



The Policy of the Board of Deacons on  
**WEDDINGS**

at  
South Church in Andover  
An Open and Affirming Church of  
The United Church of Christ

We at South Church in Andover are pleased to be a part of your wedding plans.

Marriages are very special services of worship for the couple, for their families and for their friends. Thus, the church seeks to ensure that this special worship service will be a significant event in your lives, as well as an appropriate service of worship for this church.

The United Church of Christ's Book of Worship reminds us that...

*The essence of marriage is a covenanted commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the glad occasion on which two people unite in the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one presiding acts as an official representative of the church and gives the marriage the church's blessing. The congregation joins in affirming the marriage and in offering support and thanksgiving for the new family.*

To help you plan your wedding, we have prepared this guide which outlines the traditions, requirements, and expectations of the church. It is our joy to work together with you to make this one of the most special and meaningful days of your life.

### **Who May Be Married At South Church In Andover?**

The facilities and staff of the Church are available primarily for members and their immediate families. Applications from non-members will be considered on an individual basis at the discretion of the Pastor. Non-members should attend several worship services at the church prior to the wedding.

*You are welcomed, no matter your age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race and ethnicity, physical and mental ability or economic circumstance, into the full life and ministry of South Church, including worship, sacraments and rites. Join us as we grow together in God's love.* – From the South Church Welcome Statement. South Church in Andover is an Open and Affirming Church of the United Church of Christ.

### **How to Begin**

Contact the church office to indicate your interest in being married at the church. In addition to this guide, you will be given the schedule of fees for weddings and a Wedding Application form. Return the completed and signed Wedding Application to the church administrator. After we receive it, a Pastor will call you to schedule an interview. You may ask the church administrator if a specific wedding date is available on the master calendar of the church, but a date will not be scheduled until after the couple has met with the Pastor.

### **Premarital Counseling**

Those desiring to be married at South Church in Andover commit themselves to a series of premarital counseling sessions with the pastor. These consist of two to three one-hour conversations. The first meeting is an initial planning session, the second is a conversation about the marriage relationship, and the third, if needed, is a combination of counseling and planning. Additional sessions may be scheduled if the Pastor feels they are needed. All arrangements are to be deemed tentative until the second interview in the series has been completed. The Pastor is the sole arbiter of whether or not a proposed or scheduled wedding will occur at South Church in Andover, and will communicate the church's intentions in this regard to both parties involved immediately and directly.

### **The Service**

The United Church of Christ provides an "*Order for Marriage.*" Note that the Pastor does not marry the couple. Rather, the couple marries one another by making a public commitment to each other through their vows, by exchanging rings, and by joining hands in the presence of God and the company of family and friends.

In consultation with the Pastor, you may want to develop a service which will uniquely express the meaning of your marriage. The Pastor is prepared to work with you in developing such a service, which might include writing your own vows, including guest speakers or musicians, the selecting of favorite readings, etc.

**Traditional Vows of the Marriage Covenant**

*I give myself to you  
to be your wife/husband/partner.  
I promise to love and sustain you  
in the covenant of marriage,  
from this day forward,  
in sickness and in health,  
in plenty and in want,  
in joy and in sorrow,  
as long as we both shall live.*

**Expectations**

- ! A wedding at South Church in Andover is a Christian service of worship. We presume you desire to be married in a church because you are a person of faith. The wedding is a time of praise, prayers, and invoking God's presence and blessing. Those not comfortable with a wedding in the context of a community of faith should request information from their town clerk about other professionals in the state who can officiate at weddings.

**Policies and Procedures**

1. OBTAIN, in addition to this booklet, the Wedding Application form and the schedule of fees from the church administrator. Return the completed and signed Wedding Application to the church administrator.
2. THE PASTOR, upon receiving your application, will call you to schedule an interview. At that interview, dates will be discussed but will remain tentative until the premarital counseling process has been completed.

## Page 4

3. A PASTOR OF SOUTH CHURCH WILL OFFICIATE AT ALL WEDDINGS which take place at South Church in Andover. Guest clergy (e.g., relatives or friends who are Pastors) may be invited to take a part in the service, but only at the invitation extended by the Pastor of South Church in Andover.
4. THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC WILL OVERSEE ALL WEDDING MUSIC. If unavailable for any service, the Director of Music will make other arrangements in consultation with the Pastor. Suitability of certain music for the organ, as well as consideration of the appropriateness of suggested music, will be the decision of the Director of Music. If music is requested which the Director of Music does not own, it must be provided by the couple at least two weeks prior to the service. Use of recorded music is discouraged. Guest musicians should not be invited until after consultation with the Director of Music and Pastor. It will be the responsibility of the couple to schedule a planning consultation with the Director of Music.
5. REHEARSALS. All participants must be present and on time for the wedding rehearsal. Bring with you the marriage license and any special items to be used. Fees for staff and facilities are due and payable at the time of the rehearsal in separate envelopes. Allow one full hour for the rehearsal. Out of respect for staff members present, please inform all members of the wedding party that the rehearsal will start on time, even if members of the wedding party or family have not yet arrived.
6. PREVIEW THE PREMISE, if you are unfamiliar with our church and its facilities. Office hours are listed on the church website: [southchurch.com](http://southchurch.com)

### Photography

No flash pictures may be taken during the ceremony itself, either by guests or by the professional photographer. No roving about by photographers or members of the congregation is allowed.

