

**YOUR CHRISTIAN WEDDING at COMMUNITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**PASTOR'S POLICY on WEDDINGS**

- A. **CO-HABITATION**: It is my desire to see a Christian man and woman, who are in love, joined in Christian marriage. However, the Bible is clear that "living together" and having sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage is a sin before God, and incompatible with the Christian lifestyle. Additionally, numerous studies have shown that couples who do "live together" before marriage are *50% more likely* to divorce after marriage than those who don't. Therefore, my policy is generally not to perform church weddings for couples who choose to "live together" before marriage. However, recognizing that each situation is unique, and God is a God of grace, such requests will be considered under certain conditions - most notably when both parties profess to be Christians, confess their sin, are willing to live apart (and remain celibate) until their wedding day, and abide by the other requirements below. I understand that, for a variety of reasons, you may think it necessary to "live together" before marriage, and that living apart is not feasible. If so, please share them with me. Our church may be able to help.
- B. **PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING**: In this day of rampant divorce, pre-marital conversations or counseling take on added importance. *Therefore, I require of each couple:*
1. A *MINIMUM* of 7 HOURS of PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING with me (or, at my discretion, another pastor or pre-marital counselor) *before* the wedding. To be of most benefit to you, this should be spread over at least 5 sessions of 75-90 minutes each, spaced no closer than 1 week apart. *Therefore...*
    - Counseling must be started no less than 8 weeks before the anticipated wedding date, *and preferably 2-6 months before*. I do not perform "quickie" weddings.
    - It is the responsibility of the couple to notify me *in advance and as early as possible* if they *cannot* make a scheduled counseling session, or will be more than 10 minutes late. I will do the same.
  2. To enhance the usefulness of the counseling for the couple, **EACH COUPLE IS REQUIRED to take a MARRIAGE INVENTORY entitled PREPARE/ENRICH at the INITIAL SESSION. COST: \$35 for scoring, due at the 1st session** (make checks payable to "PREPARE/ENRICH").
- C. **WEDDING CEREMONY**: "We assert the sanctity of the marriage covenant. Marriage between a man and woman has long been blessed by God and recognized by society." (United Methodist Social Principles). *Therefore...*
1. Marriages performed in this Church are part of the regular liturgy of the Church, and the wedding ceremony is part of the worship of the Church. The wedding ceremony ought, then, reflect this in content.
  2. Any aspect of the service which varies significantly from the United Methodist "Order for the Service of Marriage" (or newer, alternate order) must, in the judgment of the pastor, be Christian in intent and content. Contemporary or varying prayers, readings, music, vows, etc., may be used provided they meet this positive test.
  3. WEDDING MUSIC ought to reflect the Christian character of the church wedding. Music must meet the approval of the pastor and organist. The standard for selection of music is: "Does this music have (Christian) excellence in intent and/or content?" - not "will this get by?"
  4. As the current pastor of the Church, I shall be "in charge" of the weddings held in this church. At my discretion, I am willing to invite others to take part in the liturgy or service, at the request of the bride or groom.
- D. **CHURCH POLICIES**: The church policies and fees outlined in "Planning Your Wedding at Community United Methodist Church" are to be observed by all. Please advise not only your wedding party but also guests regarding policies prohibiting smoking, alcoholic beverages, the taking of flash pictures during the actual wedding service, etc.

- E. **WEDDING REHEARSAL:** Rehearsal will be scheduled at a time agreeable to the pastor, couple, wedding party and church calendar. Rehearsal generally takes about an hour. When possible, it is helpful for the ushers in the wedding party to meet with the pastor about 15 minutes before the rehearsal hour. This will afford the minister a chance to go over some details with them before the rehearsal.
- F. **MARRIAGE LICENSE/FEES:** The Marriage License and balance of all applicable Church fees MUST be submitted to the church office NO LATER than ONE WEEK BEFORE the WEDDING, or the wedding will be canceled!

Neither the Community United Methodist Church, its pastor, nor its members shall be held liable for personal injury or personal property damage/loss of those using the church grounds and facilities.

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It is my hope that these policies, guidelines and suggestions will be of help in making your wedding preparations and that very special day just that -- very special! I look forward to assisting you (both before and after the wedding) in preparing not only for a great wedding, but even more for a terrific, life-long marriage.

At no time are you under any obligation to "carry through" with the wedding. Should either of you feel that this marriage is not truly "right" for you, or that now is not the right time, please contact me immediately!

But if you DO decide that you want to spend the rest of your life with one another, in the sacred bond of Christian marriage, I will seek to help you make your wedding day truly a "once in a lifetime" event and your marriage one of mutual joy and fulfillment.

May yours truly be a marriage "made in heaven".

In Christ's Love,  
Don Lare, Pastor

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