

Athens Christian
Church
Wedding
Handbook



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# YOUR WEDDING AT ATHENS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your upcoming marriage. The days and months ahead of you will be filled with decisions, joys, and maybe a few tears as you plan one of the most important days of your lives: **YOUR WEDDING DAY.** It is our desire to be as much help as we can to you and your families. That's why this handbook has been designed for you. It will help guide you and answer questions that may come up during the planning of your wedding.



# GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU AND YOUR MARRIAGE

We would like to encourage you to begin your marriage by making Christ the head of your household. It has been said, "The family that worships together, stays together," and we firmly believe this. We also believe a home that has been established with Christ at the head will result in a long-lasting positive relationship for you.

In Genesis 2, God gave Eve to Adam as his wife and so marriage was the first event in their life together. Other verses in the Bible such as Proverbs 18:22; Hebrews 13:4; I Corinthians 7:10-11; Ephesians 5:22-33; (and many more) speak about God's plan for marriage. Like Adam & Eve, God desires your marriage to last for your entire lifetime. Your marriage will be a time of learning and growing and can be a wonderful life experience for both of you, yet it will not become this without commitment, hard work, and a love like the one described in I Corinthians 13.

God's plan for you also includes a personal relationship with him. Our desire is not to be a wedding chapel where people come into our building and then never return, but it is to be a home and family for you in God's design for the church. If you do not regularly attend somewhere else, we would like you to consider being a part of our church family. The minister who is working with you

for your wedding would be happy to answer any questions you might have about the church, and its Savior, Jesus Christ. We believe our relationships with God, our Savior Jesus, and with other Christians living in this area are so important, we have built a building in order to gather and worship Him as a church.

Concerning marriage, we understand the Bible clearly indicates Biblical Holy Matrimony to be solely between one man and one woman. Therefore, Athens Christian Church facilities shall not be utilized to perform any same-sex unions or ceremonies of any kind, including civil unions. Nor will Athens Christian Church staff members be available to perform any same-sex unions or ceremonies of any kind, including civil unions. (Gen. 2:24, Mark 10:5-9)

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is important when planning a wedding everyone knows what they are responsible for, to ensure everything necessary will be done in a timely fashion. We feel it is important you know what you can expect from us as a church and what we expect from you as the wedding party.

Athens Christian Church will provide the following things when you choose to be married here at our church:

- A clean and comfortable setting for your wedding.
- A minister who will be able to give advice in regards to ceremony planning and will lead your ceremony in a professional manner.
- Premarital counseling by a minister. If one of our ministers is not available, we will give you suggestions of other counselors. (Any fees charged by outside counselors/ministers will be the couple's responsibility.)
- Wedding Assistant volunteers who will help both the minister and wedding party in certain and definable ways. (See pages 11 & 12)
- Custodians who will vacuum, clean bathrooms, windows, and necessary cleaning of the building.

- Cooperation with you to accommodate a reasonable schedule for the rehearsal, wedding, decorating, and clean up after the wedding that will be beneficial to both parties.
- A clear understanding of all responsibilities of the church and the wedding party so you will know exactly what you can expect of us and what we expect of you.

Athens Christian Church will expect the following things of every couple who will be married at our church.

- The wedding party and guests will respect the church, its property, its schedule, its staff, and its volunteers with the utmost courtesy.
- All fees will be paid at the times specified. Any nonpayments will jeopardize the reservation of the church building by the wedding party.
- All premarital counseling will be completed 2 months prior to the wedding date. It will be in your best interest to complete this step as soon as possible so adequate time can be devoted to your wedding planning with the minister.
- All decorations will be removed from the church, furniture will be returned to its proper place, any food or trash will be properly disposed of in trash cans, and the building will be left in good order. This must be done after the ceremony is finished (and your pictures have been taken), and before you leave to go to your reception. The church will not be liable for any rented decorations left in the church when the wedding party leaves the building after the ceremony.
- Complete compliance with our building usage policy stated immediately following this section.

### **BUILDING USAGE REQUIREMENTS**

As with any organization, we have implemented a building usage policy for those who will be using our building for a wedding ceremony. All of these requirements are based on one principle: **RESPECT**. As a church, we are trying to do everything in such a way that we are pleasing to God. We are asking you to do the very same thing for the period of time you are using our building. While your wedding will only be here on one day of your lifetime, our ministry to this community is an ongoing process. We have been serving the community since 1842 and plan to continue for years to come. How you, your wedding party, and guests conduct themselves is a direct reflection on our church. Paying for the use of the church building does not give anyone permission to do anything they desire. This is true for weddings at the church also. We do not anticipate having problems with any wedding, in fact almost all of the weddings we have hosted over the years have been very positive for both the church and the couple. However, because of a few incidents in the past, we feel that for your protection and ours, we need to define each party's roles and responsibilities in the form of a contract.

