

# OAKWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

## Premarital Information

*rev. 06-2009*

We're glad that you are inquiring at Oakwood Community Church regarding your prospective marriage. We believe in the establishment and maintenance of healthy Christian families and homes. Since marriage is not merely a civil act, but a spiritual covenant, we have committed ourselves to doing the best we can to prepare couples like yourself to enter God's ordained institution of marriage.

Seldom do couples enter into marriage anticipating strife and grief, yet over one-third of marriages end in tragedy. Many more marriages are less fulfilling than the couple desired and God intended. Few individuals are foolish enough to imagine that they will automatically be successful in any field of activity without preparation and effort. This principle applies to marriage as well. It takes much more than "feeling in love" to bring lasting success in marriage. Therefore, we are providing for you Premarital Preparation and Enrichment sessions by one of our pastoral staff members or a trained member of our congregation.

The goals of these sessions are to:

- 1) help you and the pastor to assess your readiness for marriage
- 2) evaluate and clarify values, beliefs, behavior, and attitudes
- 3) resolve present and potential conflicts
- 4) stimulate spiritual development as individuals and as a couple

Topics include some of the following: understanding love and the marriage commitment, communication, conflict resolution, how to meet the needs of your spouse, family background, personality traits, in-laws, roles, finances, spiritual relationship and values, sexual adjustment, children, education, housing and leisure time.

It is our desire that these sessions will enable you to go into marriage with genuine confidence and preparedness. Although it can be disheartening, we will also consider the sessions successful if you come to the conclusion that you should postpone your wedding plans until you have resolved certain problematic issues that surfaced during the counseling.

If wedding ceremony preparations are already in full motion, the pressure is great for couples to ignore the issues that need to be addressed prior to the wedding. Therefore **for your protection, we require that you complete half of the sessions prior to being eligible for officially scheduling the wedding date in our church.** Usually there will be 5 to 8 sessions of 60 to 90 minutes in length, with a minimum of one week between sessions. The spacing between appointments is necessary in order to allow outside preparation and communication between you.

You will want to give this careful consideration in your wedding plans. **In order to give adequate time for the premarital inventories to be completed and scored, counseling sessions, and possible additional time for resolving issues we require that this process begin no later than three months prior to your wedding date.**

Couples also have the option of obtaining premarital counseling from another pastor or professional counselor recommended or approved by the officiating pastor.

You are preparing for a lifetime together. You will be eternally grateful for the effort and time you invest to build your marriage and home upon a solid and sure foundation. Though the decision to get married is a very important and serious one, it should also be an enjoyable one. We consider it a privilege and a joy to enter into this time of preparation with you.

## Wedding Policies and Procedures

The Bible teaches a great deal concerning the marriage relationship and therefore this church is seeking to conduct and sanction Christ-honoring marriages. The ceremony is a sacred worship service as well as a joyful event.

- Contact the Pastor to schedule the Premarital Preparation and Enrichment sessions. After the couple completes half the sessions they are eligible for scheduling the wedding date in the church, provided the Pastor gives his approval. Final decision as to who may be married at Oakwood Community Church rests with the Lead Pastor, in consultation with the elders if necessary. The couple shall complete all sessions and assignments prior to the wedding.
- The couple shall clear the wedding and rehearsal dates with the officiating pastor and the church office, so that there are no schedule conflicts. After a wedding and rehearsal date have been set, Oakwood will secure the dates. The officiating pastor should contact the Director of Wedding Ceremony at this time and inform her or him of the wedding date and the name and phone number of the couple getting married (all couples are expected to use one of Oakwood's Directors of Wedding Ceremony for their wedding - see page 6 for details).
- We expect one of Oakwood's pastors to participate in the weddings performed in our church (see **Those Who May Officiate Marriage Ceremonies - on behalf of the ministry of Oakwood Community Church on page 5**). If a couple desires a guest pastor to assist in the wedding, the couple shall first obtain approval before contacting him themselves. Oakwood's pastor is the one who shall formally invite and make arrangements with the guest pastor.
- The couple shall give the wedding license to the pastor prior to, or at the rehearsal, so that he can assure that the legal papers are in order.
- Other churches wishing to rent our church must conduct a Christ-honoring wedding with an officiating minister of evangelical beliefs and ministry. Oakwood's deacons are the one's who will approve or deny such requests.
- Since a Christian wedding is a worship service, the choice of music and readings etc., must reflect Christian worship and values. It is to be a distinctly Christian wedding. The couple may select the music in consultation with the pianist/organist, but the selections must be approved by Oakwood's Director of Wedding Ceremony or the officiating pastor.
- Photographers may take non-flash photos and video tapes from behind the congregation; they are to clear exceptions with the pastor. They may not take flash pictures during the wedding ceremony (except while the bride comes down