However, your photographer is permitted to take flash pictures during the Processional and the Recessional, and may take available light photos during the service from the balcony or any other vantage point provided it is out of the direct line of sight of the congregation and done in silence. Photographers (or others) may not walk around the main floor or the balcony, or be at the front of the Sanctuary during the service. Please convey these understandings to your photographer and request your photographer to consult with the Pastor prior to the service.

## Page 5

Consider whether you would like to take some of your photographs before or after the ceremony. Some wedding parties favor taking photographs before the ceremony to insure that all members of the party are present and to avoid long delays between the ceremony and the reception.

You may have the ceremony videotaped from the balcony using available light, with the approval of the Sexton.

### **Printed Order of the Service**

A printed order of the marriage ceremony is not necessary, although it can be helpful to your family and friends and serve as well as a keepsake. It is your responsibility to prepare and print this document. By request, the Pastor will be pleased to email you the order of worship a week in advance.

### **Flowers and decorations**

Given the beauty of the Sanctuary, we recommend floral decorations be kept to a minimum. You may wish to place a small floral arrangement on the table in the narthex. Decorations on the end of pews are not advised because of the narrow aisles. You might like to consider leaving an arrangement of flowers for the Sunday Worship Service, in celebration of your marriage.

### **Unity Candle**

A unity candle can add beauty and meaning to a service, signifying how the two lives and lights become one. You are responsible for providing the unity candle, tapers, and holders. Some couples ask florists to provide these items. Others invite a friend or family member if they would be willing to make the unity candle a special gift!

### **Confetti and rice**

Confetti, rice, or birdseed should not be used inside or outside of the church. Some wedding parties provide bubbles for guests to use as the couple exits the church.

**Alcoholic Beverages**

Alcoholic beverages of any kind are prohibited on the church premises. Please note that the Pastor will not conduct a ceremony when it is apparent that either the bride or groom has been drinking, no matter how small an amount they report to have consumed.

**Our Facilities**

**THE SANCTUARY** seats more than 600 and has two main aisles, not a center aisle.

**THE FELLOWSHIP HALL** is served by a fully-equipped **kitchen**. This area is suitable for wedding receptions, subject to specific regulations governing its use.

**Our Staff**

- ! **The Church Administrator, Linda Hacker**, handles all matters involving scheduling and use of facilities. The Church Administrator will provide you with this booklet, the Application, and the schedule of fees. Contact her at 978-475-0321.
- ! **The Director of Music, Laura Weiss** offers consultation concerning the selection of music appropriate to the occasion, rehearses with and accompanies soloists, and plays for the wedding service. It is your responsibility to initiate contact with her 978-475-0321, extension 107.
- ! **The Wedding Coordinator, Fran Bolway**, acts as advisor to the couple for decorations, arranging the sanctuary, instructing ushers, and the order for the processional and recessional. She will be the liaison between the organist, pastor, and wedding party during the day of the ceremony. She will also work in consultation with the photographers and florists and will oversee clean-up following the ceremony. Contact her at 978-470-1586.
- ! **The Pastor is The Rev. Dana Walsh** The pastor will meet with the couple, direct the rehearsal, and preside at the wedding ceremony. The Pastor's contact is solely and directly with the couple. Contact the pastor at 978-475-0321.

**Planning Checklist**

- \_\_\_ Obtain and read this booklet, Application, and Fee Schedule from church administrator.
- \_\_\_ Return completed and signed application to Church Administrator.
- \_\_\_ Meet with Pastor (Pastor will call you after receipt of Application).
- \_\_\_ Schedule follow-up sessions with Pastor.
- \_\_\_ Set rehearsal time (usually evening before wedding approx. 5:00 p.m.)
- \_\_\_ Contact Director of Music
- \_\_\_ Contact florist.
- \_\_\_ Arrange for unity candle and tapers.
- \_\_\_ Contact photographer.
- \_\_\_ Plan and schedule reception.
- \_\_\_ Obtain marriage license(s). You are responsible for complying with all state laws in application for the license.
- \_\_\_ Deliver marriage license and fees to Pastor at rehearsal.
- \_\_\_ Take a deep breath, relax, take charge of your own wedding. Don't get so stressed out that you don't enjoy your own wedding. We will all work together to make this a beautiful and significant ceremony for you!

Updated 7/14