

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Wedding Policy

We at First Congregational United Church of Christ want you to know how pleased we are that you are considering our church for your marriage ceremony. Marriages are very special services of worship for the couple, for their families and for their friends. Thus, the church is concerned with making sure that this special worship service which you are considering will be a significant moment in your lives as well as an appropriate service of worship for this church.

In keeping with our long legacy of social justice and inclusivity, First Congregational United Church of Christ – DC proclaims the equal rights of all people, including the legal right for individuals to marry the person of their choice. In accordance with our Open and Affirming Statement and the laws of the District of Columbia we welcome weddings for all couples, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

The marriage ceremony is the glad occasion on which two people unite as partners in the mutual exchange of covenantal promises. In consultation with your celebrant, you may want to develop a service which will uniquely express the meaning of your marriage. This might include writing your own vows, including guest speakers or musicians, the selection of favorite readings, or other modifications.

A wedding ceremony conducted in the church is not just a social occasion performed within the walls of a religious building. It is a service of worship. Prayers are offered and solemn vows are made. It is expected that those present, and most particularly all of the wedding party, will participate in the spirit of sincere worship. Like all services of worship, a wedding ceremony is designed to glorify God who divinely ordained marriage. Because we see weddings as important religious services, anything that adds to the reverence of the occasion is proper and anything that detracts from the spiritual nature of the service is discouraged.

To help you plan for your wedding and to know the traditions, requirements, and expectations of the church, we prepared this guide for you. It is our joy to work together with you to make this one of the most special and meaningful days of your lives.

Members (active members at the time of reserving a date) of First Congregational UCC may use the sanctuary, living room and chapel for three (3) hours for the ceremony and the Sanctuary for one and a half (1.5) hours for rehearsal the day before for no charge.

Space Fee

For **nonmembers**, the fee for a wedding at First Congregational United Church of Christ is \$2,000 and includes:

- Use of the Sanctuary, Living Room, and Chapel for up to three hours for the wedding including setup, ceremony, and cleanup.
- Use of the Sanctuary for up to one and a half hours on the day before the ceremony for a rehearsal.
- Use of the Sanctuary piano subject to the approval of the Music Director.
- Use of the Sanctuary's 47-rank, 2,590 pipe Casavant pipe organ subject to the approval of the Music Director.

The following is not included in the wedding fee:

- A sound technician to run the sound board and record the service (the sanctuary is equipped with a [Yamaha LS9-32 Digital Mixing Board](#)). You may hire one directly from our list of preferred technicians if available, or provide one of your acquaintance subject to the approval of the church's Building Manager.
- Use of the hi-definition cameras and related equipment to Zoom or video record the service. Use of this equipment is available for an additional fee.
- The celebrant. You will need to work out arrangements directly with a celebrant.
- The musician. Our Music Director may be available to provide the music for your service at a fee to be negotiated directly with him or her. If you choose to bring in someone else to play the piano or organ, we require that our Music Director approve that person.
- Bulletins for your service. A printed order of the marriage ceremony is not necessary, although it can be helpful to your family and friends as well as a keepsake. It is your responsibility to have the bulletin printed (some couples make their own on their computer with special paper available from an office supply store). You will need to make arrangements with a graphic designer and a printer for these.
- Flowers, decorations.
- A unity candle.

Reception

If you wish to hold your reception at FCUCC, the Community Hall on the second floor can seat up to 104 people and rents for \$195 per hour and the Catering Kitchen rents for a use fee of \$150 - \$500 depending on the nature of your reception.

Parking

Please see [FCUCC Event Parking Policy](#).

Additional Fees and Guidelines

A refundable security deposit of \$500.00 (not applied to the above fees) is required immediately to hold your date for you.

Cancellation fee: within 90 days of event, forfeit 100% of deposit;
cancellation beyond 90 days, forfeit 50% of deposit.

The other fees are due thirty (30) calendar days before wedding date.

The security deposit will be returned within thirty days (30) after the wedding date, minus any charges for damages or extended use of the building, i.e., for each half hour (or fraction thereof) past the allotted time of use for Sanctuary, there is an additional \$150 charge.

Available Dates and Times

Please note that no weddings will be scheduled on Sundays, Mondays, federal holidays, between Palm and Easter Sundays, Inauguration Day, or the day preceding Inauguration Day. Weddings scheduled on federal holiday weekends may be subject to an additional charge.

Weddings shall begin no earlier than 10:00 a.m., and no later than 5:00 p.m.

