

The First Congregational Church of Fall River

Wedding Booklet

*And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of these is love.*
I Corinthians 13.13

**282 Rock Street - Church Office: 21 June Street
Fall River, MA 02720
508-672-5862**

Adopted by the Board of Deacons, March, 2008

Welcome to First Congregational Church

The people of the Congregation extend to you our welcome as you make plans for your wedding. We are honored that you have chosen our sanctuary as the location of this most solemn and joyous event. Our church's facilities are available to you whether you are a life-long member or new to this community. Included herein are (1) explanations of the understandings we bring, as a faith tradition, to the wedding ceremony and (2) policies set by the church for conducting weddings at First Congregational Church.

Christian Marriage

Christian marriage is a covenant between two people and a covenant between the couple and God. This covenant is one based on love and can only be made by the free and willing consent of each member of the couple. This covenant is also one of responsibility, in which life-long commitment and faithfulness is publicly promised.

In the Congregational tradition, weddings are considered services of worship. They are, therefore, to be both solemn and joyful in character, communicating the seriousness of the commitments being made, but also expressing the great gladness of those entering into the marriage covenant.

The Minister who officiates at the ceremony acts as a representative of the Church and asks God's blessing upon the union being formed. The congregation and the couple's families are given the opportunity to express their affirmation of the marriage and their support and thanksgiving for the new family being created.

Planning Your Wedding

The Senior Minister is expected to officiate at all weddings. At the Minister's discretion, another clergyperson may be invited to participate or officiate in his/her stead.

Although it is appropriate that the service reflect the needs and preferences of the couple, the service must also conform to certain standards of Christian faith and worship. Therefore, the officiating Minister must give final approval to the content of the service, including prayers, vows, readings, and music selections.

Scheduling Your Wedding

You should schedule your wedding in consultation with the officiating Minister and with the Church Secretary, in order to identify a date that is open in the Minister's schedule and that is available on the church calendar. Please schedule the date of the wedding and the rehearsal several months in advance, so that the date may be reserved. **PLEASE NOTE: Arrangements for weddings are entered on the church calendar on a first-come-first-served basis.** As soon as you have settled on a date, you should consult with the officiating Minister, who will direct you to any further contacts necessary for your use of the church sanctuary and other church facilities.

The officiating Minister will be pleased to meet with you to discuss the meaning of Christian marriage, as well as the details of the ceremony. He/she will explain the parts of the service, answer any questions you may have, and discuss any special features you may wish to include in the service.

The Wedding Rehearsal

All participants, including the parents and ushers, should be present for the rehearsal. If all members of the party are present at the designated time, the rehearsal usually takes about an hour. In scheduling the rehearsal, be sure to allow plenty of time between the rehearsal and the rehearsal dinner, especially if the wedding party must travel any significant distance to the site of the dinner.

Wedding Music

The Minister of Music is expected to be asked to play at all weddings wherein music is requested. At the Minister's and the Minister of Music's discretions, guest organists, soloists and other musicians may be invited to participate. **When a guest organist is employed, the Minister of Music is also paid his/her usual fee.** Music is an integral element of the wedding ceremony. It sets the mood of the service and brings the wedding party and congregation together in a spirit of worship. While we will attempt to accommodate the music preferences of the couple, the officiating Minister will make final decisions regarding music choices which are appropriate for a wedding in this church. Selection of vocal and/or instrumental soloists should be arranged several weeks before the wedding to allow adequate rehearsal time.

The Marriage License

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has established laws concerning marriage. The Minister not only represents the Church, but also acts as a functionary of the Commonwealth. Therefore, a proper marriage license is required before proceeding with the wedding ceremony. *Please take careful note:* **IF YOU DO NOT PRESENT A PROPERLY COMPLETED MARRIAGE LICENSE BEFORE THE WEDDING, THE WEDDING CANNOT BE HELD!**

The City Clerk will be able to answer all questions concerning the relevant legal aspects of marriage. We recommend that you **make application for the license at least one month prior to the wedding.** After the wedding, the Minister will sign and return the license to the City Clerk. Photocopies may be procured from that office about a week after the wedding. After the wedding ceremony, you will be given a Certificate of Marriage from the Church.

The Wedding Day

Seating: The Sanctuary seats approximately 430.

Pictures: Wedding services may be videotaped (using a stationary camera), but only available light may be used.

