Wedding Policy of Grace United Methodist Church

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
Colossians 3:14, NIV

Purpose

Grace United Methodist Church, Bay City, in its concern for all persons at all stages of life, invites persons, especially its members, to consider the use of the church for Christian weddings. Because there are so many other details and the focus of inviting God into your covenant, the church has adopted the following policies.

Services on the Occasion of Marriage

Weddings at Grace United Methodist Church are joyous, meaningful, and worshipful occasions. Though weddings are social and legal events, our focus is on their spiritual significance. The wedding ceremony celebrates the gift of human love in the context of God's gift of love. All the words, music, and moments of the service are intended to reflect the divine dimension of a human act of commitment.

Ordinarily, the Service of Christian Marriage should be held here at Grace Church in order to join this service to the community's continuing life and witness to God's love in our lives. The service shall be under the direction of the appointed pastor. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. This service may be observed on any day.

The service begins with the gathering of all invited guests and participants, prayers will be prayed by all who are present, and it is appropriate for worshippers to sing hymns, psalms, spirituals, or spiritual songs which affirm God's love for us and our love for one another. Scripture will be read and typically, a short homily or message will be given; traditional portions of the service include the declaration of intention, the response of families and people, the exchange of vows, the blessing and exchange of rings (optional), the lighting of a unity candle (optional), the declaration of marriage, a blessing of the marriage, and a dismissal with blessing. The celebration of Holy Communion is also available as desired and is offered to the entire assembled congregation.

Traditions other than those mentioned may be added with approval of the pastor as long as these actions do not detract from or diminish the Christian understanding of God's presence in the marriage covenant.

Steps to planning your wedding at Grace United Methodist Church

1. Visit a worship service at one of the Grace UMC Campuses.

   If you are not a member or constituent of Grace United Methodist Church, it may be helpful for you to visit a worship service. It will give you an idea of "who we are" and "how we do things". Feel free to introduce yourself to the pastor following the service and let him or her know you are considering having your wedding at Grace Church.

2. Check on the availability of the church for your desired wedding date.

   While it is a good plan to reserve your wedding date well in advance, the church will not reserve a wedding date further than eighteen (18) months in advance. Also, when reserving your date, make sure that you clear the date of your rehearsal as well. Rehearsals are generally held the evening prior to the wedding.

3. Make your wedding deposit.

   A deposit of $75 is necessary to reserve your wedding date on the church calendar. When you make your deposit (within 10 days after receiving this document), you will fill out a form giving the basic information regarding your details. Make checks payable to Grace UMC.

4. Make contact with the pastor.

Revised June 16, 2026

All weddings conducted at Grace Church are performed by the pastor of this local church. Other clergy may be allowed to participate in the ceremony at the invitation of the pastor of Grace UMC.

5. Between six and eight months prior to your wedding, it is ***your responsibility*** to contact the pastor to set up your premarital mentoring appointments and to plan the ceremony itself. If at any point you have a question or concern about the ceremony, contact the pastor.
6. Make contact with the organist/pianist about 4-6 weeks before the wedding. Only Grace Church organists/pianists will be allowed to perform at Grace Church weddings, unless special permission is granted. If you have other special music needs, be sure to discuss them with the pastor and the organist/pianist. Elsewhere in this booklet the policies regarding wedding music are discussed at more length.
7. Bring your marriage license and your final wedding payments.

   Your final wedding payments and marriage license are ***due at the rehearsal***, according to the payment schedule on page 6 of this booklet.

Building Use

The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is usually held the night before the ceremony. It is necessary for all participants, including ushers, to attend the rehearsal. The pastor and wedding host/hostess are in charge of the rehearsal. The rehearsal will last from 45 minutes to an hour. Special arrangements can be made.

Alcoholic Beverages

There will be no alcoholic beverages of any kind permitted on the premises at any time. If alcohol is found on the premises, the wedding may be canceled. If wedding party members are found to have consumed alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or the wedding, the service may be canceled.

Standard Set-Up

The standard set up for a wedding here at Grace UMC will be done by the custodian. This includes the moving of all chairs and risers out of the chancel area, the moving back of the altar table, and the placement of the centerpiece of flooring to create a level chancel area. The kneeler will be brought in and centered in the chancel. It also includes taking down of the colored banners and placing the wedding banners in their place. Heating and Air Conditioning will be set appropriately. At West Campus, the nursery area ½ door will be exchanged for a full door and paper placed over the windows for privacy. This room is usually used by the bride to get ready.

