

Wedding Planning



Trinitarian Congregational Church

*United Church of Christ
54 Walden Street
Concord, Massachusetts*

*triconchurch.org
(978) 369-4837*

Welcome to Trinitarian Congregational Church, an ecumenical community of faith, in the tradition of the United Church of Christ and an Open and Affirming Congregation. We have worshipped here in Concord for close to two centuries along with serving the needs of the larger community.

In addition to those who are members of our congregation, we are also pleased, as schedules permit, to make our building and staff available for wedding ceremonies for others who share our belief that a wedding service is an act of faith and worship that should be conducted with a conscious awareness of the presence of God and reflect the religious dimensions of marriage.

If you are not a member of our congregation, we strongly suggest that you attend a worship service here before discussing your wedding. Doing so will give you a good sense of who we are as a church and an opportunity to see if our beliefs and ways of worshipping are compatible with what you envision for your wedding service.

A member of our clergy officiates at all wedding services held in our church. If the couple wishes to have a clergy person who is a family member or close friend also participate in the service, that is often possible but it is at the discretion of the officiating clergy.

Couples will be expected to participate in two to three pre-marital counseling sessions with the officiating clergy. Couples who live at a great distance may be able to arrange, with the approval of the officiating clergy, to schedule these sessions with a minister closer to their home.

A Christian Marriage Ceremony

Marriage is a commitment that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is a service of worship during which the couple unite in their vows in the conscious awareness of the presence of God. It is an intentionally and specifically religious ceremony that is recognized by the Commonwealth as the legal uniting of two people in marriage, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification. The content of the ceremony, its words, music, and total atmosphere, should reflect the religious dimensions of the marriage. Couples will need to reflect on how best to do this in ways which truly reflect their own faith as well as that of our church.

Timetable

- 1) As soon as possible, preferably 6-12 months in advance, before you make final arrangements for a reception hall, call the church to check the availability of the date. You will then need to talk with a minister before finalizing the date.
- 2) The minister will set up dates with you for planning and for premarital conversations. This is a basic part of our commitment to you and of yours to us. Again, allow plenty of lead-time.
- 3) Once a date has been set for the wedding, the couple should call the church organist, clear the date with her, and arrange for a time to discuss the music.
- 4) No more than 60 days prior to the wedding, get your marriage license which is available from the Town Clerk's office at any town or city in Massachusetts. Full details are available from those offices but, be aware that the license is valid for 60 days. It is recommended that the expiration date be a few weeks after the scheduled wedding date. Both parties must apply in person for the license and there is a minimum three day waiting period between filing and being granted a license. A blood test is no longer required.

Pre-marital Conversations

The pre-marital sessions include:

- a time for the couple and the minister to begin to get acquainted and to feel comfortable with each other, so that you and the officiating clergy will not come to the altar as strangers.
- a time for the couple to ask questions about the service, to plan the ceremony in detail and understand it thoroughly.
- a time to explore your relationship in the presence of another. Normally covered are a wide variety of issues, such as the meaning of commitment; strengths and weaknesses in your relationship; how your own unique family and personal background impacts on your present and future relationship; goals and expectations; how your feelings about money, sexuality, roles, religion, and children affect your relationship; hopes and dreams for the future.
- a time to talk about issues that have arisen in the relationship. There is an opportunity for the couple to help set the agenda, depending on their own needs and concerns.

The atmosphere of these sessions is informal and relaxed. We invite you to enter into them expectantly and openly, seeing them as a unique opportunity to grow in closeness and understanding.

Planning the Marriage Ceremony

We want this service of worship to be yours. We invite you to play a major role in planning it so that the vows, the readings and the prayers all say what you want them to say.

The minister will provide you with plenty of resources, both traditional and contemporary, and will work with you to put together a service that is beautiful and meaningful. We want the final product of our efforts to reflect honestly who you are and what you believe. It must also feel acceptable to the minister. So it is a joint effort which we enter into together. Some special things to consider:

- Is this to be an ecumenical or interfaith service? Do you want other clergy to have a part in the service?
- Do you want to write your own vows? It's harder to do this than you may think! We have materials to help you get started.
- Do you want friends, family members, or people in the wedding party to do some of the readings?

Any or all of these should be discussed with the minister before making any final decisions.

Planning the Music

In addition to serving as organist for your ceremony, our Music Director is a valuable resource as you plan the music for your wedding ceremony. We suggest that you contact her to set up an in-person consultation.

Vickie Wagner, 617-522-0510, vwag@aol.com

These musical portions include the following:

The Prelude begins about 20 minutes prior to the wedding and is played as your guests arrive. The final selection begins when the organist gets the cue that the couple's parents or other honored guests are being escorted to their seats.