the aisle if desired). The ceremony concludes after the pastor has pronounced the benediction. Therefore, the photographer may take flash pictures of the groom kissing the bride and of the recessional. The bride and groom shall communicate these requirements to any photographers prior to the wedding day. The wedding is a worship service and a Christian testimony, not a theatrical event.

- You may engage the florist of your choice. Decorations may be as simple or elaborate as you wish. Do not use thumbtacks on wood; use only special tape so that you will not mar the finish. Florists shall protect the finish on furniture and the carpets from dampness of palms or ferns. Use only "dripless" candles. Protect carpet with plastic where candles might drip.
- Deliveries from florists and caterers - check with Church office to ensure building will be unlocked, etc., for delivery of items prior to and after wedding.
- Oakwood currently has no special wedding supplies such as candelabras, candle lighters, kneeling bench, guest signature stand, etc. If you desire these items you will need to supply them. Florists often rent these items.
- One of the members of our church, whom the Deacons have authorized, shall supervise the use of all church kitchen equipment. Oakwood currently has a very limited supply of kitchen supplies.
- No rice or birdseed is to be thrown inside the church itself. The bride and groom are to inform all members of the wedding party that we do not permit smoking in any of the church facilities, nor do we allow any alcoholic beverages on the church premises. If there is a reception at the church there is to be no dancing.
- If there are any special or extraordinary arrangements that you would like to make for the wedding (candlelight service, etc.), be sure to check with the Pastor regarding the church's "ground rules" for such special arrangements *before* contacting any one else in this regard.
- The wedding party may use any of the classrooms for dressing. You will want to provide a temporary covering over the windows. We also suggest that you bring some mirrors.
- We require the sponsors of the wedding to assist in the set up and take down of tables and chairs, etc., in the preparation for Sunday Bible School and Sunday services.
- No food is provided by church.

- Bulletin Information (wedding invitation and/or shower) for entire church will be inserted only once per event. Contact Church secretary.
- Director of Wedding Ceremony from Oakwood Community Church is required
- Custodial  
The Church custodian will take care of the following building needs:  
Cleaning facilities before and after event

### **Those Who May Officiate Marriage Ceremonies on behalf of the ministry of Oakwood Community Church**

**The Lead Pastor** of Oakwood Community Church may officiate any marriage ceremony he determines is in harmony with Scripture, in any location. Ordinarily this assumes he is ordained with The Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA), or he is working toward an EFCA ordination credential. On a temporary basis, until he is credentialed with the EFCA, or transfers another credential to the EFCA, he may officiate a marriage ceremony by virtue of his being an elder of Oakwood.

Any male **vocational ministry pastor** of Oakwood who is credentialed for ministry by the EFCA (licensed or ordained), or who holds a non-EFCA ordination credential, which Oakwood recognizes, may officiate an Oakwood or community wedding, with prior approval of Oakwood's Lead Pastor. (We expect all full time, vocational ministry pastors, and many of our full time vocational ministry Directors to work towards obtaining an EFCA credential)

All **ordained clergymen** at Oakwood (such as, but not limited to missionaries, retired pastors, ordained men who are not presently in vocational ministry) who are not on the ministry staff of Oakwood must first obtain approval of Oakwood's Lead Pastor (or majority of elders) before officiating a marriage ceremony that is associated with persons who are affiliated with Oakwood (both members and non-members).

Oakwood authorizes its **elders** (ordained and non-ordained) to officiate wedding ceremonies and solemnize marriage vows. This applies only to elders who are serving in the official capacity of elder at the time of the wedding ceremony; it does not apply to former elders.

## ***Director of Wedding Ceremony***

Oakwood's Director of Wedding Ceremony (DWC) serves under the direction of the officiating pastor. She (or he) directs all ceremony procedures from the processional to the recessional (the ceremony itself) and facility related issues such as AC, locking and unlocking the facilities, guiding the upholding of Oakwood's wedding policy, etc. If there is a Wedding Planner, this person works with the bride (and possible others) to plan the pre-ceremony events and post ceremony events. The wedding planner may wish to have input on behalf of the bride related to ceremony procedures (best if it is prior to the wedding rehearsal) – but those issues will ultimately be under the approval of the DWC and under the DWC's direction.

