

WEDDING POLICY - HUGHES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Services of marriage are provided for couples so that they may solemnize their marriage in a context of Christian worship. Everything about the service is designed to witness that this is a Christian marriage.

Holy Communion may or may not be celebrated. If it is, it is most important that its significance be made clear. Specifically: (1) The marriage rite is included in a Service of Word and Table. (2) Not only the husband and wife but the whole congregation are to be invited to receive Communion. It is our tradition to invite all Christians to the Lord's table. (3) There should be no pressure that would embarrass those who for whatever reason do not choose to receive Communion.

The pastor will provide all couples with copies of approved services at the couples' first consultation with the pastor.

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Common Prayer teaches "Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God." This points to the central truth that is upheld in all Christian weddings, namely that the purpose of the wedding itself is to celebrate and hallow the relationship between husband and wife which you now seek to establish. The Church does not "marry" the couple: They marry each other, by the promises and vows they make to one another, before the congregation and in the presence of God. The role of the Church and all her ministers is to bless that relationship, and to join in celebrating and establishing the fullness of Christian marriage. To that end, this church is pleased to assist in all ways that we can, and we are grateful for the privilege of sharing in this time of special joy. This booklet will help answer questions about the planning of weddings at Hughes United Methodist Church. Naturally, each wedding presents a slightly different set of needs and wishes, so please do not hesitate to contact any of us on the staff at Hughes UMC for additional clarification. It is our intent to help you have a wedding service that will be a happy and meaningful worship experience, as well as a firm foundation upon which your marriage can grow.

In order to maintain the integrity and dignity of the service and to insure the proper use of the church's facilities, the Ministers, Trustees, and Worship Committee have established the following guidelines.

ELIGIBILITY

Every couple wishing to be married in this church must comply with the wedding policies of the United Methodist Church and the laws of the State of Maryland. This will insure the healthiest foundation possible for marriage and provide a clear witness to the community that marriage is considered a sacred relationship between husband and wife.

Each couple must provide at least two months notice before a wedding. Since there is the need for counseling and other preparations, this requirement should be seen as the bare minimum.

Hughes United Methodist Church holds that the witness we make to this community is of great importance. It is our practice that this church is available to our members and their children.

All weddings performed at Hughes UMC are acts of worship celebrating the grace and love of God and the love between the couple. While Christian weddings are the norm, interfaith ceremonies may be arranged at the discretion of the pastor. Clergy from non-Christian traditions may be invited by the pastor to participate in the ceremony. A liturgy which honors both the Christian and non-Christian traditions will be created by the officiates and couple. Solely non-Christian weddings will not be conducted at Hughes.

We gladly extend to you the use of the church and ask that you work in concert with our professional staff in planning the ceremony and conducting the wedding.

Permission to be married at Hughes UMC must be given by one of the ministers. The minister also will set dates with you for any additional counseling sessions (usually two to four sessions are expected).

SETTING THE DATE AND HOUR

The Business Manager can give couples a provisional date and hour for the wedding. Our church office hours are 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. No final determination can be made until the couple has had an initial counseling session with a minister of this church. We are not able to reserve the use of the church more than six months in advance, although we can give a provisional date that would assure that no other weddings would take priority. It is important to remember that a firm date from the church is more important than reservations for a reception or arrangements with a caterer. Couples should therefore be certain to meet first with the clergy before making any other arrangements.

There are times when events in the church year may preclude the scheduling of a wedding on a specific date. These times are known by the Church Secretary, so the couple should check with her in the event of any question. Normally, weddings are not performed on Sundays, unless a couple would request special permission from the ministers. Weddings are also not usually scheduled between the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day. Weddings which occur between December 6th and January 6th will be held with the full Christmas decorations intact.

Weddings must be held on the hour reserved. If you reserve the church for 2:00 p.m., for example, your wedding must be held at 2:00 p.m. Your guests will start arriving at 1:30, and your wedding will be at 2:00. If a wedding begins later than the scheduled time, the minister may modify and abbreviate the service as the minister deems necessary.

THE REHEARSAL

When scheduling a date for the wedding, provision should also be made for a rehearsal. Wedding rehearsals vary in length, but should seldom take more than an hour from start to finish. It is important to stress that everyone involved in the wedding service should attend the rehearsal and that as a convenience to others, they should be at the church and ready to begin promptly at the time appointed for the rehearsal.

A sixty-minute wedding rehearsal normally will be scheduled. The minister is the director of the rehearsal, and has the final decision concerning all procedures, in consultation with the Bride and Groom. If the start of the rehearsal is delayed due to the late arrival of members of the wedding party, the rehearsal will be abbreviated.

