



First Congregational United Church of Christ

*2023
Wedding
Handbook*

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Visit us online:
fccmoline.org/weddings

The essence of marriage is a covenant commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the glad occasion on which two people unite as together in the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one presiding acts as an official representative of the church and gives the marriage the church's blessing. The congregation joins in affirming the marriage and in offering support and thanksgiving for the new family.

--Book of Worship, United Church of Christ

Congratulations!

Marriage is one of the great gifts that God has given to the human family. Some of the most beautiful experiences of joy and happiness are found in the marriage relationship.

Your desire to be married at First Congregational UCC indicates you want your wedding service to be a sacred worship experience. It means that you want God to be a part of the life you make together and the home you build.

The agreement to host a wedding service at First Congregational UCC will be determined after the pastor of First Congregational UCC talks with the couple making the request. To prepare for the wedding, the officiating pastor will meet with couples to assist in planning the service of marriage.

It is a privilege to help you plan your wedding and an honor to be with you on your life's journey together.

Revised August, 2023

Scheduling a Wedding at First Congregational UCC

While many customs and traditions have secular origins, the purpose of a Christian wedding is worship before God: to acknowledge God's gracious love in which the marriage of two persons might grow, to hear words of guidance from Scripture, to pray for this marriage and all marriages, and to make a public promise of faithfulness to each other in the marriage vows. Couples desiring a wedding at First Congregational UCC should be willing to affirm these religious purposes when making arrangements for the church and presiding minister. If not, then a civil ceremony before a magistrate might be more appropriate.

Who can get Married at First Congregational UCC?

First Congregational UCC does not prohibit any couple who can be legally married from holding a wedding at the church. All weddings are subject to final approval by the pastor.

Premarital Counseling

Premarital counseling is required for all couples married at First Congregational UCC. There will be two counseling appointments scheduled with the pastor. If an outside minister is approved and is helping with the ceremony, only one premarital counseling with the FCC pastor may be required.

Premarital counseling is to be arranged 6 months before the wedding date.

Scheduling

An online Wedding Date Request form must be submitted and approved.

Once your date is approved, you will receive an approval email and will have 7 days to mail in your non-refundable \$200 scheduling deposit to make your wedding date official on the church calendar. Your deposit is only for the approved date and time requested. Requests for a change to the wedding start time will be handled on an individual basis, as there is no guarantee your new time preference is available. The deposit will be applied toward the wedding fees outlined below.

If you must cancel or reschedule your wedding date for any reason, your non-refundable scheduling deposit will not be returned, Last minute cancellations, within 30 days or less, are subject to forfeit any other fees paid. You must submit a new online Wedding Date Request form if you want to choose a different date.

FCC has the right to decline any wedding date request for any reason, including requests for holidays or holiday weekends. The church's calendar of events is reviewed first and takes priority.

Any pandemic guidelines put in place by FCC at time of the event will apply, which may require a limit to guests in the building, face masks being required, and social distancing requirements, and is subject to change. Please contact the office for information on the most current guidelines.

Fees and Services

All weddings at First Congregational UCC are charged a comprehensive fee of \$1,500, which includes the use of our sanctuary and multiple services designed to facilitate the planning and celebration of your wedding. Included in the fees:

Services

- A Minister to officiate the wedding.
- A Wedding Coordinator to assist in planning and applying the wedding guidelines.
- An Organist or Pianist.
- 14 candelabras and a white aisle runner upon request.
- Wedding programs published by the church office upon request.

The fee does not cover outside services, such as instrumentalists, florists, photographers, not listed above.

Unused services do not result in a fee reduction.

Outside services secured by the couple are paid directly by the couple.

Facilities

The following church facilities are made available during weddings held at First Congregational UCC:

- The Sanctuary for the rehearsal (**up to 1 hour**)
- The Sanctuary for the ceremony (**up to 4 hours**)
- Limited dressing rooms for men and women.
- Fellowship Hall rental is negotiated under a different agreement. If you desire to use the Fellowship Hall, please contact the church office.

