

Wedding Guidelines



And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is Love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

*Athens First United Methodist Church
327 North Lumpkin Street
Athens, Georgia 30601*

A Message to the Bride and Groom

We at Athens First United Methodist are happy you want to have your wedding in our church. Questions are often asked concerning the guidelines of the church for weddings. The ministers, the staff, and the Altar Guild have put together this book to help you have a lovely wedding within the context of a United Methodist worship service. Please read it carefully before you meet with our Minister and our Music and Wedding Directors.

The Sanctuary and Chapel are available for weddings and can be made festive and beautiful while maintaining the atmosphere of a House of Worship. The *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church affirms that a church wedding is a worship service reflecting a joyful, reverent and dignified celebration. The United Methodist Church observes an open communion table. If the Sacrament of Holy Communion is served during a wedding the entire congregation must be served. By having your wedding in the church you are making a statement about the value you have for Christian worship, both for yourself and for the new family that begins with your marriage.

A member wedding held in the Sanctuary or Chapel with no rehearsal, decorations or music included requires no fee. However, the usual fees will apply if plans expand.

The Church requires an ordained minister to perform all weddings. Should you request to have an outside minister perform the wedding, he or she must be approved by the Senior Minister. In addition, the Church requires a church director to direct all weddings. A sound technician will be present for the rehearsal and wedding to assist with the audio and other technological needs. For your further assistance, a member of the Altar Guild will give you assistance in planning decorations and will be present during your wedding.

The Bride and Groom should arrange a conference with their Minister well in advance of the wedding date for pre-marital counseling. Please obtain the marriage license at least a week in advance and give it to the minister.

Our Director of Music or Organist will assist you in all decisions related to musicians and music selection. If you wish an organist not on our staff to play for your wedding, our Director of Music must approve musicians and music selections.

Responsibility

It is your responsibility to adhere to the policies and standards stated in this book, as well as, to insure that your florist, photographer, videographer and caterer understand the policies that concern them.

Before any wedding date is guaranteed, the application form must be completed and returned to the church office with the deposit before the wedding date is secure. A Staff Minister, our Director of Music and the Wedding Director are to be contacted to verify their availability to perform the wedding service. Upon receipt of your application and deposit, the date will be held for seven days to allow you to secure a Minister, Director, Organist, Photographer, and Florist. If this information is not provided with this time period, the date will be released and your deposit will be refunded. This must be done before other plans or announcements are made. The deposit is refundable after the wedding, provided no damage has occurred and all policies are respected.

The director's main responsibility is to supervise the details of the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. The director will schedule a preliminary meeting with you to review church policies, answer questions, offer suggestions and discuss your wedding details. A second meeting will be scheduled closer to your wedding date to confirm details and discuss a timeline for the wedding day. At the rehearsal, the director will provide instructions and answer questions for the wedding party. On the wedding day, the director will be there to assist and supervise so that things go according to schedule.

The decision to perform a marriage ceremony is the right and responsibility of the Minister. *The Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church states that the Minister will provide premarital counseling, discuss and plan your wedding with you.

Time and Date

Athens First United Methodist Church **members** may reserve the church up to one year in advance of their wedding date. **Non-members** may reserve the church up to six months in advance of their wedding date.

The Church will be open three hours before and until one hour after the wedding. The Church Wedding Director will be present to assist you during this time. Any change made in the time of the ceremony or rehearsal should be discussed with the Senior Minister's assistant and your director.

Saturday evening weddings will be scheduled to allow ample time to prepare the church for Sunday morning activities. All receptions held in Hancock Hall will end and be cleared no later than 7:00 p.m.

Weddings will **not be scheduled** for Holy Week, including Palm Sunday weekend, Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Eve through New Year's Day, or Sundays.

Dressing Rooms

The John Wesley Room (253) is available to the Bride and her attendants for dressing. The room includes access to an adjoining restroom and mirrored makeup area.

The groom and groomsmen will find a dressing room (236) in the hall adjacent to the Sanctuary on the Hancock Street side of the church, and a restroom adjacent to the stairs one floor down.

Under no circumstances will food or drink be permitted in the Sanctuary, Narthex or Chapel. Smoking and alcohol are **NOT PERMITTED** on the church premises.

The Bride should have a designated person to remove the bridal party's possessions, food and drink within an hour following the ceremony.

Decorations

Only live flowers may be used in the Sanctuary or Chapel. If floral arrangements are prepared at the church they must be made in the Sacristy, adjacent to the Sanctuary and not in the Sanctuary.

Decorations are to be completed one hour before the service begins.

- ❖ In the Sanctuary, flowers must be arranged in either two silver vases placed on each side of the cross, or in one low silver container placed at the base of the cross.
- ❖ If using the two silver vases, florists must arrange flowers in a 4 inch base, round papier-mâché insert. These will fit into the silver vases which are 15 ½ inches high. If using the low silver container, an oblong papier-mâché insert should be used. The papier-mâché inserts will be approximately 1 ½ inches above the rim of the silver container; have appropriate greenery cascading down to cover papier-mâché container.
- ❖ Both the two silver vases and the one low silver container are available through the Altar Guild and can only be used in the sanctuary.
- ❖ The arrangements can be no taller than the cross which measures 26" tall and 40" in breadth. Nothing shall obscure nor be greater in height than the cross. Palms or ferns may be used as a background.
- ❖ The Chapel furnishings are brass. There is not enough space to place an arrangement in front of the altar cross on the same table, but two small side arrangements or a floor arrangement may be considered. Two small footed vases are available through the Altar Guild. Plastic must be used to protect the carpet if a floor arrangement or candles are used.
- ❖ Rice, confetti, birdseed, or flower petals are not to be thrown in the Church building or entrances. Bubbles are allowed outside only.

