

Christ Congregational Church

Wedding Policies and Guidelines

(Approved by the Board of Trustees, January, 2016; Adopted by Congregational Vote, April, 2016)

1. Introduction

We are pleased that you wish to be married at *Christ Church*. It is our prayer that your wedding might be a blessed occasion for you, your families and your guests. We have created the following guidelines and policies in the hopes that they will assist you in preparing for a memorable marriage celebration. If you have questions not addressed in the pages that follow, or desire further clarification about matters which are addressed, please feel free to discuss your concerns with our Minister or our Wedding Coordinator.

2. Who may get married at *Christ Church*?

We believe the Holy Scriptures stipulate that Christian marriage is defined as a solemn public covenant between one man and one woman in the presence of God. Beyond that, it is not required that either members of the couple be members of *Christ Church*, but it is required that both members of the couple be baptized, professing Christians.

3. Who may perform marriages at *Christ Church*?

The Minister of *Christ Congregational Church* is ultimately responsible for and in charge of all weddings celebrated at *Christ Church*. However, the Minister of *Christ Church* may agree to invite guest officiants to celebrate marriages at the Church, subject to the following guidelines:

- Guest officiants shall be male, ordained members of the Christian clergy, lawfully permitted to perform marriages in the state of Texas;
- Guest officiants shall agree to abide by all the wedding policies and guidelines stipulated in this document.

It should be noted, also, that any Minister of *Christ Church* has the right to refuse to perform any particular marriage ceremony, according to the dictates of his own Scripturally informed conscience, or to require counseling sessions prior to his participation in a service.

4. What size wedding will *Christ Church* accommodate?

The Nave of *Christ Church* will seat approximately 250 congregants. Due to space constraints in our Chancel area, we recommend that wedding parties be limited to a maximum of five (5) male and five (5) female attendants. Animals (other than service animals) are not permitted to attend the wedding or to be included in the wedding in any way. Please be prepared to inform the Wedding Coordinator how many pews will need to be reserved for family/special guests.

5. What costs are associated with a wedding at *Christ Church*?

Christ Church does not charge for the use of its facilities; however, the following non-negotiable fees for services apply:

Non-member fees:

Administrative fee: \$500.00

Wedding Coordinator fee: \$250.00

Sexton fee (janitorial): \$100.00

Organist fee (if applicable[please see section 6 below]): \$250.00 *without* soloists; \$300.00 *with* soloists

Reception fee (if applicable[please see section 15 below]): \$250.00

One (1) check for the relevant fees outlined above (minus the deposit [please see section 16 below]) must be submitted to the *Christ Church* office at least one (1) week prior to the wedding date

Member fees:

Administrative fee: *waived*

Wedding Coordinator fee: \$250.00 (wedding only); for receptions at Church, add \$50.00

Sexton fee (janitorial): \$100.00 (wedding only); for receptions at Church, add \$50.00

Organist fee (if applicable[please see section 6 below]): \$250.00 *without* soloists; \$300.00 *with* soloists

Reception fee (if applicable[please see section 15 below]): *waived*

One (1) check for the relevant fees outlined above (minus the deposit [please see section 16 below]) must be submitted to the *Christ Church* office at least one (1) week prior to the wedding date

Honorarium:

In addition to the fees listed above, it is customary to give the officiating clergy a monetary gift for the time involved in consultation, the rehearsal and the wedding. The suggested minimum is \$300.00. A separate check should be made out in the name of the officiating clergy and given directly to him.

6. What should I know about wedding services at *Christ Church*?

Order of Service

While there is no prescribed liturgy or particular order of service which must be used in marriages celebrated at *Christ Church*, all wedding ceremonies shall, at minimum, include: 1) A reading(s) from Holy Scripture (it is recommended that the Scripture be

read from one of the following English translations: KJV, NKJV, RSV, ESV, NASB, NIV); 2) Prayer(s); and, 3) Exchange of vows consistent with the Christian faith.