### **Services and Fees for Regular Attenders**

- There is no Premarital Preparation and Enrichment fee for our pastoral staff for those who are an active part of Oakwood Community Church. There is however a one time charge for inventory testing materials of approximately \$90-\$120. The pastor will likely request that the couple purchase one or two marriage resource books as part of their marriage preparation.
- Oakwood Community Church does not set fees for its full-time pastoral staff for performing marriage ceremonies. Although the pastors are usually given some remuneration for their preparations, we leave that decision up to the couple getting married.
- For a listing of required fees see page 8.

### **Services and Fees for Non-Regular Attenders**

- Our pastoral staff provides the Premarital Preparation and Enrichment sessions free of charge as a ministry to our community. The exception to this would be if neither the pastor nor the couple has available openings during regular office hours. If counseling during non office hours is to be conducted then there shall be a one time counseling fee of \$150 paid directly to the pastor on the first appointment.
- There is a one time charge for inventory testing materials used in the Premarital Preparation and Enrichment sessions of approximately \$90-\$120. The pastor

will also likely request that the couple purchase one or two marriage resource books as part of their marriage preparation.

- Oakwood Community Church does not set fees for its full-time pastoral staff for performing marriage ceremonies. Although the pastors are usually given remuneration for their preparations, we leave that decision up to the couple getting married.
- For a listing of required fees see page 8.

**WEDDING FEES**  
(Effective 3/07)

	Regular Attenders	Non-Regular Attenders
<b>Facility Rental</b> (check made out to Oakwood Community Church) <b>Special set-ups may require an extra custodial fee</b>	\$50	\$200
<b>Damage Deposit</b> Separate check made out to the church along with a self addressed stamped envelope. This check will be returned if there is no damage	\$150	\$150

For services listed below, make check out to the individual performing the service

	Regular Attenders	Non-Regular Attenders
<b>Director of Wedding Ceremony</b> At the direction of the officiating pastor, the responsibilities of this person are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directs all ceremony procedures from the processional to the recessional</li> <li>• Opens and closes facilities</li> <li>• Miscellaneous administrative details</li> </ul> (This position does not include "Wedding Planning" beyond the ceremony itself)  We will put you in contact with the Director of Wedding Ceremony	\$100	\$100
<b>Sound Technicians</b> The sound technician must be someone who has been trained on our equipment. We will put you in contact with an available Sound Technician  *for first 3 hours, \$25 for each additional hour or partial hour ** for first 3 hours, \$35 for each additional hour or partial hour Additional fee for tear down/reset of stage instruments is noted	\$75* w/o tear down/reset  105* w/tear down/reset	\$125** w/no tear down/reset  \$192.50** w/tear down/reset
<b>Pianists – Suggested – not required:</b>  ***depending upon the extent of services rendered	\$90 - \$120***	\$90 - \$120***
<b>Custodial fee:</b> (check made out to Oakwood Community Church)	\$60	\$60

**All checks are to be given to the Director of Wedding Ceremony on or before the night of the rehearsal. Please put them in envelopes with the individuals name on them. The DWC will then distribute them to these individuals.**

## **Planning for your Wedding Service**

Planning your wedding service is the privilege of the couple, and usually more particularly the bride. You will want to communicate all your desires in detail to Oakwood's Director of Wedding Ceremony. If the wedding is held at a location other than Oakwood's facility, and an Oakwood Director of Wedding Ceremony is not used, then you will need to plan the details of the ceremony directly with the officiating pastor. We want this service to be special to you and we desire to accommodate as many of your requests as possible. She will pass on to the officiating pastor any unusual items that may need his approval (for example, approval of your vows should you choose to write your own, or special readings other than Scripture, or "secular music"). Again, since a Christian wedding is a worship service, the choice of music and readings etc., must reflect Christian worship and values. It is to be a distinctly Christian wedding. The couple may select the music in consultation with the pianist/organist, but the selections must be approved by Oakwood's Director of Wedding Ceremony or the officiating pastor. The more precise the advance planning, the more efficiently the Director of Wedding Ceremony (or the pastor) will be able to direct a stress-free wedding rehearsal.

