

*ST. JOHN-HILL CHURCH*

*WEDDING PLANNING  
HANDBOOK*



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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **What is Marriage?**

Marriage is a time of public commitment between a man and a woman who wish to affirm their life together.

A marriage service is a sign of hope, a fulfillment of desire, and one of the most special occasions in their lives of those being married. From the church's perspective, marriage is a gift of God, a sacred and holy covenant between a man and a woman that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the time of celebration when two persons unite with the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one who presides represents the church, prays for the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit, and invites the congregation to join in celebrating the union. Together they offer support and thanksgiving for the new family.

The first story of Jesus' ministry told by John is of Jesus as a wedding guest, called upon by his mother to turn water into wine. Several of Jesus' parables are of people at a marriage ceremony or feast. Through these stories Jesus and those who recorded his life showed the importance of marriage in their communities.

### **The Worship Service**

A Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship to God. The one presiding may invite the couple to share in the planning and writing of their service. Family and friends of the couple may be

invited to share the leadership of the service by reading scripture, offering prayers, or in other ways. A marriage ceremony's validity is not how sumptuous or simple, but how authentic the commitment being pledged.

### **Planning with the Pastor**

The first thing the couple needs to do is schedule the service by speaking with the pastor of the congregation or calling the church office. To avoid potential conflicts, this should be done before scheduling other events related to the marriage. The pastor works with the couple about schedules, policies, practices, fees, and legal requirements. If the church sanctuary is to be used, the pastor will prepare the couple for marriage and preside at the worship service. If the couple wants other clergy to participate in the wedding, they should speak to the pastor of St. John Hill Church first. Normally the pastor of the church officiates at all weddings held in the Church. Most often the one who presides at the marriage meets with the couple several times before the ceremony. This is a time to talk about the Christian understanding of the marriage relationship and the couple's readiness to enter into the covenant. In these meetings, plans are also made for the actual wedding service.



## **WEDDING GUIDELINES**

### **ARRANGEMENTS**

Careful planning for a church wedding is necessary. Please contact the pastor as soon as you have any idea regarding a possible date for the wedding. It is important that the date and time be confirmed early to avoid any possible conflicts on the schedule of the pastor or the church building.

Weddings are not scheduled on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or during Holy Week.

The congregation requires that the pastor meet with the couple several times prior to the wedding.

### **USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING**

A wedding in the church is always considered to be a service of worship. Therefore, it is expected that members of the wedding party, family, and guests will conduct themselves in accordance with the respect shown for all sacred institutions.

-- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church building. Alcoholic beverages are forbidden on the church property.

-- It is the responsibility of the ushers to enforce the drinking and smoking policies stated above.

-- Rice should not be used. Confetti or other paper or plastic-type sprays or decorative ribbon also should not be used because they create a terrible mess. Violation of this prohibition will result in an additional clean-up charge, forfeiting the security deposit check. Birdseed is acceptable. However, packets of seeds shall not be given to the guests until the bridal party is ready to leave the church. Bubbles and bells may also be used outside the church.

-- It is the obligation of the bride and groom to make certain that these guidelines are made known to the members of the wedding party and guests prior to the wedding.

### **WEDDING DECORATIONS**

All floral arrangements are the responsibility of the couple. Flowers may be placed on the altar or other small tables in the chancel.

Simple floral arrangements or ribbons may be placed on pew ends. The use of any screws, nail, staples, wires, or any other fastening device on furnishings or structure is prohibited. We recommend the use of special non-marring tape or ribbons that can be tied around the pew end.

The parament colors will reflect the appropriate season of the Church Year. Colors will not be changed to coordinate with the wedding colors.

Furnishings of the church (baptismal font, altar, etc.) shall not be moved for the convenience of a wedding. A white runner for use upon entry of the bridal party in the aisle is permitted. Consult with your florist concerning this item.

Extra candle stands are permitted. The cost of the extra candles will be the responsibility of the bride and groom.

The church interior (nave and chancel) should be decorated to your satisfaction and within the above guidelines no later than two hours before the ceremony is to begin. You will need to insist on this requirement when you make the initial contact with the florist.

You are welcome to leave your floral arrangements in the chancel for Sunday worship. If

you decide to do this, give ample notice to the pastor, and an announcement regarding the arrangements will be placed in the Sunday worship bulletin.