It is very helpful to the Wedding Assistant and the Ministers if all roles in the wedding itself are assigned and clearly understood well in advance of the rehearsal. This includes which groomsmen are paired with which bridesmaids, as well as other such matters of courtesy. Having this organized before the rehearsal will save time for all concerned.

It is important to establish all plans and procedures for the wedding at the consultations with the minister prior to the rehearsal. If time is spent making changes at the rehearsal, rehearsal time is further reduced. No changes will be made in the wedding service after the rehearsal is completed.

THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY

Weddings in this church are conducted by a minister on the staff to Hughes UMC. Ordained ministers of the United Methodist Church or other denomination may assist with permission from a minister of Hughes UMC. Should a couple wish to have the participation of other

ordained ministers, they should indicate that wish to the staff minister early on so that arrangements may be made.

If you are using visiting clergy, we must have their names, address and telephone numbers. Please inform all visiting clergy that they must provide their own vestments. We do not supply the vestments for visiting clergy.

As a professional courtesy, the Sanctuary of Hughes UMC is occasionally made available to other United Methodist clergy for conducting weddings when their own sanctuary is too small to accommodate the number of guests anticipated. In this instance a written request from the minister to a minister of Hughes UMC is requested. The visiting minister is then responsible for counseling the couple, planning the wedding and conducting the rehearsal and the wedding in accordance with the guidelines of Hughes UMC. The fees for such a wedding will be the same as for a member of Hughes UMC. The visiting minister should pick up copies of the wedding guidelines for the couple from the church office. All fees should be paid two weeks prior to the wedding.

Marriage requires a period of preparation. While this may vary from couple to couple, an average of three sessions with the minister should be anticipated. It is the purpose of these sessions to consider various aspects of Holy Matrimony, and to help couples prepare not only for the wedding itself, but - more importantly - for the commitments they are undertaking.

It is within the discretion of any minister to decline to officiate at any marriage ceremony.

THE WEDDING ASSISTANT

An important ministry in this church is that of the Wedding Assistant. The Wedding Assistant provides her time and experience to assist the clergy and all bridal couples in the planning, rehearsal, and conduct of all weddings as it relates to the church. At the time a couple begins their counseling, they should contact the Wedding Assistant to discuss certain specific details. At the rehearsal, the Wedding Assistant will assist the officiating minister. The members of the Altar Guild may also be available to assist both the clergy and the Wedding Assistant.

Our Wedding Assistant will help the minister in conducting the rehearsal, will direct the activities at the rear of the church, and will assist the bridal party in any reasonable way. You must notify the Wedding Assistant of the dates and times for the rehearsal and the wedding and for further information concerning procedures and accommodations.

The Wedding Assistant is available to discuss the following items with the wedding party prior to the rehearsal:

Flowers (Names on corsages)

Programs/Bulletin covers

Candles/Candle holders
Photographer & Videotaper
(Balcony & Parlor)
Minister/Groom/Best Man/Sacristy
Receiving line/Narthex

Guest Book/Stand
No candles in windows
Bows on pews/no tape etc.
Dress at Church/Rooms

MUSIC GUIDELINES

Music is one of the principal means by which God is glorified in Christian worship, and is thus an integral part of the service of Holy Matrimony. The bridal couple should consult with the Organist/Music Director well in advance of the wedding to select the music for the wedding. Questions of whether or not a particular selection is appropriate will be determined by the Organist. If soloists or instrumentalists are desired, approval must be given by the Organist/Music Director. He can assist in arranging for their participation. It is the responsibility of visiting musicians to rehearse with him. It is not the practice of this church to permit visiting organists or other musicians in lieu of the participation of our Organist. Soloists or instrumentalists are expected to attend the wedding rehearsal.

When the dates for the wedding and rehearsal have been set, you must contact the church organist to secure his services. The organist will give either a tentative commitment to play for the wedding or arrange for one of our assistant organists to play. Six weeks prior to the wedding, the organist either will give a final commitment or will enlist a substitute to play for you. You must discuss your musical selections with the organist, who will advise you of their suitability. If you wish a soloist to sing at your wedding, you must enlist the soloist and then arrange for a rehearsal with the organist. If you want the organist to be present at a rehearsal, you must enlist him to be present.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In the matter of photography, it is essential to remember that all weddings remain first and foremost acts of worship. Nothing may be allowed which intrudes on an atmosphere conducive to worship. The couple is responsible for informing the photographer and their guests of this policy.

