



God, Marriage and the Church

A Christian Service of Worship
for the
Marriage of Christian Disciples



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Introduction: God, Marriage, and the Church

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) states: “God has ordained that a man and a woman may enter together into marriage, pledging their love and promising fidelity each to the other, as long as both shall live.”

As Jesus Christ has blessed this relationship, and it has been declared holy throughout the life of the Church, those who pledge themselves each to the other in the sight of God are promised God’s help as they enter into the joys and duties of life together.

The pastor reminds the couple of the meaning of Christian baptism, for themselves and their families. The minister may take this opportunity to instruct the man and the woman on the relationship between Christian faith and marriage. God’s blessings proclaimed in marriage are not automatic, but are received as God’s gracious gift, demonstrated by a husband and wife’s faithfulness to each other as expressed in the vows they make to each other in their worship service. In this way, the blessing becomes a participatory blessing - faithfulness expressed with divine presence in a three-way relationship of love, hope and trust. This is how the marriage experience becomes a blessing to all concerned.

The state legally recognizes marriage as a civil contract and gives pastors the authority to serve as the state’s representative in conducting the agreement. Therefore, the state also has the authority to dissolve marriage. Recognizing the action of the state as an accomplished fact, the Church’s responsibility for Christian education and counsel before marriage also extends to any special problems involved in the marriage and after a divorce. Such problems include the readiness of persons to enter into and sustain a new marital or familial relationship and to meet obligations to persons involved in a former marriage (especially children).

A marriage service in a Christian church is essentially a worship celebration of God’s blessings in the life of the couple, the family, and all concerned (within the church and as a witness to the outside world). If the minister is convinced that Christian commitment and responsibility are lacking, and the marriage is not one which offers promise of being blessed by God, the minister would not in good conscience be able to proclaim God’s blessing in a worship service. Pastors are always ready and willing to work with a couple if they are willing to engage in a process of commitment and responsibility within a Christian context. If the couple is unable or unwilling, or if they are determined to be married against the counsel of the pastor, they will have to seek other options.

Marriage for Christians is an Act of Discipleship

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well being of the entire human family. For Christians, marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live together before God lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage, a lifelong commitment is made by a man and a woman to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by a community of faith. (*PCUSA Book of Order W-4.900*)

Discipleship is lived out within a particular church through active membership. In our constitution, we understand that faithful members accept Christ's call to be involved responsibly in the ministry of his Church.

Therefore, the pastors of Crestview Presbyterian Church are most comfortable when both bride and groom are active members of the church and engaged in a life of discipleship- preferably active members of Crestview Presbyterian Church seeking to faithfully participate in their call to God.

The Wedding Service is an Act of Christian Worship

Christian worship joyfully ascribes all praise and honor, glory and power to the Triune God. In worship the people of God acknowledge God present in the world and in their lives. As they respond to God's claim and redemptive action in Jesus Christ, believers are transformed and renewed. In worship, the faithful offer themselves to God and are equipped for God's service in the world. (*PCUSA Book of Order W-1.1000*)

Therefore, the bride and groom serve God well when they plan their wedding to focus on God's love and providence. The wedding service celebrates their response to God, who has called them to be together.

The Elements of the Service are Ordered by God through the Church

Christian worship is rooted in the Old and New Testaments, and reflects the tradition of the Universal Church and our Reformed heritage. The focus of the service is on the Word of God in the midst of the people - they gather, proclaim, respond, are sealed, and go forth into the world.

In worship, the church is to remember both its liberty in Christ and the biblical command to do all things in an orderly way. Careless or disorderly worship is both an offense to God and a stumbling block to the people. Those responsible for worship are to be guided by the Holy Spirit speaking through Scripture, the historic experience of the Church universal, the Reformed tradition, the Book of Confessions, the needs and particular circumstances of the worshipping community, as well as the provision of [our church]. (*PCUSA Book of Order W-1.4001*)

The service begins with scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The man and woman shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange their vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation. Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which will support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the Triune God, the minister shall declare publicly that the man and woman are now joined in marriage. A charge may be given. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do

not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction. (PCUSA Book of Order W-4.9004)

The Pastor and Session are responsible and accountable for the Wedding Service

The ruling board of elders (called the Session) has the authority to oversee and approve all public worship in the life of the church. The pastor has the authority to select Scriptures, preach the word, offer prayers on behalf of the people, select the music, and approve the use of other art forms (drama, dance, etc.).

Therefore, the Session may assist in determining if a couple should be married in a service of Christian worship at Crestview, and what elements are appropriate and what are not. The pastor will coordinate the wedding service with the bride and groom and work with the Wedding Service Coordinator to assure that everything is well planned for the rehearsal and worship

Counseling with a Pastor

Marriage is a very serious undertaking for a man and woman. CPC expects couples to give energy to preparation for the event and their life together. Within the parameters of their schedules, pastors will help couples identify dates and times for the wedding ceremony. They will also work with couples to address Crestview's mandatory pre-marital counseling requirements. While there is no fee for time spent in pre-marital pastoral conversations, the couple will need to consider the costs of any pre-marital materials as they plan their marriage.

The purpose of pre-marital counseling is four-fold:

- 1) To ensure the pastor knows the couple and the quality of their faith;
- 2) To establish a pastoral relationship with the couple for future needs;
- 3) To lay a foundation for the couple to invest intention in the marriage;
- 4) To actually plan the wedding service.

Planning and scheduling counseling six months to one year in advance is highly desirable. Plan to meet with the officiating pastor several times; contact the church office to make an initial appointment. Engaged couples are also invited to make use of Crestview's trained "Marriage Mentors" at minimal or no cost. These are seasoned couples with special training and resources who have volunteered to help couples prepare for marriage. Please ask the officiating pastor if a Marriage Mentor is available.

Wedding Guidelines

Who conducts the service?

Professional ministerial ethics indicate that all weddings must be conducted by one of the pastors on the staff of Crestview Presbyterian Church; another ordained Christian pastor or priest may participate, upon invitation by one of Crestview's pastors. The invitation to an outside pastor to participate in the wedding can be extended by the CPC pastor upon review of the ministerial credentials. The Church does not rent the facilities to other churches for weddings.

Wedding Service Coordinator

Who helps coordinate the service?

The costs involved with planning a wedding at Crestview include the full services of one of our Wedding Service Coordinators. This person works closely with you, the pastor, and the Wedding Music Director at Crestview to ensure your service goes well. This person will also help you work with the florist, the photographers, and others involved in your service and/or reception. If you obtain the services of an outside coordinator, please be advised that s/he will work under the direction of Crestview's Wedding Service Coordinator.

All wedding services which anticipate more than 40 guests, a wedding party exceeding 4 (including bride and groom), and/or elaborate processional/recessional plans must have a Wedding Coordinator. In other circumstances, the decision is left to the officiating pastor.

S/he will help you plan and keep on schedule. On the days of the rehearsal and wedding, the Wedding Service Coordinator will assist the pastor with all the variables that need to come together in order to best serve God in worship.

Your Wedding Service Coordinator will maintain a checklist for you and the church, which includes:

- Review final order of worship planned by the couple with the officiating pastor.
- Ensure couple contacts and meets with the Wedding Music Director (see below) to decide on musical needs.
- Finalize entering/exiting plans, including ushering people in and out, for the service of marriage.
- Review guidelines for florist (flowers/greens/appointments) with wedding couple.
- Discuss photographer/videographer policies with wedding couple and determine space and time needs.
- Coordinate set-up/take-down needs for sanctuary and/or fellowship hall with the Wedding Service Custodian.
- Ensure all items for wedding service (i.e.: unity candle, programs, guest book, etc.) are ready for wedding service.
- Coordinate payment for wedding service participants.
- Oversee time schedule on the day of the wedding.
- Help conduct rehearsal and wedding service.
- Ensure that all necessary documentation is given to the church office following the ceremony.

The Music for Wedding Services Directs Attention to God And the Faith of the Church

Suitable music for worship fits the style and theme of the particular occasion. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical form of praise and prayer. Secular music is not often used in worship services. Indeed, contemporary songs of love and relationships often contain lyrics contrary to a Christian understanding of relationships

Therefore, the bride and groom must have a Wedding Director of Music help select all music used in the worship service, and approve all musical decisions chosen by the couple.

Who helps us with music?

In order to assure proper planning of this event, your Wedding Service Coordinator will ask that you make an appointment with Crestview's Wedding Director of Music after your wedding date is confirmed by the pastor- preferably several months in advance of the date of the wedding. This will give you an opportunity to discuss thoroughly all the music for the ceremony, allowing time for prayerful consideration of the selections and adequate time for musicians to prepare.

As noted above, a church wedding is a Christian service of worship. Therefore, the musical selections shall have a Christian focus. Your wedding service Director of Music will meet with you concerning these selections. Normally, the organist will serve as the Wedding Service Director of music for your wedding, and help ensure that any sung or instrumental music used is consistent with Christian principles.

The wedding Director of Music, in consultation with the officiating pastor, will help you select appropriate music that will help direct the congregation's attention to God and the faith of the church. S/he also has the responsibility for final approval of soloists and other musicians for the service (which may require an audition). Due to the limitations of our current sound system, CD or tape music does not usually come off well; most wedding parties prefer live accompaniment and soloists. If you would like prerecorded music, please consult with our Music Director.

Normally, one of Crestview's keyboard artists plays the organ and/or piano at all weddings. If for any reason another keyboard musician is desired, this arrangement must be made with the full consent and approval of the Wedding Director of Music. S/he shall be apprised of the qualifications of the substitute, since our professional musicians are responsible for the proper use and care of our organ and piano. For this reason, there will be a \$50.00 bench fee, paid through the Wedding Service Coordinator, for this service. The couple should make separate arrangements to compensate the substitute(s) as you feel appropriate, and pay them directly.

If a soloist is to be used, rehearsal of music shall be held at some time agreeable to the soloist and the Wedding Director of Music. The couple may select their own soloist, although the Wedding Director of Music will be happy to help locate one if it is so desired.

Facilities

What facilities may be used?

Either the Sanctuary (seating approx. 750) or the Chapel (seating 50) is available for inside weddings. The Memorial Garden provides a great location for a small, outdoor wedding service. Our pastors may also conduct Christian wedding services in other locations.

Your Wedding Reception may be held in the Fellowship Hall of Crestview Church. If you plan to use the Fellowship Hall, we have facilities available to accommodate up to 200 guests. If the wedding families and friends wish to conduct the reception themselves, it will be their responsibility to clear the use of the kitchen with the church office staff. A \$500.00 damage/cleaning deposit is required. The family will be responsible for any breakage, defacements, etc. The Kitchen and Fellowship Hall facilities must be left in a neat and orderly fashion following the reception and the deposit will be returned once the premises have been examined by the church office staff. Smoking or the use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted in the church building.

When may the facilities be used?

Those interested in having their wedding at Crestview can call the church office or view the facilities calendar at www.CrestviewChurch.com to determine if the date(s) they are interested in for their wedding are available. The couple can schedule the use of church facilities and staff well in advance of the wedding date, but no wedding dates will be accepted more than two years in advance. Contact with a Crestview pastor is also required to determine his/her schedule for the date(s) selected. Due to the special usage of the facilities and the high volume of activities during the Christmas holiday season (Thanksgiving weekend through January 2) and Easter (Holy Week through Easter), the pastors may ask couples to avoid these time periods for sanctuary wedding services. Occasionally, it may be necessary to have two weddings on the same date.

Times for the rehearsal and the wedding must be both endorsed by the officiating Crestview pastor, and confirmed on the master church calendar. A deposit of \$100 is required to confirm a wedding date on the church calendar. Dates can not be considered “confirmed” until a deposit has been received and one of the Crestview pastors has acknowledged availability for that date.

Unless prior special arrangements are made with the Wedding Coordinator, the sanctuary or chapel are available to wedding parties two hours ahead of the start time of the wedding, during the thirty to sixty minute worship service, and one hour following the wedding service (approximately four hours total). The Fellowship Hall may be reserved for three hours after the wedding. The church facility must be made ready for Sunday worship within one hour after the completion of the wedding; for this reason, **the latest any Saturday wedding can begin at Crestview is 6:00pm.**

The Rehearsal

What about the rehearsal?

The officiating pastor also conducts your rehearsal, assisted by the Wedding Coordinator. All wedding party members and parents should be present. In consideration of commitments others may have on the same evening, promptness will be greatly appreciated. The rehearsal will last approximately one hour, and will cover the processional, the wedding service, the recessional, seating of parents and guests, lighting of the candles, and any other pertinent details. Another couple's rehearsal may be scheduled before or after your rehearsal.

The Pastor will be discussing details of the wedding service during your pre-marital counseling. Most details will be decided before coming to the rehearsal, with the entire order of worship approved ahead of time (including the order in which wedding attendants will be placed.) The couple should decide whether they will memorize their parts in the service or prefer to have the minister prompt them in their vows. If vows are written by the couple and memorized, the minister will need a copy in advance. Few changes are able to be made at the rehearsal.

Some things the Wedding Coordinator will want to review with you and your guests at the rehearsal:

- Will the bride and/or groom and their attendants be dressing at church or at home? The Wedding Coordinator will show both the bride and groom the assigned location(s) of their dressing or “staging” rooms.
- Who will be sitting in the front row on each side?
- Who will be ushering honored guests (parents, grandparents, etc) into the church?
- The bride and groom should decide if they would like to have their guests excused from the sanctuary one row at a time by the ushers or dismissed all at once by the minister after the bridal party has left the room.

Decorations and the Florist

What about decorations and the florist?

The Sanctuary of Crestview Presbyterian Church needs no decorations to serve as an appropriate space for worship. Therefore, flowers and other appointments should not be unduly elaborate. In all the activities surrounding the service, excessive ostentation should be avoided. The Wedding Service Coordinator and/or custodian will make arrangements to return the sanctuary to its original state following the wedding.

Helpful Florist Planning Notes:

It is the responsibility of the bride to make arrangements with the florist to take care of flowers. In addition to flowers and greens, the florist can supply flower holders if desired. The Wedding Service Coordinator will help the bride and groom assure that appointments do not deface or mar the physical property of the sanctuary, such as water on the flower stands, nail holes in the pews and wax on the carpet. Nothing is to be attached to the pulpit, or the lectern. Aisle runners are not permitted at Crestview.

Candelabra, which the church can supply, must be placed in the wings of the chancel area. Due to wind currents that can blow out candles, the Wedding Service Coordinator can show you where candelabra may be placed. There is a \$15 fee for the use of candelabra, which will include white candles. If desired, two matching, smaller dripless tapers can be purchased from the church (\$4/pair) for use with a unity candle (which is to be provided by the wedding party).

The Wedding Service Coordinator will work with you to see that all decorations are removed immediately after they have served their purpose.

Audio-Visuals/Media

What about photographers and videographers?

The bride and groom often want to have pictures made of their wedding ceremony, their families and others present for this special event. Many couples have pictures taken before the wedding, so that they can move without delay to their reception, while others take the majority of the pictures after the wedding. If a professional photographer is obtained, the Wedding Service Coordinator will brief him or her prior to the service as to what pictures may and may not be taken. (Non-compliance can result in a photographer not being allowed to photograph future weddings at CPC)

The photographer employed may take pictures of the bridal party coming down the aisle. The last picture to be taken will be that of the bride on her father's arm. Pictures may also be taken as the bridal party leaves following the ceremony. From the end of the processional to the beginning of the recessional (during the ceremony), it is the policy of Crestview to permit only available-light pictures taken from the back of the church. Your wedding photographer is not to use flash photography during the wedding service. Flash pictures taken by guests during the ceremony are discouraged. This is a courtesy for the other guests in attendance, and shows respect for the service as Christian worship. We ask you to help by asking your friends and relatives from doing so.

