



VESTAVIA HILLS
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Wedding Polices & Guidelines

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Weddings at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church

We, at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church, are happy that you are having your wedding here. The church is the most appropriate place for the marriage of Christians. It is a fitting place for taking the vows of “those whom God hath joined together.”

A church wedding is a service of worship and consecration - a religious ceremony—and all preparations should be made with this in mind.

The Clergy and the Church Council have authorized the publication of the following regulations for the use of church facilities for the wedding ceremony and related functions.

General Rules and Guidelines

Members in good standing of the church and their immediate families will be given priority use of the church. Church members should have been members at least one year prior to requesting a date for the wedding.

Non-member grandchildren of current members may have the privilege of scheduling their wedding at VHUMC outside the three-month non-member window, however, non-member fees will apply.

Non-members may not schedule weddings prior to three months before the requested wedding date.

The wedding ceremony will be a United Methodist ceremony from the *Book of Worship*. A *VHUMC staff minister selected by the senior pastor will officiate at all ceremonies.*

If you would like a guest minister of another denomination or United Methodist minister who is not currently on the staff of VHUMC to assist in the wedding, you must secure the approval of the Senior Pastor to make your request. Our pastor will decide if this is possible and, if approved, will issue the appropriate written invitation to the visiting minister.

Due to limited staff and facilities, we can allow only one wedding per weekend.

Dates and Times Excluded: No formal weddings may be scheduled during Holy Week, Charge Conference, Annual Conference meeting weekend, Vacation Bible Camp weekend or on staff holidays or holiday weekends as set by the Pastor Parish Relations Committee (New Year’s Eve/Day, Martin Luther King’s Birthday, Palm Sunday weekend, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the Day after Christmas).

VHUMC requires pre-marital counseling sessions with the bride and groom. These sessions must be scheduled by contacting the VHUMC pastor in charge of the service. **Please contact the pastor as soon as possible for scheduling.**

General Rules and Guidelines Continued

It is the policy of VHUMC to assign a staff Wedding Director for all weddings. This person will work with the church to make sure that the church rules and regulations are followed, unlock buildings and handle lighting and sound requirements, assist the minister where needed, and conduct rehearsals and wedding day activities. A fee is charged for these services. **Outside wedding planners/coordinators must meet with the VHUMC Wedding Director and adhere to church policy. They must defer to the staff wedding director concerning all issues.**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs on church premises is strictly forbidden.

Smoking is not permitted in the church or on church grounds.

We do not store wedding dresses or wedding apparel at the church. VHUMC is not responsible for any stolen articles or equipment. All personal belongings are the responsibility of the wedding party.

Fixtures, furniture and seasonal decorations (the pulpits, piano, Chrismon tree, Advent wreaths, poinsettias and Easter lilies) may not be moved.

The church must be reimbursed at replacement cost for any breakage and/or damage to any church equipment or facilities. A \$200 refundable security deposit is required; security deposit will be refunded no later than two weeks after the wedding provided there has been no damage.

Refreshments may not be taken into the Sanctuary, Chapel, Bride's Room or Choir Suite.

Weddings on Saturday may not be scheduled any later than 6:00 p.m.

Wedding receptions in the Church Parlor or the Fellowship Hall must end by 9 p.m. to allow time to clean and set-up the rooms for use on Sunday. Parking lots must be vacated by 9:30 p.m. to avoid disturbing our neighbors.

The wedding date will be reserved on the church calendar only upon receipt of a completed and signed "Wedding Information Form," \$200 non-refundable reservation deposit and \$250 refundable security deposit. The reservation deposit will be applied toward wedding fees.

All fees are due in the church office one month prior to the wedding date. Please indicate "Wedding Fee" on the check to ensure correct disbursements are made.

The marriage license should be given to the minister at the rehearsal.

Note: The VHUMC pastor, wedding director and organist must be notified of rehearsal and wedding time changes. Please send a copy of the rehearsal and wedding invitations for our files.

The Role of the Minister

A minister of Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church will officiate at the wedding ceremony. The Senior Pastor will assign a staff pastor to officiate based on schedule and availability. Wedding ceremonies will be United Methodist ceremonies and the Service of Christian Marriage from the United Methodist Book of Worship will be used. There will be no exceptions.

Only ministers currently serving on the VHUMC staff can officiate weddings at VHUMC. If you would like a guest minister to assist in the wedding, you must secure the approval of the Senior Pastor (see General Guidelines). Upon approval, the Senior Pastor will issue the invitation.

