

Your Wedding  
at First Baptist Church  
Middletown, Ohio



## **Your Wedding at First Baptist Church**

You have chosen First Baptist Church as the context in which your wedding will take place. Because we believe that the covenant which you will enter is ordained by God and regulated by God's commandments, we will be trying to help you plan a wedding ceremony which affirms Christian teaching and glorifies God.

Although your wedding day is an extremely important occasion, the wedding ceremony itself is designed to focus on the larger issue which is your life together as a couple. The beautiful rituals and activities which take place at the time you are married serve no purpose in and of themselves unless they emphasize the life long commitment a man and a woman are making to each other.

As we plan with you, our first priority is assisting you to prepare for your life long journey together. While it is true that the service, symbolism, music decorations, photography and reception require careful preparation, the larger issues of your relationship with one another form the foundation of the commitment which you are entering. That is why we explore those issues with you first. If you understand the profound seriousness of your commitment, the arrangements for your wedding day will find proper focus and direction.

The staff of First Baptist Church will do its best not only to assist in planning the wedding but also in stressing the deeply spiritual meaning of Christian marriage. We look forward to working

together with you in celebrating God's presence in the relationship which you will enter soon.

### **First Step**

The first step in planning your wedding is reserving the date. You must call the church and the pastor not only to inquire about available dates, but also to arrange for an initial meeting with the pastor. The date of your wedding cannot be confirmed until it is placed on the church calendar in the office and the pastor has met with the couple. This should be done at least three months in advance of your wedding. If you are planning a wedding in the spring or at any time during December even more advanced notice should be given.

### **Pre-Marital Study**

A basic requirement for all couples being married at First Baptist is pre-marital study. Usually this consists of three sessions scheduled. The purpose of these sessions is to encourage the couple to examine their relationship as thoroughly as possible. Included in the study are such issues as finances, personal backgrounds, roles played by husband and wife within the marriage, conflict management and many other issues. The couple is also asked to consider basic Christian teachings regarding marriage.

Planning for the wedding ceremony itself also takes place during these sessions. However, the nature of the couple's relationship is always the primary concern of the pre-marital study. Except in

very unusual circumstances, pre-marital study must begin no later than three months before the wedding service is to take place.

### **Basic Assumptions**

As a community of Christian believers First Baptist Church and its leaders are guided by principles outlined in the Bible and by the teachings of Jesus Christ. In applying these principles we try to be faithful to God's Word. There are times when the principles of scripture and assumptions of our society appear to be in conflict with one another. When that occurs, we try to be faithful to God's Word and responsive to human need.

For that reason, persons asking to be remarried following a failed marriage will not automatically be turned down for marriage at First Baptist Church. However, we do feel that we have an obligation to ask you to consider:

1. The reasons for the termination of an earlier marriage
2. The steps which you are taking to assure the permanence of a new marriage
3. Whether enough time has elapsed between a divorce and plans for remarriage

In all cases, we will invite you to join us in seeking God's presence in your marriage and to join us in prayer for Divine Guidance in your life together.

## **Worship at the time of marriage**

There is distinct difference between weddings that are solemnized by civil authorities (a judge, Justice of the Peace, or other official) and those which are held in the Christian Community. This is because we regard marriage as a sacred covenant sealed by God. The words which are spoken, the music which is used, and the over all atmosphere of the ceremony combine to make the wedding an act of worship, not a performance.

For this reason we strongly encourage couples to plan their wedding day so that the actual ceremony will be a service of worship in which God is praised and those who assemble are reminded of God's presence. The awe and mystery of God's presence are central to this experience. That is why we plan music, scripture, prayer, the exchange of vows and rings, and all other symbols to magnify our awareness of God during the ceremony. During this solemn time when you are taking vows to last a lifetime we attempt to avoid all distractions such as flash photography and other activities which, though important, are not central to the experience of worship.

As we plan for your wedding we ask you to keep worship a priority in the entire process.

## **The Wedding Reception**

The wedding reception is a social event which is usually held immediately following the ceremony. Receptions range in size and scope from a small family dinner to brief gatherings in a

church social hall to larger events which include a meal and elaborate rituals.

Personal tastes and budgets will govern whatever plans you and your family may make for your reception. Unless you have asked to hold a reception at the church, your reception plans will normally have little connection to the church staff. It should be observed, however, that wherever your reception is held it may be the occasion in which a number of activities may be enjoyed which add to the festive nature of the day without diminishing the reverence and dignity which should characterize the ceremony itself. For example, please consider the following possibilities for inclusion in your reception:

1. Popular songs from musicals, motion pictures and similar choices. Such songs usually emphasize the romantic and sentimental nature of a couple's relationship. We believe that these should be omitted from worship but they fit perfectly into the atmosphere of the reception.
2. Poetry or other readings which include humor, fond memories of how you met, or tributes to your parents and other family members. It is important to celebrate all these aspects of your relationship as your wedding day unfolds. But the reception is a far more appropriate place to include than the service of worship.
3. Toasts, tributes and informal remarks by friends and family members.

