

*Guidelines for Couples
Planning Weddings at
West Parish Congregational Church, United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 23, Bethel, Maine 04217*



Introduction

We believe that the decision to marry is a major life decision, best made as a joyous response to the grace of God. The guidelines below are intended to help you deepen your appreciation of that grace and celebrate it with the officiating minister(s), the other members of your wedding party and the community which gathers to help you begin your marriage.

Before the Wedding

It is expected that, in the months before the wedding, you will have at least three conversations with the pastor of this church, or with another counselor chosen in consultation with this pastor. For this reason, we request that you notify the pastor at least six months in advance of your intended wedding date. If another minister is to officiate, the Diaconate of this church expects this church's pastor to be invited to be involved in the planning of the wedding service.

The purposes of these pre-wedding conversations are: (a) To build a relationship between you and the officiating minister(s), so that all may more meaningfully share in this important event; (b) To help you prepare for some of the changes marriage will bring to your lives; and (c) To plan a service which will reflect some of your uniqueness and express what is significant to you as you make this covenant with each other and with God.

Marriage "in the church" is often taken to mean a wedding in a particular building. A church, however, is a community of people. Regardless of whether members of this congregation are involved in your wedding, we do worship God here where you will be making sacred vows. In order for you to become acquainted with this congregation in their spiritual home, we ask that you worship with us once or twice before the wedding and invite you to join us again at times afterward as well.

The Wedding Service

The wedding itself is a service of worship. During this service God is glorified, thanked for bringing you two together and asked to bless your marriage with spiritual presence and guidance. You are encouraged to take part in the planning of the service, so that the promises you make and the scripture and other words spoken or sung may express your love and dependence on God in ways meaningful to you both. At the same time, the wedding service is an opportunity for others not only to witness and support your entrance into marriage, but also to praise God and be reminded of the significance of God's presence in their lives.

Music

Please remember that, as the wedding is a worship service, music should be chosen that is appropriate for the worship of God. If you plan to have organ music, this church expects that you will ask our organist to play, and supply him with written scores as needed, well in advance of the wedding. If you plan to engage a different organist, permission to do so is to be sought from this church's organist. Other instruments may be used instead of or in addition to the organ. Vocalists are also welcome.

Photographs

Again because the wedding is a worship service, photographs during the service itself—that is, after the processional and before the recessional—will not be permitted. An exception to this rule is that a still photograph or a videotape recording from a fixed location in the balcony may be made during the ser-

vice, but this is to be arranged with the officiating minister(s) in advance. Please be sure that your photographer and friends understand these restrictions and that arrangements are made to take the photographs you desire before or after the service. The church will be available for 1½ hours before your ceremony is scheduled to begin and up to ½ hour following the conclusion of your ceremony, unless the reception is to be at the church.

The Rehearsal

Generally a rehearsal will be held one or two days before the wedding at a time convenient to those involved. All primary participants are to be present, including musicians and ushers. The marriage license is to be given to the officiating minister at this time.

The Reception

If you would like to hold your reception in this church building, please arrange it with the minister ahead of time. The Chapel and the Dining Room are available for this purpose.

Smoking and Drinking

No alcoholic beverages are to be used on the premises, nor is smoking allowed in the church building. Please be sure your wedding party, guests, photographer and musicians know this.

Cleaning Up

Please delegate someone in your party to be responsible to see that flowers and other decorations, flower boxes, wrappers and anything else brought in for the wedding are picked up and that all areas used for the wedding are clean and ready for the church's use. If rice or confetti is to be thrown indoors, it must be thoroughly vacuumed up. Outdoors bird-seed, bio-degradable confetti or flower petals may be used, but must be swept from walks and porches. The deacon or the pastor will advise you of what needs to be done if you are in doubt.

Fees

If neither bride nor groom is a member of this congregation or a child of a member, the requested donation for the use of the Sanctuary is \$400. If you choose to have your reception at the church, we request an additional contribution of \$300.

The fee for the minister's services is \$200.

The fee for the services of this Church's organist is \$200, with additional payment if needed for special preparations. Fees for other musicians are to be negotiated with these persons at the time you engage them.

Payment is to be made at the time of the rehearsal. Separate checks should be made out for donations and fees.

There is an additional fee of \$35 for the premarital inventory, to be paid prior to your first counseling visit with the minister. (Or \$29.95 if you are able to fill out the inventory online)

Minister: The Rev. Richard L. Bennett 207-256-2097

Organist: Elizabeth Smith

Approved by the West Parish Congregational Church Council,
January 10, 1990; revised February 25, 2004