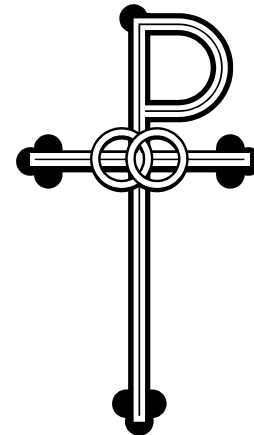


Wedding Policy and Procedure Booklet

First United Methodist Church



**400 N. Sam Houston
San Benito, Texas 78586
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Rev. Melissa Smith Nelson**

The Wedding Ceremony

God designed the covenant of marriage for intimate human companionship so that as a man and woman live faithfully together something mystical exists between them and God.

It is to be entered into thoughtfully and prayerfully, therefore, no wedding will be considered on short notice.

Even though the United Methodist Church does not consider this time a sacrament, we acknowledge that it is a very sacred moment when a couple comes together to establish a brand new family. It is a sacred act whereby God enters into a new relationship of love, companionship, and devotion with a man and a woman.

Because of the sacredness of this event we believe that the wedding ceremony is first and foremost a service of worship. The Holy Scripture will be read and prayers will be lifted up in the name of Jesus Christ. Symbols of an everlasting covenant will be used in the giving and receiving of rings.

Second, the wedding ceremony is uniquely yours. The service may include traditional elements that have been used for hundreds of years, like the charges, the presenting of the bride, the exchange of vows and rings, and the pronouncement.

You are encouraged to personalize your ceremony as you consider all its elements. For example, you might consider writing your own vows or involving family members in a variety of ways. Early in the premarital sessions, different copies of other services can be shared along with other suggestions for making it uniquely personal.

It is the hope of this congregation that you will not only invite Christ to be central in the wedding ceremony, but that you will also invite Christ to be central in your marriage.

The Clergy's Role

The clergy appointed to the local congregation gives the final authority for all weddings at the local church. Any guest clergy, whether United Methodist or another denomination, must receive a written invitation to officiate at an onsite wedding service by the pastor of the church. Since this is an act of worship in the sanctuary a pastor from another denomination must have a time to confer with the local pastor on their understanding of what is to happen at a wedding.

The clergy appointed at the local church may need to co-officiate if another clergy is requested.

The role of the clergy in your wedding is two-fold.

- 1 The pastor of the local church will guide you through a series of counseling sessions to a greater awareness of the strengths and

Marriage License and Rings

First United Methodist Church of San Benito, Texas is located in Cameron County. You may have a license from another county but please make sure you take the necessary time to get the license. In Texas the waiting time is 72 hours.

The marriage license **must** be given to the minister at the time of the rehearsal. It will be signed directly following the worship service and recorded in the official church records. It will be given to the couple following the service so it may be mailed to the county registrar for official recording. If there is no rehearsal the marriage license should be brought to the pastor the day before the wedding.

The Pastor will inquire about the rings on the night of the rehearsal and how they will be brought to the altar for the wedding service.

Sober Wedding Party

During both rehearsal time and the wedding service, all of those standing at the altar or ushering must be sober.

Because of the sacredness of this time the pastor has full discretion to postpone the starting time of the wedding if the groom or the bride is inebriated. Members of the wedding party who are not sober will be asked not to stand at the altar during the service.

Wedding Fees:

This information is found in the church use policy. Until an official request form is completed and submitted to the church office, no wedding date is official.

Reviewed and approved

date: _____

Pastor: Melissa Nelson

Communication Coordinator: Rudy Hyde:

Church Organist: Connie Morrison

Wedding Consultant:

- ◆ The Pastor will close the registration book prior to the procession of the families and people will be asked to sign the registration book at the reception. This will insure the wedding starting on time.
- ◆ Communion may be a part of the marriage ceremony. It is open to all who attend. The bride and groom may assist in serving the elements.

Photography:

We wish to avoid any movement which would distract the flow of the ceremony or take away from the worship of God and the confirming of the marriage covenant as the center of attention. Please do not use any video cameras with bright lights. Please tell your family and guests that no photos are allowed in the sanctuary during the service.

We suggest that your photographer visit the church in advance of the wedding to familiarize himself/herself with the facilities. It is necessary for the minister in charge to speak the photographers about special arrangements.

The photographer may be in the aisle at the processional and recessional; after that all pictures must be taken from the back of the sanctuary with no flash.

We allow video taping of the ceremony, provided the camera is set up on a tripod and placed in the designated place.

Rice, Confetti, or Birdseed:

No confetti is allowed; however, rice or birdseed is permitted on the premises as long as someone is designated to **sweep all walk ways immediately after the throwing in order to prevent anyone's slipping.** Bubbles are also a possible option.

Rehearsal: If there is more than one bridesmaid and groomsmen it is necessary to have a rehearsal scheduled with the pastor in order to prepare you and the members of the wedding party for the ceremony. If it's a weekend wedding, we normally have the rehearsal on Friday evening.