The Processional occurs as the wedding party walks down the aisle. The music might be something lyrical and gentle, such as Pachelbel's "Canon in D" or Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." Or, perhaps more bold and festive in mood, such as a baroque trumpet tune or the traditional Wedding Chorus of Wagner ("Here Comes the Bride"). In our sanctuary one piece of music is usually sufficient for all the attendants and the bride, but if you prefer a separate processional piece for the bride, that is possible.

The Interlude is a short, quiet selection before the vows, or during the lighting of a unity candle. This is optional.

Congregational Hymns Often the couple's family and friends would enjoy lifting their voices in singing a hymn at the beginning and/or end of the ceremony. Listed here are a few selections from our hymnal (Hymns, Psalms & Spiritual Songs) that are often familiar to those from many denominations.

#229 From All That Dwell Below the Skies

#455 All Creatures of Our God and King

#464 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

#473 For the Beauty of the Earth

#555 Now Thank We All Our God

#559 We Gather Together

The Recessional sounds as the wedding party and immediate family walk out of the sanctuary. This is typically the most joyous music of the entire ceremony. It might be something cheerful and light, such as "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring." Or, it might be very exuberant, such as the traditional "Wedding March" of Mendelssohn or the "Hornpipe" from Handel's Water Music.

If you are interested in adding a vocalist or instrumentalist (trumpeter, harpist, oboist, flutist, etc.) our Music Director can help guide you with that as well.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually held the evening before the wedding. It will take approximately one hour. The entire wedding party – the couple, attendants, parents of the couple and readers should be present at the rehearsal.

Please stress to your group the importance of coming to the rehearsal on time! Often the minister has other commitments to meet that same evening.

At the rehearsal we will go through the entire wedding in detail:

- when to arrive
- where to go when you get here
- how and where to seat guests
- the processional
- the recessional
- the service itself
- dismissal of guests
- plans for the receiving line (if any)
- information about photographs, video

Photographers, Cameras, and Video

The church asks that no pictures be taken either by guests or the official photographer during the ceremony. Pictures may be taken entering and leaving the service. Pictures may also be posed prior to or following the service if the couple wishes. The entire service may be videotaped from a stationary camera.

Children in the Wedding

Children are always welcome to be a part of the wedding party, but parents are strongly encouraged to consider their readiness to participate, especially those children under age five. Ring-bearers and flower girls often bring special joy and meaning to the service, but, if uncomfortable or easily distracted, they may also disrupt the worship experience. Couples and families should consider this matter carefully.

In the instance where either partner or both may have children of their own and desire their participation in the wedding, the clergy will be happy to explore with the couple the possibilities for the children's meaningful inclusion in the service.

License

The license, along with all fees or honoraria should be turned into the church office at least ten days before the wedding.

Access for Disabled Persons

The church is handicapped accessible from the ramp off the parking lot and from Hubbard Street and there is a wheelchair available for use in the building.

Access to the Church

Our sexton will be available starting one hour before the ceremony to assist with parking or as needed.

Flowers

Couples usually choose to have two bouquets for the altar and sometimes use flowers and/or bows on some of the pews. It can take time to arrange these decorations and it is the couple's responsibility to see that their florist has a key to the church or makes arrangements to get one so that the flowers may be arranged appropriately in advance of the ceremony.

Runners

The church does not allow the use of any paper or cloth runner on the aisle that needs to be taped or fastened to the carpet or floor and we strongly discourage the use of any other type of runner. They are difficult to walk on and can actually distract from the attractiveness of the bridal gown.

Confetti

Please no rice, confetti or birdseed. Rose petals are also discouraged; they can present a slipping hazard for the wedding party and their guests and a challenge for a young flower girl who may be either over zealous or intimidated by the task of throwing them. The use of bubbles is allowed.

Church Bell

The ushers are invited to ring the church bell at the conclusion of the service but, in respect to our neighbors, we ask that the ringing be confined to less than 7 peals. The clergy can provide information about ringing the bell at the time of the rehearsal.

Parking

There are nineteen parking spaces in the church lot off Walden Street, including two accessible parking spaces. Parking is also available on Hubbard Street, along the side of the church and in the municipal parking lot, behind the stores on Walden Street, less than one block from the church.

The purpose of these guidelines is to maintain an atmosphere of dignity and reverence with a minimum of distraction, so that the wedding ceremony can truly bear witness to the couple's stance before God and reflect the service's religious nature, as well as the joyful spirit of the occasion. We thank you, your wedding party and your guests, for your cooperation.