The items included in the contract, which you will sign and abide by, are intended to be a general list of what the church and the wedding party will do, so your ceremony can be hosted here at Athens Christian Church. We reserve the right to take any necessary action to insure these requirements are followed. This includes, but is not limited to, retaining your entire deposit.

In using our facilities, we ask you abide by all the rules which are written throughout this handbook. If you have any questions about any of them, please do not hesitate to ask us. We want your wedding to be very special and don't want anything to distract from this time.

- 1. Prior arrangements must be made with the minister and/ or wedding assistants regarding unlocking/locking of all facilities for rehearsal and/or wedding ceremony and reception preparations.
- 2. Alcoholic beverages are **NOT** allowed anywhere on church property for purposes of consumption or distribution, *including the parking lot*.
- 3. Smoking is **NOT** permitted anywhere inside the church building.
- 4. The use of rice and birdseed to shower the couple is prohibited.
- 5. The wedding party is responsible for setup, cleanup, and otherwise restoring the church facilities to its original status. This includes removing any decorations used for the wedding and reset classrooms used for changing to the way you found them. The same is true of the Family Life Center area (if a reception is held here). The exception to this rule is cleaning that would be done by our custodial staff such as vacuuming, cleaning bathrooms, mopping, taking the trash to the dumpster, and similar activities.
- 6. Any damage to the building or property or missing items used by the wedding party will be paid for by the bride and groom by deducting the amount of the damage from the deposit. Any damage done by the bride and groom (or their guests) that exceeds the dollar amount of the deposit will be paid by the bride and groom. Any property damage not paid for will be resolved through appropriate channels and actions. Athens Christian Church will not be responsible for any items left in the building by you after you have left following the ceremony.

NON-COMPLIANCE WITH ANY OF THESE REQUIREMENTS WILL RESULT IN THE FORFEITURE OF PART OR ALL OF YOUR DEPOSIT. As you plan your wedding, you will need to pay for many things. There are several things that you will need to pay for in relation to use of the church, and for those who are participating in the ceremony. We do charge a set fee for use of certain areas of the building. The following fees are determined by the church leadership and not by the ministers. These fees apply to every wedding that will be officiated at Athens Christian Church. For those who plan to have their wedding at our church, you will need to do the following:

- All FEES must be paid in full before your wedding is reserved on our church calendar. (Any fees not used, such as a soloist or musician will be refunded with your deposit.)
- All dates for the wedding and rehearsal must be cleared with the church and the officiating minister's calendar BEFORE being announced.
- The building can be reserved <u>only</u> for the day of the rehearsal <u>and</u> the wedding day. Please check with the church office several days in advance of your wedding day. If there are no additional activities scheduled for the evening of your rehearsal day, you may begin decorating the Worship Center at that time. Your minister or wedding assistants will go over a checklist so we will know what your needs and expectations are.

## **FEES FOR BUILDING USAGE**

- \$250 DEPOSIT which will be deposited into our bank account and will be returned to you if all areas of the contract are adhered to. This DEPOSIT (along with all other fees) must be paid when the contract is returned to the church office and before we will put your date on the calendar. It will be deposited when it is received. After your wedding is over, this DEPOSIT will be returned by mail one week later, if all areas of the contract are adhered to. If the deposit is retained by us (part or all of your deposit may be retained), we will send a letter stating the reason it was retained.
- The FEE for use of the Worship Center for the ceremony is \$250 for regular attending congregants and their immediate family members (children, grandchildren or great grandchildren), and \$500 for those who do not attend ACC on a regular basis. (Note: Regular attending congregants are defined as attending ACC on a regular basis for a period of one year). The use of designated dressing rooms, the utilities, and custodial services are included in this fee. This FEE must be paid to hold the date and returned with the contract. It will be deposited into our account when it is received. The drums and piano on the stage, as well as, the chairs in the Worship Center, are not permitted to be moved for the ceremony.
- The **FEE** for the use of the Family Life Center for receptions and/or rehearsal dinners is \$150 for regular attending congregants and their immediate family members (see above), and \$300 for those who do not attend ACC on a regular basis. (Note: Regular attending congregants are defined as attending ACC on a regular basis for a period of one year). This **FEE** must be paid to hold the date and returned with the contract. It will be deposited into our account when it is received. DJ's, dancing, or inappropriate music are not permitted in the Family Life Center.

