

THE WEDDING POLICY

WESTMINSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The marriage ceremony in the church is a worship service. It is one of the most sacred rites that the pastors perform under the authority of the church. All wedding ceremonies performed in this church have the blessings of the church. In order that you may have a sacred and dignified wedding ceremony, you are urged to make thorough preparations, spiritual as well as temporal.

The church understands that marriage is a holy covenant that is instituted of God. Therefore each couple is invited to attend worship services at Westminster United Methodist Church as much as possible unless you are already involved in another church. A spiritual foundation is vital in order to establish a meaningful life together. The pastor and staff of Westminster United Methodist Church wish to extend every possible assistance to you so that your wedding in the church will be a memorable experience. Serious study and careful judgments have gone into preparing the following wedding policies and regulations. They are approved by the Board of Trustees and the Worship Committee and are the official policies related to weddings. Please read these materials carefully so that you may cooperate fully with the church in upholding these high standards.

WEDDING DATE CONFIRMATION

Whether any couple may be married at Westminster United Methodist Church is the final decision of the congregation's pastor. Each reservation for a wedding is confirmed and officially scheduled only **AFTER the pastor of Westminster has agreed to the date and the advance deposit (\$400 non-refundable) has been paid.**

COUNSELING SESSION WITH PASTOR

Each couple is asked to attend at least one counseling session with the pastor. Or, you may choose to do counseling with your own pastor. This session will be scheduled by the pastor. In counseling session, the pastor will talk about the meaning of Christian marriage, provide materials to enhance your relationship, and answer questions you may have regarding the ceremony.

MEETING WITH WEDDING COORDINATOR

The Wedding Coordinator is the official representative of the church. A wedding coordinator will be assigned to each wedding. It is necessary for the bride and/or mother or other persons responsible for the wedding to obtain a copy of the Wedding Policy and Florist/Photographer instructions from the wedding coordinator. These will be e-mailed to you or you may arrange to pick this up in the church office. After reading through the policy, please direct any questions you may have to the wedding coordinator.

No weddings may be scheduled during Holy Week. We may or may not schedule weddings or rehearsals on the following: New Year's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day or the weekend of Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve or Day, or the week between Christmas and New Year's Day.

The exact hour and date of the wedding and the rehearsal must be fixed at the time the reservation is placed. Evening weddings should be planned to begin no later than 8:00 p.m. All rehearsals will be scheduled prior to the wedding and require approximately forty-five minutes to an hour.

To reduce the possibility of misunderstanding or error on the part of any person involved, a *photocopy* of the wedding program is to be faxed to the Coordinator and pastor no later than 15 days prior to the service – fax # 713-977-0340

MUSIC

Because the music for the service is planned with and approved by the church organist, the bride must contact the organist. The organist of this church will be the organist for all weddings. An appointment with the organist can be arranged by contacting **Mr. Gustavo Andres, Westminster's church organist, gusandres75@gmail.com, or 812-219-0585.**

Due to the large number of weddings, please schedule your consultation 30 to 60 days prior to your wedding. If you will have a string quartet, please inform the organist immediately so that your date will not remain on his calendar.

Selecting music at the organ in the sanctuary where your wedding will take place is one of the most enjoyable aspects of your wedding planning. During your consultation, the organist will play a wide range of pieces from which to

select music for: 1) seating of the families, 2) the bridesmaids' processional, 3) the bride's processional and 4) the couple's recessional. Your musical ideas are welcomed and listening to wedding CD's is great, but you are not expected to have done any "homework" before the consultation.

Prelude music, played 20 to 30 minutes prior to the ceremony, is typically chosen by the organist. A sampling of this music will be played to ascertain your preferences. If you will have a vocalist, those selections should also be discussed during this session. At the end of the consultation you will be given the list of pieces, including placement, titles and composers, for your printed program.

If desired, the organist will secure a qualified soloist or additional musicians. A guest soloist is welcome but is required to know the music in advance of the rehearsal with the organist.

FACILITIES AND FEES

The fee is \$2,000. A non-refundable deposit of \$400 is due when you book a date and will hold that date for you; the balance of \$1,600 is due 30 days prior to the wedding. An additional fee of \$400 will be added if a wedding is on a holiday week-end. If the total due is not received, we will not be able to mail the marriage license to the county for recording. The wedding coordinator will be at the church two hours prior to the wedding. If you need additional time, there will be there will be an additional charge of \$150.00 an hour.

The Westminster United Methodist Church wedding fee is an inclusive fee and provides for the services of the pastor, the wedding coordinator, the organist, and the use of the Sanctuary. The charges quoted include the minimum costs for electricity, cooling, heating and custodial time. **However, if the wedding party chooses to use their own pastor, the cost is still the same due to utility and custodial costs.** This fee has been approved by the governing committees of the church. In the event of a cancellation, the deposit will be retained for administrative charges.