Below is a suggested order of service. You are welcome to propose adjustments or additions to the Director of Wedding Ceremony (or the pastor). You will also want to work out details of the service with the Director of Wedding Ceremony. Such items include: rental of optional items (candelabra, plants, etc.), family members to be seated and their order, manner of processional with names and order of entrance, selection of vows, selection of music, etc.

It is not necessary to have a worship program for your wedding guests. If you desire this, after the service has been planned with the Director of Wedding Ceremony (or the pastor), you may make your own arrangements with a printer.

## Planning Music For Your Wedding

Neither keyboardist nor soloist is required for your wedding, but obviously, they do add something special. You are responsible for selecting the music and musicians which are then submitted for approval to the Director of Wedding Ceremony. The lyrics should be specifically suitable for a Christian worship service. Any special tapes or sound equipment needed must be discussed with the sound technician well in advance of the rehearsal. Music can be a beautiful accent to the vows. The Director of Wedding Ceremony may be helpful to you in this regard.

A detailed format of the Wedding Ceremony including musical selections, order of processional, indication of vows selected, etc. should be given to the Director of Wedding Ceremony, Sound Technician, and the officiating pastor at least one week prior to your rehearsal. However, please remember that all elements of the ceremony must first be approved by Oakwood's Director of Wedding Ceremony or the officiating pastor.

Any taped selections to be used in the ceremony should be recorded in the order of play on a quality CD, and available to the sound technician prior to your rehearsal. Please consult the sound technician to assure the best quality recording.

Live or taped music is customary for the prelude, processional, and recessional. Optional special music may be inserted in the locations indicated. We strongly recommend that you choose no more than three songs to be performed in the optional places in the ceremony. In choosing your music, you should consider the type of wedding (formal or informal), the words to the vocal pieces, and whether or not the selections would suit the vocal range and style of your musicians.

## **Suggested Order of Service**

(this is not how it would appear in an Order of Service that might be printed)

### **Prelude** -- (instrumental: live or tape)

- Seating of guests
- Seating of special family members
- Optional candle lighting
- Optional special music

### **Processional**

- Determine instrumental music and bridal processional music

### **Ceremony**

- Greeting (pastor's initial remarks) & Opening Prayer
- Optional special music
- Statement of Intention (initial promissory vows)
- Giving of the Bride (Question to Bride's Father or other)
- Optional special music
- Scripture Reading (couple may make a request – or it may be incorporated into the Words of Encouragement)
- Words of Encouragement (2-5 minutes)
- Optional special music
- Exchange of Vows
- Exchange of Rings
- Optional special music
- Optional lighting of the unity candle during above special music
- Pronouncement
- Marriage Blessing
- Benediction
- Kiss (modest, without introduction)
- Presentation of the couple

### **Recessional**

- Instrumental music: live or tape
- Bridal party
- Special family members
- Optional instructional announcement to congregation (invitation to wedding reception, or other request)
- Congregation (by rows, or general)

## Sample of a Wedding Program

This might appear in Order of Service to the Guests if the Bride chooses to prepare one; it is not required. The elements may vary of course due to the choices of the order of ceremony. The pastor has samples of various wedding programs that may be a helpful guide.

Prelude

Processional

“titles” ..... .. composer

“another title?” .....composer

Greeting and Opening Prayer

Statement of Intention

Giving of the Bride

Scripture Reading

Words of Encouragement

Exchange of Vows & Rings

Special Music ..... Song’s title

Lighting of the Unity Candle

Pronouncement

Marriage Blessing

Presentation of Couple

Recessional

“title ”.....composer

## Wedding Planner Websites

These websites have “schedules” of when things should be done. They generally start at 9-12 months prior to the wedding. A wedding can be planned in a shorter amount of time, but these sites give some good information about some things you might want to plan for.

<http://www.wilton.com/wedding/wedding-planner/>

<http://www.wedalert.com/content/planning/calendar.asp>

<http://www.a-weddingday.com/articles/weddingtimetable.html>

<http://www.weddingsolutions.com>

You can find additional sites by doing a search for Wedding Planning.