All members of the wedding party (best man, maid/matron of honor, ushers, bridesmaids, flower girl, ring bearer, father of the bride, soloists/musicians, etc.,) are expected to be present at the rehearsal which starts promptly at the appointed hour. The minister will handle the details and organization of the ceremony, assisted by the wedding coordinator.

weaknesses of your relationship. Involvement in pre-marital counseling is expected of all couples. The nature, number and the time commitment of these sessions will be discussed at the initial conference between you and the pastor.

- If you live near by, you are encouraged to attend the Sunday worship service at church. This will give you a feel for the worship setting and hopefully help you feel more comfortable.
 - The content of the sessions is confidential. They will focus on important areas of marriage and family life, such as communication, role expectations, finances and other practical aspects of married life like child-rearing, in-law relations, sexuality, religion, and issues unique to your relationship with each other. We encourage your openness, your honesty, your questions, and your willingness to grow.
 - There is value in the pastor's getting to know the couple better at the start their new family together in this spiritual event.
- 2 Second, the clergy will assist you in thinking through the worship aspects of your wedding. From the initial conference to wedding day, the clergy makes herself available to provide ideas, resources, and support in order to fulfill your expectations and wishes for the service.

The Organist and Musicians

You are responsible for contracting the Church organist as soon as possible after the initial conference with the minister. Even if you plan to use another musician the Church organist must approve the use of the organ.

The use of CD and other microphones will entail visiting with the communication coordinator.

Music will be selected generally because of its religious themes and appropriateness for worship. Your lives and relationship will be strengthened as you open yourselves to God's presence and blessing.

- 1 Confirm the date and time of the wedding and the rehearsal. The church organist will discuss with you: organist fees, musical selections (instrumental and/or vocal), other rehearsal times in addition to the wedding rehearsal (if needed). All music and activities must be cleared through the minister.
- 2 Other music notes:
 - There will be an extra fee for the Accompanist and the Com-

munication Person.

- Soloists set their own fees. Our church organist plays for all weddings. In the event she is unavailable, she may suggest a substitute.

Other Considerations:

1 The Wedding Party:

All members of the wedding party are strongly encouraged to arrive 30 minutes before the wedding is to begin and remain at their designated waiting places. This will help assure the wedding starts on time.

- The bride and her attendants will be in the _____. They shall arrive when the bride determines.
- The groom and groomsmen will be in the _____ Pastor or Wedding Coordinator will escort them to the sanctuary.
- The rest of processional will wait in _____. (I.e. father of the bride, grand parents.)

2 The Processional and Recessional

- Usher assignment in the seating of family members will be determined by the bride and groom in the planning session with the pastor.
- **Processional order is usually**
 - ⇒ Paternal Grand parents of the groom
 - ⇒ Paternal Grand parents of the bride
 - ⇒ Maternal Grand parents of the groom
 - ⇒ Maternal Grand parents of the bride
 - ⇒ Parents of the groom
 - ⇒ Mother of the bride
- If there are other special persons to be seated, that can be discussed during planning time.
- Recessional is just the opposite of processional.

Ushers:

These are important leaders and should be chosen thoughtfully. It is recommended that you have two ushers for weddings. Add one usher after the first 75 guests and additional one for every increase of 50 additional guests you expect to attend.

Responsibilities include

- Being at rehearsal 10 to 15 minutes early to meet with the pastor

- Being dressed and in the sanctuary 30 minutes early
- Seating guests & Seating family
- Once the mothers are escorted, in ushers make sure all other persons go down the side aisles
- Make sure any disturbance is taken care of
- Escorting the wedding party out
- Directing the guests out after wedding is over

Wedding Coordinator???? Do We Have One?

We do not have a wedding coordinator; however if you choose to have one, the local clergy will need to be contracted by the wedding coordinator as soon as possible after the initial conference. The wedding coordinator must be present for the rehearsal as well as the wedding. The pastor will be in charge of the rehearsal.

Guidelines for set up and decorations in the sanctuary These guidelines are determined by the Trustees of the Church in consultation with the clergy. It is recommended that in considering your decorations for your wedding you use the beauty of the sanctuary to help create a worship environment. Simple and elegant go a long way in worship settings. All decorations must be removed that day and any clean up must be taken care of or you will forfeit your deposit.

The practical guidelines are spelled out below:

- ♦ Delivery of flowers must be coordinated when someone from the wedding party is able to receive them. The church is not opposed to the use of silk flowers.
- ♦ Altar Candles are provided by the church.
- ♦ If candles are used, they must all be No Drip candles and be positioned behind the altar rail. There can be NO candles down the aisle with the exception of the windows. A person should be designated to extinguish all candles at the end of the service.
- ♦ A designated, person either an usher or someone else, shall be ready to light the candles 10 minutes before the wedding starts
- ♦ If a Unity Candle is used it must be provided by the couple.
- ♦ Pew decorations must be attached so there will be no damage the wood or carpet.
- ♦ Real flower petals are not to be used by the flower girl as they can stain the carpet.
- ♦ There is guest register stand in the entrance; however for large weddings two stations are recommended.