

Wedding Guidelines

***T**hank you for your interest in scheduling your wedding at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church.*

These guidelines provide information regarding facilities, music, flowers, decorations, photography, and fees. Please carefully check over this information since it will answer most of your questions.

A wedding in our church is a special worship occasion and it is our hope to make your wedding day both special and sacred. Any questions you may have concerning this handbook should be directed to the Wedding Facilitator or the church office.

We require premarital counseling approved by the Sherwood Oaks Christian Church minister that participates in your wedding. Please make arrangements for this as soon as possible. Also, the FOCCUS Inventory for marriage preparation is enclosed and should be returned to the church office as soon as possible. The results from this inventory will be discussed in your marriage preparation sessions.

May the Lord richly bless both of you as you begin your lives together. We pray that the Spirit will be allowed to guide your marriage as you live your lives for Him and eagerly anticipate His coming.

Sincerely,

Tom

*Tom Ellsworth
Senior Minister*

Statement of Purpose

Sherwood Oaks Christian Church (SOCC) has a very positive view of marriage. We believe that marriage is an institution created by God for teaching mankind how to exercise the virtues of commitment, sacrifice, love and grace (Ephesians 5:22-33). Further, marriage is an institution created for mankind's good pleasure (Song of Solomon, Genesis 2:18, 22-24). SOCC desires to celebrate the union that God bestows on two people as they become one flesh while honoring the Giver of all good things.

Therefore, the purpose of the SOCC Wedding Ministry is to prepare engaged couples for a life-long, God-glorifying marriage, to assist in the preparation of the wedding ceremony and to provide resources after the wedding to help the couple maintain and enrich their marital relationship.

Is It A Christian Marriage?

One question the church may ask you is, "Why do you want to be married in the church or by a minister of the church?" If your thoughts are something along the line that Christ is a part of your lives and you want Him as a part of your marriage, then you are on the right track. The first prerequisite for a Christian marriage is that both parties be Christian.

Why?

According to Genesis, the couple becomes one flesh.

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18, 22-24)

Furthermore, as Christians we are also "one" with Christ.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ...for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:27, 28)

Therefore, how can two individuals become one with another who is not also one with Christ? This is why God says "do not be yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14)

It can be clearly seen from these verses that believers are to marry believers. Further, the Bible indicates that a believer is more than one who just acknowledges there was a man named Jesus. Rather, it is one who has surrendered their life to Him completely (Luke 18:18-30).

Christian Marriage

As Christ has blessed the marriage relationship, it is declared holy throughout the life of the Church. Those who pledge themselves each to the other in the sight of God are promised God's help as they enter into the joys and responsibilities of life together.

A wedding is approached by all as one of the greatest ventures of life. In this light, it is important for the prospective bride and groom and the parents to understand their respective roles in the wedding and reception.

The wedding belongs to the bride and groom. They are the ones who are joined by God together in holy marriage. Yet, there is a helpful suggestion of shared responsibility at this point. As the wedding service belongs essentially to the bride and groom, the wedding reception is traditionally the responsibility of the bride's parents. This rule encourages shared wedding preparations.

Is It a Second Marriage?

“Does the church marry divorced people?” The answer: Sometimes, it depends on the circumstances. God’s original plan was that marriages continue until dissolved by death. But sin entered the scene and disrupted God’s original plan. For that reason the Bible notes two allowable exceptions.

Adultery

Adultery so shatters the oneness that God intended that in the Law of Moses it was punishable by death! (Deut. 22:22) While Jesus did not enforce capital punishment (nor does our church today as a part of the New Covenant) for this offense, he does acknowledge marital unfaithfulness as grounds for divorce.

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery. (Matthew 9:19)

Unequally Yoked

Paul notes a second exception caused by a situation that existed in Corinth, where a Christian might be married to a non-Christian.

To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband.... But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. (1 Corinthians 7:12-15)

So the two allowable Biblical exceptions for God’s original intention are adultery and desertion by a non-Christian mate. Adultery shatters the marriage relationship. If there is no forgiveness nor reconciliation, the marriage is dissolved. In the case at Corinth mentioned above, Paul says the man or woman is not bound by that marriage. The marriage relationship is broken in either case and remarriage is permitted. If the divorce was not Scriptural, the church must rely on repentance, forgiveness and God’s grace and discuss each case on an individual basis.

Pre-Marital Counseling

SOCC requires every couple using our facility for their wedding to complete an approved pre-marital counseling program. “Starting Strong” is offered twice each year, in January and June, on Sunday mornings and is limited to eight couples. This six week series includes several modules facilitated by professional counselors. There are sessions on communication, conflict resolution, children, religious beliefs, commitment, sex and the FOCCUS marriage preparation inventory. You and your fiancé must complete ALL modules of the program. We want to give you the best possible start on your lives together. Please call the church office to register for Starting Strong.

Reserving the Church

Weddings at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church are religious services. We believe God Almighty acts to unite a couple. Holy Scriptures commands that marriage be held in high honor among all and that it be entered into reverently and solemnly. We welcome religious acts in the ceremony; prayer, blessing etc. Your reception is the proper place for secular music, performances, entertainment, etc.