Non-United Methodist guest pastors may assist in the ceremony by the invitation of the VHUMC minister, however the VHUMC minister will conduct the major parts of the ceremony and will have final approval on all parts of the service, including vows, scripture and homily.

Pre-marital conferences are ordinarily scheduled between the VHUMC minister who will officiate at the service or a designated counselor. These conferences will enable the minister to discuss the nature of Christian marriage, explore the marriage expectations of the couple and examine the wedding service. The bride and/or groom must contact the minister to schedule counseling sessions.

The honorarium (\$100-500 suggested amount) is to be handled between the groom (or his best man) and the minister(s).

In the event of an out-of-town wedding, the wedding party will reimburse the pastor performing the wedding for customary expenses (travel, lodging and meals).

Facilities

Every effort will be made to arrange for the wedding date and time you prefer, however church-wide use of the facilities must take precedence.

- Sanctuary: Seats 1,000
 - Chapel: Seats 125
 - Parlor: Depends upon set-up/use
 - Fellowship Hall Reception: Depends upon set-up, approximately 350 (Note: Fellowship Hall may not be available if previously booked with another event).
- The Bride's Room is available for Sanctuary and Chapel weddings. It is adjacent to the Narthex of the Sanctuary. Bridesmaids may use the women's dressing room in the Choir Suite. Groomsmen may use the men's dressing room in the Choir Suite.

Catering is available for receptions in the Parlor and Fellowship Hall. The Church catering service is available. Outside contractors are permitted, but must be approved. but may not use the commercial kitchen because of health regulations.

Many bridal parties like to have refreshments available the day of the wedding. The parlor may be reserved for this purpose. Refreshments may not be taken into the Sanctuary, Chapel, Bride's Room (special arrangements may be made for the bride only) or Choir Suite.

Member Fees*

Facility fees are necessary in order to properly prepare, clean, heat or cool, etc. A \$200 deposit is required to reserve the facilities. The deposit will be applied toward applicable fees. A \$250 refundable security is also required.

For the purpose of definition, “Members” are defined as church members and their immediate families who have been members at least one year. “Non-members” are persons who have been members of VHUMC for less than one year and other persons who are not current members of the congregation of VHUMC. Non-member grandchildren of members of VHUMC may schedule weddings outside the regular three-month window, however, they will pay non-member fees.

Because of the demand for our facilities, any cancellation will forfeit the reservation deposit. Checks should be made payable to Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church and balance is due one month prior to wedding date.

Wedding Music

Music is an effective part of the wedding ceremony. It creates an atmosphere of reverence as the guests arrive and contributes to the worship experience for participants.

The selection of music must be appropriate to a service of worship. The wedding ceremony is a sacred service as well as an act of corporate worship. Therefore, only music which conforms to standards of dignity and is theologically appropriate may be used.

Organ music is recommended for the wedding ceremony, although instrumental solos using harp, trumpet, violin or flute are acceptable. Vocalists may be used at appropriate times in the ceremony.

Secular and popular music is not permitted, nor is any type of pre-recorded or taped music allowed in the wedding service. *The Faith We Sing*, the supplement to *The United Methodist Hymnal*, includes music conducive to contemporary ceremonies in the Sanctuary.

A church organ is a highly complex musical instrument designed for a specific church installation. If you wish to use an organist in the Sanctuary, the church organist will be happy to assist you. The organist will also assist you in selecting music and will be available to direct the vocalists and musicians at your rehearsal and wedding ceremony.

If you choose not to use an organist or pianist, all music selections in the wedding ceremony, including soloist music, must be approved by the VHUMC Director of Music in conjunction with the senior pastor. Please call the church office to discuss your music selections with the director no less than six weeks prior to the ceremony. **Please do not print your programs before music selections have been approved.**

Financial arrangements with the organist, pianist and contracted vocalists and musicians are the responsibility of the wedding party. The fee for the organist (or pianist) is included in “Facilities and Fees” and must be paid to VHUMC with your other fees one month prior to the ceremony.

NOTE:

The piano may not be moved for any reason.

If additional musicians such as string quartets are used, they must be located in the Choir Loft.

Floral and Decorating Policies

The following policies have been found to be practical and useful. They are given for your guidance to assure that the church and its furnishings will not be defaced or damaged and that the church can be easily prepared for the next function or service. Candles and greenery used during the wedding ceremony are more than decorations; they are Christian symbols.