You may ask the Church Office to "pencil-in" a tentative date for the rehearsal and wedding service on the church's building calendar. **These dates remain tentative until after the couple has sent in their deposit.**

Building

Our building was constructed in 2011 and is of a striking, modern design by [Todd Williams and Billie Tsien](#). It is fully accessible, has state-of-the-art audio-visual and lighting capabilities and HVAC systems. See our [website](#) for photographs of the building. We encourage you to schedule a visit to be certain our modern design is appropriate for your vision of your ceremony. The church office is normally open 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday.

The walnut chancel furniture was custom designed by Williams and Tsien as a gift to the congregation and hand-crafted by [Stephen Iino](#).

The sanctuary seats up to 325 including the balcony. The chapel can seat up to 40.

Music

Music for the ceremony may be arranged through the church's Director of Music. S/he will be happy to discuss possible selections with you. The wedding is a worship service. The church's policy is to allow only music appropriate for a worship service; other music should be used for the reception. The use of pre-recorded music is discouraged.

The fee for the musician is negotiable and generally includes one consultation and the service. This fee is to be paid directly to the musician at the consultation. It is the couples' responsibility to make contact with the Director of Music as early as possible to assure availability.

If you choose to bring in someone else, we require that our Director of Music approve of your musician in order to safeguard two very valuable musical instruments.

Photography/Video Recordings

The taking of pictures or videotaping the service is at the discretion of your celebrant.

Decoration of the Church

Decorations can enhance the beauty of the building and the wedding ceremony. Please review and follow these guidelines carefully. If any damage is done to the building or furnishings, the \$500 security deposit will not be returned and additional fees may be assessed.

- All decorations must be appropriate to a worship service.
- Moving or removing of the chancel furniture must be approved by church staff.
- Only church staff members are allowed to move church furniture. You should consult with church staff at least seven days prior to your ceremony about how the chancel furniture should be arranged.
- No tape, tacks, nails, pins, screws, or other objects shall be driven into or attached to the walls, floors, furnishings, etc.
- Aisle runners may not be used.

- Please note that the church frequently uses the Narthex to hang exhibits of religious art or exhibits of art which speak to a specific social justice issue or peace initiative that aligns with the church's mission. If such an exhibit is currently installed, it will remain on the walls during your service and reception.
- Flower petals, rice, birdseed, confetti, or other similar items are not to be thrown on the floor or used anywhere inside or outside the building. Bubbles may be used outside only.
- If a Unity Candle is lit as part of the wedding ceremony, the candles are to be provided by the bridal party. A table will be provided by the church. Only dripless candles are to be used during the ceremony.
- Congregational candle lighting ceremonies are not allowed.
- Arrangements for floral decorations should be made through the florist of your choice, who will supply the flowers and the containers. Because of the scale of our sanctuary and its modernity, we recommend that your florist visit the church so that they may make appropriate recommendations to you for your consideration.
- Care must be taken at all times to see that the floors, walls and furnishings are not disfigured in the placing of flowers or other decorations. Protection must be placed under all pots, vases or plants so that no dampness seeps through. Your floral arrangements are likely to be stored in a florist's cooler and with the humidity control we maintain for the well-being of our organ, flower vases may develop condensation even in the winter. Therefore, a protective saucer must be placed under vases until the water within comes to room temperature.
- If you would like to leave a flower arrangement for the Sunday worship service, please check with the church office.
- Weddings held during the Advent, Christmas and Easter seasons are required to leave in place the church's decorations.
- All decorations must be removed immediately after the ceremony.

First Congregational United Church of Christ is NOT responsible for lost or stolen property.

The Rehearsal

The wedding ceremony will be planned in advance by the couple in consultation with the celebrant. All members of the wedding party should participate in the rehearsal, including but not limited to the couple, their parents, attendants, participating children, ushers, readers, etc.

Please plan one full hour for the rehearsal.

The rehearsal will be conducted by the celebrant.

The marriage license should be delivered to the celebrant at the rehearsal.

Punctuality

We require that both the rehearsal and the wedding start promptly at the times agreed upon. The church reserves the right to cancel any rehearsal or wedding that is more than thirty minutes late. If a rehearsal is cancelled then the wedding will also be cancelled. All fees paid prior to the wedding will be forfeited.

Alcoholic beverages

The consumption of alcoholic beverages of any kind may be consumed only according to the terms and restrictions of the church's [alcohol policy](#).

No Smoking

In accordance with D.C. law, smoking is not permitted anywhere within our building or within 25 feet of any entrance.