Summary of Fees:

Comprehensive Services & Facility Fee Detail:

\$200 - Non-Refundable Scheduling Deposit due within 7 days of approval email.

\$1300 - Balance Comprehensive Wedding Fee due **60 days** prior to wedding date.

Your scheduling deposit locks in FCC fee costs. Fees are subject to change prior to receiving a scheduling deposit.

Additional Fees:

\$500 - Refundable Security Deposit is due 30 days prior to the wedding date.

This deposit includes coverage for, but is not limited to: damage expenses, time overage, contract violations, etc.

Deposit will be returned within 14 days **AFTER** ceremony, if applicable.

***Fees not paid in full within 30 days of the wedding date will cancel the wedding and be subject to forfeit any fees already paid.**

**Please contact Pastor for a discounted "Active Member" fee pricing*

Payment Methods:

Checks shall be made to **“First Congregational UCC.”**

Please note the couple’s names and the wedding date on the check.

Mail check to 2201 7th Avenue Moline, IL 61265

Other options for online payments (with an additional fee) may be available.

For more information call 309-762-0787.

Planning the Service

The marriage service is one of the most sacred and beautiful of all services of the Church. It is a worship service in which two persons in the company of their loved ones and friends pledge themselves to each other under the blessing of God and are united in Christian Marriage. Preparations should be made with this in mind. It is the desire of First Congregational UCC that the wedding be a memorable event—beautiful and meaningful. It is to this end that the following guidelines and policies have been established.

The Wedding Service

The format for weddings at First Congregational UCC follows the order for marriage in the *United Church of Christ Book of Worship*. Couples, in consultation with the pastor, may adjust the service to meet their family needs.

Rehearsal

One hour is allotted for your wedding rehearsal. The presiding minister will direct the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including attendants, parents, additional clergy, readers and ushers, soloists and musicians, are expected to attend unless excused by the presiding minister. Please bring your marriage license to the rehearsal! The rehearsal cannot continue without the wedding license.

Wedding Coordinator

The couple will meet with the wedding coordinator to finalize the details of the wedding, plan programs, and answer any questions.

Clergy

The pastor of First Congregational UCC presides over all weddings. Additional ministers may be invited by the presiding minister to also be a part of the service, should the couple request it. First Congregational UCC’s minister will determine what role additional ministers will play and have final authority on all matters related to the service and the use of First Congregational UCC’s facilities.

The following sections describe some choices to consider in the planning of a wedding ceremony:

Readings

The couple will work with the presiding minister to select scripture passages to be read during the ceremony. In addition to readings from the Bible, a selection from a secular source may be used if it is in harmony with the spirit of a Christian worship service and with the biblical understanding of marriage. Non-biblical material must be approved by the presiding minister. Couples frequently choose one or more friends or family members to serve as readers.

Vows

A list of suggested vows is found in the Order of Service booklet. Couples may choose one of these, or may write their own vows. Written vows should be consistent with the biblical understanding of marriage and should make clear that the promises are a life-long commitment. They must be submitted to the presiding minister for approval at least **one month** before the wedding.

Music

The pastor will refer the couple to a church musician to help with the selection of music and will consult with the couple regarding their selections as needed.

The music for a wedding typically consists of the following:

- Prelude, as the guests are arriving and being seated.
- Processional, as the wedding party enters the Sanctuary.
- Recessional, as the wedding party leaves the Sanctuary.
- Postlude, as guests leave the Sanctuary.
- Appropriate vocal or instrumental solos and congregational hymns may be used.

While the church provides a musician as part of the comprehensive fee for weddings at First Congregational UCC, some couples may wish to invite other instrumentalists or vocalists to perform special music. When this is the case, the couple will be responsible to pay these special musicians directly.

Programs

As part of the services of the church, standard wedding programs will be printed by the staff of First Congregational UCC by request. The program outlines the service and lists the wedding party. The information must be given to the church office **one month** prior to the wedding in order to allow ample time for review and printing.

Bulletins will be printed on ivory or white cardstock unless the couple provides specific paper at their own expense.