If unusual custodial services are required for set up or clean up or in the event of damage to the facilities are present on the premises, there may be additional charges as determined by the church.

THE REHEARSAL

The rehearsal will begin PROMPTLY at the time scheduled. ***The wedding party members should park on the West side of the sanctuary, not the Bering Street parking lot.*** The bride and groom are asked to urge all members of the wedding party to be prompt for the rehearsal. Church regulations do not allow smoking in the sanctuary area or any other area inside the church or facility. **No rehearsal or wedding ceremony will be conducted when any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol/drugs.**

The following information will help you to be prepared for the rehearsal:

1. The pastor and wedding coordinator will be in charge of the rehearsal.
2. The rehearsal will require approximately 45 minutes.
3. All participating parents should be present for the rehearsal.
4. All members of the wedding party, including ushers, should be present.
5. **The marriage license must be delivered to the pastor at the rehearsal.**
6. Any children in the wedding party should be at least 3 years of age; older than 3 is preferred.
7. You should plan for at least one usher for every 40 persons expected at the service. Groomsmen may serve as ushers. Ushers are asked to inform those persons with cameras that **personal pictures may not be taken in the sanctuary at any time during the wedding.**
8. If a wedding program of the order of service and the music selections is to be printed, it must be submitted to the Wedding Coordinator for final proofing by the pastor and organist.
9. A rehearsal check list is provided at the end of this booklet for your completion.

GUEST MINISTERS

Permission for a guest minister must be cleared with the pastor of Westminster. Only he/she can approve using an outside pastor. The fee will remain the same if a guest minister is involved because of utilities and custodial costs.

BRIDE'S DRESSING ROOM

For weddings we have provided dressing areas for wedding participants. Because this area will be used on Sundays, all garment bags, hangers, trash, and other items must be removed from this area **immediately following the wedding service**.

REGARDING WEDDING DRESS AND OTHER PERSONAL VALUABLES

The bride is responsible for determining if the dresses are to be delivered to the church. She will then report this information to the Coordinator. The church's responsibility is limited to providing a dressing room where dresses may be left. The church will not be responsible for personal items such as wedding dresses, wraps, purses. The church shall not be liable for such items if lost, stolen, or damaged. However, every reasonable effort will be made to assist the wedding party in protecting such property. It is suggested that some friend of the family be assigned to be present if a wedding dress is to be delivered prior to the ceremony.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FLORIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER

The bride will be furnished a copy of each of these instructions at the time the wedding is discussed with the Coordinator. It is the bride's responsibility to review these instructions with both her photographer and florist in making plans for her wedding and reception, so that there will be no misunderstanding or deviation from these established rules and policies. The bride should give a copy of the policies to the florist and photographer.

We encourage wedding flowers to be left for Sunday Services. As soon as the decision is made, the bride needs to contact the church secretary or Wedding Coordinator and make arrangements in advance to have an acknowledgment placed in the Sunday Bulletin. If the altar flowers have already been designated by someone else for that given Sunday, then the wedding flowers would be placed in the Narthex with an acknowledgment in the Sunday Bulletin.

If the bride wishes to keep the floral arrangements provided by the florist for the wedding, arrangements must be made to have the flowers picked up **immediately** following the wedding service. The church cannot be responsible for the flowers after the service. Wedding candelabra and/or Unity candle must also be picked up **immediately** after the wedding service as the church does not have storage facilities and will not be held responsible for lost or damaged

items.

SOUND TECHNICIAN – if special music or other special effects requires a sound technician, Westminster will use our own technician without exception. Please let the wedding coordinator know in advance if you want a CD or other music for approval.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Compliance with the following rules is necessary as a provision for use of the church facilities:

1. Smoking is prohibited in the church buildings at all times.
2. Food and drinks are not permitted in the church building except in the areas where wedding party is dressing.
3. Alcoholic beverages/drugs are not permitted on church property.
4. Birdseed, in lieu of rice, may be thrown **outside** the church building as the bridal couples leave the church. No rice, paper petals, or confetti are to be used inside or outside the church buildings as the couple departs.
5. Aisle runners are not permitted.
6. A custodian and Wedding Coordinator will be on duty for all rehearsals and ceremonies.
7. No rehearsal or wedding will be conducted when **any** member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol/drugs.
8. If more than one wedding is scheduled on the same day, there will be a minimum of four hours between weddings. In such cases, rehearsal hours will be scheduled for accordingly as convenient for both parties.
9. **Variations of the prescribed procedures and other exceptions may be made only at the discretion and approval of the pastor.**
10. Members of the wedding party are requested to park on the West

parking lot for the rehearsal and wedding in order for the small East parking lot to be used for other Church functions.

11. The church will be open two hours prior to the scheduled wedding time. Additional time will be billed at \$150.00 an hour.

Reviewed 09/2021