

# **First Congregational Church of Fresno**

## **and an Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ**

The church wedding or commitment ceremony is a religious rite for persons who desire to affirm their vows and celebrate the beginning of married or committed life in the hope and tradition of Christian faith. This rite is a matter of great significance, not only for the couple, but for the wider circle of family and friends.

First Congregational Church is happy to be involved in this important moment, and offers its pastoral staff and services to members and non-members alike.

### ***Minister***

Normally one of the ministers of this church will meet with the couple and officiate at weddings or commitment ceremonies here. These rites at the church are viewed as a sacred pastoral responsibility and prerogative. The close interpersonal relationships formed during preparation are, of course, a matter of confidentiality and mutual trust.

Initially at reservation time, the couple should make an appointment with the minister who will officiate. The church office will be glad to help facilitate this appointment. The proposed date may be “held” on the church calendar, but will not be considered “confirmed” until after the initial meeting between the minister and the couple. Additional appointments will be scheduled as necessary by mutual agreement.

### ***Pipe Organ***

The Casavant Pipe Organ of First Congregational Church is quite special and more complex than most. We encourage everyone to attend a Sunday morning service to see, hear, and feel the power and the beauty that the pipe organ brings to celebrations. The church organist is the contracted musician that plays for all of the ceremonies here at First Congregational Church or provides for a capable substitute in his/her absence. The use of organists requested by a couple from outside of the church is not permitted, though the use pianists and other musicians can be used at the discretion and consultation of the Music Director/Organist. The organist works closely with the couple in selecting appropriate music for the ceremony. An appointment with the organist should be made *at least* six weeks before the ceremony for the purpose of planning the service music. The organist should also be consulted if vocal or instrumental music in addition to the organ is desired in the ceremony, or if arrangements for a rehearsal are necessary.

## *Music*

Music will be discussed at the initial meeting with the minister. Good taste, the church setting and the religious character of the ceremony must be considered in selecting music while instrumentalists of various kinds as well as vocal soloists may be utilized, the church does not allow the use of taped music or soloists requiring pre-recorded soundtracks and heavy amplification.

## *Ceremony Coordinator*

The church will provide a coordinator, who will be able to advise you about facilities and decorations and will assist in the smooth functioning of both the rehearsal and the ceremony. The coordinator will be contacted through the church office after the date has been set. The coordinator will become most active with the couple about 2 months before the ceremony.

## *Photography*

Formal pictures may be taken in the sanctuary, chapel or courtyard before or after the ceremony. Pre-ceremony pictures must be completed and the photographer and his/her equipment removed at least thirty minutes before the scheduled beginning of the ceremony. It is advised that an hour and a half of picture-taking before the ceremony should be long enough.

Because the ceremony is a religious service of worship, **it is required that no pictures be taken in the sanctuary or chapel during the ceremony.** Unobtrusive photographs and video cassette recordings using available light may be taken from the balcony of the sanctuary, or from the rear of the chapel, if no guests are seated there. Floodlights and flash photography are not permitted during the ceremony. Rules & Guidelines are included and must be signed.

**Video photographers** are not allowed to be in view of the congregation during the service. A contract will be provided that will convey this information to your photographer or video photographer. If the guests photos are distracting, the minister may stop the ceremony. Rules & Guidelines are included and must be signed.

## *Receptions*

The large Fellowship Hall is available for those who wish to hold a reception following the ceremony at the church. NO alcoholic beverages in any form are allowed. Please obtain information for receptions from the church office, or ask the church's coordinator for more info.

## *Rehearsal*

The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the evening before the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the couple to have all members of the party, including the parents, present at the appointed time. **Punctuality is imperative.** Unless excused in advance by the organist or the minister, soloists and instrumentalists involved in the music must also be present in order to understand their role in the service.

The Sanctuary or Minturn Chapel will be reserved for a period of one hour for your rehearsal. The minister will direct the rehearsal with the assistance of the coordinator. Please give the coordinator the marriage license at the outset of the rehearsal.

***Candles... Flowers and Decorations***

The church's coordinator will show you what the church has to offer and help outline the placement.

Please have the florist notify the coordinator about delivery time for the flowers, if delivery arrangements are needed. Rules & Guidelines are included and must be signed.

You are invited to leave your altar flowers for use during the Sunday morning worship service of the church as a gift to God in celebration of your ceremony. Please notify the coordinator if this is intended, so that proper arrangements and recognition can be made.

Safety and insurance considerations we do not permit the use of a runner or bridal carpet in the aisle. Likewise, fire regulations prohibit live candles anywhere near the aisles or pews. Live candles will be on the altar and chancel.