Holy Communion

If the celebration of Holy Communion (the Lord's Supper) is desired as part of the service, the communion (bread and cup) must be offered to all congregants, who should be invited to come forward to receive the elements at the communion kneeling rails located in front of the Chancel area. Therefore, should such be desired, the intent to celebrate communion as part of your service should be discussed with the Wedding Coordinator during your initial consultation. This will help our Altar Guild prepare and make available to the officiating clergy the requisite elements relative to the number of guests you are expecting. Please note that ushers for communion will not be provided by *Christ Church*, but ushering services will be needed for this part of the service and should be contemplated as part of the rehearsal.

Music

The use of music in wedding ceremonies celebrated at *Christ Church* is subject to the following stipulations:

- All musical selections must be approved for use by a *Christ Church* Minister, Organist or Wedding Coordinator prior to the wedding rehearsal. For planning purposes, the following general guidelines will apply:
 - No recorded music shall be used (CDs, mp3s, etc.);
 - The music to be sung or played must be of appropriate lyrical and/or musical content as to be consistent with a service of Christian worship;
 - No school or college “fight songs,” *alma maters*, or similar music shall be played before, after or during the service.

- If *Christ Church* instruments (organ and/or piano) are to be used, the *Christ Church* Organist must be given right of first refusal to play the service, and the following stipulations will apply:
 - Should the *Christ Church* Organist be available to play, the couple to be married, and/or their representatives, should consult with the Organist at least sixty (60) days prior to the wedding date to select music and /or to coordinate plans with other instrumentalists or soloists (the Organist's fee [see section 5 above] includes one, 1-hour consultation. The rehearsal with soloists will take place in conjunction with the wedding rehearsal, but all soloists [or other instrumentalists] should arrive with music performance ready. The organist will not have time to teach the music to soloists);

- In the event the *Christ Church* Organist is unavailable, any guest instrumentalist(s) (and their selections) must be approved by the *Christ Church* Organist prior to the wedding.
- If instruments other than the *Christ Church* organ/piano are to be used, those instruments must be acoustical instruments (i.e. not amplified; [e.g. string quartets, harp, classical guitar]), the use of which is subject to approval by the *Christ Church* Organist or Minister prior to the wedding.

7. What flowers and decorations may be used?

Flowers and Plants

Only cut, fresh flowers may be used at weddings at *Christ Church*, with one important exception: flowers girls are to strew only artificial petals. The Wedding Coordinator will provide you with contact information for our recommended florist, who will know best the type and scale of flowers that work well in our buildings and in our services. The use of fresh flowers and plants, professionally supplied or otherwise, are allowed only as stipulated below:

- Fresh flowers carried or worn by the wedding party may be used.
- Fresh flowers may be placed in the *Narthex*:
 - Atop the provided hexagonal table;
 - In a maximum of two (2) standing urns (provided by the florist or wedding party).
- Fresh flowers may be placed in the *Sanctuary*:
 - In the Chancel area atop a maximum of two (2) standing pedestals (which will be provided by *Christ Church*);
 - On the Baptistry ledge above the Choir Loft.
- Fresh flowers or plants may be placed in the *Parish Hall*:
 - Atop the provided communion table on the north wall;
 - In a maximum of two (2) standing urns (provided by the florist or wedding party);
 - Atop a refreshment table(s).

Flower arrangements placed on the hexagonal Narthex table are customarily left for use in the Sunday service following the wedding. We will be glad to include a dedication in the Sunday Church bulletin regarding the donation of these wedding flowers. If this is desired, the bride and/or groom should inform the Wedding Coordinator as to the information to be included in the service bulletin at least two (2) weeks prior to the wedding. All other plants and flower arrangements should be removed from the Church immediately after the wedding service, or they will be discarded and/or used in the Church's ministry.

