



Practical Advice For Your Wedding Service And Reception

The following advice is out of our experience of marrying couples for many years. Weddings are wonderful experiences or they can be unmitigated drudgery! The practical advice is not exhaustive; but much of it is thoughtful. I hope that it is helpful for you in your planning.

If anything is unclear or you would like to discuss it with us, please contact us at the CapChurch office (604-980-8997). Thanks.

1. The wedding service should be long enough to accomplish the purposes of the wedding; that is, to call upon the Lord's blessing for the marriage and to allow the community of friends and relatives to add their blessing to the union. Normally 30-40 minutes is sufficient time.
2. The wedding should be focused on God and not on the intimacy and love of the couple, which is important but secondary. Excessive couple intimacy can detract from the intimacy of the couple with our Lord.
3. The wedding should be a natural and normal event, culminating from months of friendship and work, intimacy and struggle. It is not primarily a formal, religious activity but a loving human activity brought to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it should be a very human event. Everything doesn't have to be perfect. Humour, the occasional slip of the tongue, forgetting one's lines or stuttering the "I do's" is all part of this wonderful celebration.
4. There are several places within the ceremony where the bride and groom can select family and friends to read passages, give testimony and pray. Family and community involvement is important.
5. The wedding should not be submerged in too many "meaningful" symbols (e.g. the 3 candles, self-written vows, personal songs, etc., etc.) or the effect will be one of confusion rather than the simplicity of love and devotion to God. Any of these symbols may be appropriate and very meaningful to the entire assembly.
6. If the couple decides to write their own vows, they should bear in mind that the historical vows of the church combine elements of covenant, devotion, reverence, mutual affection, as well as an acceptance of marriage being a community event. Many self-authored vows are intensely private at the expense of a fuller meaning of the vow-giving. (See the outline on "Vow-Making.")
7. Please give the minister (Paddy or Mike) the latitude to speak relevantly about you and your marriage, as well as the necessity of the good news for everyone's marriage. This will not be rote or long-winded but succinct and authentic. The minister's job, in the midst of all the joy and celebration, is to point you and the congregation to God and to call upon God for His blessing. The message that I will bring will honor God and you. (Note: it will not be "evangelistic"!)
8. Video cameras and other cameras (with or without flash) are often an interruption to the marriage ceremony. If cameras are used during the ceremony, they should be unobtrusive. Friends should not be encouraged to shoot at whim during the ceremony, though this can be quite fun during the reception. A professional photographer during the ceremony who conducts himself carefully is not normally a disruption. Please speak to the minister about this.
9. Most church facilities will tape record the service at your request. Copies of the cassette tape or c.d. are an inexpensive and thoughtful gift to those family and friends not able to attend the wedding. Our church (Capilano Christian Community) has tape-copying equipment and can be used to make copies of the ceremony.
10. Greeting guests may be better accomplished by the couple visiting with guests during the reception rather than a "reception line." Reception lines are especially exhausting in larger weddings. If children are present, the reception line can be a torture for them.

11. If children are invited to the wedding-reception, some activity for them during the reception is a good idea (e.g. an inexpensive colouring book and crayons, table games, etc.). Children at a reception are a reminder to keep the reception limited in time.
12. Please understand if the minister is unable to attend the rehearsal dinner or has to leave early from the reception. This is not a sign of disinterest; Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays are often hectic days in the life of the church. (Please appreciate as well that the minister's spouse has her own life and may choose not to attend some of the wedding functions.)
13. Careful thought to the spirit of the reception is important. Many worshipful weddings have been defeated by ill-conceived receptions. Aggressive alcohol consumption, an open bar, an open microphone where indecent and adolescent stories are recounted, offensive and coarse "toasts" to the wedding party; these are not the qualities that make for a memorable wedding. The couple should give straightforward instructions to the "master of ceremonies" about the ethos of the celebration. Planning by the parents of the bride is required.
14. "Stags" and "showers" need to be in the spirit of the wedding and the faith of the church, rather than the unhappiness of society. This caution may not be necessary. However, some stags/showers are a mockery of the intent of God for the wedding and marriage. There certainly should be celebrations for the bride and groom that involve fun and honour and gift giving. But not licentious and degrading debacles.
15. There is no charge assessed for the minister's time in marrying anyone who is a member of Capilano Christian Community or is any gift expected. Any financial gift for those who are not members of CapChurch is appreciated.
16. If you should choose to invite your Home-Base Mentoring couple to the wedding, please indicate "no gift please" on the invitation. Their gift to you is the many hours of mentoring and prayer.
17. Also please excuse the minister from providing a substantive gift (beyond the hours of preparation and personal contact with you). The CapChurch ministers do many weddings each year and they do not have a church budget for gift buying! Paddy or Mike, however, may well bring a remembrance to honor your covenant.
18. The minister is available to assist you in any way so that your wedding is all that you want it to be and so that it honours God in every way. Couples should not be reluctant to discuss whatever conflicts, difficulties or intimacies with us prior to the wedding. The time leading to the wedding is fraught with intensity and this is the time that you will need someone with our skills and confidence. You will not disappoint us nor surprise us!