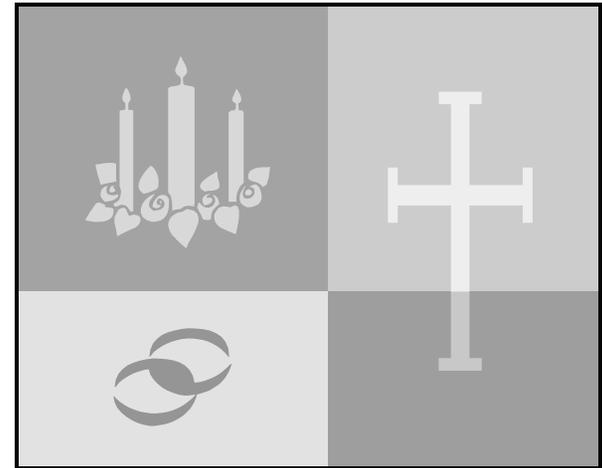


# Celebrating Your Marriage



First Congregational  
United Church of Christ

700 Poyntz Avenue

Manhattan, Kansas 66502

785-537-7006

[uccmanhattan.org](http://uccmanhattan.org)

## From Our Pastor

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Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! At First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC), we understand the essence of marriage to be a covenant commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the joyous occasion on which two people unite in the mutual exchange of covenant promises. We welcome both same-gender and opposite-gender marriages. We welcome second marriages. We welcome interfaith and interracial marriages. We know that love is what makes a family and we are delighted to celebrate with you.

My goal is to help you develop and plan celebration that is both personal and meaningful. The occasion is a service of worship, and the full participation of the congregation is encouraged through the use of scripture, prayers and music. Family and friends may be invited to share the leadership of worship. I am happy to incorporate creative ideas or simply celebrate with a standard, short and sweet service.

I hope the information contained in this booklet will answer many of the practical questions you may have. Should you decide to celebrate your union in our church, you will be asked to sign an agreement which indicates that you agree to abide by the policies outlined. Should you have further questions please call the church office at 537-7006.

*Grace & Peace,*  
*The Rev. Caela Simmons Wood*  
Pastor, First Congregational United Church of Christ

## HOW TO BEGIN

Preliminary inquiries regarding weddings at the church may be made with the Administrative Assistant who will provide you with the "Celebrating Your Marriage" booklet and check the church calendar as to the availability of the church facilities and the services of the pastor, wedding coordinator, and organist. If you've not met the pastor or attended worship with us, we highly recommend that you meet, talk, or correspond with the pastor before making your deposit. **A date will be reserved on the church calendar upon the receipt of the signed agreement and payment of a non-refundable deposit of \$200.00 which will be applied to the overall fee.**

## PLANNING THE CELEBRATION

### Scheduling the Service

You will undoubtedly have a number of considerations to take into account in selecting a date and time for your celebration—family schedules, reception venues, and other events taking place in the community.

The church tries to be flexible concerning the hour or day of the week when the service may take place. While there are times and seasons when weddings are discouraged, they may be permitted if reasons exist why they cannot be held on another day and provided that they do not interfere with programs of the church which take priority. Services are discouraged on Sunday afternoon or evening, on December 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, from Good Friday through Easter Day, or on

other major holidays. **Any event scheduled at the church on a Saturday must be concluded by 6:00 P.M. so that the facilities can be made ready for Sunday worship.**

The building will be open no earlier than 3 hours prior to the ceremony. The church may be used a maximum of 2 hours after the announced time of the service. (For example, if your wedding is at 4:00 P.M., the church will be open for your use from 1:00 P.M. through 6:00 P.M.) If additional time is needed, it must be scheduled in advance and will require the payment of additional fees. Please note that other events and groups may be using the building on the same day at times other than the five hour period reserved for your ceremony.

## Rehearsal

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The purpose of the rehearsal is to relieve participants of anxiety and confusion about the details of the service. Those details will be planned in advance by the couple and the pastor so that the rehearsal should take no longer than one hour. The rehearsal will also give the staff an opportunity to share important information with all participants.

The rehearsal for the service will be scheduled at a time convenient for the pastor, organist, and coordinator, and when all participants in the wedding ceremony can be present. All participants must arrive promptly for the rehearsal so that it can begin at the appointed time. The church will be open for the rehearsal 20 minutes before the rehearsal is scheduled to begin.

## ABOUT OUR FACILITIES

### Church Furnishings & Appointments

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The furnishings of the church sanctuary remain in place for marriage services. This includes the pulpit, lectern, communion table, baptismal font, etc. White paraments or the color of liturgical season may be used on the table, pulpit, and lectern for weddings and blessing ceremonies. A kneeling bench is available if desired. There are two small and two large flower stands available. If you choose to rent additional candelabra, dripless candles **must** be used.

