



Wedding Handbook

CG Midtown

Please read this handbook in its entirety prior to contacting the church office or submitting your wedding application.

Wedding Handbook Overview

Congratulations on your engagement! This handbook is your key to all things weddings at Common Ground. Please note:

- This handbook was assembled to provide you with a good understanding of our view on marriage, the process at Common Ground, and details on what to expect. We anticipate that the vast majority of your questions will be answered in this document. Please read it, note any questions you have, and then contact the church office at office@cground.org or 317.251.1494 to inquire about church availability.

To get you started, below is a general checklist/timeline for weddings at Common Ground:

1. Read the Wedding Handbook, noting questions you have as you read.
2. Contact the church office at office@cground.org or 317.251.1494 to see if your potential wedding date is available.
3. Submit your completed wedding application and wedding fee of \$950 to the church office. You may mail it in to 4550 N. Illinois Street, Indianapolis 46208. Our goal is to reply within 10 business days of receiving your completed application and fee.
4. Once your wedding is approved, it will be added to the church calendar and your date reserved for you. Unfortunately, we are not able to “hold” dates prior to your wedding being approved.
5. You will receive an email or phone call letting you know that your wedding is approved. At this point, you will be given information regarding upcoming Foundations of Marriage retreats. Once you confirm that the retreat aligns with your calendar and our availability (space is limited), you will work with the office staff to register for the retreat, take the Prepare Inventory and receive information on your mentor couple.
6. Approximately two weeks following your wedding approval, a wedding coordinator will be assigned and will contact you to begin working on details for your wedding.

A few fast facts:

- Wedding fee:
 - i. Package A – getting married at Common Ground - includes building, retreat and mentoring \$950 (a \$200 security deposit is refundable)
 - ii. Package B – just going through Common Ground’s premarital process, not getting married at Common Ground - includes retreat and mentoring only \$380
- Amount due when you apply: \$950 or \$380, respectively
- How far in advance you can apply: 12 months
- Do you have to use a staff pastor: No
- When is your rehearsal: After 5pm on Friday night
- Can you book a Friday wedding: Unfortunately not
- Can we video record your wedding for you: Talk with your wedding coordinator about this. This may be available for an additional fee.
- For most everything else...please keep reading!

Again, congratulations on your engagement! We hope you find the information contained in the Wedding Handbook helpful.

Introduction to Marriage

Marriage is a gift from God. God created men and women in such a way that they are complimentary to each other. He intended that they be joined in marriage to love and help each other, creating a unique oneness (Genesis 2:18-25). Since God designed the marriage relationship, we acknowledge that He knows best how to build a healthy marriage.

God communicated His view of marriage in the Bible. In it, we see basic principles which bring joy and fulfillment to marriage. Ignoring these principles can lead to frustration and failure. A few of these principles are as follows:

- **Marriage is intended to be permanent.** Marriage is a life-long relationship between a man and a woman which fosters tenderness, respect, and care for each other in good times and bad. Another way to look at this is to define marriage as a covenant relationship, rather than a contractual agreement. Unlike contracts, a covenant is a constant regardless of circumstances, feelings, etc. It is like God's relationship with us: no matter what we think, act or feel, God loves us and promises to forgive us. In this context of marriage, God also creates a loving and nurturing environment for raising children and caring for aging relatives.
- **Marriage serves a larger purpose.** Marriage was designed by God to reflect the relationship between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:31-32). This is a mystery, but the principle is that marriage is to bear witness to the love God has for his church (and the world). It also includes being active, participating members in a Christ-centered church. The ability to grow in marital oneness and bear witness to God's amazing love is fueled by belonging to a local church community.

Remarriage after Divorce

God's intentions in marriage are for lifelong fidelity. Unfortunately, broken marital vows distort God's original vision. According to the Bible, marriage partners can break their marital vows in a variety of ways, sometimes leading to divorce. Divorce destroys community and has far reaching relational effects. As a community, Common Ground has approached this issue in the following ways:

- **Encouraging faithfulness.** Our worship, education, house church and counseling ministries are designed to encourage and support couples in making and keeping their wedding vows. We will participate in the restoration of marriage in crisis, helping couples move toward forgiveness and reconciliation.
- **Understanding the story.** The Bible provides reasons for divorce and also records conditions for remarriage after divorce. Common Ground will consider participating in the remarriage of divorced individuals on a case by case basis after conversation and prayer to understand the circumstances that led to divorce and the intentions of the person desiring to be remarried.
- **Teaching repentance and practicing forgiveness.** The Bible teaches us to have a forgiving nature. We desire to be a source of encouragement to those who are truly repentant. Therefore, we will participate in the remarriage of individuals who confess sin and demonstrate an attitude of repentance.