As a courtesy to guests who will be waiting at the reception, and to the Altar Guild who must clean up after the wedding, no more than 30 minutes is allowed for photographers in the church after the wedding.

Photographs of the Bridal Party should be made prior to the service. During the service itself, non-flash photographs may be taken from the balcony. Flash photographs during the wedding by the photographers or by guests are not allowed. Flash photographs may be taken during the

processional and the recessional but not during the wedding ceremony. Portions of the ceremony may be re-enacted for photographing after the wedding. Videotaping is permitted from the balcony only.

We strongly urge you to consult with the photographer prior to the wedding in order to identify which poses and groupings you wish to have photographed after the ceremony. This will save time and money and prevent inconvenience to your guests.

Photographers who find it impossible to comply with our practices will not be allowed to accept future engagements to photograph weddings here and may be requested to leave the Sanctuary until after the service is completed.

FLOWERS AND OTHER DECORATIONS

After you have made your arrangements for flowers, palms etc. your florist must notify the church in advance, giving the time the flowers will be delivered and picked up. The florist may provide vases for your flowers or you may use the vases upon the altar. In this case, you will need to pick up the vase liners from the church office on the Monday prior to the wedding.

The specific details for providing flowers and the policies concerning other decorations are discussed with the Wedding Assistant. The couple is requested to have the florist contact the Church Secretary to arrange delivery day and time of any floral arrangements. No re-arrangement of the furnishing of the church is permitted. Couples who wish to leave the altar flowers in place for the Sunday service to follow, a gift which is always sincerely appreciated, should contact the Church Secretary concerning this at your earliest convenience so that a note of appreciation may be published in the Sunday bulletin.

Aisle runners are not used in this church. The aisle of the church is fully carpeted. We do not recommend the use of a runner due to the 100 foot length of the aisle, the difficulty of attaching it securely to the carpet and the danger of tripping on it.

The wedding party is responsible for returning any rented items to the florist, etc. The church is not responsible for any items left in the church after a wedding.

Do not tape, staple, tack or wire bows, flowers or ribbons to the pews.

MISCELLANEOUS

Rice and bird seed are not to be thrown anywhere on the church grounds. Flower girls do not normally drop petals in the aisles of the church.

If the bridal party wishes to dress at the church, the women's robing room on the lower level is available for this purpose.

Bridal parties who wish to dress at the church should advise the Wedding Assistant so that arrangements may be made. There is a room with a full length mirror available for the Bride's use. There is also a waiting room for the groom. Food, beverages, and smoking, are not permitted in these rooms. Restrooms and water fountains are located on the same floor as these rooms.

If family members, members of the bridal party, or other close friends are to be chosen to read selections from Holy Scripture, those so selected should be comfortable in reading in public, and willing to rehearse their readings well before the service. This is a point to discuss with the minister in planning the service.

Receiving lines are not usually held if the reception is to be held outside the church. The decision to have a receiving line or not should be discussed with the Wedding Assistant and clergy.

Our Sexton will open the church prior to the wedding, prepare the church for the wedding, arrange the altar area before and after the ceremony, and clean-up and close the church after the wedding. The church office will arrange for the custodial services of the Sexton.

The church will supply six candles on the altar and two seven-candle candelabra for your use. A Unity Candle, if used, must be purchased by the couple. Your florist can usually provide this. Other candles are not permitted.

Adjustments to the sound system, drinking alcoholic beverages, smoking, or the use of obscene or offensive language are not permitted.

LICENSE

A civil marriage license must be obtained from the Clerk of the Court of Montgomery County, Maryland. Procedures for this may be determined by contacting the Clerk of Court at (240-777-9400 option 4) or by going in person to the County Courthouse in Rockville. The license should be given to the Minister at the Wedding Rehearsal.

Hughes UMC is located in Montgomery County and your marriage license must be issued by the Clerk of the Court for Montgomery County. A two-day wait is required by the County, and your license is good for six months only prior to the wedding.

FEES

Hughes UMC through its governing bodies has set various fees for the recognition of the services of the staff and for the use of the church facilities. All fees must be given to the Church Business Manager one month before the Wedding Rehearsal:

Member fees:

Sexton - \$120

Organist - \$300

Wedding Assistant - \$150 recommended

Officiating Minister - honorarium

(These fees are for services rendered)

Non-member fees:

Same as above, plus \$500 (This fee is for the use of the church)

Officiating Minister - \$300

All checks should be made payable to Hughes United Methodist Church.

Rev. 1/14/10