## **MINISTERS, MUSICIANS AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

- There is a FEE of \$200 payable to the minister. This takes into account the hours he/she will spend with you in planning your wedding ceremony, rehearsal and the wedding itself. Remember, you are paying a professional for his/her time.
- The church will provide musicians, soloists and sound technicians. Musicians, soloists, and sound technicians are not employees of the church. Please contact them to discuss your music and sound needs. (Fees: Sound/\$50, Musician/\$120, Soloist/\$50.) Our sound technicians must be used. If you are providing your own musicians and/or soloist, fees will be returned following the wedding with your deposit.
- Creating a slide show for projection during the ceremony is the responsibility of the Bride and Groom. Slide shows for projection during the ceremony must be compatible with the audio/visual equipment, computer equipment, and software at the church. MP4 videos work best. All music and/or slides shown during the ceremony must be "Church Appropriate."

<u>SPECIAL NOTE</u>: The contract in this handbook is very important. It must be read, signed, and returned (along with all fees) at the time you want your wedding and rehearsal dates put on the church calendar. If you do not do this, the building is not considered reserved.

#### **SETTING THE DATE**

Deciding on a date and getting the church building reserved for your day is the first thing that should be done when planning your wedding. Our ministers will be happy to work with the date you have decided upon if they are available. Please be sure the date you choose is open for the officiating minister before you reserve the building. There are many other events for which our building is used, so we encourage couples who desire to be married here to reserve the church as soon as you determine a preferred day for your wedding. We cannot confirm your date until the contract (which is enclosed in this handbook) is filled out, signed, and returned, along with a check for the required fees. At that time we will put your wedding rehearsal, wedding, and reception (if at the church) on our church calendar. Once your wedding is on the church calendar, it will not be moved by us. If there is a conflict with your rehearsal time, we would not change it except in extenuating circumstances and with your permission.

### **PREMARITAL COUNSELING**

Anyone married in our church or married by our ministers are required to participate in counseling sessions prior to the wedding. These sessions will be conducted by one of our ministers and will be held at the church at the arranged time. There will be a minimum of four (4), one hour sessions covering various aspects of married life and God's direction to married couples. If circumstances dictate, we may approve of another qualified counseling program with a qualified minister/counselor. (Any fees charged by outside counselors or ministers will be the bride and groom's responsibility.) Your premarital counseling is included in your fee if provided by one of our ministers, with the exception of the cost of your books. Written notification of completed counseling is to be made to the officiating minister before the wedding can be performed.

We strongly encourage couples, who plan to be married by our ministers, to complete this step as early as possible. At a bare minimum, you must complete this two (2) months before your wedding. We, like you, often have busy schedules and this will insure your wedding planning will be done in a timely manner.

We reserve the privilege to refuse to perform your wedding ceremony at the end of the counseling sessions, if the minister or counselor feels you should not be married at this time. *Therefore, all counseling must be completed at least two (2) months before your wedding date, and before you send out any invitations.* It is your responsibility to assure the counseling is completed in a timely fashion.

Other meetings with the minister will be necessary to plan the details of the wedding ceremony. Appointments for these meetings may be made only after your counseling is completed and at the minister's convenience. The counselor will contact the minister who will be performing the wedding to let him know you have completed your counseling.

### PLANNING THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Planning the ceremony is a very important step to your wedding. You will have to answer questions like "Who do I want to have in my wedding party?" "Will we use children as flower girl and ring bearer?" "When will everyone enter and in what order?" These and many other questions will have to be answered as you plan your wedding day.

After your counseling sessions are complete, the officiating minister will meet with you, and work to get answers for many of these questions and possibly ask questions you may not have considered. His experience will be able to give guidance you may need in order to address all the issues that will need to be settled as you near your wedding day. He will suggest an order for the ceremony, but will be working with you to personalize your special day and include what you desire for your ceremony.

He will also be striving to make this a time that honors God and God's design and purpose for marriage. You will need to discuss issues with him such as photography, when to sign the license (information on how to obtain the license is discussed later), and other such issues other than the ceremony itself. The minister will have complete charge of the rehearsal and ceremony to insure everything is done professionally. He will guide you and your family in this time so your ceremony may be as memorable as possible.

#### **OUR WEDDING ASSISTANTS**

Our wedding assistants are volunteers from our church who will help our ministers with various aspects of your wedding. They will also be helping you with some areas of the wedding as well. The wedding assistants will be providing help in the following areas:

- They will provide guidance on how items on the stage can be removed for the ceremony and getting them put back in place after the ceremony. If a table is desired in the foyer for a guest book or wedding gifts, they will help with this also.
- They will work with the minister in regards to dressing rooms for the wedding party.
- They will coordinate making sure the church building is open and available to the wedding party for decorating, rehearsal, and the day of the ceremony.
- They will assist the minister with the rehearsal and wedding as he needs them to do so. This may include helping the wedding party enter at the proper time, assisting the ushers with the candle lighters, and other similar things which will help your wedding go more smoothly.

