



WEDDING POLICY

(revised February 13, 2013)

WELCOME! We are delighted that you have chosen, or are considering, Messiah United Methodist Church for your wedding. Christian marriage is a sacred covenant (agreement) between a man and a woman who are intending to live in covenant with God. Only those who are intending to live in such a covenant shall be married at Messiah. All wedding plans are to be *centered in Christ*, who is the revelation of God's love for all the world. The following policy is provided by Messiah to help you plan your wedding and to help bring meaning to your marriage covenant.

MARRIAGE RITUALS - Only those rituals approved for use in the United Methodist Church will be used. In consultation with the Pastor, the couple may choose either the "A Service of Christian Marriage I" or "A Service of Christian Marriage II," as found in The United Methodist Book of Worship (1992), pages 115-127 and 128-133, respectively. Supplemental resources are available to personalize the service to the particular circumstances of the couple.

INITIAL CONFERENCE WITH THE PASTOR - Any couple considering a wedding at Messiah shall first schedule an appointment with the Pastor at which the meaning of marriage and the wedding policies of the church will be discussed. Following this initial conference with the Pastor, dates on the church calendar shall be set aside for the rehearsal and wedding, provided that all parties are in agreement regarding the policies of the church and the requirements of the Pastor.

The decision to perform or not to perform the ceremony is the right and responsibility of the Pastor, in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and The United Methodist Church. All wedding plans shall be approved by the Pastor.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING – Couples are expected to participate in an appropriate program of premarital counseling in preparation for their marriage, as required by The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. The goal of this counseling shall be to build a strong foundation for Christian marriage, and to discover those weaknesses which need to be addressed to assure a strong relationship. In most cases, premarital counseling shall consist of three or four conferences with the Pastor to plan the wedding and to explore Growing Love in Christian Marriage, Revised Edition / Couples Manual co-authored by Joan and Richard Hunt. This resource is the official pre-marriage preparation resource of The United Methodist Church. A set of two manuals typically costs \$9.00, and can be purchased through Cokesbury.com or from Amazon.com.

CONFERENCE WITH THE ORGANIST - A conference with the organist is required to discuss the music to be used during the ceremony. Because the music for your wedding, like the ceremony itself, is an act of worship of God, selections of a secular, romantic, or popular nature are inappropriate. There is a great selection of music for the wedding service which seeks to bring the blessing of God upon your marriage and life together. The organist will discuss the music with you. The Messiah organist is expected to play for all weddings in the church. The use of another organist requires the approval by the Pastor or the Messiah organist. If another organist is used, the music played must also be approved by the Pastor or Messiah organist. *Please contact Lisa Bloy, our Church Organist, at (571) 248-8328 as soon as your wedding has been placed on the church calendar.*

REHEARSAL - A rehearsal is necessary for all weddings, and arrangements shall be made with the Pastor at the time of the initial conference. It is necessary that all participants in the wedding be present at the rehearsal. It is also imperative that all participants arrive on time, since the Pastor and organist frequently have other commitments following the rehearsal. Promptness can be facilitated by giving each participant specific directions to the church.

MARRIAGE LICENSE - The marriage license must be in the hands of the officiating Pastor before the ceremony can begin. We suggest that the license and marriage certificate be given to the Pastor one week prior to the wedding. This not only avoids embarrassment and the possible delay of the ceremony, it gives the Pastor time to complete these important documents and have them ready for signing following the wedding. Marriage licenses may be obtained from the Clerk of the Circuit Court in any Virginia jurisdiction, and are valid for 60 days.

DECORATIONS - The altar is not to be disturbed in any way beyond the use of flowers and appropriate candles. Altar candles, a unity candle, candelabra, and aisle candles shall be provided by the church upon request and are included in the wedding fee. Flowers and all other decorations used in the wedding are to be removed immediately after the ceremony. Care should be taken not to damage pews, carpeting or sanctuary furnishings. Couples shall be held responsible for damage to the chapel or sanctuary furnishings.

PHOTOGRAPHERS - Ask your photographer to consult with the Pastor prior to the wedding. No photographs may be taken during the ceremony. A video recording of the wedding may be made from the rear of the church if doing so in no way distracts the attention of those attending the wedding. The video camera should be mounted on a tripod and left to run. The photographer may not roam around to get new or different angles once the wedding has begun. If close-ups of the participants are desired, the wedding party may return to the chancel immediately following the ceremony.

RECEPTION - The church does not furnish any form of catering service. The caterer must provide all his/her own equipment such as punch cups, bowls, serving dishes, etc.

GENERAL RESTRICTIONS - No alcoholic beverages are to be served or consumed on the church premises. Smoking is not permitted inside the church facilities. No rice or bird seed is to be used in the church building.

POLICY FOR USE OF A GUEST PASTOR – The participation of a guest Pastor, at the request of the bride and groom, either as the primary officiating Pastor or in addition to one of Messiah's Pastors, requires prior written consent from Messiah's Senior Pastor.

POLICY ON NON-MEMBER USE OF CHURCH -Non-Members who wish to use Messiah church for their wedding ceremony must confer with one of Messiah's Pastors. If the church calendar is clear, the Pastor may use his/her discretion regarding this matter.