Marriage and Premarital Sex

The Bible teaches that any sexual relationship outside of marriage is not God's will. Premarital intercourse, cohabitation, adultery, and other sexual involvement leave scars that can severely harm the marriage bond. For this reason, the church and its ministry staff will not participate in weddings where an unmarried couple is living together and/or involved in premarital sex. Our intent is to restore couples to a right relationship with God and each other. Common Ground will participate in weddings of couples who are willing to take these steps: repentance, separate if co-habiting, and abstain from sexual intercourse until they are married. We believe this is an important step toward a healthy marriage and preparation for God's vision of marital fidelity. We encourage open dialogue around this and believe there is power in living in the light. You are invited to speak with a pastor if you have questions about this or if you are having a hard time living by these standards of holiness.

What are some biblical passages dealing with marriage?

- **Marriage was designed by God.** (Genesis 2:18-25)
- **God communicated His view of marriage.** (Hebrews 13:4)
- **Marriage is permanent.** (Matthew 19:6)
- **Marriage serves a larger purpose.** (Ephesians 5:21-33)
- **God desires unity in marriage.** (Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18)
- **Broken vows can destroy a marriage.** (Matthew 19:9)
- **The Bible teaches repentance and forgiveness.** (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4)
- **Sex outside of marriage is against God's will.** (I Thessalonians 4:3-6)
- **The church is called to restore right relationships.** (Galatians 6:1-5)

Our Premarital Process

Is it for me?

Anyone getting married at Common Ground, or by a Common Ground officiant at another location, is required to participate in our premarital process. Anyone who attends Common Ground is welcome and encouraged to participate – even if you're getting married somewhere else with an outside officiant.

What is included in the premarital process?

Our process has 3 parts:

1. **Foundations of Marriage Retreat** - a retreat for a couple planning to be married.
2. **Prepare Inventory** – each couple will participate in this online inventory which will be utilized by your mentor couple.
3. **Enneagram** – each partner will take an enneagram assessment and be introduced to this as a tool to help you navigate your inner life as well as your relationship with each other.
4. **Mentor Couple** – the pastoral staff will assign a mentor couple to each engaged couple participating in our premarital process. This is in addition to meeting with the pastor/wedding officiant. You should anticipate about 4 sessions with this couple prior to the wedding and 2-3 sessions over the course of your first year of marriage.

Once your wedding application is approved, the office staff will work with you to register for a Foundations of Marriage retreat. Following your registration, you'll be asked to complete the Prepare Inventory and we will work to assign you a mentor couple. These steps will be initiated after your application is approved.

Mentor Couples

Based on God's value of strong and healthy marriages and how they reflect His love to the world, we want to ensure you are well equipped in your marriage. One way we seek to accomplish that is by pairing you with a mentor couple.

Mentor couples have been personally selected by our pastoral team and have attended a training class designed to help them walk through the mentoring process with you. In a nutshell, our desire is that the mentor couple relationship will provide:

- A safe place for the engaged/newly married couple to discuss questions and issues, and receive guidance
- A context for discussing observations from the Prepare Inventory
- Opportunity to talk about important issues *before* they become a serious problem
- Prayer & encouragement

When will we be assigned a mentor couple?

Typically, we make mentor couple assignments in the weeks leading up to the Foundations of Marriage retreat. Based on the wedding date we may make adjustments accordingly. If you feel there are circumstances that warrant an earlier pairing with your mentor couple, please contact the church office.

What should we expect?

At a high-level, your mentor couple will meet with you at least 4 times prior to the wedding. These conversations are designed to help you work through challenges in your relationship, identify family values and establish a plan to help you prioritize your new lives together. We have asked the mentor couples to help facilitate a safe and transparent environment for you to discuss any questions, concerns or expectations regarding your relationship and marriage. There will also be approximately 3 meetings after the wedding (6 weeks, 6 months and one year).

If you have any further questions about the mentoring process please contact the church office.

Is specialized counseling available?

Yes. If you have a special need, call the church office at 317.251.1494 and a pastor can meet with you and give you more information on where you can receive specialized counseling, if necessary.

