



Frederick
Church of the Brethren

Marriage Ministry Guidelines

Frederick Church of the Brethren

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OVERVIEW

We are delighted that you desire to have your wedding at our church! It is an honor to share in this chapter of your lives.

The process that follows reflects our commitment to Christ-centered marriage. It also reflects our commitment to you and the success of your marriage.

Marriage Ministry Focus

The Marriage Ministry of the Frederick Church of the Brethren is designed for persons who are centered in Christ and active members and/or participants of the congregation. Exceptions are made on a case by case basis.

Officiating Clergy

Weddings at the Frederick Church of the Brethren are conducted **by a member of the pastoral team**. Other clergy may participate if mutually agreed upon by the officiating pastor and the couple.

Biblical Foundations

The Frederick Church of the Brethren affirms Christian marriage as an expression of God's covenant relationship with humankind.

This divine institution focuses on the following:

1. A Covenant With God.

Three parties are joined in a service of marriage: the bride, the groom, and Christ. This covenant experience is marked by holiness -- in that it emulates Christ's relationship with the Church.

"Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless." Ephesians 5:25-27

2. A Covenant With God's People

Christianity is not a solo experience – but a commitment lived out in community. Thus persons seeking marriage are to be in covenant with God's people – rooted in a particular congregation. Only in this context and the extended relationship it affords -- can couples receive the love, support, mentoring, and accountability needed for an effective relationship.

"Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing -- but let us encourage one another and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

A commitment to God's covenant leads to a number of basic understandings.

1. Union With Christ

As noted earlier, three parties are joined in Christian marriage: the bride, groom and Christ. For this reason, affirmation of Jesus Christ, as Lord, by both bride and groom, is a needed benchmark so that integrity undergirds the marriage covenant (2 Corinthians 7:14-18).

2. The Permanence of Marriage

The biblical image of one flesh (Ephesians 5:32) -- underscores the permanence of marriage from God's perspective. Thus, every effort is made -- with existing, new and potential couples -- to underscore the life-long commitment represented in the marriage covenant (Malachi 2:14).

3. Sexual Purity

Throughout both the Old and New Testament God calls persons to sexual purity and sanctity (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Such reality is achieved within a covenant relationship sealed in the presence of both God and His church.

4. Heterosexual Union

The Book of Genesis establishes God's order for creation (Genesis 1:27-28). This order provides for union between man and woman, in the covenant of marriage, i.e. the experience of becoming 'one flesh' (Genesis 2:20-24).

It is our intent to draw persons toward these understandings. We do so through a ministry of love, conviction, grace and mentoring. It is our intent to reject to walk with persons as they discover a deeper level of obedience to Christ and His Word.

MARRIAGE MINISTRY PROCESS

The Frederick Church of the Brethren Marriage Ministry Process is designed to be a continuum of care. This process begins prior to the wedding day and continues for the months and years that follow.

The items that follow detail the various components of this process—**normally requiring six months to implement**. Persons are expected to participate in each aspect of the process. **Exceptions are made on a case by case basis.**

Please note: special provisions/arrangements will be made for non-resident participants/members to allow for full participation in the process.

PREPARATION

[1.] **Initial Inquiry**

Preparation for marriage begins with an initial inquiry with a pastor or the Church Office.

Couples are asked to read the congregation's Marriage Ministry Guidelines prior to the Pastoral Interview. If in agreement, the couple may call and schedule an appointment with the pastor of their choice.

Please note: A wedding date cannot be reserved until the pastor has determined that the couple is ready for marriage.

[2.] **Pastoral Interview**

During this session the couple's readiness for marriage *preparation* is determined. It is during the Pastoral Interview that the pastor agrees to work with the couple as they begin to prepare for marriage.

[3.] **PREPARE Inventory**

To help with marriage preparation, couples complete the PREPARE Inventory. This inventory measures strength and growth areas, providing a basis for the couple to discuss issues in their relationship during the pastoral counseling.

The couple contacts the Director of Caring Ministry to arrange a date and time to complete the inventory. A small fee (see amendment for fee schedule) covers the cost of compiling the results of the PREPARE Inventory.

[4.] Pastoral Counseling

Pastoral counseling begins several months prior to the wedding service and enables the officiating pastor and couple to realistically assess their readiness for marriage.

Please note: Since pastoral counseling is the means by which the pastor determines readiness for marriage, a wedding date is confirmed during this stage of the process. To assist the couple with wedding planning, a wedding date can typically be determined after 3-4 counseling sessions. However, in some cases, the pastor and the couple may mutually agree to postpone a wedding date to allow for additional pre-marital counseling or for individual counseling, when warranted.

At the pastor's discretion for marriage readiness, the couple will be asked to complete the *Application for Wedding* and forward it to the congregation's Director of Caring Ministries.

Upon signing the application, the couple agrees to participate in every aspect of the Marriage Ministry process, including (but not limited to): completion of the PREPARE Inventory; and participation in the marriage preparation class.

Following the submission of the *Application for Wedding*, a confirmation letter is sent indicating agreed upon dates and times for the wedding rehearsal and ceremony, and other related activities and events.

After receipt of this letter, the Wedding Coordinator will initiate contact with the couple to establish dates for further wedding preparation and planning.

[5.] Prepare For Marriage Class [Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts (SYMBIS)]

This multi-session learning experience complements counseling offered by the officiating pastor. Conducted in a group setting (with other engaged or recently married couples), this class focuses on necessary skills for effective relationships and Christian marriage.