- If your reception will be held at the church, they will help you determine how you can best use the space available to you in the Family Life Center, and where additional items can be found or stored. You will be responsible for the set up of your reception and the resetting of the Family Life Center (for use on Sunday morning). We will provide a diagram to help guide you in this process. We suggest you have someone coordinate this for you who is in your family or wedding party.
- They will contact the custodian after the wedding is over and have checked that everything is put back in its proper place. If you have a question about where something should be placed, they will be able to assist you.

#### **HELPFUL HINTS**

Based on our past experience in hosting weddings at our church, we would like to share some very useful pieces of information to help in your planning.

### **Where to Dress**

The bride and her attendants may use room #105 and the west restroom for their dressing areas. The groom and his attendants may use room #220-221 and the east restroom. You will be shown these rooms when you meet with the minister.

# **Seating Capacity**

Our Worship Center has a seating capacity of 265 people. This excludes the front rows (8), which traditionally are not used in a wedding. In planning how many you will invite based upon this figure, please remember several rows in the front will be reserved for family members.

# **Seating Guests**

One of the customs in seating people at a wedding has been to seat friends and family of the bride on one side, and friends and family of the groom on the other side. Please keep in mind if your groom-to-be or your bride-to-be is coming from another town or state, there may not be as many of his/her family and friends at the wedding as yours. If this is the case, then in order to have a balanced look, it might be best to forego the above tradition and seat guests on both sides.

You will also need to plan how your family members will be seated. This will depend on how many members of your family will be present and who they are. The minister will help you with a suggested seating arrangement for family before the rehearsal and you should plan to mark the rows with a bow (or something similar) so that all will know those seats are reserved. You should also plan to leave the front row open so that the wedding party, singers, and others will have plenty of room to move to their places.

## **Miscellaneous**

 • If you choose to use an aisle runner for your ceremony, you will need one that is 52.5 feet long. The church will not be responsible for accidents which are a result of your decision to use an aisle runner. Please have your ushers assist people who may have difficulty walking on it, or remove it as soon as possible after the ceremony.

- The church has two brass-toned candle lighters. If you plan to use candles, you will not need to rent the lighters. The church also has two wooden candelabras (each holding seven candles that measure 3/4" in diameter) you may use. Also available to you is a white decorative mailbox which you may place in the foyer in which guests may leave cards.
- You must buy and use only **dripless candles**.

# **The Receiving Line**

- A simple receiving line can be formed just outside the front Worship Center doors, so the wedding party may greet guests on their way out or on their way to the reception in the Family Life Center.
- A more personal touch may be for the bride and groom to come back into the Worship Center following the recessional to dismiss the rows, one by one, greeting each person who attended the wedding. The guests can then go to the reception, sit, and visit while pictures are being taken.

# **Wedding Photography**

Wedding photographs are important mementos of this special occasion. We encourage photographs to be taken before and after the ceremony. We do have two important guidelines for photography during the service itself.

- During the service itself, we ask that no flash
  photographs be taken. The sharp flashes of light create a
  very disturbing influence and destroy much of the dignity
  of the service.
- The ceremony may be videotaped. We suggest that the person videotaping the ceremony arrive early and choose a place which is out of the way of the guests and the wedding party, but where he/she can still get a good view.

#### THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

For those being married at the church building in Athens, your marriage license **must** be obtained at the **Menard** County Clerk's office, located at the Menard County Courthouse on the square in Petersburg (102 South 7<sup>th</sup>; 632-2415). It is **very important** you obtain your marriage license in Petersburg, even if you live in a county other than Menard.

- The cost of the license is \$50.
- The license is valid for 60 days, with a 1-day waiting period.
- You will need to provide the Clerk's office with information about your parents (state of birth, mother's maiden name & address, and father's name & address).
- You will need to provide the Clerk's office with information about any previous marriages, if applicable.

If you have any questions about obtaining a license in Menard County, please call the County Clerk's office and they will be happy to assist you.

If we are performing your wedding at a location other than Athens Christian Church (if it will be outside of Menard County), you will need to contact the local government offices to find out where to obtain your marriage license.

The minister will let you know when he will need the license, so it can be properly filled out by him. You will need to sign the license after your wedding ceremony before you go to your reception.

We hope all this information has been helpful. We look forward to the opportunity of assisting you at this special time in your life. If you have any questions about this information, please call our church office (636-8463).

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. . .

(I Corinthians 13:4-8)