## **MUSIC**

-- As soon as the dates and times of the wedding and rehearsal have been decided, the church organist should be contacted. The organist will then arrange for a conference with you to review music and make selections. The organist employed by this congregation ordinarily will provide his or her services for the wedding.

-- A marriage in the church is in the context of a service of worship. Therefore, music selection will need to be religious music appropriate for weddings. Secular music should be reserved for a special and meaningful time during the reception.

-- If your plans for the wedding include a soloist, or other musicians, you will need to contact the organist, and all decisions are to be made either by, or with the consent of, the church organist and/or pastor. Ample rehearsal time must be arranged, and the organist must not be placed under the pressure of a last minute rehearsal.

-- Musical accompaniment other than the church organ is permitted, but is also subject to all the conditions above.

-- No one is permitted to operate the sound system except the organist or another member of the church staff.

## **WEDDING REHEARSAL**

-- The wedding rehearsal is held shortly before

the wedding (usually the evening before). It is a time when the entire wedding party can become familiar with the wedding service itself. It is important that all members of the wedding party, including the parents or guardians of the couple, be in attendance at the rehearsal if they are to participate in the wedding.

-- Any ushers, guest book attendants, etc., should also be present. This is important in order to convey information about the location of restrooms, telephone, water, first aid, etc. Knowledge of any nurses or doctors attending the wedding should also be available.

-- All members of the wedding party are asked to arrive promptly for the rehearsal.

-- All fees should be given to the pastor on rehearsal night, if not before. The Wedding License must be brought to the rehearsal for the pastor's information.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

No flash pictures are to be taken during the wedding ceremony. This applies to all photographers, professional and amateur. Flash pictures of the bride and her attendants entering and the bride and groom and wedding party exiting the nave are permitted. Available-light shots and time exposures are permitted. Video photography is permitted without floodlights and if the person holding the camera remains stationary. All photographers should respect the solemnity of the worship service. Distracting movements and positions must be avoided. The professional photographer should consult with the pastor in advance with regard to appropriate positions

and locations from which the photographer can operate.

Photo sessions after the ceremony are encouraged.

### **FEES**

The following church fees should be paid at least one week prior to the rehearsal, by check or in cash.

#### **Pastor:**

*For Members:* Preparation for and officiating at the marriage service are part of the responsibilities as pastor and worship leader of the congregation. Gifts may be accepted.

*Non-Members:* \$150.00

#### **Organist:**

*For Members:* \$100.00

*For Non-Members:* \$100.00

#### **Sexton:**

*For Members:* \$75.00

\$50.00 on separate check for security deposit, returnable if no extra clean-up is necessary.

*For Non-Members:* \$75.00

\$50.00 on separate check for security deposit, returnable if no extra clean-up is necessary.

#### **Use of the Church:**

*For Members:* same as for the Pastor

*For Non-Members:* \$150.00

**Bulletins:** \$15.00 per 100

All bulletin information must be submitted to the pastor or to the church secretary at least one month prior to the scheduled ceremony.

Bulletin Preparation and Printing \$30.00

### **LEGAL ISSUES**

**IMPORTANT:** The marriage license **must** be given to the pastor prior to the wedding ceremony. The best time for this detail to be accomplished is at the rehearsal. The pastor cannot officiate at a wedding ceremony unless the proper license has been presented. The pastor will complete and sign all the forms necessary on the day of the wedding, return one part of the certificate to the couple, and forward the marriage license itself to the Clerk of the Orphans Court for registry.

Pennsylvania law outlines the following steps to obtain a marriage license:

1) Application for a marriage license may be made in person at the Clerk of the Orphans Court office in any Pennsylvania county.

2) Persons under the age of 18 need parental consent and persons under the age of 16 also need the approval of a Judge of the Orphans Court.

3) No person under the influence of alcohol or drugs may either apply for a marriage license or be married.

4) The license will be issued three days following the receipt of the application by the court's clerk.

5) The license is valid for sixty days from date of issuance.

## Applying For Your License

In most counties, both parties must apply in person at the same time for a marriage license. If you are under 18 years of age, a parent is required to be present. In a few counties, you do not have to be present at the same time, but you must apply in person. The form will be held until the second person appears to complete the application. An application will not be filed until it is complete.

It is recommended that you apply for your license two weeks prior to the scheduled wedding. Items you need to take with you when you apply for your marriage license include:

1. Funds to pay for license
2. Birth Certificates
3. Driver's Licenses

The current fee range for a marriage license is \$30-\$65. This amount varies county to county. In addition, many counties only accept cash.

