



Weddings
at
**St. Paul's United Church
of Christ**

Revised: April 30, 2016

St. Paul's United Church of Christ

2173 Stoverstown Rd.
Spring Grove, PA 17362
717-225-6357

(Find other contact information on page 11.)

Rev. David K. Martin, Pastor

Welcome!

Your wedding will be one of the most memorable events in your life. We believe that this is a most sacred experience. We are eager to help you to make it a joyous and significant occasion for you and for all those who will be there to join the celebration.

This booklet describes some of the details involved in planning your wedding, and aims to familiarize you with St. Paul's United Church of Christ's approach to and policies on weddings.

We're here to help! If you have questions, contact Pastor Dave Martin.

An occasion of worship

A marriage "in the sight of God" differs from a civil ceremony in several ways. The state is concerned with marriage as a legal contract of civil relationships and property rights. The church is concerned with marriage on a deeper level of personal relationships, a covenant between two people who call upon God to witness it, bless it and participate in it.

A church wedding joins two people who seek to establish a home where Christ is honored and revered; where children, if any, are brought up in Christian love; and where the fellowship of the church enriches marriage and family life.

Your vows, exchanged during the ceremony, will be an outward announcement of your inward unity and commitment.

Your presence in the church for this event will also say something to those who are present about your faith in a God who loves, supports and nurtures us. It will underscore your belief that your ability to love one another depends on God's love.

Who may be married here

St. Paul's Church welcomes not only members of our own church and couples from our own Christian tradition, but couples of different Christian traditions, and couples where one is Christian and the other is of a different faith background.

How to begin

At least six months before your preferred wedding date, contact the church office and indicate your interest in being married at the church. You will be given this guide and a Wedding Contact and Information form. Once you have read this guide, completed the Wedding Contact and Information form, and returned it to the church office, the pastor will plan a time for an initial meeting with you.

Please note that the pastor of this church hosts all weddings at the church, and guides the couple in the performance of their vows. If you wish a guest clergy person to assist with the ceremony, that's generally fine. But talk to Pastor Dave about it before you issue that invitation.

Pastoral care before the wedding

Three 60-minute sessions with the pastor are normally needed as we prepare for the service.

The first is a get-to-know-each-other session. You'll be asked to share your stories – his, hers and theirs. The pastor will discuss with you the Christian understanding of marriage as a covenant promise, and the understanding that becoming married is a process. The pastor will send you home with a booklet to read on becoming married and a questionnaire (online) for each of you to complete about your relationship and expectations for marriage.

The second session is an opportunity for you to begin discussing topics or differences that may not have talked much about before.

The third session is mostly devoted to planning the service itself – choosing the scriptures and other readings, discussing the liturgy, and overall making the service as meaningful and personal to you as we can.

Please note that if the pastor comes to believe your relationship is affected by domestic violence, controlling behavior, or addiction, the pastor reserves the right not to perform the wedding.

The wedding service

A wedding at St. Paul's United Church of Christ is a service of worship. The wedding is a time of praise, prayers, and invoking God's presence and blessing, the God this gathered community knows best through Jesus Christ.

After the second session the pastor will email you a file with options for all aspects of the service – a sort of pick-and-choose way of thinking through the ceremony. You can make it your own by choosing together those versions of the various parts of the service that best “say” what you want your wedding to communicate.

The pastor also invites you to combine ideas from several sources, or to write your own vows or even construct your entire service. The pastor will rejoice in helping you make your wedding service your own expression of your love and faith.

An outline of the wedding service

The heart of the service is the two sets of vows. The first vows declare the couple's intention to God and everyone. The assembled family and friends respond by giving their blessing. Then the couple makes promises to each other. Elements may be added—more readings, hymns, solos, Communion, passing of the peace, etc., or not. The order shown here may be altered. The following gives you a sense of the basics and the flow.

Prelude music

Stage is set; music often sets a tone of joy and anticipation.

Entrance

After congregation is seated, family members and members of the wedding party and presiding minister enter with a little drama.

Words of welcome

Presiding minister welcomes all in Christ's name, indicates that we gather at this time to worship God, the author of life and love.

Opening Prayer

Asking God's presence to guide the two who are to be joined in marriage, and all who witness this event.

Reading of Scripture

The wisdom of sacred tradition is brought to bear; readings other than scripture may also be chosen.

Meditation

Minister's reflection on the message of scripture and the gospel for this particular occasion.

Declaration of intention

The first two vows by which the couple announce to all assembled their freely chosen desire to marry

Pledges of support

Parents, family and/or entire congregation respond to couple's declaration of their intention by giving their blessing and pledging their support.

Vows of the marriage covenant

The second set of vows by which the couple makes promises to each other.

Exchange of symbols

Most often, but not always, rings are blessed and exchanged.

Expressions of unity (optional)

Unity candle, combining of colored sands, hand fasting, or other expressions of unity are made by the couple.

Announcement of marriage

Presiding minister announces a new reality—a married couple—has come into being by virtue of the promises made before God and congregation. (The kiss comes here!)

Prayer of thanksgiving

What it says.

Benediction

Couple and congregation are blessed by the presiding minister.

Recessional

Couple, then wedding party, make a dramatic exit, usually accompanied by music.

The music

The wedding ceremony is a service of worship. Within that context, there's lots of room for both sacred and secular music.

It's assumed that the organist of this church, Darlene Hoover, will serve as organist for all weddings. It's your responsibility to contact Darlene at least a month in advance of the wedding date. Our organist will discuss with you the choice of processional, recessional, and other music. All music selected should be fitting for you but also aim to honor God.