Wedding Finances

Church Use

If either partner or their parents are financially supporting this church, there is no expectation of payment for the use of the church building. Some families choose to make a donation which is greatly appreciated.

If the couple or their parents are not financially supporting the church, there is a fee of \$450 for the use of the building.

Checks should be made payable to Trinitarian Congregational Church.

Clergy

If either partner or their parents are financially supporting this church, there is no fee for the clergy, but families may wish to offer the presiding clergy an honorarium.

If the couple or their parents are not financially supporting this church, there is a fee of \$450 for the clergy. Off-site weddings require an additional charge, plus travel and expenses.

Checks should be made payable to the individual.

Organist

The organist's fee for the ceremony and consultation is \$350. There may be an additional charge for rehearsal with requested singers or instrumentalists, or for extraordinary practice time necessitated by requests for difficult or unusual music. It is not customary for the organist to attend rehearsals, but if her presence is required, there is an additional fee of \$150.

It is expected that our Director of Music will serve as organist for weddings at this church. In accordance with the Code of Ethics of the American Guild of Organists, any arrangement to have another organist must be made through the Director of Music and it is expected that she will be offered her regular fee.

Checks should be made payable to Victoria Wagner.

Sexton

It is expected that the services of the church Sexton will be engaged for all weddings at this church. The fee is \$75.

Checks should be made payable to James Aromaa.

Please mail all checks to the church at least ten days before the date of the wedding. Where financial hardship exists, waiver of fees may be discussed with the officiating clergy.

After the Wedding

The minister invites, in fact, encourages you to meet with him or her again, perhaps six months to a year after the wedding. This can be an ideal time to recall significant events and experiences of the months just past, and to reflect on helpful steps for the future.

We strongly encourage participation in marriage enrichment events that are available in the area, and will help put you in touch with such opportunities to enhance the deepening of your relationship.

We also invite and encourage you to become and to remain actively involved in a church community, whether ours or another.

This booklet is designed to answer a number of your questions, and provide some information as you begin your planning. We strive to do everything we can to assist you in your preparations, and to enhance the dignity and joyfulness of the occasion. Please contact us with any questions or concerns that you have.

Church Staff

Reverend Robert W. Brown, Senior Minister

Reverend Gail Miller, Minister of Congregational Life

Victoria L. Wagner, Director of Music

Judith Walpole, Church Administrator

Amy Bruning, Church Administrative Assistant

Carrie O'Brien, Children's Ministry Director

Marcia Macres, Communications/Social Media Manager

James Aromaa, Sexton

A Brief History

Our church has its roots in the first church established in Concord by the early settlers in 1636. In 1826 a small group, dissatisfied over the “leaving out of the Trinity”, left First Church and “crossed the brook” to form the Second Congregational Society and the Second Calvinistic Religious Society. Established as the Trinitarian Congregational Church by an ecclesiastical council on June 5, 1826, the group accepted a gift of land from Ebenezer Hubbard and built the first meeting house on this site.

That structure was extensively renovated in 1874 and in 1884, a manse was erected on the south side of the property, where the open lawn currently exists. In 1924, a disastrous fire destroyed the church and the current structure was built and dedicated in 1926. The extensive church school wing, now home to our own church school classes and to a weekday pre-school, was added in 1956 and the manse was removed shortly thereafter.

Mission and social concerns have long been areas of great importance to our congregation. The early records mention numerous missionary societies providing, in various ways, for the poor and needy. In 1836, the church took a strong stance against slavery and members were active in providing assistance to escaped slaves. Today, we continue the tradition of compassionate concern through our commitment of significant tangible resources to a host of mission and outreach projects as well as our ongoing emphasis on hands-on service projects.

We belong to the United Church of Christ. Democratic in government, the local church, while autonomous and responsible for its own life, ministry and mission, honors faithfully its denominational and ecumenical covenants with the wider Christian Church.

Trinitarian Congregational Church Welcomes You

We, the members of the Trinitarian Congregational Church, are called by God to live as one community. We strive to love, as we are loved by God, both freely and unconditionally. We recognize, celebrate, and affirm the full humanity of all individuals, with our God-given diversity.

Therefore, we intentionally welcome individuals of any ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation into full fellowship and participation in the life of the church.

We strive with the help of the Holy Spirit to become more like Jesus in our love and support for one another, in order to oppose and overcome any injustice, oppression, and prejudice that continues in our society, our communities and ourselves.

Trinitarian Congregational Church Is an ecumenical community of faith in the tradition of the United Church of Christ.

We are an Open and Affirming Congregation serving the needs of all individuals regardless of sexual orientation or gender identification.