Bringing in your own food

Please feel free to bring in small amounts of food for the pre-wedding dressing and photographs. It is important to get plenty of water and light, healthy snacks before the wedding. This helps keep persons from passing out or getting sick. We suggest small sandwiches, nuts, fruit, and vegetables. Bottled water is also suggested for ease and convenience. Food that is high in sugar or caffeine is not recommended.

Smoking

Smoking is only allowed outdoors, fifty feet from the main entrance of the building.

Rice, birdseed, flower petals, balloons, bubbles, etc…

It is not permitted for guests to throw anything as the couple exits the church (rice, birdseed, flower petals, etc…). Real petals cannot be scattered in any part of the church. Artificial flower petals may be scattered down the aisle inside the sanctuary but an additional fee of $25 will be charged due to extra clean up. Balloons cannot be released on church property for we are called to be good stewards of our environment. Bubbles may be blown outside as the couple departs.

Property damage

Any movement of sanctuary furniture must be done with the approval of the pastor or wedding host/hostess. If furniture is moved, proper care must be taken that it is not damaged, and it must be returned to its proper location. Some items of furniture may not be moved. Items may not be attached to church furniture in such a way as to damage it. If damage does occur, repair or replacement cost will be charged to the couple. During Christmas and other holidays, decorations appropriate to the season will be in the sanctuary or chapel. These will not be moved.

Video Projection System

If you wish to have a slide show presented during your wedding, special arrangements must be made at least 6 weeks prior to the wedding. A member of our video team must be present to run this show.

Reception

If you desire to have your reception at Grace United Methodist Church, we invite you to do that. A separate policy is in place for this; please see a pastor or church administrative assistant for a copy.

Photography/Videography Guidelines

Capturing your wedding on video is an important goal for most wedding couples. **It is important that you go over these photography policies with your photographers well in advance of your wedding day**. It may be helpful to show them this form before you hire them. Some photographers may not be willing to work within these restrictions and you will need to know that in advance.

Still Photography

Before the Service

The photographer will be allowed to enter and set up no more than two hours before the wedding. No pictures can be taken inside the sanctuary within a half hour before the service.

During the Service

Generally, flash photography is not permitted by anyone during the ceremony except for the processional and recessional. Only natural light photography is permitted. During the ceremony, flash photography may be used sparingly as the professional photographer sees fit. Still photographers must remain off the chancel area and are not permitted in the front of the congregation during the ceremony. There are no exceptions. The ceremony begins with the seating of the parents. Movement up and down the aisles will not be permitted or tolerated at any time except as noted.

After the Service

Following the service, the photographer has one hour to complete all additional photographs desired. If the desire is to have the pastor in the pictures, he or she must be notified ahead of time and those pictures must be taken within 15 minutes after the service.

Videotaping

All video cameras except one must be placed behind the last row of chairs. Placement of 1 unmanned video camera is permitted in the chancel area. It must be placed to the side and placement approved by the pastor or wedding host/hostess and it must be started by remote control. There is no one allowed in the chancel after a ½ hour before the service begins.

Music Guidelines

Selection of music and musicians

To oversee the appropriateness of the music, all musical selections and musicians for your wedding ceremony need the approval of the organist/pianist and/or pastor. We will work with you to help you arrange any special musicians that you wish to add to the organist/pianist of Grace Church. Arrangements for payment of these additional musicians will be the bride and groom's responsibility.

Prerecorded Music

Prerecorded music of any type is permitted in consultation with both the pastor and the organist/pianist. If prerecorded music is to be used, a member of our sound team will need to be at the wedding to run the sound system.

Flowers and Decorations

Flowers can be a wonderful addition to any wedding. When considering which florist to contact for your wedding flowers, here are the basic guidelines.

Flower Placement

Flowers may be placed on the Altar Table in our sanctuaries. The Grace Church candles and Bible must remain on the table. Also, we have two small side pillars that may have flowers placed on them.

Chair Decorations

Decorations may be placed onto the sanctuary chairs with the use of pins and/or ribbons (or the like). The decorations can in no way damage the chairs or furniture.

Candles

If you desire you may use candelabras, but no-drip candles must be used in the candelabra.