Flash photography may be used during the entrance and the departure of the bridal party and of the bride and groom (i.e., while the organ is playing). **NO LIGHTS OR FLASH CAMERA MAY BE USED DURING THE SERVICE ITSELF. Please note this in your wedding bulletin, e.g., John and Jane ask guests to please refrain from taking flash photographs during the Wedding Worship Service.**

Pictures without a flash may be taken at any time, provided the photographer remains behind the seated guests. Vows may be restaged for flash photographs after the service.

The bride and groom should instruct the professional photographers and videographers to consult with the Minister before the service begins.

Dressing Rooms: No facilities are available at the church for the bride and her party, or the groom and his attendants.

Safety of Property: It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to arrange for the safety of the property of the wedding party during the ceremony. First Congregational Church will not be held responsible for lost or stolen articles.

Decorations -- Flowers, Candles, etc.

Flowers: Flowers should be in place in the Sanctuary one hour before the ceremony. Flowers for the wedding party may be delivered to the church, or you may prefer to have them delivered to your home. Ribbons and/or flowers on the pews or elsewhere in the Sanctuary should be secured without use of tacks, pins, or adhesives of any kind. Plastic clips may be used. If you desire other kinds of decorations, please consult the Minister.

Candles: The large candles on the Communion Table are available for your use. There are two large candelabra which also may be used.

Aisle Runner: Because of serious danger to members of the wedding party and guests as a result of tripping on aisle runners, we do not allow use of aisle runners in the church.

The Reception: If you would like to have the reception at the church, the Fellowship Hall (downstairs) may be reserved for the occasion. You must provide your own caterer. Please see the schedule of fees for use of these facilities.

Other Policies:

Alcoholic beverages may not be served or consumed on church property.

There is no smoking anywhere in the church building.

The use of rice, confetti, and flower petals is not allowed.

No tacks, pins, or adhesives may be used in decorating.

**None of the religious symbols (i.e., Cross, Bible, Baptismal Font, etc.)
may be hidden, moved, or obscured.**

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to acquaint the wedding party with these rules prior to the wedding rehearsal.

Security Deposit: A refundable security deposit of \$350 is required of all wedding parties, to be paid two weeks in advance of the wedding.

Note: The First Congregational Church is handicapped accessible. Please let the Minister know in advance if this need is anticipated.

Wedding Fees and Policies

First Congregational Church of Fall River

	Non-member	Member
Reservation Fee (non-refundable)	\$50	\$50
Sanctuary (including opening, monitoring, closing)	\$400	\$50
Reception Room Fellowship Hall (downstairs)	\$300	\$50
Officiating Minister: The Minister will participate in the rehearsal and in the service.	\$400	\$250
Music Minister*	\$300	\$200
Sexton (cleaning) Sanctuary only	\$150	\$150
use of Fellowship Hall	\$100	\$100
Coordinator	\$75	\$35
Security Deposit (refundable)	\$350	\$350

*Additional fees may apply if extra rehearsal time with the soloist is necessary or if unusual music is requested.

All fees are due two weeks prior to the ceremony.

Member fees apply when either of the couple or a parent of either of the couple is currently in good standing as a member of the First Congregational Church.

Please see next page.

Checks should be made payable as follows:

Officiating Minister: L. Weldon Palmer

Minister of Music: Sandra D. Wood

Soloist: if applicable

Sexton: Paul Anderson

Coordinator: Paul Anderson

Sanctuary and Reception Fees: First Congregational Church of Fall River

Wedding Reservation Agreement

We have read and do understand the policies and fees regarding weddings at the First Congregational Church of Fall River. We agree that it is our responsibility to abide by those policies and to make them known to our guests and to others (including the photographer and/or videographer) who participate in our wedding.

We have enclosed a **non-refundable reservation fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00)** to reserve the church for our wedding. (We understand this fee will be applied toward payment of the sanctuary fee.)

We agree to pay the following fees:

Reservation fee	\$ _____
Sanctuary	\$ _____
Minister	\$ _____
Minister of Music	\$ _____
Wedding Coordinator	\$ _____
Sexton	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Security Deposit (refundable)	\$ _____
Total Fees	\$ _____
Less Deposit	\$ _____
Balance Due	\$ _____
(two weeks before wedding)	

Signatures: _____

Date: _____

Please Note: This form must be returned to the Church Office (with the \$50 reservation fee) in order to reserve the date on the Church Calendar.