Scheduling your wedding is subject to the following guidelines:

- Members and regular attendees who consider SOCC as their church home will have the opportunity to use this facility for weddings and receptions subject to availability and compliance with the remainder of these guidelines.
- Due to the limited number of dates available for weddings, use of this facility by members of other local congregations may be limited.

All dates should be cleared with the Wedding Director as early as possible. Schedule the facility for a wedding at least four months in advance.

Before a wedding can be officially scheduled, the signed Spiritual Covenant must be on file and half the total fee must be paid. If you and your future spouse have not signed the Spiritual Covenant and half your fees have not been paid, your wedding has not been officially accepted and listed on our church calendar.

Who Should I Contact?

- The Pastoral Care Minister:
 - Sign the marital covenant agreeing to the Sherwood Oaks Christian Church requirements for a wedding using our facility.
 - Confirm your plans for marriage, pre-marital counseling and spiritual growth.
- Contact the Pastoral Care Administrative Assistant:
 - Check the availability of the Chapel for the date you desire. You should have two or three possible dates. Wedding dates are coordinated with the ministry needs and programming schedule, so some dates are not available.
 - Be aware that other activities might also be scheduled in the building during your rehearsal or wedding.
 - Discuss fees and services offered.
 - Pay half the total wedding fees to reserve your wedding date. Make your check to: Sherwood Oaks Christian Church. This must be paid before your wedding date is reserved on the official church calendar.
- Contact the minister who will perform the ceremony.*
- Contact the assigned Wedding Facilitator to discuss your wedding ceremony plans.

**Note: Couples are required to both confirm the date and contact the minister performing the ceremony.*

Contact the Minister

Remember all our ministers are very active in their various ministries so please contact the church to set up an appointment. Our senior minister may not be available to perform your wedding, but our staff of associate ministers will be able to help you. Any officiating guest minister must be approved in advance by our Pastoral Care Minister. SOCC ministerial staff must be included in your wedding.

Marriage Preparation Expectations

The ministry staff at SOCC supports the Monroe County Community Marriage Agreement. Coming from various faith communities, we share a common concern regarding marriage. We have agreed with other church leaders in our community that we will require every couple we marry to prepare for marriage, not just for a wedding. We believe:

- That God has established the sanctity and companionship of marriage in Scripture.
- That God intends the marriage bond of husband and wife to last a lifetime.
- That as religious leaders we have a responsibility to insure that couples marrying under our care receive preparation to improve their marital understanding and commitment.

As a result, we will:

- Expect a minimum of four months of marriage preparation.
- Expect a minimum of four premarital counseling sessions or their equivalent.
- Strongly encourage regular church attendance during the marriage preparation period.

Please note that you cannot be married at Sherwood Oaks Christian Church without completing an approved premarital counseling course. This will be arranged through the Pastoral Care Minister. The *FOCCUS Inventory* for marriage preparation is the recommended assessment tool for the minister conducting your counseling.

General Building Information

Our wedding Chapel can be used almost anytime or day. It seats 220. There are several nearby rooms for wedding preparation. It has an easy entrance at door #20. It is recently remodeled for weddings. The Fellowship Hall seats 200-500. The time and labor for turning it from worship to wedding and back to worship by Sunday morning is usually prohibitive. A bridal room is available for the bride, but we suggest that you dress at home and arrive ready for your wedding. The groomsmen may use a men's restrooms or a classroom assigned by the Facilitator. Rooms available for use during a wedding are limited to the bridal room, men's changing areas and restrooms. ***The building must be vacated by 9:00 PM, Monday through Friday, and by 7:00PM on Saturday.*** Rehearsals should take place between 5:00 and 7:00PM the evening before the wedding. Make sure your music is ready for the rehearsal; the music must be coordinated with the procession. Receptions are held in the Fellowship Hall or Fireside Room. You must make special arrangements to use the Fellowship Hall or the Fireside room for your rehearsal dinner or reception. The Fellowship Hall will hold up to 350 guests seated at tables. Carpet and furniture must be protected from candle wax. You may not use tacks, nails, tape or any materials that might damage property. Smoking and the use of alcoholic beverages are prohibited. By agreeing to the conditions of this policy the bride and groom assume responsibility for the damages to the church building or property resulting from use by the wedding party. The building is available to you for two (2) hours for rehearsal, two (2) additional hours for rehearsal dinner including clean up, five (5) hours on the wedding day for preparation, ceremony and pictures. We have no special accommodation for children except a training room at the left rear of the worship center.

Chapel Wedding

Chapel wedding are encouraged. Our Wedding Chapel seats 220 guests. The center aisle is twenty feet long. An organ and piano are provided along with a modern sound system and viewing screens. The intimate setting with its beautiful stain glass wall is just right for a cost effective yet charming place to exchange wedding vows. It is available most week-ends so scheduling your wedding should be easy. The chapel is provided as is. You may add some decorations, but we cannot rearrange the furniture or adorn the walls and apse.