Flower children/adults are not allowed to throw/drop anything.

***Facilities***

The church has an option available for ceremonies and receptions. The sanctuary will seat as many as 350 guests. Minturn Chapel will seat approximately 60-64 persons. The Sanctuary or Minturn Chapel will be reserved for up to 4 hours maximum for the preparations and ceremony. Fellowship Hall will accommodate up to 200 people at tables if a dinner reception is planned.

Smoking is not permitted within any of the buildings. Members of the party and guests should not bring alcoholic beverages to the church. It is also requested that no rice or bird seed be thrown or scattered on the church premises, as this becomes a safety hazard and is very difficult to clean up.

**CHURCH CONTACT, ADDRESS AND DIRECTIONS**

2131 North Van Ness Boulevard  
Fresno, California 93704

*south of Clinton on the  
SW corner of Yale and Van Ness Blvd.*

*Small parking lot on south end AND street parking is allowed.*

Traveling from the North or South on 99: Take the Clinton Ave Exit. Travel east on Clinton until Van Ness Blvd and turn right or south until Yale.

Traveling from the North or South on 41: Take the Shields Exit. Travel west on Shields until Van Ness Blvd and turn left or south until Yale.

Church Email: office@bigredchurch.org  
(559) 227-8489 Fax: (559) 227-8490

***PLEASE READ BELOW***

***AND SHARE WITH YOUR MINISTER, IF NOT HIRING FCCF'S MINISTER.***

**FCCF MISSION STATEMENT**

**God calls the church into being.  
In response we love God and each other.**

We provide a place in a changing world where the constancy of God's love and compassion is known through the example of Jesus Christ.

We celebrate our life together through ministries of prayer and worship, music and education, stewardship and outreach.

We share the stories of our faith and spiritual journeys. We connect with the mysteries of God's grace, the miracle of restorative faith, and the power of ritual and myth. We live with compassion for all God's creation. We dispel isolation and alienation, witnessing to the joy of an open and affirming Christian life.

Strengthened and transformed by our faith, we go out into the wider community offering the message of hope and reconciliation to all people.

**Open and Affirming Statement of First Congregational Church**

“We believe that all people are sacred creations of a loving God.

We affirm the diversity that exists among us. We strive to answer the call of Christ by extending his love, compassion and acceptance to everyone. In this spirit, we open our family of faith to people of every religious background, sexual orientation, family composition, physical and mental ability, race, age and gender.

As Christians, we experience God's reconciling love. In response we stand with those who suffer discrimination, isolation and alienation.

We welcome all people to participate fully in our church's life and ministry. We celebrate the variety of talents and perspectives which flow into our spiritual community, continuing to enrich us in ways we could not have predicted or envisioned.”

## Procedural Checklist 4

- \_\_\_ 1. Tour the church. Check availability of your date.
- \_\_\_ 2. Turn in your application and \$ 500 deposit.
- \_\_\_ 3. Make initial appointment with the officiating minister.
- \_\_\_ 4. After initial meeting with the minister, talk with the organist about music, and the coordinator about other details.
- \_\_\_ 5. Confirm availability of all party members and inform them of the date/ time for rehearsal and ceremony.
- \_\_\_ 6. Obtain State wedding license no sooner than 90 days prior to ceremony if needed.
- \_\_\_ 7. Have follow-up meetings with minister if arranged.
- \_\_\_ 8. Pay balance of fees **three weeks** before rehearsal. FCCF payment, minister, organist and coordinator payment required separately.
- \_\_\_ 9. Bring wedding license to rehearsal. Give to coordinator. Church office will copy and mail to Fresno County Clerk.
- \_\_\_ 10. Get everyone to the rehearsal at the appointed time.
- \_\_\_ 11. Celebrate your day!

The church and staff wishes to cooperate in every way possible in order to make your ceremony a most happy and memorable event.

**Please notify the church office immediately about any change in plans, addresses, phones or dates, etc.**

## Staff Coordination

### The Minister

Will outline the order of the ceremony with the couple, will perform the marriage/commitment ceremony. A meeting with the minister is required to confirm the ceremony. If you have a close connection with a minister, he/she is welcome. Their name and contact information is required on this contract.

### The Church Office Administrator

Will handle the reservation contract and process to engage staff on specified day; as well as completion of financial payments. The church office will mail the appropriate papers for recording and registering the marriage at the County Clerk's office. **Minister and Organist/Pianist are to be paid directly by the couple/family.**

### The Ceremony Coordinator

Will assist with all arrangements, decorations, conducts the rehearsal, starts and directs the ceremony. Will become actively involved with couple about 8 weeks prior.

