



They are
no longer
TWO...

...but
ONE.
Mark 10:8

Forest Park Wedding Policy

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**Approved by Trustees November 2003
Revised May 25, 2005**

PLANNING YOUR WEDDING AT FOREST PARK COVENANT CHURCH

The Forest Park Covenant Church family rejoices with you as you anticipate your wedding! Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well being of the entire human family. In legal terms, marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. Marriage means much more. It is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out their lives of discipleship together before God. In a service of Christian marriage, a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

What follows is vital information which will help you, as a couple, understand what is involved in planning a wedding at Forest Park Covenant Church.

FOREST PARK COVENANT CHURCH WEDDING POLICY

Marriage is one of the most important commitments you will ever make in your life. Therefore, our pastoral staff takes the responsibility of preparing you for marriage very seriously. We want to do all that we can to insure that your marriage lasts a lifetime. In order for your marriage to have the healthiest possible beginning, we believe the following conditions must be met:

1. Both partners must be followers of Christ. (We define a follower of Christ as someone who has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord of their life AND is demonstrating the fruit of that decision by involvement in a local church body, desiring to obey God in every aspect of their lives.)

Believers are encouraged throughout the pages of the Bible to avoid marrying a spouse who does not share their Christian beliefs and practices. Ephesians 5 teaches that marriage is joining two people as “one in Christ.” If one of the persons in a marriage relationship does not share the same beliefs and practices of the Christian faith as the other, being joined as “one in Christ” is impossible. Couples must be one **with** Christ as individuals before they can be one **in** Christ as couples.

2. It has become common practice among many couples today to live together before getting married. Statistics have consistently shown that the divorce rate among couples who do so is 50% higher than couples who live apart before getting married. As a church, we also hold to the Biblical emphasis on not being sexually active until you have married.

Although we discourage couples to live together before marriage, we will evaluate suitability for marriage on a case by case basis for couples who are cohabitating. We reserve the right in all marriage preparation to not perform weddings for couples who, in the officiating pastor’s judgment, are not yet ready to make this commitment.

3. If either of you have been previously married or divorced, the decision to perform a second marriage will be made on a case by case basis. Factors such as reasons for the first divorce, the relationship with Christ at the time of divorce, opportunities for reconciliation, etc. will all be taken into consideration. Divorce is a terrible trauma to undergo and the healing from that experience takes time. If a divorced person re-enters marriage before he/she is

ready, or before there is healing from the wounds of the former marriage, the new marriage will face serious problems.

4. Premarital guidance is required at Forest Park Covenant Church. The pastors will guide couples or refer couples to a professional counselor. The Pastor must approve premarital guidance other than from a Forest Park Covenant Church pastor.

PROCEDURE FOR SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

STEP ONE - As soon as you have decided to get married, you should contact the church office manager. All requests for marriage will be approved by the pastor(s) of the church through the church office. Members of the church shall have priority over non-members in selecting dates.

STEP TWO -Make an appointment with the Pastor. Because we believe that Christian marriage is a sacred covenant relationship involving the Lordship of Jesus Christ over marriage, home and family, we take marriage very seriously in our church. Thus, the ministers are happy to officiate at the wedding, but only after appropriate counseling, and where there is serious intent to establish the marriage on Christian principles. The Pastor(s) will explain the premarital education process and requirements of Forest Park Covenant Church. The minimum period of time from initial contact to wedding date shall be at least six months to allow for the number of counseling sessions required and various board approvals.

STEP THREE-If the family desires another pastor to participate in the service, such a desire should be made known to and approved by the pastor of our church.

STEP FOUR-Scheduling of the facility for the wedding of church members or their children may be initiated at anytime with Trustee approval. Weddings of non-members, other than children of church members, may only be scheduled six months in advance.

STEP FIVE-Secure an Application Form for use of church facilities from the church office secretary. A rental application form must be submitted to the Trustee Board when requesting to use the church facility.

STEP SIX The Wedding Coordinator is the liaison between the wedding party (bride, groom, their family members, vendors, etc.) and the church staff. Both members and non-members must use the services of the church Wedding Coordinator for all contact with the church other than counseling. The Wedding Coordinator is to ensure smooth and consistent communication throughout the wedding process.

STEP SEVEN when the request has been approved, the Wedding Coordinator will contact the bride and groom to schedule an informational meeting. During this meeting facility features and use guidelines will be discussed along with an overview of the entire wedding process.

THE ADDRESS for use on invitations is:

3815 Henry Street
Muskegon, MI 49441
Tel: 231.780.4784

THE SERVICE

The church is the House of God. The wedding ceremony shall be Christian and sacred in character, as opposed to the secular, romantic or purely humanistic themes.