To accommodate scheduling needs:

- 1. SYMBIS may be completed at any time prior to or during the couple's first year of marriage.*
- 2. An equivalent course may be completed through another church when a couple resides out of the area. Attendance must be verified by your officiating pastor.*

Wedding Ceremony

The wedding ceremony is a worship experience. It is jointly planned among the couple, the Wedding Coordinator, and the officiating pastor/s.

Follow-Up

[1] Pastoral Follow-Up

Approximately six months after the marriage service, the officiating pastor contacts the couple. This contact is an opportunity to ‘check in’ regarding the couple’s experience early in their marriage. Appropriate counsel and encouragement are provided.

[2] Small Group Experience

Married couples are encouraged to participate in a small group designed for young married adults. The purpose of participation in such a group is for support and encouragement during the formative year(s) of the marriage.

[3] Marriage Mentors [under development at this time]

The couple will be introduced to their mentors toward the end of the pastoral counseling process. Typically, a mentor couple has been married for 10 years or longer and has experienced much of the challenges that you will face in your life together.

Following your wedding day, you will meet with your marriage mentor couple. They will serve as an important part of your support network during those first few years of marriage by providing support, counsel, prayer, and encouragement. Mentors and couples will meet quarterly at a minimum.

[4] ENRICH Inventory [optional]

Much happens during the early years of marriage. For this reason, couples may elect to complete the ENRICH Inventory – another opportunity to measure strengths and growth areas as they have changed over time. As with the PREPARE Inventory, this tool can be used in conjunction with pastoral counseling.

GENERAL PLANNING INFORMATION

Wedding Coordinator/s

The Wedding Coordinator is an important resource. The Wedding Coordinator assists with logistical detail and use of the church building.

The Wedding Coordinator is ***required*** for all weddings occurring within the church.

Couples have the option – in addition to the church’s Wedding Coordinator – to utilize an ‘outside’ wedding consultant. The involvement of this individual, however, does not replace the role of the church’s coordinator.

Your Wedding Coordinator will:

- 1) Assist you with general arrangements for ceremonies;
- 2) Direct the wedding rehearsal;
- 3) Prepare the sanctuary or chapel for the wedding ceremony;
- 4) Organize and guide your wedding party and ushers to assure that all aspects of the service proceed in an orderly and worshipful manner;
- 5) Facilitate use of the church facility (i.e. opening and closing the building, maintenance, use of candelabra and other supplies).
- 6) Assist you in planning a reception at the church, if desired. In this regard, the Wedding Coordinator works in partnership with the Women’s Guild, which provides both rehearsal dinners and receptions;
- 7) Assist you in the placement of flowers and floral arrangements as needed;
- 8) Assist you in securing a list of organists and soloists available for weddings.

It is important to maintain close contact with your Wedding Coordinator throughout the marriage preparation process to ensure that all details are arranged as you prefer.

For larger weddings, a Wedding Assistant is required as well.

Obtaining A Wedding License

A wedding license must be obtained at the Frederick, Maryland, Court House. A 48-hour waiting period is required by the county, and your license is valid for a period of six months. Either the bride- or groom-to-be must apply for and obtain the license from the Clerk of the Court. The license should be given to the officiating pastor one week prior to the wedding rehearsal.

Wedding Music

The wedding ceremony is a service of worship, and music appropriate for worship should be used. Secular and popular music can be more appropriately used at the wedding reception.

Still and Video Photography

Flash pictures are not permitted during the wedding ceremony. Flash pictures may be taken in both the chapel and the main sanctuary before and following the wedding service. Photographs using available light without flash may be taken *from the back of the church or the balcony during the service*. Video recording is permitted during the service in either the sanctuary or the chapel from the balcony or chancel area.

Church Rehearsal Dinner; Wedding Reception

If a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception at the church is desired, please notify your Wedding Coordinator as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Use of Church Facilities

For a detailed description for use of our facilities, please consult the Frederick Church of the Brethren Policies & Procedures, available upon receipt of your application from the Director of Caring Ministries.

Wedding Fees & Honorarium

The church facilities are available to members and active participants without charge. Fees and honorariums related to services rendered follow:

Pre-Marital Ministry Services

<i>Prepare/Enrich</i> premarital inventory	\$ 35.00
<i>SYMBIS</i> Marriage Preparation class	\$ 75.00

Payment for the Pre-Marital Memory Services is collected on the day the couple completes their Prepare/Enrich inventory. Please make two separate checks payable to the following:

	<u>Amount:</u>	<u>Memo line:</u>
<i>Life Innovations, Inc</i>	\$35	<i>Prepare/Enrich</i>
<i>FCOB</i>	\$75	<i>SYMBIS</i>

Wedding Services¹

Wedding, Rehearsal & Reception	\$ 500.00
Large Wedding, Rehearsal & Reception (5 or more attendants)	\$ 600.00
Wedding, Rehearsal	\$ 350.00
Large Wedding, Rehearsal (5 or more attendants)	\$ 425.00
Wedding	\$ 300.00

Payment for wedding services are arranged through the Wedding Coordinator. All wedding service fees and honorariums are to be paid, checks made out to FCOB, one month prior to the rehearsal. The church will then distribute to designated parties.

Honorariums and Fees

Organist	\$ 200
Use of Candles	\$ 50
Use of Aisle Runner	\$ 40

¹ Wedding Fees cover required wedding expenses; Wedding Coordinator and A/V tech. Please note: a) fees for large weddings are higher, since they require the use of an Assistant Wedding Coordinator; b) there is no charge for the use of the FCOB facility; c) there is no charge for the services of FCOB pastors. Often, however, couples provide a 'love gift' as a token of appreciation for a pastor's ministry; d) wedding fees do not cover honorarium for any musicians a couple wishes to utilize, including an organist. Couples are asked to contract directly with the musicians, of their choice.