The church is available for decorating at 9 a.m. on the day of the wedding.

Access from the pews to the aisles must remain open.

The pulpits and piano may not be moved under any circumstances.

No flowers or decorations of any sort may be hung from or placed on the wooden half wall behind the altar or on the railing of the choir loft. Decorations or flowers may not be attached to exterior walls or doors.

Candles must be drip-less or oil-burning. Suitable material (non-flammable) must be used to protect floors and carpets from candle drippings even if drip-less candles are used.

Pews may be marked with flowers, bows or ribbons tied to the pews. Absolutely no tacks, nails, screws, fasteners or tape other than masking tape can be used on the furniture or elsewhere in the church.

The Altar Table is to remain in the chancel area and cannot be obscured. You must use your own flower containers. Paper-Mache containers are not acceptable. Liners must be used in all containers and adhesive tape should be attached to the liners, not to the containers. No water should be put into containers. Drop cloths must be used to protect the carpet while arranging flowers. Leak-proof buckets for all your arrangement material are to be kept on the drop cloths.

Live rose petals may not be thrown in the church. Only silk petals may be used and they must be completely removed after the service.

Placing flowers, ferns, candles or anything decorative on the piano is strictly prohibited.

Decorations may not be placed near or on the organ console. Greenery on stands in the choir loft may not be watered.

A unity candle is available for use with prior arrangement made through the wedding coordinator.

The church paraments may be white or the color of the Christian Year. Please advise your church wedding director of your choice.

Seasonal decorations such as the Chrismon tree, the Advent wreath, poinsettias and Easter lilies may not be removed.

It is the responsibility of the florist to remove any debris from the decorations prior to or after the wedding. If flowers or decorations are put in the fern wells, they must be removed and the ferns replaced.

Floral and Decorating Policies Continued

Non-conformity or unwillingness to abide by these policies will necessitate a conference between the bride, the florist and the VHUMC wedding director.

The company name, address and contact name of the florist must be provided no less than two months before the wedding so we can mail a vendor acknowledgment form for him/her to sign and return. Please email this information to the Senior Pastor's assistant. **Although the florist is hired and paid by the wedding party, he/she is subject to the direction of the Pastor and/or the VHUMC Wedding Director in the event such direction is necessary.**

SPECIAL NOTE:

All decorations, candle holders, ferns or other material you bring in must be removed immediately after the wedding. Anything you move must be put back exactly as you found it. Unless there are specific instructions for the flowers to be left in the church, they must be removed. When flowers are to remain for church use, it is understood that they will be utilized at the church's discretion.

Photography/Videography Policies

The following policies have been found to be practical and useful. They are designed to ensure that the wedding ceremony is conducted in an atmosphere of reverence. Please keep them in mind as you make your plans.

It is the bride's responsibility to notify friends and relatives attending the wedding that no photography/videography is allowed during the service. This is a distraction to the minister and wedding party.

Posed pictures may be taken before and after the service. It is recommended that as many pictures as possible be taken prior to the wedding ceremony or at the conclusion of the service after the congregation has been dismissed. The church building will be available for pictures three (3) hours before the wedding.

All professional photography during the ceremony must be made without flash or floodlights. Professional photographs during a service are only permitted from the balcony of the Sanctuary or from the rear of the Chapel adjacent to the sound system console. There should be no photography from the aisle during the ceremony. No external lights on video equipment may be used during the ceremony.

Videotaping of the service is only permitted from the balcony of the Sanctuary or from the rear of the Chapel adjacent to the sound system console. No external lights on video equipment may be used during the service. No video sound equipment of any kind can be used, including lapel microphones, recorders or stand microphones. There will be NO EXCEPTIONS.

Any pictures of members of the group leaving the ceremony may be taken in the narthex after the congregation has been dismissed. All pictures must be completed within one (1) hour after the completion of the service.

Absolutely no tacks, nails, screws, fasteners, duct tape or scotch tape can be used on the furniture, walls, pews, carpeting or elsewhere in the church. Masking tape is permissible.

It is the wedding party's responsibility to insure that the photographer and/or videographer understands and abides by these policies. Non-conformity or unwillingness to abide by these policies will necessitate a conference between the bride, the florist and the VHUMC wedding director.

Although the photographer/videographer is hired and paid by the wedding party, he/she is subject to the direction of the Pastor and/or the VHUMC Wedding Director in the event such direction is necessary.