While some counties do not require proof of your birthdate, many counties are now verifying the age of applicants. A driver's license or birth certificate should be available.

## Waiting Period Required

There is a three day waiting period from the date of your completed application to the date of issuing the license. For example, if your application is made on:

- Monday - you may pick up your license on Thursday;
- Tuesday - you may pick up your license on Friday;

Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday - you may pick up your license on Monday.

Counties may offer exceptions to the waiting period, but be aware that these exceptions are rare, and generally available only to military personnel.

## Second Marriage

If you or your fiancé were previously married, you must provide information regarding the dissolution of all previous marriages. This also applies to annulments. Information you must supply includes:

1. An original or certified copy of the divorce decree bearing the signature and seal of the proper issuing official.
2. The month, day, year, and docket number of the final decree.
3. The county and state where the decree was granted.
4. An English translation for foreign divorces and annulments.

## Valid Marriage Licenses

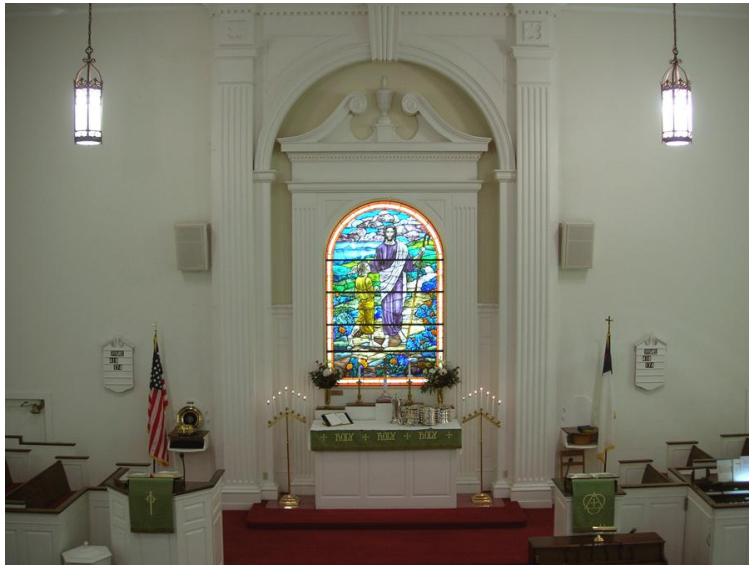
Your marriage license may be used for your marriage ceremony performed anywhere within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by an officiant meeting the requirements of Pennsylvania laws to perform such services. You do not have to get married in the county where the license was issued.

Once you have received your marriage license it is valid for up to sixty days from the issuing date. The marriage license must be presented to the person officiating your marriage ceremony on your wedding day.

In Berks County, apply for a marriage license at Berks County Register of Wills Office. Located on the second floor of the Berks County Services Center, 633 Court Street, Reading, the office is usually open Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Application for a marriage license must be made personally, with both parties appearing together. No appointment is necessary.

In addition, marriage applications can be made at your local District Justice Office and at Reading District Court (First Floor, Courthouse) by appointment only.

The Berks County website is a good source of additional or more detailed information. You may also call the marriage license bureau of the Register of Wills office at (610) 478-6617.



MARRIAGE INFORMATION SHEET  
ST. JOHN-HILL CHURCH  
620 Hill Church Road, Boyertown, PA 19512

*Please complete the information on this sheet – front and back – and bring with you to your first meeting with the pastor*

Groom:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_

Single  Widower  Divorced

OCCUPATION

\_\_\_\_\_

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

\_\_\_\_\_

Bride:

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

AGE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF BIRTH \_\_\_\_\_

Single  Widow  Divorced

OCCUPATION

\_\_\_\_\_

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE OF WEDDING:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Rehearsal: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### WEDDING SERVICE INFORMATION

First names to be used: Bride: \_\_\_\_\_ Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to have a bulletin for the wedding? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

If you, do you want the church to prepare it, or will you make other arrangements? \_\_\_\_\_

Note: if you wish to have the church prepare it, special arrangements must be made at least a month in advance, and specific fees apply. If you are making other arrangements, the Pastor must see and approve the service before it is printed.

Florist \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_

Video photography \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate number attending the service \_\_\_\_\_

Reception Location and time \_\_\_\_\_

New Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

New Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Will the Bride and Groom have photographs taken at the Church following the wedding service? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

Will the wedding party be dressing in the church? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no