permission is expressly given by the Director of Choral Arts or Church Organist and the individuals involved have met with our organist to be oriented to our instrument. Such outside musicians as string and brass ensembles are similarly welcome to be utilized within a ceremony, but are subject to the same understanding regarding musical selections and approval by the Director.

For those desiring vocal selections, a guest soloist may be used, or the Director of Choral Arts or Church Organist will be happy to suggest qualified individuals from within the congregation. Vocal pieces will generally be used at the very beginning of the service, following or preceding the homily, and during the lighting of the Unity Candle if desired. Because the congregation joins in saying the words of the Lord's Prayer as a part of the worship ceremony, it is recommended *not* to include that particular piece among the musical selections for soloists. The bride and groom may also wish to consider the inclusion of particular hymns sung by the congregation in their service, as appropriate to our understanding of the marriage ceremony as an act of corporate worship. The Director of Choral Arts and or the Church Organist maintains a list of such hymns, solos, and other musical selections and will be happy to share such during a meeting with the bride and groom prior to the ceremony.

Please note that *it is the responsibility of the wedding couple to make an appointment with the Director of Choral Arts and or the Church Organist* and, if needed, the soloists, and this should be done at least one to two months prior to the ceremony.

WEDDING TEAM

Lakewood United Methodist Church is blessed to have a wedding team consisting of several individuals who have been trained to act as hosts or hostesses for each ceremony. The member or members assigned to your wedding will provide assistance to the bride (if requested) while she is preparing for the service, and will be present at the rehearsal and ceremony

to assist the officiating pastor in arranging the wedding party, starting the processional, and the like. Consequently, an outside wedding coordinator is unnecessary. Soon after a wedding is confirmed and at least thirty days prior to the ceremony, the bride and groom may meet with the wedding team member to go over any concerns and determine how the individuals in this ministry may be of most service to the couple. A small charge for the assistance of the wedding team is included within the fees, with funds going towards continued care and improvement of our worship facilities.

UNITY CANDLE

The church is happy to provide a beautiful brass unity candle stand for those wishing to utilize such during their ceremonies. Couples are responsible for furnishing their own candles for the stand, which may be found at many local gift shops. It is suggested that the wicks of such candles be trimmed in advance so as to not present a problem in lighting on the day of the ceremony.

DECORATIONS

The beautiful sanctuary of Lakewood has been designed for worship, incorporating numerous symbols of the Christian faith, and thus excessive additional decoration is unnecessary. Because the wedding ceremony is a service of corporate worship, chancel furniture and fixtures are not to be moved and such furnishings as the altar table, pulpit, lectern, sanctuary lamp, and the Alpha and Omega windows must be left unobscured. There shall be no alteration of the physical appearance of the chancel such as the construction of a trellis or the addition of equipment other than candelabrum. No

additional candles may be placed on the altar without permission, nor may candelabrum or floral arrangements be located in front of the altar itself. For evening weddings, twenty pew torches are available to be used within the main seating area of the sanctuary for a set-up fee.

Unless otherwise requested to be changed to white, the cloth paraments in the chancel will reflect the season of the church's year in their color, either blue (Advent), green (Epiphany and Kingdomtide), purple (Lent) or red (Pentecost). Similarly, Christmas decorations such as trees, garlands, and wreaths will be in place during the season of Advent and poinsettias will be in the chancel during the last two weeks of December and may not be moved once they are in place. During this season, no other flowers may be used. If flower arrangements are desired at other times, they should be placed within the two brass stands in the chancel area. Artificial flowers or plants are not allowed in the chancel, though any petals to be thrown by flower girls should *not* be live in order to avoid staining the carpet due to their moisture and pigment. Similarly, protective cloths and plastic must be placed under all plants and candles, and aisle runners are not allowed. Flowers and decorations may not be attached to the pews or any furniture in the sanctuary with tape due to its ability to damage such, nor should they be "spritzed" once attached. If wire is used, it should similarly be wrapped to avoid scratches, and no nails or screws may be driven into the wall, floors, or furnishings. The wedding party is responsible for any damages done to the facility, as well as for removing all candelabras and decorations immediately following the departure of guests. Families wishing to leave their own floral arrangements for Sunday morning services, or those desiring to purchase one or both of the sanctuary arrangements scheduled for the day, should contact the church office to determine availability on

our regular floral calendar, as well as discuss appropriate wording for the Sunday church bulletin. No equipment may be left on the premises, and charges may be assessed if the custodian has to remove such. Please note that the Church cannot be responsible for any equipment or personal property brought to our campus, before, during, or after the wedding. If you have additional questions regarding decorations, the wedding team member will be happy to discuss further these requirements with you.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY

Lakewood recognizes the value of wedding photographs and videos as a lasting remembrance of this most special occasion. However, the taking of pictures during the service, either by a professional photographer or friends, has often been found to detract from the holiness of the moment and so it is *not allowed*. We request that ushers inform guests with cameras of this policy, and similarly, professional photographers may not enter the sanctuary after the processional of the bride has ended. Timed exposure shots from the narthex are permitted only if caution is exercised to minimize the noise, and changing film or film packs is not allowed during the ceremony. If the wedding party desires pictures in the chancel area, these may be staged prior to or following the service. Couples wishing to employ a videographer to record their service may do so provided that those filming the ceremony remain stationary during the service and are dressed appropriate to the occasion. Please be aware that video cameras generally need a great deal of light to have a finished tape of high quality and that additional lighting sources will not be allowed within the sanctuary. For this reason, candlelight weddings may therefore not provide enough light for a good recording and the tape may appear to be dark and

somewhat grainy with some participants appearing almost as silhouettes. The proposed location of video cameras must be approved in advance of the ceremony by either the officiating pastor or the member of the wedding team, and at no time will either a photographer or videographer be permitted to stand on church furnishings or pews in order to take a picture. On the day of the wedding or at the rehearsal, those individuals involved in either activity should check in with the pastor or team member in order to discuss their plans for the ceremony.

SOUND AND AUDIO

Soon after completing the reservation, or no later than one month prior to the day of the ceremony, a member of the Lakewood UMC Audio-Visual team will be assigned to each wedding in order to provide the sound support necessary for the service. Both for the purposes of amplification and for providing a recording of the ceremony, the pastor(s) and groom may be wired with lavalier microphones which will be controlled from the sound booth at the rear of the sanctuary. A small fee designed to compensate our volunteers for their time is included within the costs of a ceremony at Lakewood and includes the presence of an AV tech at both the rehearsal and ceremony. Please note that while every effort will be made to reduce the potential for technical problems, the church can assume no responsibility, however, for guaranteeing the ultimate quality of the audio recording made.

BULLETINS

Printed bulletins may be used for the worship service, but the couple should consult with the pastor on format and order *before* any such material is finalized. *A completed bulletin should be presented to the church office one week prior to the*

day of the wedding, and both the purchase and printing or photocopying of the bulletins is the responsibility of the wedding party. Couples are advised to check at local Christian book stores for a selection of appropriate standard wedding bulletin shells, or with the printer of your choice for a custom program.

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

As a service of worship, it is entirely appropriate that wedding ceremonies include one or more readings from the book of the church, the Bible. The following passages are suggested lessons which the bride and groom may wish to consider in thinking through their service:

Genesis 1.26-28, 31a	The creation of man and woman
Song of Sol. 2.10-14	Love is strong as death
Isaiah 63.7-9	The steadfast love of the Lord
Matthew 5.1-10	The Beatitudes
Matthew 22.35-40	Love, the greatest commandment
Mark 10.42-45	True greatness
John 2.1-11	Christ at the wedding feast of Cana
John 15.9-17	Remain in Christ's love
1 Corinthians 13	The greatest of these is love
Ephesians 4.1-6	Called to one hope
Ephesians 4.32-5.2	Be imitators of God
Ephesians 5.22-33	Wives and Husbands
Philippians 4.4-9	Rejoice in the Lord
Colossians 3.12-17	Put on love
1 John 3.18-24	Love one another
1 John 4.7-16	God is love
Revelation 19.1, 5-9a	The wedding feast of the Lamb

REHEARSALS

Wedding rehearsals can be joyful times of preparing for the ceremony with family and friends, though members of the wedding party should remember that they are in a holy place dedicated to the worship of God and thus should dress and act accordingly. Rehearsals will be under the direction of the officiating pastor, assisted by a member of the wedding team, and outside coordinators, if any are present, will not be asked to share in the leadership of the rehearsal or ceremony.