Use of the Church Building

In all matters pertaining to the building, authority rests with the presiding minister. Everyone associated with the wedding, including the wedding party, guests, and contracted service providers, are expected to abide by the policies of First Congregational UCC.

Accessibility

A wedding rehearsal is held the evening before the wedding and is allotted one hour. The doors will be opened approximately 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal. The church gate located at the 7th Avenue entrance will be opened for the day of the wedding.

Wedding parties may use the building for up to, but not exceeding, 4 hours on the wedding day. Use begins 2 hours before the scheduled start of the wedding service. For example, a wedding scheduled for 2:00 p.m. allows the wedding party to use the building from noon until 4:00 p.m. Any deliveries, such as from florists, or set-up by photographers must be completed during the 4-hour window. Should time go over the allotted time frame of 4 hours, a fee of \$100 per hour will be taken from the security deposit.

Church Etiquette

- **No tobacco or alcohol** is allowed on the premises of the church or the parking lot.
- The pastor will cancel the rehearsal or wedding service if any member of the wedding party is “under the influence.”
- No rice, bird seed, confetti, or similar materials are allowed on church grounds.
- All items brought into the church must be removed after the wedding.
- Please leave the church in relatively clean condition.
- Violation of these policies may result in loss of security deposit.

Decorations

Part of the joy of holding a wedding at First Congregational UCC is the beauty of the Sanctuary. Some items for decorations are provided by the church and couples may also decorate with approval.

Arches are not permitted.

The color of paraments and vestments used for the wedding services are white and will be changed to white for the wedding service.

The furnishings in the Sanctuary may not be moved or altered for the wedding service.

The altar and clergy seats are not to be decorated; however, ribbons or flowers may be attached to the pews upon consent of the presiding minister.

No adhesive tape or clamps that will scratch the pews or remove the varnish will be allowed.

Under no circumstances are rice, birdseed, or other similar objects to be strewn about the church or its grounds.

Couples must arrange to have a member of the wedding party remove decorations prior to leaving our facilities. Florists are thanked in advance for their cooperation in the observance of this policy.

Timeline for Preparing for your Wedding

The following is a timeline of appointments and tasks to be completed to help weddings at First Congregational UCC run smoothly. For further explanation of the following tasks, please consult the referenced sections and pages in the wedding handbook.

To Book Your Wedding:

- Complete the online “Wedding Date Request & Couple Info” form. Once a date is approved by the office, a non-refundable scheduling deposit of \$200 is due to the church within 7 days of the approval email to reserve your date.

6 Months Before Your Wedding:

- The pastor will contact the couple; two premarital sessions will be scheduled.

3 Months Before Your Wedding:

- Meet with the church wedding coordinator to begin planning the details for the wedding ceremony (this can be done at one of your premarital sessions).
- Select music for the wedding ceremony, to be approved by the music coordinator.

1 Month Before Your Wedding:

- Final meeting with the presiding minister and wedding coordinator.
- Turn in handwritten vows.
- All remaining fees and security deposit are due to the First Congregational Church office or the wedding is subject to be canceled.
- All wedding program information is due to the office.

1 Week Before Your Wedding:

- Proof the wedding program, which is normally sent to the couple electronically as a .pdf for review and direct any changes or adjustments to the wedding coordinator.

1 Day Before Your Wedding:

- Wedding Rehearsal (one hour is allotted for this).
- The presiding minister provided by First Congregational UCC will direct the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including attendants, parents,

additional clergy, readers and ushers, soloists and musicians, are expected to attend unless excused by the presiding minister.

REMEMBER: Bring your marriage license to the rehearsal!

Day of Wedding

- Wedding parties may use the building for up to, but not exceeding, 4 hours on the wedding day.
Use begins 2 hours before the scheduled start of the wedding service.
Then typically one hour is for the service and one hour for pictures and clean-up.
- Have a time frame set and scheduled to allow access to the building.

Within 14 Days AFTER the Wedding:

- The refundable security deposit will be returned – if the church is left in appropriate condition. Any time overage fees will be deducted from the deposit.

***If you would like to proceed with requesting a wedding date, please visit fccmoline.org/weddings to submit an official request. Thank you and congratulations!**