The company name, address and contact name of the photographer and/or videographer must be provided no less than two months before the wedding so we can mail a vendor acknowledgment form for him/her to be sign and return. Please call Aleta Short, 769.0109.

Important Contact Information

VHUMC requires pre-marital counseling sessions with the bride and groom. These sessions may be scheduled by contacting the VHUMC pastor in charge of the service and are the responsibility of the bride and groom to initiate.

If you would like a guest minister of another denomination or United Methodist minister who is not currently on the staff of VHUMC to assist in the wedding, you must secure the approval of the Senior Pastor to make your request. Our pastor will decide if this is possible and, if approved, will issue the appropriate written invitation to the visiting minister.

The VHUMC pastor, wedding director and organist **must be notified of rehearsal and wedding time changes.** Please send a copy of the rehearsal and wedding invitations for our files.

If organ music is to be used in the sanctuary, the VHUMC organist should be contacted as soon as possible. All music is to be approved by the Director of Music.

Catering is available for receptions in the Parlor and Fellowship Hall. Outside caterers are permitted, but are to use the parlor kitchen only. Our church chef, Charlie Gagne, must be contacted.

It is the policy of VHUMC to assign a staff Wedding Director for all weddings. You will be contacted once the Wedding Director has been assigned.

For any additional questions, please contact the Senior Pastor's assistant or 769.0109.

For a listing of all pastors and staff, including contact information, please visit www.vhumc.org.

Wedding Information Sheet - Member

No wedding date will be confirmed until all forms are completed, submitted and approved.

A reservation fee (\$200/ member or \$300/non-member) should be submitted with the completed form.

The fee will be applied toward usage costs and will be forfeited upon cancellation.

The balance due must be paid one week prior to the wedding.

Wedding date requested: _____ Time (No later than 6 p.m.): _____

Rehearsal date requested: _____ Time (No later than 6 p.m.): _____

Bride's Information

Full Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Current Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Church Affiliation: _____ City/State: _____

Parents Name: _____ Home Phone: _____

Church Affiliation: _____ City/State: _____

Groom's Information

Full Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Current Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Church Affiliation: _____ City/State: _____

Parents Name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Church Affiliation: _____

City/State: _____

Facility Information

Sanctuary: ____ Chapel: ____ Bride's Room: ____

Parlor Prior to ceremony: ____

Parlor Reception: ____

Fellowship Hall Reception: ____

CHURCH USE:
Deposit Received: _____
Master Calendar: _____
Minister: _____
Guest Minister Letter: _____
Wedding Director: _____
Organist: _____
Caterer: _____
Total Fee: \$ _____
Balance: \$ _____

VHUMC policy stipulates that a staff minister officiate at all weddings at VHUMC. The Senior Pastor will assign a VHUMC pastor to officiate based on schedule and availability. If you would like the Senior Pastor to invite a guest minister to assist the VHUMC minister, please complete all of the information below.

Name: _____ Church Affiliation: _____

Church Address: _____

Office Phone: _____

Relation to Bride/Groom: _____

Professional Services

VHUMC will mail all wedding vendors a copy of the wedding policy.

They are required to sign and re- turn an acknowledgment that they will adhere to VHUMC regulations.

Please provide the complete name and address below:

Florist: Company Name: _____

Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Photographer: Company Name: _____

Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Videographer: Company Name: _____

Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Music: Organist/Pianist : _____

Other Musicians: _____

Outside Wedding Planner/Coordinator: If you are contracting with the services of an outside wedding planner or coordinator, it is understood that the consultant MUST meet with the VHUMC Wedding Director and adhere to church policy. He or she must defer to the staff wedding director on all issues.

Wedding Planner/Consultant:

Company Name: _____

Contact: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Other Information

Couple's Address After Marriage: _____

Couple's Phone After Marriage: _____

Do you plan to make VHUMC your church home? ____ Yes ____ No

May we send you information on Adult/Couple Sunday School Classes? ____ Yes ____ No

Will you be leaving the large floral arrangements for church use? ____ Yes ____ No

I/We have read Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church's Wedding Policy and hereby agree to abide by all of its provisions. I/we understand that the deposit accompanying this application will be applied toward facilities and/or services. I understand that this is a non-refundable deposit that will be forfeited in the event we cancel the wedding for any reason.

Signature of Bride: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Groom: _____ Date: _____



VESTAVIA HILLS
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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