A member of the Altar Guild will call the bride and her florist to discuss plans for decorating the Sanctuary. Your florist is responsible for seeing that all floral arrangements and other decorations are removed

immediately after the service. No nails, tape or screws are to be used for attaching decorations to walls, panels or pews.

Please contact the Altar Guild if you wish to leave your altar flowers for Sunday services.

Candles

The church's two silver candlesticks are to be used on the Altar. The Altar candles must be lit first. It is the responsibility of the bride to provide all candles except the Altar candles. All candles should be "dripless"; this includes unity candles and memory candles. To protect the floor, plastic is to be placed on the floor. Any additional labor costs due to cleaning wax residue from carpeting and flooring will be deducted from the deposit.

Two brass candelabra are **provided by the church** if the bride desires to use them. They must be placed within the altar rail. Only metal candles (15" or 18" tall) are allowed. Absolutely, no wax dripless candles may be used. A total of fourteen (14) candles are needed for the two candelabra (7 for each). The wedding florist should be able to provide metal candles, as the church does not furnish them. Arrangements should be made by the florist or the bride to have the candles taken after the ceremony. **Due to possible damage to the brass coating, no attachments may be used on the candelabra.**

Holidays and Decorations

When weddings are scheduled during holiday seasons and the church has been decorated, you must incorporate the seasonal decorations into the wedding décor. Decorations for the holiday seasons in the church may not be moved. Please contact the Altar Guild with questions.

Remember: Weddings will not be scheduled for Holy Week, Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas Eve through New Year's Day, or Sundays.

Photographs and Videos

Your wedding is a worship service in the United Methodist Church and **no flash pictures are to be taken during the service.** Timed exposures using available light may be taken from the balcony. Please remind your photographer and inform your guests of this important policy. Pictures are to be completed in the Sanctuary or Chapel 45 minutes prior to the service.

The church has a video package available using the cameras in the sanctuary should you choose for the church to record your ceremony. You may choose to use an outside videographer. Please indicate on your application your preference.

In keeping with a service of worship in the United Methodist Church, **the only video camera permitted in the Sanctuary will be placed in the balcony. No video camera will be permitted in the chancel area of the Sanctuary.** A video camera is allowed in the last pew of the chapel only. Please inform your videographer of this policy.

Music

A “Service of Christian Marriage” is a worship service and a part of the liturgy of the United Methodist Church. It is the responsibility of our Director of Music to oversee all musical portions of the wedding service and to see that all music is appropriate for Christian worship. The Director of Music should be consulted early in the planning of all weddings in the Church.

The Church Organist Fee includes a one-hour consultation with the bride, a one-hour rehearsal, and the wedding itself. If additional rehearsing with soloists, instrumentalists, etc... is required, additional fees will be negotiated. If the Church Organist is not available, the Director of Music or Church Organist will provide you with a list of approved local organists. Their involvement and fee would be negotiated by the Bride. If you would like to bring in an outside

organist, they will simply need to contact the Director of Music in advance in order to be approved. If you require other instrumentalists, soloists, etc... the Director of Music can assist you by providing names and contact information.

In the event that outside organist or soloist is used, our Director of Music must approve the music.

Only live music is permitted in the wedding service.

Reception

The fellowship hall is available for receptions. **The catering service used for your reception is responsible for cleaning the fellowship hall and kitchen after the reception.** All receptions should be completed and cleared no later than 7:00 p.m. The caterer must furnish all equipment, china, silver, crystal, etc. The Church has tables and chairs that may be used by making prior arrangements with the Church office.

Alcoholic beverages are not permitted under any circumstances on the church premises.

Rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals or any similar material may not be thrown in the Church building or at any entrances. Bubbles may be used outside only.

Please Remember...

- ◆ Upon receipt of your application and deposit, the date will be held for seven days to allow you to secure a Minister, Director, Organist, Photographer, and Florist.
- ◆ The balance of fees for the wedding is due in the Church office four weeks prior to the wedding.
- ◆ Smoking and alcohol are not permitted on the Church premises.
- ◆ Nails, tape and screws are not to be used to attach decorations to walls, panels or pews.
- ◆ Only live flowers may be used in the Sanctuary and Chapel.
- ◆ Decorations for the holiday seasons in the church will remain in the Sanctuary and will be incorporated into the wedding decorations.
- ◆ Any changes from the wedding application must be made with the Senior Minister's assistant.
- ◆ Only live music is allowed in the wedding service.
- ◆ Rice, confetti, birdseed, or flower petals are not to be thrown in the Church building or entrances. Bubbles are allowed outside only.

One Last Note

Again, we want to say how happy we are that you have chosen to be married at Athens First United Methodist Church. We wish you joy and fulfillment in your new life.



Athens First United Methodist Church
P. O. Box 1190
Athens, Georgia 30603
(706) 543-1442
Fax (706) 546-4797
Web address: Athensfirstumc.org

Chuck Hodges, Senior Minister

Stephen Mitchell, Director of Music
smitchell@athensfirstumc.org

Revised 07/09