

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Seekonk Congregational Church is pleased to be part of your wedding. It is one of the most significant events of your life, and therefore, all care and thoughtfulness should be taken to make it special and unique. The ceremony should authentically reflect your uniqueness as a couple and new family. Our minister will assist you in making it a special occasion and will work with you in the required counseling and preparatory sessions. However, ultimately it is up to you to make this your wedding and not merely a formality.

The Minister and Board of Deacons have final authority over the use and order of the sanctuary and the service. Your initial contact should be with the minister to clear dates and arrange for your pre-marital counseling. If possible, this should be done at least 4-6 months in advance of the wedding date you desire. Obviously, the earlier you make your arrangements, the more likely you are to get the date and time you wish.

In addition, the following information may be helpful as you plan your wedding.

## **LICENSE**

Your marriage license **MUST** be obtained at the Seekonk Town Clerk's Office at the Town Hall, located on 100 Peck Street, Seekonk, MA (508-336-2920). Since your minister cannot legally marry you without the license in hand, it is required that you bring it to the church office and give it to the pastoral assistant in the office prior to the rehearsal.

## **COUNSELING**

In preparation for your wedding, you are expected to meet with the minister for 2-3 pre-marital counseling sessions. These sessions will deal with basic issues in marriage relationships, communication skills, goal-setting, building the wedding ceremony and other issues which may arise. In addition, it is also strongly encouraged that you make an appointment for follow-up counseling 6-12 months after your wedding.

## **THE REHEARSAL**

Most weddings require a rehearsal, usually held one or two nights prior to your wedding day. Everyone participating in the ceremony should attend the rehearsal. Promptness is requested and, with it, the rehearsal should last no longer than 45 minutes.

## **CHURCH RECEPTIONS**

Wedding receptions may be held in Woodworth Hall if desired. However, please note that no alcoholic beverages may be served on church property, although permission for a champagne toast is often granted for wedding receptions. Caterers and others working in the reception are asked to get clearance with the church office well in advance and clean up immediately following the reception. Fees are listed on the separate sheet.

## FLOWERS AND CANDLES

Altar flowers help to make the wedding more beautiful, and can be ordered through the florist of your choice. Consult with the minister for final arrangements, as s/he knows the policy of the church concerning decorations.

A white aisle runner is an optional item and is the responsibility of the florist if requested by the couple.

Candelabra for the chancel are available for the wedding, (except when the air-conditioner needs to be on) and candles are provided free of charge, unless the party desires new candles. In such cases, the couple will be asked to pay for them.

Many couples choose to take the light from 2 altar candles and together light the Christ candle in the center of the altar. You may talk with the minister about this possibility. The two altar candles can be lighted by two special relatives or friends of the celebrants as part of the ceremony just prior to the entrance of the wedding party.

Because the significance of your wedding ceremony can be lost if too many people are snapping pictures, we **do not allow** flash pictures to be taken during the ceremony. It is appropriate, however, to photograph the processional and recessional. Ushers should be instructed to inform guests with cameras about this. The minister reserves the right to interrupt the service if necessary.

Pictures may be taken by the photographer before the service and at the processional and recessional, but **no flash pictures** may be taken during the service. Following the service, pictures may be posed. The service is too significant to be interrupted by flash **or movement of photographers** during the service and the minister reserves the right to interrupt the service, if necessary, to speak with a photographer or videographer who does not follow the above criteria. Please be sure that the photographer understands this requirement.

Video-recording of wedding is permitted. However, arrangements concerning positioning of the camera must be made with the minister or wedding coordinator **at least** 45 minutes before the start of the ceremony and additional lighting is not permitted. It is appropriate for the videographer to attend the rehearsal.

## THE MUSIC

The church organist is expected to be in charge of the music unless other arrangements have been made and approved by the minister. The marriage service is a worship service—a sacred rite. As in any worship service, the music is to be chosen with care and discrimination. Since in the marriage service the assembled people of God join with the celebrants in asking for God's blessing as a new home is established, the music should accentuate the reverence of the service. Both texts and music should contribute to the worship atmosphere of the service.

There is a variety of excellent wedding music. Volumes of music appropriate for the marriage service have been compiled and offer selections which can reinforce the dignity and reverence of your wedding. The organist and minister will gladly assist you in selecting your music.

It is appropriate to use hymns in a wedding ceremony if a couple desires to do so. The minister and/or organist will assist you in selecting appropriate hymns.

You should contact the organist soon after the wedding date has been determined, since time is needed to prepare the music you have chosen. The organist will then determine a meeting time to discuss selections and listen to the possible choices.

## **OTHER CLERGY AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE SERVICE**

Please discuss any wishes along these lines with the minister.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Because the church does not have an appropriate space that is large enough for most receiving lines, we request that you plan to have your receiving line at your reception, if possible. The celebrants usually greet at the door as guests leave.
2. We request that no confetti or rice be used in the church building.
3. A kneeling bench is available to be used in the service if desired.
4. Space may be reserved in front of the church for the "wedding party". Please indicate this to the minister.
5. You may wish to have orders of service printed. Please discuss this with the minister.

## **WHAT TO DO WITH THE MINISTER**

It is not necessary to invite the minister, with or without spouse, to your reception. However, if you wish to have the Minister attend, with or without spouse, please send an invitation. If it is possible, the Minister will attend and, if desired, provide a blessing for the meal.

At the reception, it is not appropriate to introduce the minister with the wedding party, to include the minister in the receiving line, or to seat the minister at the head table. It is appropriate to call upon the minister for a blessing following the toast or for a prayer at the beginning of the meal.

## **FEES AND HONORARIA**

The fees and honoraria are paid to the pastoral assistant at least 3 days prior to the ceremony. The fees and honoraria for couples who are not members of the church are slightly higher than for those who are members. Couples shall be considered "members" if either the celebrants, or their parents are members in good standing of the church (for at least one year prior to the ceremony). Checks or cash are acceptable. Please make out checks individually for the Pastor, (the Church if not a member), the Organist, and the wedding coordinator, or place cash in separate envelopes for each person.

Enclosed please find a separate sheet listing the fees for weddings along with names of the church staff.

## **FINALLY**

We are honored to be part of this new relationship. Please call on the church staff regarding any questions you may have or assistance you may need. We will be glad to help you.

Because we are part of your new relationship, we feel a sense of responsibility to you and for you. If you are not yet a member, we extend an invitation to you to become a part of our church family now or in the future, and to use our services and/or our facilities. We also encourage you to come and see our minister should problems or concerns arise in your marriage in which you would benefit from our assistance.

Thank you very much for allowing us to be a part of your union.

## **NOTES:**