

Planning a Wedding

at Community Congregational Church, Short Hills



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Congratulations!

The decision to get married is one of the most significant ones that you will make. This booklet is intended to help guide you through the process of planning a ceremony to be held at Community Congregational Church.

A wedding ceremony held in a church is, first and foremost, a service of worship. God is at the center of all aspects of the service, including all music and speaking. Any special additions to your service are to be to the glory of God, and it will be helpful to you to keep this in mind as you plan your ceremony.

It is our desire to make your marriage ceremony both beautiful and meaningful. Your pastors are anxious to be of help in all the practical details of your wedding plans and, of course, at any other time in the future.

The following policies concerning church weddings have been approved by the Church Board. They are set forth in this booklet not as restrictions, but to give whatever helpful information is needed in planning a wedding at Community Congregational Church.



*"So faith, hope and love abide, these three;
but the greatest of these is love."*

I Corinthians 13:13

Planning a Wedding

Planning a wedding can be an immense undertaking, with many moving parts and important details. This booklet will answer many of your questions, as well as offer helpful information and suggestions regarding your wedding at Community Congregational Church. Feel free to contact the Church Office for further information or guidance.

Because of the beauty of our church building, as well as its convenient location near several popular reception venues, Community Congregational Church fields several inquiries a year regarding hosting wedding ceremonies. Due to the private nature of weddings and the impact they have on church facilities and staff, our policies and fees vary based on the membership status of the inquiring parties. Please see the fee list at the back of this pamphlet for a breakdown of the different costs for active members, inactive members, and non-members.

Reserving the Date

To reserve the church for a wedding, the Church Office should be called as far in advance as possible. At any wedding performed in the church, one of our pastors must officiate, or co-officiate with another pastor at the Church Board's discretion. Please indicate when you call which of the pastors you would like to officiate and whether you would like to have the ceremony in the Sanctuary or the Chapel. The use of the church for a wedding is provided free of charge for active members of the congregation.

Sanctuary or Chapel?

Community Congregational Church is blessed with two lovely settings for worship. Our Sanctuary has a seating capacity of approximately 450 people. The Welch Chapel can comfortably seat about 100 people. The decision regarding which worship setting to utilize can be made on the basis of personal preference or according to the number of people you expect might attend the service. While both spaces have projection, only the Welch Chapel is air-conditioned.

The Use of Projection during the Ceremony

Both the Sanctuary and Chapel spaces offer the option of projection, at your discretion. Words to hymns, photos, and scripture readings are some of the options to be projected before, during, and after the service. If no projection is used, a cross will be projected. Our clergy will guide you through the process of choosing what is right for you.

CHURCH STAFF

The Pastor

The date and time of all wedding events are coordinated directly with the officiating pastor. Please coordinate with our clergy before finalizing your plans with a reception venue or your extended family.

The couple is asked to meet with the officiating pastor shortly after the church is reserved and prior to the printing of invitations or save-the-date announcements. At this initial meeting, the pastor will further explain the church's wedding policies and procedures, as well as expectations for further meetings, planning the wedding ceremony, and premarital counseling.

Music Staff and Selections

The church requires that our Director of Music coordinates all services where music is desired. The Church Office will contact the Director of Music as soon as a date and time have been confirmed for the wedding. All musical requests should be made by the family directly with the clergy, who will then work with the Director of Music to make any necessary arrangements. Our church's organist/pianist and professional soloists are available for weddings.

A wedding is a worship service and, therefore, the music played or sung should be of the same sacred nature as that used for any worship service of the church. There is a large repertoire of fine music suitable for weddings. You may rely on the Director of Music for appropriate and beautiful music if you do not have suggestions of your own. The couple should understand that certain secular or popular music may not be considered appropriate. The Director of Music has the final decision as to all music that is performed or sung at the ceremony.

The music fees are listed on the last page of this booklet. If our organist/pianist is not available, the Director of Music will recommend an alternate. The Director of Music will also advise you of fees for vocalists and other musicians, which vary by instrument.