### The Organist

Will assist in selection and in performing music for the ceremony. Please contact as soon as you book your date to get set on his calendar and set a meeting.

### The Custodian

Will open and close the various rooms required for the rehearsal and wedding, will set out the basic equipment being used and will receive flower deliveries if needed. Will assist the Coordinator as needed. No security is provided, but we can make a recommendation if desired.

### Contact information:

Rev. Ara Guekguezian	(559) 227-8489	pastor.fccfresno@gmail.com
Scott Horton, Music Director	(559) 799-8100	scottulare@aol.com
Pat Morales, Ceremony Coordinator	(559) 281-8403	patmorales40@gmail.com

### To the COUPLE:

**Please, if any of the information changes regarding this agreement or any facts written here on change, CALL the church office with the updated information as soon as possible.**

**Please call with any questions, Amelia De Castro at 227-8489.**

## REQUESTED USE OF CASAVANT PIPE ORGAN



- Requests for use of the Casavant Pipe Organ in the First Congregational Church of Fresno sanctuary must be made separately through the current organist on staff at First Congregation Church of Fresno
- Current church organist will also have the first right of refusal for non-church events
- Where a request is made for an organist other than current church organist to play or perform, that request shall be made separately through the current church organist, and must conform to the standards set forth in the Code of Ethics by the American Guild of Organists: **RULE 4. Members shall obtain the approval of the incumbent musician before accepting an engagement for a wedding, funeral, or other service requested by a third party. In such cases, the incumbent should receive his/her customary fee, and the third party is expected to provide it. It is the responsibility of the guest member to inform the third party of this rule. Members are advised to protect themselves as incumbents in this regard by negotiating employment contracts which secure these fees and which provide some responsibility, oversight, and control as to choice of music, etc.** [Adopted by the National Council on October 23, 1933 as revised through December 15, 2008].
- It shall be the responsibility of the sponsoring outside group to act as the responsible “third party” and to act well in advance of the event itself to assure proper arrangements have been made with the current church organist regarding use of, and/or placement of the organ console
- Under no circumstances shall the grand piano in the sanctuary be de-tuned to match the organ. Upon request, and at the expense of User, arrangements may be made through the current staff organist that the organ be tuned to match the piano

SPONSORING GROUP: \_\_\_\_\_

EVENT AND DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST ORGANIST: \_\_\_\_\_

A.G.O. MEMBER? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

WILL GUEST ORGANIST BE REMUNERATED? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIFIC NEEDS FOR USE OF ORGAN: \_\_\_\_\_

WILL REHEARSAL TIME BE REQUIRED APART FROM FINAL REHEARSAL? \_\_\_\_\_

IF YES, WHAT TIME(S) WILL BE REQUESTED? \_\_\_\_\_

RESPONSIBLE THIRD PARTY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT BY PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## Statement of Liability

### HOLD HARMLESS CLAUSE

We/I, the undersigned, accept the following conditions related to our/my use of facilities at First Congregational Church of Fresno, CA.

By acceptance of this agreement, we/I covenant to hold free and harmless First Congregational Church (including its officers, members, employees) from any and all claims, demands, loss, liability, cost or expense of any kind or nature whatsoever for any occurrence which results in the injury or death of persons, or which damages property arising out of, connected with, or attributed to the use and occupancy of the church facility.

User agrees to pay for any damages to the facility and for any damages or loss of any church property resulting from the occupancy of said facility by the user or resulting from the conduct or action of the user, its agents, invitees, employees, or any persons participating in, or attending, the event during the user's occupancy.

ACCEPTED BY \_\_\_\_\_  
Print name

YOUR SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have liability insurance? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, name of organization's insurance company:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy No.: \_\_\_\_\_

First Congregational Church of Fresno, U.C.C.  
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd. Fresno, CA 93704  
(559) 227-8489 FAX 227-8490 Email: office@bigredchurch.org

## Marriage or Holy Commitment Ceremony Agreement for Service

Day and Date of Ceremony: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: (4 hours) Arrival \_\_\_\_\_ Start \_\_\_\_\_ Leave \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Rehearsal: \_\_\_\_\_

Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ for 1 hour.

Estimated Attendance: # \_\_\_\_\_

Sanctuary or Minturn Chapel? \_\_\_\_\_  
seats 320                      seats 60

**Full Name of Bride/Partner:** \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name of Groom/Partner:** \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Church Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

**For office use:**

Minister's Name:

Address:

Phone:

