First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, IA ***(revised August 2022)***

Congratulations on your engagement! We at First Presbyterian Church (FPC) want to help make your wedding ceremony a memorable celebration. A church wedding is one of the happiest and holiest moments in life. The church wedding is a public worship service of praise and thanksgiving to God for the love given to all, and especially for the love that the couple has for each other. As a Christian service of worship, the couple make their commitment to one another, to God, and to the gathered congregation.

Section I General information about using the church for marriage

If you wish to have the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church perform the marriage, whether using the church or not, contact the church office and ask for the Pastor to discuss your plans.

Although marriage is a civil contract between couples, marriage is also a covenant and commitment to live together before God in a life of discipleship. This is also for those who have had a prior civil ceremony and now wish to have a blessing ceremony.

As a Christian service of worship, the marriage ceremony is under the direction of the Pastor and the supervision of the Members of the Session (the official board). Normally, the FPC Pastor performs weddings at FPC. Other Presbyterian Church (USA) clergy or clergy of corresponding denominations may be invited by the FPC Pastor to perform a wedding or to assist the FPC Pastor if they are willing to abide by these guidelines. Invitations to clergy to participate or perform a wedding must be approved by the FPC Pastor and the church's Session unless they are members of the PC(USA); the Pastor will extend the invitation to the clergy if the way be clear, in keeping with customary courtesy among the clergy.

In accordance with Presbyterian Church (USA) governance, all persons married at FPC receive two types of counseling. Normally, the FPC Pastor provides counsel on the biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical understandings of the marriage covenant, which includes preparation of the wedding service as an act of worship. Couples are also encouraged to seek counseling on matters related to living married-life dynamics. The Pastor can assist couples in obtaining adequate professional assistance in this regard. It is recommended that all counseling be completed early in the wedding planning process.

If this church is chosen as the place for your wedding, the couple agrees to follow the policies of the First Presbyterian Church. We want your wedding to maintain its individual and special nature. We also want it to be a wedding that will reflect the beliefs and practices of our church as well as follow our policies. An overview of our best practices, recommendations and policies is listed in this document.

It is our prayer that God, the Giver of Life and Love, will bless the beginning of your married life as you look forward to the vows that you will take in God's House and in God's Presence.

***Section II* Best Practices and Guidelines for a Wedding at First Presbyterian Church**

Step 1: Work with the Pastor and the Administrative Assistant (Tammy Foster) to find a date for the wedding. When a date is confirmed, a public announcement may be made. To confirm the date on the church calendar, non-members make a deposit of $100 towards the $500 sanctuary and dressing rooms use fee; the deposit is refundable if notice of cancellation is given at least 30 days prior to the wedding date.

Step 2: Determine if the church will be used for the wedding and the reception or only the wedding service. Note that the church grounds are smoke-free/alcohol-free/drug-free. The one exception is that the couple may obtain special permission for a champagne toast in Ryerson Hall.

Step 3: Secure a marriage license from the county courthouse – Johnson County Clerk of Court, 319-356-6060. The couple is responsible for obtaining the marriage license and the Pastor is legally responsible for returning the signed license to the Marriage Bureau offices. The marriage license is signed by all parties prior to the wedding. The basic information about the wedding and the participants is entered into the permanent records of the church. ***Blessing Ceremony:*** If a couple has had a civil ceremony and wishes to have a blessing ceremony, the procedures for the marriage license would be addressed following the civil ceremony.

Step 4: Review the Church Wedding Fees: The individuals providing services are to be paid directly by the couple. Checks should be delivered to the church office no later than the Wednesday prior to the ceremony. Within this document is the list of services and fees. If a reception is held or other services provided, there are additional fees.

$500 Sanctuary and dressing rooms (2) use fee (non-members only)

$335 – $500 Organist/Pianist for the rehearsal, wedding and working with soloists
Our organist is Melissa Moll. Please contact her directly to make all arrangements (melissa.moll@firstpresiowacity.org).

$100 Audio technician Our audio technician is Jerry Stamp. Please contact him directly to make all arrangements (jmestamp@gmail.com, (319-337-4574).

$100 Sexton's fee for preparing and cleaning the areas of the church used.
Our Sexton is Gerald Hill. Please contact him directly to make arrangements (gerald.hill@firstpresiowacity.org).

$100 Sexton's fee for cleaning the reception area, if held at the church.

Note: These fees are the minimum. It is also common for the Pastor to receive a financial gift of the couple's choosing. If the wedding is an intimate one with immediate family and attendants only, or if a financial hardship, special arrangements on the fees can be made with the Pastor.

Step 5: Please review the following for a successful event.

Gifts: The couple is responsible for gifts brought to the church or reception. The church is open, as a public building, therefore, precautions should be taken to protect gifts. The church is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Programs: The couple is responsible for the printing of their program. If the couple plans to include the order of worship in the bulletin or program, consult with the Pastor about the order of worship and where to put any optional readings, solos, or activities.

Music: Work with the organist to identify music with a focus on the Christian faith and the sacredness of marriage. It will also be important to communicate with the organist regarding other musicians or vocalists involved in the ceremony.

Tuning the piano: If needed, the couple assumes responsibility for paying to have the piano tuned by the church-approved piano technician.

Post-wedding celebration: We suggest the use of birdseed or bubbles outside the building. Ecological concerns no longer permit the use of potpourri, dried flowers, confetti, rice, or balloons.

Ushers: Experience has taught that the number of ushers is dependent on the anticipated attendance.

Reception: If the reception is held in Ryerson Hall, the Reception Committee is willing to serve. The contact person for this service is Mary Linn (319-321-3316). The fee for this service is $250. Checks may be made out to the FPC Kitchen.

Facility and Decorations Considerations: Due to safety concerns, decorations cannot impede access to doors, exits and movement of the wedding party. The **sanctuary seats approximately 275** people on the floor level, fewer if social distancing is needed. The balcony has additional seating for the musicians and the videographer. The **communion table** needs to be visible, although it may be moved to facilitate the needs of the wedding party for space. A unity candle and flower arrangement may be placed on the communion table. The church has two brass, oil-filled candle stands for use. Please ask the Pastor should you wish to use these items. Based upon experience, we ask that **no glitter** be used on any decorations, flowers, or dresses. **Artistic banners that are in place** to denote the Liturgical Season will remain in place; if an exception is sought, please consult with the Pastor. Fire code is such that **additional chairs cannot** be set up in the aisles.

Following the Wedding Ceremony: It works well for the couple to delegate someone to remove the decorations after the service so that the church is ready for the next event.

Photography: It is suggested that a statement be placed in the program similar to: "Guests are encouraged to take pictures or videos without flash during the processional and recessional; and to refrain from picture taking during the ceremony." An official videographer may use the balcony. The official photographer works with the Pastor and couple on how photographs will be taken during the ceremony.

Wedding Rehearsal: A rehearsal with the Pastor, musicians and all wedding participants is usually held the evening preceding the wedding at a time arranged with the Pastor. Normally, this will last an hour with the processional and recessional rehearsed as well as the actions of the couple and members of the wedding party. It works best if the sequence of key participants to enter, who will light the candles, and who will usher whom is determined prior to arriving for the rehearsal. Soloists will rehearse with the organist/pianist at a separate time, either prior to or following the rehearsal.

Again, we offer our sincerest congratulations on your upcoming wedding!