The Building Custodian

The custodian is present at both the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. He or she is responsible for preparing the church for the service and for the necessary cleaning afterwards. The fee is listed on the last page of this booklet.

SITE DETAILS

Photography/Videography

Photos may be taken in the narthex before and after the ceremony. Pictures and videos during the ceremony in the Sanctuary or the Chapel should be taken discreetly. Movement, therefore, by professional photographers/videographers should be kept to a minimum so as to not be distracting to the pastor and the couple or detract from the sacred nature of the event.

Flowers

The couple may use any florist, and should notify the Church Office of the selection. The florist should coordinate access to the building with the Church Office. Flowers, palms, or ferns may be used as the couple desires, as long as the communion table remains the center of worship. When candles are used, they must be secured by the florist and be non-drip. Arrangements must be made with the custodian for proper carpet and floor protection for candles, floral arrangements, and potted plants. When flowers or candles are placed on the ends of pews, they must not mark woodwork. Tape, thumbtacks, nails, or any other fasteners that might cause damage are not allowed. Responsibility for marks or stains must be assumed by the families.

Many times, couples wish to leave the arrangements in the church after the service, thus enhancing our worship service on Sunday morning. If you plan to leave flowers in the church after the wedding, please notify the Church Office so that we may recognize your gift in our Sunday bulletin.

Policies

Confetti/Rice: Rice, confetti, and the like are not allowed on the Church property. If you wish to have something thrown as you exit the building, bird seed is permitted, provided that caution is used to prevent it from getting inside the building. Bubbles are also an acceptable alternative.

Alcohol/Drugs: Alcohol/drugs are not allowed on church property. If anyone is found to have alcohol/drugs on the property, he/she will be asked to dispose of it immediately. The ceremony will not begin until all alcohol/drugs have been removed.

Receptions

Rooms are available at the church for receptions following the ceremony. Inquiries should be made through the Church Office as to availability and cost. The church does not provide catering or recommend vendors. Alcohol/drugs are not allowed on church property.

PLANNING THE CEREMONY

Our clergy work closely in planning the service with the couple so that the ceremony may be personal in nature. This is done during planning and premarital sessions with the officiating pastor.

Order of Worship

A sample order of service for the marriage ceremony might include some of the following components:

- Processional
- Welcome
- Declaration of Intent
- Affirmation of Family & Friends
- Scripture(s)
- Solo or Hymn
- Message

Exchanging of Vows
Exchanging of Rings
Prayer of Blessing
Announcement of Marriage
Charge & Blessing
Recessional

The order of worship can be adapted in any way that the couple and pastor feel is appropriate. For instance, it is possible to add music or the lighting of a unity candle.

Readings

There are many readings from the Scriptures which are appropriate to use in a marriage ceremony. A few options are listed below, but there are numerous others that might be appropriate, including a favorite passage or verse. Our pastors can assist you in identifying other texts that might meet your needs. The inclusion of secular poetry or readings is at the discretion of the pastor.

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a (*The creation of man and woman*)
Genesis 2:4-10, 15-24 (*Becoming one flesh*)
Proverbs 3:3-6 (*A seal upon your heart*)
Song of Solomon 2:10-14, 16a; 8:6-7 (*Love is strong as death*)
Jeremiah 31:31-34 (*New Covenant*)

New Testament

Matthew 22:35-40 (*Love, the greatest commandment*)
John 2:1-11 (*The marriage feast at Cana*)
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 (*The marks of a Christian*)
1 Corinthians 13 (*The greatest of these is love*)
1 John 3:18-24 (*Love one another*)
Revelation 19:1, 5-9a (*The wedding feast of the Lamb*)

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually held the day before the wedding, but may be arranged for any time convenient to the officiating pastor and the couple. A wedding consultant may attend the rehearsal and confer with the pastor; however, the pastor conducts the rehearsal, assisted by the custodian and the musician(s).

Obtaining a Marriage License in New Jersey

Please be sure to acquire your marriage license in advance of your wedding, and bring it to the wedding rehearsal. Instructions and important details about obtaining your marriage license are available at www.nj.gov/health/vital/registration-vital/marriage-licenses/.

Contact Us

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