

## To the Bride and the Groom,

I am pleased that you have sought out assistance in your important plans for marriage. You may be considering a ceremony at the West Bowdoin Baptist Church or at another location.

In the days and weeks ahead you will be asked to make additional important decisions. You have already made your most important decision, to enter into a life-long covenant with each other and with God.

If it is your desire to hold the wedding at the West Bowdoin Baptist Church, there will be certain considerations expected because of the traditions and faith of the Church. These guidelines will assist you in starting to make your choices and will help make your preparations for the wedding.

The understanding of the wedding as a Christian celebration is centered on the understanding of marriage, love, and the family as taught in the scriptures. The sacred bonds of marriage were instituted of God as the union of male and female. Christian marriage begins with uniting of two believers. God looks upon this sacred unity with favor and the new relationship created is a lifelong covenant of love and loyalty. The home thus becomes the cradle of Christian and personal devotion, teaching, and nurture.

If you are not a Christian but call on the church or pastor for a wedding, special and serious examination of marriage and the vows you are making will take place. I will spend time with you in discussion of the role of Christian faith in marriage and may require certain studies and decisions to be

made prior to the wedding.

The church may be seen as a traditional setting or a pretty place for a wedding, but we are not a “wedding chapel” open to merely perform a civil ceremony of marriage. Without the understanding of marriage as taught by God’s Word, the church becomes only a building devoid of the blessing of God.

If you have been married previously you will be asked to share the details of the marriage, and we will examine the biblical teachings on divorce. This will be discussed before any decision regarding the wedding takes place.

During the time of your preparations we will establish a plan of counseling that will provide an opportunity to build an understanding of the commitment that marriage involves. We may look at resources available to help you throughout your marriage.

During these sessions together, you will also be involved in the planning of your wedding ceremony and the wording of your vows. This will make your ceremony a personal expression of commitment and love. The wording should reflect the Christian and biblical teachings of marriage.

Couples may also choose a special location such as the home or outdoors. These services should also be planned with the same Christian guidelines in place.

When you have decided to seek a wedding at the West Bowdoin Baptist Church, the following considerations are

helpful.

- Contact the pastor as soon as you know your intended dates. If possible, this should be done at least three months before the date of the wedding. This will enable the scheduling of the facilities and the preplanning sessions with the pastor.
- It is recommended that three preplanning sessions be held. Distance may make this difficult. Out-of-town couples should share with the pastor their plans for being in the area before the wedding. A schedule can be set which will make it possible for both the bride and the groom to share in the necessary planning.
- The pastor will not agree to officiate or to make the facilities of the church available until all appropriate initial contacts have been made and all issues previously mentioned are addressed. As pastor, if I sense problems regarding the marriage, I reserve the right to require additional counseling or to refuse to perform the ceremony.
- There shall be an understanding by BOTH the bride and the groom of the Christian meaning of marriage and the lifelong commitment being entered.

The Christian wedding ceremony should be a personal statement of ones faith and the love shared. The wedding vows are being made to God, to each other, and to the gathered community. The ceremony should also express the joy and hope of the bride and groom.

These additional suggestions may help you prepare for your celebration.

- Choose your music carefully as a full part of the ceremony and not just as an attachment. All music and/or readings should conform to the Christian meaning of marriage. Music and/or readings should be cleared with the pastor during preplanning sessions. A copy of the words would be helpful for the pastor to read.
- All pictures and videos should be taken with no disruption to the service. NO FLASH PICTURES shall be taken during the wedding ceremony. Flash pictures, however, may be taken during the processional and recessional. You may wish to consider posed pictures after the ceremony. The photographers you secure for the ceremony should speak to the pastor in advance for any special considerations that they feel may be necessary.
- The preparation of a list of desired pictures is usually helpful to any photographer. It will make the time go quicker so that the activities of the wedding day will continue without long delays.
- The church may be decorated in the celebration and joy of the wedding, but the church furnishings shall not be moved except with the permission of the pastor.
- All participants in a service should be present for the rehearsal. *For an informal or small wedding, a rehearsal may be optional.*

- **No** alcoholic beverages are permitted, and anyone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs will not be permitted to participate in the rehearsal or ceremony.
- No cigarettes should be used on the church premises.
- The marriage licenses should be in your hands early and into the hands of the pastor the night of the rehearsal. No ceremony can begin without the proper licenses.
- Flower girls and ring bearers should be old enough so that they can meaningfully participate in the ceremony.
- A guest minister from another Christian church may perform a wedding. This can be arrangement with the pastor in advance. The above guidelines apply, and the guest pastor should be made aware of these guidelines and remain in contact with the pastor regarding the ceremony. The pastor of the West Bowdoin Baptist Church remains in charge and responsible for the overall conduct of the service.

We urge you to read and consider these guidelines, not as an attempt to spoil your wedding, but as a way to help you begin your wonderful life together in a meaningful celebration of joy. May God bless your days of preparation.

In Christ,  
Rev. James L. Lufkin  
Pastor

A dark blue banner with a white cross at the top and a white vertical bar at the bottom.

A Guide to Planning Your  
Wedding

West Bowdoin Baptist  
Church

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