Fellowship Hall Wedding

The Fellowship Hall seats approximately 500 people. The work of setting up and tearing down the Fellowship Hall for weddings & worship is difficult & time consuming and is reflective in the cost. We provide lighting, a sound system & have video capability.

Worship Center Wedding

The Worship center seats approximately 1475 people. There are 19 rows of seats on each side of the center aisle. The center aisle is 65 feet from the stage to the last row of pews. The carpet is blue and the walls are antique white. It takes over 400 guests to begin to give it a warm, well attended feeling. The work of tearing down the worship decorations, setting up for a wedding and resetting the decorations on Saturday evening for Sunday service is difficult and time consuming this is reflected in the cost. We provide basic lightening, a sound systems and a wedding ceremony area in front of the main stage curtain.

Photographers and Video Taping

Do not take flash pictures during the wedding ceremony (indicate this in your wedding program if you plan to use one). Take pictures before or after the ceremony and from the rear of the sanctuary during the processional and recessional. The wedding party may return after the wedding for pictures, but the Chapel, Fellowship Hall or Worship Center must be vacated within your five hour window of availability. If the minister is to be included in posed pictures after the wedding ceremony, notify him before the wedding. Video taping and recording must be done from the rear of the sanctuary. Special exceptions to the above conditions may be made with permission.

Flowers and Decorations

Floral decoration arrangements must be made directly with the florist. ***The florist must remove everything brought in immediately after the wedding.*** We have no temporary storage space. If you want to leave flowers for Sunday, please let the Wedding Facilitator know this in advance. You must protect the furniture and floors from damage (water damage from plants, candle wax, etc.). ***The church will discard any personal items, or decorations associated with the wedding left after 7:00 p.m. on Saturday.***

Attach nothing to the walls, pews, or doors. All decorations must be removed immediately following the wedding or reception. You must provide the aisle runner, if you want one. Candles must be dripleless and be contained by globes or dishes. Be sure to protect all furniture and floors from damage. Do not move plants or chairs without prior arrangements with the Wedding Facilitator.

Rehearsal Dinner and Reception

Rehearsal Dinners and Receptions may be held in the Fellowship Hall or Fireside Room. The Fellowship Hall seats approximately 350 guests depending upon arrangements of table and chairs. The Fireside Room seats approximately 40. All facilities must be vacated by 9:00 p.m. Monday – Friday and 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. See the kitchen ministry for use of the kitchen and catering. The fees for the Fellowship Hall and Fireside room only cover the clean up and facilitation of the rooms. We must approve all caterers for receptions and rehearsal dinners. If you anticipate **any** use of the kitchen, you must contact the kitchen manager. All food preparation must be done or supervised by our kitchen staff. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited. Dancing is prohibited.

Wedding Facilitator

The Pastoral Care administrative assistant will assign a trained, approved wedding facilitator for your wedding after the wedding covenant is signed and the deposit is paid. The facilitator is an agent of the Sherwood Oaks Christian Church and is authorized to make decisions concerning building use, wedding activities and equipment. The Facilitator eases the stress of putting on your wedding. The Facilitator is neither a wedding planner nor a coordinator. She will make sure the building is open and lighted. She will assist the wedding party in minor ways to assure the rehearsal and ceremony adheres to the SOCC guidelines and time limits. Make sure that you meet with her and clear ALL plans with her. Her decisions are final in settling what can be done in and around the SOCC facilities. You may hire a wedding planner or coordinator, but the times, procedures and practices at SOCC are limited and under the authority of the facilitator.

Schedule of Fees

The fees listed below cover only the personnel costs and materials associated with your wedding. SOCC does not charge for use of the facility. There are custodians, facilitators, set strike, set up, teardown personnel and church set up crews, technical support specialists and furniture movers as well as grounds keepers who are necessary for a successful and memorable wedding.

<i>SOCC Fee Schedule</i>					
Worship Center Wedding	Fellowship Hall Wedding	Chapel Wedding (A)	Chapel Wedding (B)*	Rehearsal Dinner	Reception
Maximum number of guests-1475	Maximum number of Guests -500	Maximum number of guests-220	Maximum number of guests-20	Maximum number of guests-45	Maximum number of guests-350
Total \$700.00	Total: \$700.00	Total \$425	Total \$50.00	Total \$50.00	Total \$450.00

The suggested honorarium for minister is \$150.00. Give the honorarium to the minister personally. It is not included in the facility fee.

Vocalist, instrumentalist and videotaping are not included in these fees. Schedule and pay these fees separately. Catering is available in the Fireside Room and the Fellowship Hall for the rehearsal dinner and reception. These arrangements must be made through the kitchen staff.

Your wedding date is officially on the church calendar only after your signed Spiritual Covenant is on file and half the total church fee is paid.

All remaining facility-related fees must be paid in full at least two weeks prior to the wedding. If not paid; use of the building will be forfeited and the building may be made available for other events. If for any reason you decide to cancel your wedding, you must do so at least two weeks prior to the wedding in order to receive a full refund.

* A Chapel B wedding does not include decorations, a Wedding Facilitator or any technical support. This is a small, informal ceremony that includes the bridal couple, two witnesses, minister and a maximum of 15-20 invited guests.

Building Layout