Aisle Runner

If you wish to have an aisle runner for your wedding, it needs to be at least 75 feet in length and securely fastened to the floor.

Kneeler

The kneeler is usually used in the service. If you wish to decorate it, please arrange to see it first. Since it is wood, only a non-marking hangar may be used.

Pastoral Policies

It is an honor and privilege for the pastor appointed to serve this church to officiate over ceremonies of Christian marriage. In United Methodist tradition, marriage ceremonies are considered worship services. Such services are performed under the authority of the current *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, *The Book of Worship of the United Methodist Church*, the laws of the State of Michigan, and the wedding policies of this congregation. Wedding couples need not be members of Grace United Methodist Church, but should understand that ceremonies of Christian marriage are conducted as integral parts of our faith and belief of this denomination and with due respect of the traditions and values of the Christian faith. In some cases, it may be advisable for couples to seek civil rather than religious officials.

Authority of the Pastor

The pastor conducting a service of Christian marriage in this church shall have responsibility and authority to determine whether a ceremony is appropriate as well as the content and nature of the service (see *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2004, paragraph 340 (1)).

Before a ceremony is confirmed on the congregation's calendar, the approval of the pastor, as well as the approval of the building schedule, and payment of the appropriate deposits is necessary.

Pre-Marriage Mentoring

The pastor may conduct services after appropriate counsel with both the prospective bride and groom (see *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2016, paragraph 340 (1)). Mentoring begins with an introductory meeting, continues with the use of an inventory and is followed by four to six one-hour sessions. Sessions involve both discussion of the nature and understanding of Christian marriage and the details of the anticipated ceremony.

Responsibilities for the Ceremony

Under normal circumstances, the pastor conducting the ceremony along with the wedding host/hostess will conduct the wedding rehearsal. The pastor will conduct the ceremony and sign all official wedding documents.

As time is available, the pastor may attend the rehearsal dinner or the reception at prior invitation of the wedding couple.

Asking for Other Clergy

There are times that the wedding couple would like an additional clergy member to assist in the service. The pastor of Grace Church may be approached about inviting another pastor to assist in the service. The pastor must agree to this request before a letter of invitation will be issued.

It is not permitted for another pastor to perform the service of Christian Marriage here at Grace Church without the appointed pastor's permission. Copies of invitations to conduct or assist in services shall be included in the files retained by the congregation for the scheduled ceremony.

Wedding Host/Hostess

Here at Grace United Methodist Church we have a group of people trained as our wedding hosts and hostesses. One of these persons will be onsite during both the rehearsal and the wedding to help facilitate all of the details involved in the wedding. They will be available to help with minor, emergency repairs; flower placement; runner placement (if being used); making sure the processional is lined up correctly and all important persons are seated correctly; etc.

Wedding Fees

A $75 deposit is required to reserve your date on the calendar. This deposit is a payment on the facility use charge. The following individual checks are due at the rehearsal. Please get names for the checks from the Pastor:

Members of Grace United Methodist Church		**Needed?**
Use of sanctuary and two private dressing rooms	$75	
Grace Café (Fellowship Hall) & Kitchen	$100	
Key Deposit (If key is needed)	$25	
Pastor's Honorarium Includes counseling sessions and wedding	$250	
Organist/Pianist Includes one rehearsal and wedding (prelude, processional, recessional)	$150	
Audio/Visual Team Member	$40	
Custodian	$75	
Wedding Host/Hostess	$75	
Prepare and Enrich Inventory	$35	
Total	**$825**	

Non-Members		**Needed?**
Use of sanctuary and two private dressing rooms	$125	
Grace Café (Fellowship Hall) & Kitchen	$150	
Key Deposit (If key is needed)	$25	
Pastor's Honorarium Includes counseling sessions and wedding	$250	
Organist/Pianist Includes one rehearsal and wedding (prelude, processional, recessional)	$150	
Audio/Visual Team Member	$40	
Custodian	$75	
Wedding Host/Hostess	$75	
Prepare and Enrich Inventory	$35	
Total	**$925**	

Additional Fees – Members & Non-Members		**Needed?**
Organist/Pianist fee for additional rehearsal	$25 (per half-hour)	☐
Bulletin/Worship Folder Includes cost of basic layout, copying, and available stock	$30	☐
Additional clean-up fee for petal scattering	$25	☐