Church protocol requires:

1. Throwing rice or confetti is not allowed in the church or on church property.
2. The church does not permit smoking, dancing, or the use of alcoholic drinks on church premises.
3. The church sanctuary seats approximately 600 people.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

1. Decorations may be put up the day before the wedding (providing it doesn't conflict with church activities).
2. Masking tape to be used for fastening.
3. No nails, screws, tacks, and/or glue may be used to fasten any decoration to the furniture or walls. Furniture and floors must be fully protected at all times from moisture and candle wax. Dripless candles must be used. The bridal family is responsible for any damage done to the building and/or furniture.
4. Decorations need to be removed after the wedding in preparation for Sunday services.
5. The pulpit may be removed from the platform. However, a Soundboard attendant or staff person must supervise in the moving of the pulpit. This is due to the electrical and sound equipment housed beneath the pulpit. Arrangements to do this must be made through the Wedding Coordinator.
6. Candelabras, unity candle stand, and kneeling bench are available upon request.
7. The center aisle is 36 feet in length and there are eleven rows of pews.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Flash pictures are not permitted during the ceremony except from the balcony or during the processional. Please notify your official photographer as well as any family members who may bring a camera.

Photographs may be taken before and after the ceremony.

Couples are encouraged to consider having the majority of their wedding pictures taken before the ceremony in order to avoid unnecessary delays at the reception.

Video taping of weddings is permitted. The Wedding Coordinator will guide the technician in placement of cameras for this purpose.

THE MUSIC

All music in our church, including wedding music, is an expression of worship. Therefore, the music should be appropriate to the mood and context of the worship service.

The following guidelines shall apply to weddings:

1. Live musical accompaniment, audio tapes, and compact discs are permitted.
2. Music that is used in the wedding must be appropriate for worship.
3. The Wedding Coordinator will consult with the church staff and approve appropriate organ, instrumental and vocal music, and suggest soloists who may be available.
4. Only the church's audio visual technician is allowed to operate the sound board and audio visual equipment. Therefore, this technician must be present at all rehearsals and weddings.
5. Microphones will be placed in proper places and assistance given to any soloist or instrumentalist.
6. An audio tape of the entire ceremony will be provided upon request. This service is included in the facilities fee.
7. Power Point is available by our technician.

WEDDING LICENSE

It is helpful for the minister to receive the wedding license at the rehearsal so that it may be appropriately prepared for the wedding day.

RECEPTION

Whether the reception is held at the church or at another facility it is most thoughtful to have instructed those in charge as to the procedures for guests upon their arrival at the reception. A host/hostess should know whether guests may begin at the punch bowl or buffet or that they await the arrival of the wedding party.

Directions to an off-site reception should be printed and enclosed with invitations or distributed following the wedding itself by ushers, children or youth assigned to the task. If the reception is to be held at the church, there are two options:

The capacity for the multi-purpose room is 200 people. The capacity for the gym is 400 people.

A use and clean-up form must be used to ensure the kitchen is left in the condition you found it.

In the case of a Saturday evening reception, arrangements must be made with the Wedding Coordinator for an appropriate time to clear the building for preparation for Sunday services.

Our custodian is required to set up the tables and chairs for the reception. Please confirm the

number of people attending the reception with the Wedding Coordinator one week prior to the wedding.

Food may only be served in the gym and multi-purpose room.

Use of the kitchen by non-members:

1. Prepared food may be reheated in the ovens
2. Kitchen utensils or dishes are not provided.
3. Dishwasher is not available.

CATERING

Catering services are welcome to use the kitchen and meeting rooms to serve the reception. It is requested that they leave the facilities clean and the church reserves the right to have a member of Forest Park Covenant Church present to answer any questions and to assist as may be necessary.

WEDDING/PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING FEE /NON—MEMBERS

The fee for a non-member wedding is \$650.00 with a non-refundable \$100.00 deposit due at the time of application for church use. The \$100.00 will be applied to the \$650.00 total due. This fee will cover the cost of using the sanctuary and changing rooms and will compensate the Pastor, Organist, Soundboard attendant and Wedding Coordinator. All remaining fees must be paid to the church office 24 hours prior to the use of the facility. There will be an additional \$200 fee for use of the Fellowship Hall.

WEDDING/PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING FEE /MEMBERS

Members will be charged \$450.00. This fee will cover the cost of using the facility and will compensate the Pastor, Organist, Soundboard attendant and Wedding Coordinator. All fees must be paid to the church office 24 hours prior to the use of the facility. There will be an additional \$100 fee for use of the Fellowship Hall.

CANCELLATION

Should it be necessary for you to cancel your wedding, notify the church as soon as possible.

LOSS OR THEFT OF PERSONAL ARTICLES

The church can not assume responsibility if loss or theft occurs.