Some couples utilize vocal or instrumental soloists in addition to the organ. While relatives or friends are welcome to serve as vocal or instrumental soloists, remember that performing well in a formal setting in a large sanctuary requires considerable training, skill and experience. If you need assistance, an experienced soloist usually can be secured with adequate advance notice. If you prefer an instrumental solo, our organist can play appropriate organ or piano solos to enhance the service. She will be happy to discuss this with you.

Note that the pastor has final approval, or veto power, over all music chosen for the service. Songs with explicitly sexual lyrics are inappropriate to the atmosphere of a worship service.

Some other details

Setting the date: It is of the greatest importance that dates be cleared with the church office as soon as possible so that conflicts can be avoided.

Invitations: In ordering invitations, the address of the church is:

St. Paul's United Church of Christ
2173 Stoverstown Rd.
Spring Grove, PA 17362

Decorations and flowers: Arrangements for floral decorations should be made through the florist of your choice. Remember that moderation is a virtue!

If you wish to leave any flowers from your wedding at the church, we'll be happy to use them during Sunday worship and to share them with shut-ins when possible.

A white runner may be ordered from your florist if you wish. (Keep in mind that a runner is sometimes tricky business for those wearing high heels.) Our center aisle is 80 feet long. There are 17 rows of pews in the sanctuary.

Printed order of worship: If a wedding program is to be printed and distributed to the guests at the wedding, please share a preliminary draft of the printed program with the pastor.

Photography: Please request your photographer to consult with the Pastor prior to the service. Consider whether you would like most of your photographs taken before or after the service. Some wedding parties favor taking photographs before the service to ensure that all member of the party are present and to avoid long delays between the service and the reception.

Photographers are not permitted to take flash pictures during the wedding ceremony. Pictures of the bride and the bridal party taken during the processional, and pictures of the bride, groom and bridal party taken during the recessional, are permitted. All other photographs can be taken following the ceremony. Following the service, the pastor will reconstruct any part of the ceremony for the photographer if you wish.

Videographers may shoot from the back only. If the video recorder causes interference with the church's sound system, the videographer will be asked to turn the video recorder off.

Wedding rehearsal: If your wedding party is larger than two witnesses, it is a good idea to have a rehearsal so that on the wedding day the service goes more smoothly and everyone is less anxious. The rehearsal is usually held the evening prior to the wedding (often at 5:00 or 5:30 pm), and you should allow an hour for it. The entire wedding party and parents and others who have a special role in the service are expected to attend and are urged to be on time.

Use of the church building: Our sanctuary seats up to 250 people (225 comfortably).

The throwing of rice or confetti is not permitted anywhere on church premises. Please do not release balloons outside as they will only become litter in someone’s backyard. Throwing of birdseed is prohibited inside the building. Bubbles may be used outside only.

No smoking is allowed in the building.

Alcoholic beverages of any kind are prohibited on the church premises. Please note: The Pastor may not conduct the service when it is apparent that either bride or groom has been drinking, no matter how small an amount may be reported to have been consumed.

Schedule of fees

- Organist: \$125.00
- Pastor: Honorarium based on
10 to 15 hours of the pastor’s time
- Sanctuary Use: \$400.00 (non-members only)

So that you don’t need to worry about fees on your wedding day, please bring checks for these fees to the wedding rehearsal.

Acquiring a Pennsylvania State marriage license

Also bring your marriage license to the rehearsal.

At least two weeks before the service, both parties should apply for a marriage license by signing an affidavit at the county Registrar of Wills office where you live. Proof of age, such as a driver's license, is required. If divorced, divorce papers are required. If you're under 18 years old, both parents are required to accompany the parties and sign the affidavit. The marriage license is valid for 60 days.

After the ceremony, the pastor will mail to the Registrar of Wills the completed marriage license and mail you a copy as well. The Registrar of Wills will record the marriage, mail the couple a state Certificate of Marriage, and register the marriage with the state in Harrisburg.

Receptions

Our Fellowship Hall is available for a reception.

It seats up to 120 people (100 comfortably). Please contact our Church Administrative Assistant, Dennis Hall, for fees and rules.

Again, note that the use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on the church premises.

After the big day

If you're not already involved in a community of faith, we invite you to worship with us! St. Paul's United Church of Christ is a warm, vibrant community in a progressive tradition, and people of all sorts have found it to be a welcoming and exciting place to be. (See our Web site, www.stpaulsstoverstown.org, for lots more.)

As you enter your new life together, the pastor stands ready to serve you with pastoral care and pastoral counseling. Call any time, and keep in touch!

Notes

Contact Information

Pastor Dave Martin

Church phone: 717-225-6357

Home phone: 716-946-7349

Email: davidkmartin6@gmail.com

Organist: Darlene Hoover

Home phone: 717-792-3153

Email: nannydlh@aol.com

Administrative Assistant: Dennis Hall

Church phone: 717-225-6357

Email: stpaulsstoverstown@comcast.net

Church office hours are Tuesday through Thursday, 9:00 to 11:30 am.

*If you have any
encouragement
from being united
with Christ, if
any comfort from
his love, if any
fellowship with
the Spirit, if any
tenderness and
compassion, then
make my*

joy

*complete by being
like-minded, having
the same love,
being one in spirit
and purpose. Do
nothing out of selfish
ambition or vain
conceit, but in
humility consider
others better than
yourself.*

--Philippians 2:1-3