Candles

The altar table candles which are a regular part of the worship service at *Christ Church* are the only candles to be used during weddings and will be provided by the Altar Guild. The Wedding Coordinator will be able to suggest possible locations where these candles might be used to enhance your ceremony. Please do not move these candles except under the direct supervision of the Wedding Coordinator or Minister.

Other Decorations

No outside furniture, props or decorations may be brought in and used at weddings at *Christ Church* in any location. This includes, but is not limited to: bows, lace, lamps, or other pew decorations; canopies, decorative arches or columns; additional flower arrangements or plants in the front of the Church, in the aisles or in the Narthex; a unity candle or unity sands (a candle lighting ceremony can be arranged using our altar candles); candelabras, aisle cloths, hay bales, sparklers, rice, birdseed, glitter, or bubbles. If you have a question about the use of a particular item not mentioned here, please consult with the Wedding Coordinator.

8. Can I use an outside Wedding Coordinator?

An outside wedding coordinator can be used for consultation purposes only. The responsibility to ensure that weddings at *Christ Church* run smoothly, beautifully and in accordance with our Church's wedding guidelines and policies is invested in the *Christ Church* Minister and Wedding Coordinator. The Wedding Coordinator will be present at all rehearsals and weddings. Outside bridal consultants, professional or otherwise, are not allowed to have any direct role in the wedding rehearsal or ceremony.

9. What facilities will be available to me for my wedding?

Dressing room facilities can be made available for the bride and her attendants in the Administrative Wing. It is suggested that the women bring their dresses, shoes, etc. to the rehearsal. This provides time for dresses to hang and wrinkles to disappear.

The groom and his party are encouraged to arrive at the Church dressed in their wedding attire. They will wait for the start of the ceremony in the gathering area behind the Chancel area or in the Minister's office, unless they are part of the processional. The use of all of these areas is included in the regular fees, as outlined in section 5 above.

Experience has shown that a nursery is generally not used by wedding guests and therefore is not recommended.

Sound reinforcement will be provided in the Sanctuary as required, but will be limited to reinforcement using pre-installed *Christ Church* equipment. No sound equipment may be brought in from outside. A wireless microphone is available for the officiating clergy, and a microphone is provided on the Lectern for readers and/or soloists. Please inform the Wedding Coordinator what sound reinforcement you might require, and he/she will plan accordingly. *Christ Church* will provide the appropriate personnel to monitor the sound equipment, as needed.

The “Christopher Wren” Pulpit is not available for use at weddings (and cannot be moved). Additionally, we ask that no member of the wedding party, or their guests, climb into the pulpit at any time. If a stand for a reader is required, we ask that the “Staleybridge” Lectern be used (the Lectern cannot be moved). A limited number of movable music stands are available; please inquire with the Wedding Coordinator.

If use of the cast bronze Entry Tower Bell is desired, please arrange this with our Wedding Coordinator. The bell should not be rung at any time except under the direct supervision of the Wedding Coordinator.

No furniture or other items at *Christ Congregational Church* should be moved except under the direction of the *Christ Church* Wedding Coordinator.

No food or drinks may be brought into the Sanctuary of *Christ Church* at any time.

10. Can I use a photographer and/or a videographer?

Christ Church allows the services of still photographers and videographers, but they must agree to abide by the following guidelines:

- Still Photography
 - Still photography of the wedding must be unobtrusive;
 - The photographer will be allowed 90 minutes for still photography before the ceremony, whether inside or outside the Church. The men should be photographed first, followed by the women;
 - If you desire any family members in the pre-wedding photographs, those persons should be at the Church 1 and 1/2 hours prior to the wedding;
 - Photography of the wedding party must end thirty (30) minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony;
 - Once the bridal procession has begun, the photographer may not take pictures with a flash except to take a picture (from inside the doorway to the Nave) of the bride as she *starts* down the aisle. Once she has started down the aisle she and her escort are not permitted to turn and face the photographer;
 - During the ceremony, only time-lapse photography (absolutely no flash) from the Sound Room may be used. The photographer must stay in the Sound Room/Narthex until the music for the recessional has begun;