In planning for flowers and other decorations, please ask the pastor or coordinator if you have questions about what may be appropriate. Only ribbons may be used to attach decorations to the ends of the pews. **Absolutely no tape or tacks may be used to attach anything to pews, walls, doors, or other parts of the building and its furnishings.** For the safety of you and your guests, no decorations which block access to and from the seating areas and exits, or which create an unsafe condition, are permitted.

For the comfort of your guests and the safe and efficient operation of the equipment, only the pastor or coordinator are to adjust thermostats, sound system, or other equipment in the church facility. It is your responsibility to let your wedding party, photographer, and others know this. Thermostats will not be adjusted below 70° in cooling season or above 70° in heating season. **If thermostat settings are tampered with, you will automatically forfeit your damage/cleaning deposit.**

There may be seasonal decorations in place in the sanctuary at the time of your ceremony. (For example,

poinsettias during Advent and Christmas.) You may add to them, but they will remain in place for your ceremony.

## Music & Musical Instruments

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The sanctuary houses a Möller pipe organ and a grand piano which may be used in your wedding celebration. In addition, a Deagan tower chime in the church tower can be played as a part of your celebration. The tower chimes can be pealed as you exit from the church building. The organist will demonstrate the musical options available to you when you meet with them to plan for your service.

You may wish to engage musicians for your service in addition to the church organist. This should be discussed with the pastor and organist at the beginning of the planning process. You will be responsible for the payment of additional musicians whom you choose to engage. If you wish, we can recommend several qualified soloists for your selection. Vocal or instrumental soloists may be capable and experienced friends or family members. If you use a friend or family member, be sure that they know the music they will be performing. The organist is not expected to spend rehearsal time teaching notes to a soloist. It is the responsibility of the vocalist or instrumentalist to provide the music in the proper key one month prior to the ceremony. Photocopies are illegal and unacceptable.

Please note that our sound system is designed for speech reinforcement only. We do not play recorded music via the sound system.

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## Dressing Rooms

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Andover Hall (below the sanctuary) and the Conference Room (on the second floor) are available for the use of the couple and their attendants. Restrooms are available in both areas. You are permitted to have snack food, water, and soft drinks in these areas only on the day of the wedding. **Please do not leave purses or other valuables unattended during the rehearsal or service. The Church is not responsible for valuables left unattended.**

## Accessibility

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Our facility is fully accessible for wheelchair access. Restrooms that are gender neutral, wheelchair-accessible, and large enough for caregivers to use are available. A changing table is located in our nursery. Please let the coordinator know in advance of any special needs, and we will do our best to help. If sign language interpreters or other special accommodations are needed, you are responsible for making such arrangements.

## Nursery

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The church does not provide nursery care during the rehearsal or ceremony. The nursery facility on the second floor may be used if arranged in advance and if you are willing to follow our safe church guidelines (two adults present, all adults have had a criminal background check). The church may be able to recommend an attendant if needed.

## Photography and Video Recording

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No flash pictures are to be taken during the ceremony. This applies to both your professional photographer and your guests. Available light cameras may be used by your photographer/videographer during the ceremony if it is not disruptive to others. This means that photographers and camera operators should do their work from the back of the room or from the balcony in an unobtrusive and professional manner. Photographers and videographers are not permitted in the aisles during the processional, the ceremony, or the recessional. Please inform your guests that flash pictures are not permitted during the worship service.

## Other Matters

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In keeping with city ordinances and church policies:

- No smoking is permitted in the church building or within 20 feet of any entrance.
- The consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on the church property.
- No rice, confetti, or birdseed is to be thrown outside the church. Bubbles are welcome.
- We are a downtown church and parking is limited. We ask that you be courteous to our neighbors in that regard. We have space for about 20 cars in the church parking lot. The coordinator and pastor will advise you of other areas where parking is permitted based on the time of your ceremony.

## OUR STAFF

### The Pastor

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Marriage ceremonies at FCUCC are conducted by our pastor. She will assist you in planning the worship service. The pastor will provide you with an outline of the elements of a typical marriage service and can make other recommendations based on past experience. Together with the pastor, you will plan a service that is personal and meaningful. We are happy to work with couples who come from different faith traditions, and will help you create a service that reflects and honors those differing traditions.

Pre-marital counseling is vital for any couple making a commitment to share their lives together. **You have two options for completing your required pre-marital counseling:**

- 1) Our pastor is trained in Prepare-Enrich, which is the gold-standard for pre-marital counseling and is appropriate for same- or opposite-gender couples. You can expect to meet with the pastor 3-4 times to complete Prepare-Enrich and plan your service.
- 2) If you choose, you may complete your pre-marital counseling with another licensed therapist, counselor, or religious leader. Please talk to the pastor early if you'd like to use this option.