Keeping your wedding reverent does not need to remove all the other aspects of celebration.

These are certainly welcome if kept within an appropriate context.

## **Facilities**

Most weddings at First Baptist are held in the sanctuary which comfortably seats about 325 persons. Smaller weddings may be held in the smaller chapel area of the sanctuary. This area will accommodate 35-50 persons. Very small, informal weddings may be held in the Pastor's Study.

Receptions may be held in the Celebration Center, church narthex or lower level.

Groups within the church sometimes cater wedding receptions or you may choose your own caterer. In both instances you are responsible to make all arrangements as far as cost and type of reception with the persons who will prepare the reception.

The area in the building where ladies in the wedding party may dress is the Brides Room in the Celebration Center. The room has a full-length mirror.

The church owns a set of candelabra, each of which holds seven candles. In addition, there are sixteen aisle candleholders. You are responsible to provide all candles or to ask your florist to do so. The florist should also provide an aisle runner and wedding candle.

## **Flowers**

Flowers may be used to enhance the beauty of your wedding service. All floral decorations are the responsibility of the bride and groom. You may

make arrangements with a florist of your choice or even invite a family member to assist with floral decorations. The following suggestions may assist in your planning:

1. The center aisle in the sanctuary is approximately 65 feet long.

2. The altar table at the front of the sanctuary is the focal point which most guests will see clearly from wherever they are seated.

3. Floral decorations may be placed on the aisle candleholders as long as they do not interfere with the seating of guests or the movement of the bridal party during the ceremony.

4. We suggest that you ask your florist to have the sanctuary prepared at least one hour before any activity related to the wedding begins. Florists may need to check with the church office if deliveries are planned at times when the church office is not open.

## **Photography**

Pictures provide a wonderful way of remembering your wedding day. We suggest, however, that photography be planned so that it compliments your wedding without dominating it. Events that may be of great importance to you may be different than those which are important to others. For example, if you have set aside a given time in the day for spending a few moments with a family member you do not see very frequently, make sure that those wishes are respected.

The following guidelines for photographers are followed at First Baptist Church:

1. NO flash photography by anyone is permitted during the service.
2. No pictures or videography is permitted from the front of the Sanctuary during the service.
3. During the processional a picture of each participant is permitted only if taken in the area at the back of the Sanctuary. No aisle pictures may be taken at that time.
4. Video taping is permitted only from the back of the Sanctuary. No additional lighting may be used for this purpose.

### **Wedding Coordinator**

A wedding coordinator assists the pastor during weddings and rehearsals. Her role is also to assist the wedding party. She is available to:

1. Answer any questions which remain after the wedding rehearsal is completed.
2. Help any member of the wedding party who may have questions about church facilities.
3. Assist with lighting, decorations or other details prior to the wedding.
4. Assist the bride and her attendants as the processional begins.
5. Answer questions concerning church policies as needed.

### **Use of Church Equipment**

Wedding participants are requested to ask for assistance when using church equipment, especially the sound system. Since our sound system is used on Sunday morning when our service is broadcast on radio, it is not to be used by anyone without assistance from church personnel. If a cassette tape or compact disc must be used, please do not do so without such assistance.

### **Fees**

For church members there are no fees related to use of the church facilities. While we welcome people who are not church members to use the building, there are expenses for which they will be responsible. The fee to use the Sanctuary for a wedding is \$300 payable in **advance** of the wedding. If you would like to use the building for a reception the fee can be negotiated when the first planning conference is held.

Couples (members and non-members) often ask about the range of fees which staff members should receive for their services. The appropriate ranges are listed below:

- **Organist:** \$125-\$150 (This includes consultation, practice time, rehearsal time with soloists, rehearsal and wedding.)
- **Soloist:** \$65-\$75
- **Custodian:** \$85-\$125 for wedding only. If a reception is held at the church an additional \$100 to \$125 should be offered.
- **Pastor:** \$100.00 and up

- **Church Wedding Coordinator** -\$75-\$100.
- **Sound Technician** -- \$30
- **Church Secretary** - \$30 and up – if programs are printed in the office.

*The fees are to be paid before the rehearsal.*

### **Wedding Music at First Baptist Church**

Music plays a major part in your wedding and should not be taken lightly. Your wedding will be a joyous and happy occasion. Your wedding will be a beautiful, dignified celebration – a spiritual ceremony blessed by God. Your wedding music should reflect all of these. It should be joyous, happy, beautiful, dignified and spiritual, as befits both the occasion of your wedding and the setting for it in the church Sanctuary.

The music you choose for your wedding should be of the highest quality and should offer an uplifting spiritual expression of the joy of that special day. Most popular music and love songs are not appropriate for the wedding service in the church, but are best suited for you and your guests to enjoy at the reception. In addition, the use of music that is pre-recorded on cassette tapes or CD's is strongly discouraged for your church wedding.