**OAKWOOD'S SUMMARY OF MARRIAGE LAWS  
STATE OF FLORIDA AND HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY  
(Revised June 2009)**

**APPLICATION FOR MARRIAGE LICENSE:**

1. Application for marriage licenses may be obtained in person, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM, from:  
**Downtown Tampa**, Marriage License Department, 419 Pierce St, Room #140, Tampa, 33602  
**Plant City Branch Office**, 302 N. Michigan St., Room 13, Plant City, 33563  
**Brandon Regional Service Center**, 311 Pauls Drive, Brandon, 33511  
**South Shore Center**, 410 30<sup>th</sup> Street South East, Ruskin, 33570  
**North Tampa Office, Floriland Business Center**, 9309 N. Florida Ave, Tampa, 33612  
**Telephone for marriage license info:** (813) 276-8100  
Clerk of Circuit Court offices are open during regular office hours and are closed Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.  
Both parties must be present.  
Each party must have proper identification (driver's license, birth certificate, passport, etc.). Florida legal age is 18. If under 18, must also have the consent of **both** parents unless the parents are deceased or divorced, in which case, the party having legal custody must give written consent, and must provide copy of order giving custody as well as a certified copy of the birth certificate.  
Both parties must provide a copy of their social security number.  
If either party has been divorced, final judgment papers are necessary.
2. **FEES**  
Cash is the best option for paying the fees. A local check will be accepted if the person writing the check has their name and address imprinted on the check and the name and address on their drivers license is the same. They will not accept a check if the addresses are different on the check and drivers license.  
\$93.50 Marriage License. (\$61.00 if you have a certificate of Premarital Counseling from someone registered with the county.)  
\$4.00 - Additional charge, if preparation is needed for affidavits (such as certificates of consent).  
\$30.00 - If you desire to have a marriage ceremony performed.  
If all the requirements have been met, the marriage license will be issued as soon as possible and may be used immediately. As of January 1, 1999, a letter on official letterhead from a pastor or counseling center stating the couple has completed premarital counseling must be presented to get license immediately. Otherwise, there is a three (3) day waiting period to receive the license after application.  
The Marriage License must be used within **60 days** from date of issuance. If it has expired, an additional \$93.50 fee must be paid as if an application had never been filed.
3. A Blood Test is not required by law but the leadership of Oakwood Community Church strongly suggests that you take a blood test for Rh factor and venereal disease and also a test for AIDS.
4. An expired marriage license application must be returned to the county courthouse whether or not it is used within the 60 day period. If the couple is married, it is returned signed by the minister; if it is not used, it must be returned to clear the legal record of the parties involved.
5. A Florida marriage license may be obtained at any county courthouse and is valid in any county in the state of Florida.

**DAYS MARRIAGE MAY LEGALLY BE PERFORMED:** Any day of year; no restrictions.

**ELIGIBILITY TO PERFORM IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA:** Any ordained minister, judge, notary, or clerk of the court may perform the marriage. No bond is required for any of the above persons to perform marriage.

**WITNESSES:**

1. There is provision on the marriage license for the signature of two witnesses.
2. Witnesses are not legally required in the state of Florida.

**LEGAL CEREMONY REQUIREMENTS:**

The only thing required by law in a marriage ceremony in the state of Florida is that such person will promise "to keep only unto the other so long as they both should live." All other parts of the ceremony are either traditional, the requirement of the pastor and the church performing the marriage, or the choice of the couple being married. Once the minister has pronounced the couple man and wife, they are considered by the state of Florida to be married, whether or not the marriage license is sent back into the state. Regardless of any paperwork after the ceremony, the marriage may only be legally ended by divorce.

## The Purpose of an Engagement

1. The total process of learning to understand and relate to each other in all circumstances. “I” and “you” become “we.”
2. Undoing unwholesome attitudes developed through earlier conditioning and dating experiences, and exploring male-female likeness and differences in general and as applicable to each couple.
3. Understanding and evaluating each of the parents, the parents’ relationship to each other, the relationship of each to his parents, and the future relationship of the new family to the old family.
4. Determining the kind of marriage and family life desired by the couple, and the beginning of thinking, feeling, and reacting in this context.
5. The continuation of individual growth and acceptance of responsibility, in an atmosphere of love and appreciation, with the “push” of sexuality as one of the driving forces.
6. Working out attitudes and plans for work and family financing.
7. Exploring attitudes toward children, and coming to a beginning plan of how they should be reared.
8. The exploration of personal development and of family life in the larger context of social and spiritual reality.
9. Solution of problems in the feeling and expression of affection including specific preparation for sex life.
10. Planning the general and specific details of the wedding.
11. The development of long-range family goals, life and purpose and values.