**Your pre-marital counseling must be completed at least one month before your service.** If you plan on using the pastor for your counseling, payment is due to her at the first counseling session.

## The Custodian

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The custodian will perform all custodial duties pertaining to your ceremony and will strive to provide a clean and inviting environment for your celebration. The custodian will provide for normal cleaning needs following your rehearsal and ceremony. The custodian is not normally present during the rehearsal or ceremony.

Should the cleaning following your event take longer than 3 hours, a charge of \$30.00 per hour will be deducted from your damage/cleaning deposit.

## The Coordinator

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The coordinator will assist the couple and pastor in a variety of ways. The coordinator will:

- Be available for pre-service planning, the rehearsal, and the ceremony. The coordinator will assist as needed and will ensure that the plans of the couple are followed.
- Schedule all necessary rooms on the church calendar on the appropriate days, and will secure keys and be available to open rooms as needed.
- Assist the pastor in conducting the rehearsal. On the day of the ceremony they will oversee the ushers in the seating of parents and other special guests, line up the wedding party, and assist with the wedding party's departure.
- Notify the custodian of the dates and times the building will be in use and when custodial services are needed.

- Control the heating and cooling of all parts of the building, the sound system, and the lighting while the building is in use by the wedding party.
- Be available to assist you on the day of the service with any emergencies that arise.
- Be responsible for all candles used and see that they are safely extinguished before leaving the building.

Please remember that the coordinator is required to be present when you are using the building. If they are needed for more time than the 5 hours allotted for the day of your service, you will be required to pay an additional \$50.00 per hour (one hour minimum) in advance.

## The Organist

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One of our church organists will play or, if necessary, will provide for another experienced musician to play for your service. Should the couple wish to engage other musician(s), such arrangements must be approved by the church's incumbent pastor and musician at the beginning of the planning process.

The organist will be available to meet with you at a pre-arranged time to plan your service music. It is best to schedule this meeting well in advance of your ceremony—in any case not less than a month in advance. The organist will work with the couple to choose music that reflects your personal choices and is appropriate for a worship celebration. Not all music is appropriate for a church service, however, and the musician, in consultation with the pastor, will make the final determination in such matters.

The organist will be present for one hour at your rehearsal. On the day of the ceremony, they will provide pre-service music, play the selected service music and accompany vocal or instrumental soloists as needed. If additional time is required for rehearsals with soloists, the rate is \$50.00 per hour (one hour minimum).

## **EXPENSES**

**The typical fee for a marriage service at First Congregational is \$950.00.** This includes the use of the facility and payment of the pastor, coordinator, organist, and custodian. **Additionally, you will need to be prepared for the expense of your pre-marital counseling (\$235 with our pastor; rates with other providers will vary).** Fees for active members of our congregation may be reduced at the pastor's discretion.

**In order to schedule your ceremony, a signed agreement along with a deposit of \$200.00 is required.** The deposit is non-refundable and will be applied to the overall fee. **The balance of the fee is to be paid no later than one month prior to the ceremony. At that time, a damage deposit of \$150.00 is to be paid by separate check.** This deposit will be refunded within 10 days of the ceremony provided there are no damages, no tampering with thermostats or equipment, and no excess custodial services required. If there are damages, an amount to be determined by church officials will be withheld from the deposit. Should damages exceed the amount of the deposit, you will be held responsible for full reimbursement of the costs to clean and/or repair damages.

*All checks should be made payable to:  
"First Congregational UCC."*

## **OPEN AND AFFIRMING STATEMENT** **First Congregational United Church of Christ, Manhattan,**

In response to God's call

- which we experience in the Gospel of Jesus Christ that breaks down barriers and gathers us into one body,
- which we express in our covenant "to be open to the new light and truth God has for us" and "to take our stand for justice and peace,"
- and which is embodied by our mission "to love and accept others unconditionally as God loves and accepts us,"

First Congregational United Church of Christ, Manhattan, as a diverse body of believers seeking to live in the light and image of God in Christ, does affirm:

that every person has equal worth as a special and unique creation made in God's image;

that in the spirit of love, openness, and inclusiveness we welcome persons of every race, culture, nationality, age, family configuration, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, and socio-economic status to participate fully in all aspects of our church's life and ministry;

that as agents of reconciliation and wholeness, we embrace justice and seek to support and offer sanctuary to all who suffer discrimination or who are disenfranchised from the community, and pledge ourselves to be a wellspring of faith for a diverse people in the heart of this community;

that in the light of the Gospel we will strive to comprehend and continue to appreciate more fully our differences and gifts;

that through grace, our love for God and neighbor may flourish.