

## **YOUR WEDDING AT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF HADLEY**

**Congratulations!** The parishioners of First Congregational Church of Hadley (FCCH) rejoice with you as you anticipate your wedding day. A wedding is a joyful and sacred event, and FCCH welcomes your interest in being married in the sanctuary of this church. A wedding is a deeply personal event shared between two people, and it should be planned carefully to reflect the covenant you are creating. We are here to help you make your wedding—and, more importantly, your marriage—a true blessing in your life.

These pages have been prepared to assist you in the details of your planning, and to inform you of policies at FCCH. It is understood that choosing to have your wedding here indicates agreement of all the items addressed below.

**Worship.** Having chosen to celebrate your marriage in a church, your wedding will be a worship service and will reflect God’s presence in your wedding and in your marriage. If you do not worship at FCCH regularly, we invite you to do so. Worshipping together will make both your wedding ceremony and your marriage deeper expressions of your faith. Worshipping with us will also help you to know your celebrant and this community.

**Setting the Date and Time.** As soon as you have a date in mind, check with the administrative assistant in the church office at [rooster@firstchurchhadley.com](mailto:rooster@firstchurchhadley.com) to be sure that the church and pastor’s calendars are clear. We require a \$200 deposit to hold the date.

**Pre-Marital Conferences.** The most important preparation for marriage takes place in your hearts and minds. To help this happen, the pastor normally meets with you four times before the wedding. During these sessions you will discuss your relationship, share your views on marriage, plan the ceremony, and develop a relationship with the pastor who will be a resource in the future. It is recommended these sessions occur over a period of three to six months. Thus, you are invited to contact the church office or the pastor as soon as you have decided to get married, even if a date has not been set. Please contact the Rev. Thomas Hawkins at [revthomashawkins@gmail.com](mailto:revthomashawkins@gmail.com) to set up a time to meet.

**The Wedding Service.** The pastor of FCCH officiates at all services held in our sanctuary. We are glad to welcome other clergy (ministers, priests, rabbis) to participate in your service. Please inform the pastor of these desires at the first meeting. If you would like to have a sole celebrant other than our pastor, please contact the FCCH pastor to discuss—the decision is at the pastor’s discretion.

The pastor will work closely with you on the content of your wedding to make sure the service reflects your relationship as well as the standards of the law and this church. Some couples choose to write some or all of their service, in consultation with the pastor.

**Church Musician.** Please contact the FCCH Director of Music, Toni Wilcox, at (413) 422-1034 or [tonilbses@live.com](mailto:tonilbses@live.com), as soon as your date has been set. The music director will gladly consult with you regarding music selections, and can be a helpful resource in finding soloists or special instrumentalists. If you choose someone else to play the organ or piano at your wedding, please contact our music director to discuss—our church musician has “first refusal” for all services and the decision is at the music director’s discretion.

**Decorating the Sanctuary.** You are welcome to place candles and/or flowers on the altar. Unity candles and holders are welcome, please provide your own. No other candles are allowed in the sanctuary with the exception of battery-operated candles. You can use any florist you like, but we can recommend a florist who is familiar with the church. Any decorations you bring must be taken with you after the ceremony, or they will be discarded.

**Photography/Videography.** The sanctuary is a place of worship, and your wedding is a service of worship. Thus, while the pastor will try to accommodate your wishes, guidelines must be followed in regard to photography and videography. **Most notable is that the photographer/videographer is not permitted to stand in the aisle during the processional; you are responsible for communicating this to your photographer.** The photographer/videographer is welcome to make use of the balcony as it provides a good vantage point. Have your photographer/videographer contact the pastor in advance concerning other guidelines. Flash photography is fine, unless you desire otherwise.

**Rehearsal.** A rehearsal is recommended for all weddings and is normally scheduled a day or two before the ceremony. The date and time of the rehearsal will be set in your first meeting with the pastor. All participants in your wedding (parents, readers, etc.) should be present for the rehearsal, which lasts approximately one hour.

**Invitations.** We recommend using the following church address on your printed invitations: First Congregational Church of Hadley, 102 Middle Street, Hadley, MA 01035.

**Programs.** Wedding programs are not only mementos, but also a way to thank your guests, provide directions to the reception, and describe the participants in your wedding. We will create a wedding program at a nominal cost. If you choose to create your own program, it must be reviewed with the pastor.

**Parking.** Parking is limited at FCCH and is shared with the Town Hall. Parking is also available across the street and along Middle Street.

### **OTHER DETAILS**

**Capacity.** The sanctuary seats approximately 250.

**Accessibility.** The FCCH sanctuary and bathrooms are handicap accessible. The only barriers are the steps up to the pulpit and altar.

**Rice.** Please do not include the throwing of rice or paper/plastic confetti at your wedding. Please use birdseed or bubbles, and both are to be used outside the church only.

**Sound.** We have a sound system available for weddings and the organist is in charge of turning it on and off.

**Fees.** Please contact the church’s administrative assistant, for this information at [rooster@firstchurchhadley.com](mailto:rooster@firstchurchhadley.com) or (413) 584-4117. If for some reason after meeting with the pastor for the first time, you decide to cancel the wedding, the \$200 deposit is refundable.

**Wedding Package.** Active Member Fee \$675; Non-member Fee \$900  
These fees include: four pre-marital sessions with the pastor, the organist, the custodian, the office administrative assistant, and the use of the sanctuary and bathrooms. The balance of the fees is due at the rehearsal. Please make the check payable to the First Congregational Church of Hadley.

**Change in Plans.** If your plans undergo any change, please let us know immediately. Once again, we thank you for including FCCH in your wedding plans. Please feel free to call or email the church office at [rooster@firstchurchhadley.com](mailto:rooster@firstchurchhadley.com) with any further questions. Office hours are Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., or you may leave a message on voicemail at 413-584-4117.

**Marriage Certificate.** The church will provide you with a certificate of marriage after the ceremony.

**Marriage License.** Couples planning to marry in Massachusetts have to meet certain legal requirements beforehand. These are subject to change and can vary from community to community. Please call your town or city to make sure you have everything necessary for when you apply for the license. Allow plenty of time in getting the license before the wedding. The license must be received on the day of the rehearsal so that it can be signed by the pastor and returned to you on the day of the wedding. If it is not received by then, the wedding cannot be performed.

**I have read and agree to the above.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date & time of wedding: \_\_\_\_\_