Pictures may be posed by the bridal party in the front of the Sanctuary following the service for any and all who would like to take pictures. After the wedding, any posed pictures involving the Pastor should be scheduled to be taken first. Often, the Pastor will have to leave shortly after the ceremony for other appointments.

Videographers are to station their camera on a tripod at the back of the church. One stationary, unattended VCR camera can be placed at the front of the sanctuary (as long as it is positioned unobtrusively). The Wedding Service Coordinator will review options for proper locations with the videographer.

Can the Church help us tape the service, or show images in the sanctuary?

The Church's audio recording equipment is available, along with video imaging technology. Arranging a Crestview Audio-Video Specialist requires advance notice (well before the wedding rehearsal) to ensure that the images can be shown through the church's system. We strongly urge that any such arrangement be made through the Wedding Service Coordinator several weeks early. We are unable to guarantee that your images can be played on our system without timely and careful attention to necessary technical details.

The Marriage License

How do I get a marriage license?

In the state of Ohio, the groom must be 18 years of age and the bride at least 16 years of age (or consent obtained from Juvenile Court) in order to obtain a marriage license. Parental consent (by both parents, unless one is deceased) must be given if both bride and groom are under 18 years of age. If the bride or groom is between 18 and 21 years of age, they must present a birth certificate at the time of marriage license application.

The marriage license application can be made at the courthouse in the county where the bride and groom reside (if different, either county applies) at least one week before the marriage date.

There is a five-day waiting period after making application before the license may be issued. (Exception: Butler and Claremont counties.)

The marriage license, under the laws of the state of Ohio, is good only for a period of sixty days. **It must be brought to the church no later than the wedding rehearsal for the Pastor's signature. No wedding will be performed without a valid wedding license in hand.**

Blood tests are no longer required by the state of Ohio.

Fees Associated With a Wedding

The bride and groom are responsible for paying all fees associated with their wedding at Crestview to the Wedding Coordinator at least two weeks prior to the rehearsal so that check may be prepared for distribution to various participants. A check for the appropriate amount may be sent to the church with a note attached giving the date of the wedding and names of the couple to be married. Reminder: you may subtract the \$100 deposit paid when reserving your wedding date from the total amount to be sent to the church.

What fees are involved?

These fees assume that the bride and/or groom- or one of their immediate families- are currently active members of Crestview Presbyterian Church.

Deposit for the wedding	(\$100.00)
Wedding Service Coordinator	\$200.00
Pastor's Honoraria	\$200.00
Wedding Director of Music/organist	\$175.00
Bench fee (if alternate pianist/organist used)	\$ 50.00
Soloist/instrumentalists (at the ceremony)	\$ 50.00
Each rehearsal per soloist(s)	\$ 25.00
Media/Audio Visual Specialist	\$ 75.00
Candelabra & candles	\$ 15.00
2 tapers for use with the unity candle	\$ 4.00
Facility Custodial Service	
Small Chapel	\$ 50.00
Sanctuary	\$ 75.00
Fellowship Hall	\$ 100.00

Additional Fees Associated With a Wedding

Active members contribute to the work and mission of CPC with their tithes and offerings, as would members of other churches to their ministries. In recognition of this practice of stewardship, members of other churches and others who have not been actively supporting the ministry of Crestview during the previous 12 months should plan to contribute to the work of the Crestview congregation providing their service of Christian Marriage. As special needs sometimes present themselves, any of these amounts can be negotiated with the officiating Crestview pastor. Typically, they include the same amounts as above and/or these additional amounts:

Pastor's Honoraria	\$500.00
Sanctuary Use	\$400.00
Fellowship Hall Use	\$250.00
Chapel Use	\$150.00