Wedding rehearsals are generally scheduled for the evening prior to the wedding, beginning no later than seven p.m., and lasting approximately forty-five minutes. Please ask your wedding party to arrive fifteen minutes prior to your scheduled rehearsal so that the rehearsal may begin promptly on time and that we may respect the time of the staff and volunteers involved in the wedding. Because the ceremony is a worship service and not merely a social occasion, brides should plan on fully participating in the rehearsal as requested by the officiating pastor. The marriage license should also be presented to the pastor at the time of the rehearsal if the bride and groom have not already done so.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Weddings held at Lakewood UMC will follow the rituals found in the *United Methodist Hymnal* (pages 864-869) and *Book of Worship* (pages 115-135). In compiling a printed bulletin or order of worship, thus, the following elements may be noted:

Prelude

Lighting of the Candles
The Seating of the Families
Solo or special music (if desired)
Processional of Wedding Party
Bridal Processional
Words of Greeting
Declaration of Intentions and Response of Families
Congregational Hymn (if desired)
Scripture Lessons
The Wedding Homily
Exchanging of Vows
Blessing and Exchanging of Rings
The Declaration of Marriage
The Unity Candle
Solo or Special Music (if desired)
The Blessing of the Marriage
The Lord's Prayer (said by all present)
Dismissal and Blessing
The Recessional

Additional elements, such as those often present in Hispanic cultural traditions, may be incorporated into the ceremony, but all final decisions regarding the service itself will rest with the officiating pastor of Lakewood United Methodist Church.

DRESSING AREAS

Members of the bridal party are invited to use our parlor adjacent to the sanctuary for dressing and preparing for the service. The parlor includes a toilet and make-up area, full-length mirror, comfortable furnishings, and a video monitor of the sanctuary. Members of the groom's party may use the choir suite located at the southeast corner of the sanctuary which also includes a toilet, mirror and chairs for seating. No

food or drinks, with the exception of water and light snacks, are permitted in any of the dressing rooms and smoking is limited to outside of all church buildings only. Guests are asked to likewise respect the church's facilities and furnishings and to leave them in a reasonable order.

RECEPTIONS

Subject to availability, either Founder's Court or Asbury Hall may be scheduled for receptions through the office when so desired. A member of the wedding party or family should act as hostess and take charge of the table and refreshments, or for a fee, members of the United Methodist Women will act as hostesses and provide set up, serving and clean up, including the use of the church's silver coffee and tea service and punch bowls. Please note that ***no alcoholic beverages, including champagne punch, may be served anywhere within our church facilities, and no exceptions will be made to this rule.***

All decorations in the church should respect the guidelines of the church which prohibit nails, staples, screws or tape used on walls or furnishings. Those desiring additional sound or audio-visual support, such as microphones, music played through our system, or video or computer graphics shown on the media screen, should contact the office in advance for scheduling a volunteer tech to be on duty for the reception as well as the ceremony, and an additional charge for that individual will be incurred. Receptions should last no longer than three hours, and all such events must be concluded by ten p.m. on Saturday evenings in order to allow time for clean-up and set-up for services or activities held on the following morning. Please note that while every possible effort will be

made to protect personal items such as wedding dresses, purses, and silver used in the reception, the church cannot be responsible for such items if lost, stolen or damaged. It is strongly suggested that some friend of the wedding party be charged with safekeeping such valuables during the service or reception.

While throwing rice or confetti has been a traditional part of many weddings following the reception, such items may not be used at Lakewood considering its effect on the ecological system and the difficulty in clean up. Birdseed or bubbles may be used in their place, but only outside of the building, and all seed must be swept up after the departure of the guests.

INFORMAL WEDDINGS

A wedding is considered informal when no rehearsal is required, when floral decorations are minimal, and when the bride and groom (possibly with one attendant each) walk into the sanctuary or Founders Court and stand before the pastor. Wedding guests are limited to family and close friends, totaling no more than twelve, and fees will be reduced accordingly.