- After the ceremony, your photographer will be allowed forty-five (45) minutes for additional photography in the Nave. Time will start when all guests have been escorted outside and the doors to the Nave have been closed;
 - No photographs may be taken during the service by family, friends, guests or photographers other than the official wedding photographer outlined above;
 - If at any time the Clergy or the Wedding Coordinator views as inappropriate the posing of any of the wedding participants or guests, he/she has the right and responsibility to stop the photographer from taking a picture;
 - No furniture may be moved for still photography except under the supervision of the Wedding Coordinator.
- Videotaping
 - All videotaping must be done from the Sound Room;
 - No extra lights may be used;
 - Video cameras are not permitted in any other location;
 - The videographer should bring a tripod and an extension cord if needed;
 - The videographer must remain in the Sound Room during the service;
 - No furniture may be moved for videography except under the supervision of the Wedding Coordinator.

11. Will *Christ Church* provide service bulletins for my wedding?

No. *Christ Church* will not provide service bulletins or wedding programs for your ceremony.

12. What do I need to know about the marriage license?

A marriage license should be obtained from the appropriate office/agency no more than thirty (30) days prior to the service. The license must be submitted to the *Christ Church* office or Wedding Coordinator before the start of the rehearsal. The officiating Clergy should be instructed to fill out his part of the license immediately after the ceremony and to leave the completed paperwork in the Church office. *Christ Church* will be responsible for mailing the completed license to the appropriate recording office after the ceremony.

13. What do I need to know about rehearsals at *Christ Church*?

The wedding rehearsal usually takes place the day before the wedding ceremony at 5:30 p.m. The rehearsal will last approximately one (1) hour, but should not exceed 1 and 1/2 hours. Please plan at least two (2) hours between the starting time of the rehearsal and the starting time of your rehearsal dinner. In addition, please note the following:

- All members of the bridal party, including children, are expected to participate in the rehearsal. Please ask everyone to be on time, appropriately dressed and ready to begin at the appointed hour;

- Rehearsals are for reviewing and practicing how the wedding was planned, not for planning the wedding itself. Decisions will have been made prior to this time with the Minister and the Wedding Coordinator;
- The use of a “substitute bride” is at the discretion of the bride and groom;
- The officiating clergy will be in charge of the rehearsal itself. The Wedding Coordinator will be available to assist the clergy and the couple;
- The possession or use of alcohol/illegal drugs is not permitted on church property; members of the wedding party must not arrive at *Christ Congregational Church* for the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs.

14. What do I need to know about the wedding day at *Christ Church*?

The Wedding Coordinator will determine the arrival time for all the wedding participants. This includes the arrival time for the photographer/videographer. Please do not tell your wedding party or photographers different times than those specified by the Wedding Coordinator. In addition, please note the following:

- Inform all family members who are to be in pictures prior to the wedding of the designated time to be at the church;
- Those guests who are to be seated in the reserved pews, except mothers and grandmothers, should be seated fifteen (15) minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony;
- Inform all family members/friends and the wedding party who are to be in pictures after the wedding to be readily available immediately after the ceremony. There is not time to search for these participants.
- Weddings at *Christ Congregational Church* start on time. There will be no delays for seating of guests who arrive late.

15. May I hold my reception at *Christ Church*?

Christ Church allows small “cake, punch and coffee” type receptions to be held immediately after wedding ceremonies in the Church's Parish Hall (a nominal fee for non-members will apply [please see section 5 above]). Please note the following stipulations regarding these receptions:

- No food other than cake, cupcakes, cookies, etc. may be served;
- No drinks other than water, punch and coffee may be served;
- No alcoholic beverages may be served, separately, or as an ingredient in other drinks;
- No food may be prepared or stored at *Christ Church*;
- No bands or “DJs” may be used;
- No dancing is allowed;
- *Christ Church* will provide a limited number of 8-foot rectangular tables and 12-foot round tables, as desired; however, linens, serving dishes, service utensils, cups, plates, etc. is the responsibility of the wedding party and must be removed immediately after the reception;

- A piano is available for reception use; other acoustic instruments may be used in the Parish Hall (e.g. harps, string quartets, acoustical guitars). No sound reinforcement may be used and no amplified instruments or recorded music are to be used;
- The reception must end, and all items (except those belonging to *Christ Church*), must be removed within three (3) hours of the starting time of the wedding.