The Director of Music and Organist at First Baptist Church stands ready to counsel with you as you prepare for your church wedding. There are many sacred selections that would be appropriate for your church wedding. Please give careful and serious consideration to selecting the music for your church wedding so that your special day will

indeed be happy, joyous, beautiful, dignified and spiritual.

### **Licensing**

Your wedding cannot be conducted without a license issued by Butler County under the laws of the state of Ohio. Here are some regulations in effect for Butler County:

1. Both bride and groom must be present when you make application
2. Either the bride or groom must be from Butler County. If both live outside the county, you must secure your license from the county of the bride's residence.
3. If you have been divorced, you must have your divorce decree with you when you apply for a license
4. The license is valid for sixty days from the date of issue
5. The Butler County Court House is located in Hamilton and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The license agency is located on the second floor of the Court House. The telephone number is (513)887-3000.

Please make sure to bring the license with you to the rehearsal. The wedding coordinator will make sure it is properly filled out and ready for the signatures. After the wedding you will receive two signed documents which signify that your wedding has been solemnized. If you need to provide legal proof of your marriage for such matters as change

of name or Social Security records, these documents may suffice. However, in some situations, this is not accepted and you must obtain a document from the court as proof of your marriage.

### **The Rehearsal**

Small informal weddings usually do not require a rehearsal. However, if several people are involved in the wedding a rehearsal should be scheduled at a time when all of the wedding party can attend. Even if the members of your wedding party have participated in many weddings previously, each wedding is conducted differently and everyone's cooperation is needed.

The people whom you select as attendants share with the couple and their family the responsibility of making all guests at the wedding feel a part of the celebration. They also set the tone, which makes the wedding ceremony dignified and joyous.

If you choose to ask friends or family members to participate in the service as soloists, instrumentalists or readers, please ask these individuals to attend the rehearsal so that they may be aware of the format of the service and their part in it. Unless absolutely necessary we discourage anyone taking part in the wedding ceremony who has not attended the rehearsal.

The overall format of the service is discussed in the final pre-marital session. At that time, any special requests the couple may have concerning the ceremony are considered.

However, some final adjustments to these plans may be necessary. These are made during the rehearsal.

### **Whose Day Is It?**

Although many books on wedding etiquette encourage couples to regard their wedding day as "theirs," this approach may create a false assumption. A far better attitude is to consider the many people who will attend your wedding: parents and siblings, close friends, and even some persons you are meeting for the first time. Some of your guests will be coming from great distances to share this day with you. Your wedding will be far richer and more meaningful if you think of it as their day, too.

Too often those who write about weddings suggest that you follow certain rituals or customs which may have little meaning to either of you. By thinking of this as a day in which loved ones and friends share with you, a deeper blessing may come to you.

We believe that the wedding ceremony should not focus on any external matters, no matter how beautiful these things may be. The most important part of this day is that God should be glorified and that God's blessings may be sought. No matter how large or how small, how lavish or how simple, the day on which your wedding takes place, though profoundly important and joyous, is still one day in a lifetime together.

In the final analysis, this day does not belong to any of us. As the Bible says, "This is the



day which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” By opening our hearts and minds to make this everyone’s day, we may become aware of rich blessings which only God can provide for us.

## **SCRIPTURE PASSAGES**

These readings are all taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

### *1) The Creation of Man and Woman* (Genesis 1:26-28; 31a)

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed it was very good.

### *2) Two Become One Body* (Mark 10:6-9)

But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

### *3) The Creation of Woman* (Genesis 2:18-24)

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called woman, for out of Man this one was taken.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

### *4) Remain In My Love* (John 15:9-12)

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

### 5) *Love is Strong as Death*

(Song of Solomon 2:8-10; 14; 16a; 8:6-7a)

The voice of my beloved! Look, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills. My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look, there he stands behind our wall, gazing in at the windows. My beloved speaks and says to me: "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away... O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely... My beloved is mine and I am his... Set me a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.

### 6) *God is Love*

(I John 4:7-12)

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way; God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

## **Model Wedding Service**

The Prelude: (This usually begins 15-20 minutes before the service. It includes organ, other instrumental music, solos and duets. During the prelude guests are seated, ushers light candles, and just prior to the wedding, the aisle runner is drawn)

Seating of the Mothers

Processional

Greeting

Require and Charge of Bride and Groom

Declaration of Intent

Presentation of the Bride

The Wedding Vows

The Exchange of Rings

The Wedding Prayer

The Lighting of the Unity Candle (optional)

Pronouncement

Introduction of Couple

The Benediction

Recessional followed by Postlude

Notes: If there are other participants in the service such as: readers, soloists, etc., they must attend the rehearsal.

Music may be incorporated at various points in this service provided the selections are appropriate for worship. Popular and romantic music should be reserved for the reception.

Scripture: Some suggestions are given in this booklet about appropriate scriptures. However, other scripture may be selected.