16. What initial steps do I take to “book” a wedding at *Christ Church*?

Select the Date

The first step is to contact the Wedding Coordinator to select a *tentative* date and time for your wedding. Please note:

- It is advisable to make arrangements for a wedding as far in advance as possible; we recommend that all dates be confirmed at least six (6) months prior to the wedding;
- Please do not assume that the church, clergy or musicians will be available for the date you have in mind;
- Please do not make any final arrangements for your wedding until your wedding date has been approved and confirmed;
- Marriages are generally not scheduled at *Christ Church* for the following days: New Year’s Day, Easter Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day;
- *Christ Church* reserves the right to schedule multiple weddings on the same day.

Confirm Clergy

After a *tentative* date has been selected with the Wedding Coordinator, it will then be necessary to confirm the availability of clergy:

- If you intend to use the services of *Christ Church* clergy, that intent should be communicated to the Wedding Coordinator during the initial consultation call. A subsequent meeting with both the bride and groom present should be scheduled with the *Christ Church* clergy as soon as possible in order to confirm his availability for the wedding and for the tentative date and time.
- If a guest officiant is to be used, that intent should be communicated to the Wedding Coordinator during the initial consultation call, and the permission to use the guest officiant approved by the *Christ Church* clergy as soon as possible.

Confirm Musicians

Once the availability of clergy has been confirmed, it will then be necessary to confirm the availability of musicians (if applicable):

- If the *Christ Church* organ and/or piano is to be used, the *Christ Church* Organist must be invited to play the wedding (please see section 6 above); the Organist should be contacted as soon as possible to extend an invitation to him and to confirm his availability for the tentative date and time;
- If *Christ Church* instruments are not to be used, and /or the *Christ Church* Organist is unavailable, the availability of guest musicians must be confirmed and their participation approved by the *Christ Church* Organist as soon as possible (please see section 6 above).

Reserve the Date

Once the availability of clergy and musicians has been confirmed and/or approved, a consultation meeting with the *Christ Church* Wedding Coordinator should be scheduled as soon as possible in order to officially reserve the date and time. This step will require:

- The signature of the couple to be married on a document verifying that they have read and understood the *Christ Congregational Church Wedding Policies and Guidelines* and agree to abide by the stipulations contained therein;
- A non-refundable deposit check made out to *Christ Congregational Church* in an amount representing 50% of the total fees associated with your wedding (please see section 5 above); the remaining 50% is due in the *Christ Church* office at least one (1) week prior to the wedding date.
- *Please note:* The date and time of your wedding will not be officially reserved or “held” until these requirements are met.

17. Contact Information

Church Office: 936.634.2009

Minister: Rev. Randall K. Green; 936.634.2009; rgreen@christchurchlufkin.com

Wedding Coordinator: Denise Vonwal; 936.707.1961; dvonwal@yahoo.com

Organist: David C. Lawson; 936.824.3002; dlawson@christchurchlufkin.com

18. Liability

Any damage to the Church premises, furniture, or furnishings by the florist, the photographer, videographer, caterer, wedding party, family or guests shall be repaired at the expense of the couple, their families or the wedding party. The repairs will be made at the discretion of the Minister and to the satisfaction of the Board of Trustees. *Christ Congregational Church* is not responsible for the loss of, or damage to, any personal items brought to the church. The couple and their families agree to indemnify *Christ Congregational Church* for any such loss or damage for which *Christ Church* may be found liable.