Booking Your Wedding

What are the conditions for being married at Common Ground?

- A five-month waiting period is required, providing sufficient time for our premarital mentoring and planning. This waiting period begins the day we receive the completed wedding application.
- The couple must participate in our premarital process, actively prepare for a healthy marriage, and commit to marital fidelity before and after the wedding day.
- The couple must attend church regularly. In addition, there must be some significant relationship between the couple and CG.
- One of the Common Ground pastors must approve your request to be married at CG.

What are the policies for the use of the church building and grounds for a wedding?

(Failure to comply with any of the policies below will result in loss of \$200 security deposit)

- A wedding can only be scheduled on a Saturday.
- Common Ground Christian Church is a smoke-free environment.
- The use of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on church property.
- Food or beverage is not allowed in the Sanctuary.
- You will have access to the building for a total of 6 hours on the day of your wedding.
- Please ask your wedding coordinator before planning the use of any celebration material (i.e. rose petals, confetti, rice, etc.) Some may not be allowed due to the potential for staining of carpets or the amount of time required for clean up.
- The Sanctuary and any other rooms used should be cleared of all personal items after the wedding and should be left in the condition in which they were found.
- We do not have capacity to store wedding décor or rental items at Common Ground. Common Ground is not responsible for any items or décor that is left on the property.
- Access to the building for decoration and set-up must be arranged with your wedding coordinator.
- Common Ground is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

How do we schedule a wedding at Common Ground?

The couple must read the Wedding Handbook, complete a wedding application and submit it to the church office with the **\$950** wedding fee. A date will not be held for you until your application has been approved and **\$950** wedding fee has been paid.

What does my wedding fee include?

The \$950 wedding fee includes a Pre-marriage retreat, marriage mentoring (pre and post), the required wedding coordinator, audio engineer for the day of the wedding, and a cleaning fee. The fee is a flat fee, and discounts are not available if you choose not to utilize any of the resources or services we provide. \$200 of the fee is considered a security deposit to cover any damages or additional cleaning that needs to be done following the wedding, or failure to adhere to our policies. The deposit may be refunded to you pending the condition of the building following the ceremony.

Your application and full payment must be received before a wedding will be put on the calendar. Unfortunately, we are unable to hold dates.

Upon receipt of your completed application:

- The staff pastor you request to conduct your wedding will review your application. If you do not have a preference, a staff pastor will be assigned.
- Typically, you will be notified of approval (or denial) within ten (10) business days. Approval is based on your affirmation of church policies and availability of the building and/or staff.
- Once your application is approved, you will be notified.
- Approximately two weeks following your wedding approval, a wedding coordinator will be assigned and will contact you to begin working on details for your wedding.

How far in advance may we schedule our wedding?

A date that is 12 months or less away can be scheduled subject to availability. Weddings are not scheduled on holiday weekends or the two Saturdays before or after Christmas.

When can my rehearsal be held?

Rehearsals are the Friday evening before the wedding. You may begin your rehearsal anytime after 5pm. The sound/video system is not available for use during the rehearsal. Musicians will be provided with a sound check on Saturday before the wedding.

Does the church have wedding items we can use?

The church can provide the following items:

- Four screens for holding tea lights (tea lights provided)
- Kneeling benches
- Unity candle table
- Table for guest book or programs
- Podium
- Keyboard
- Sound system and microphones
- Music stands/lights for music stands
- Communion elements and serving set
- Other small décor items and miscellaneous necessities for your wedding day (iron, steamer, needle & thread, etc.)

Any other decorative items desired should be provided by the couple. Please contact your wedding coordinator for more details or pictures of the above items.

What is NOT included?

- Video Lighting Engineer (necessary if you plan to use slides or any other video element). This service is available for an additional fee and must be requested through your wedding coordinator at least one month before the wedding.
- Services of the Audio Engineer on the night of the rehearsal. Your musicians will be provided a 30 minute sound check before the wedding at a time prescribed by your wedding coordinator.
- Musicians, vocalists and others you may choose to include in your wedding. Your Wedding coordinator can make recommendations on these and other vendors if you so desire.

A pastor is provided to officiate at your wedding as part of our ministry to you. It is customary to give the minister an honorarium. If you have questions about this, consult your wedding coordinator.

What are the policies for the use of the church building and grounds for a reception?

Requests for receptions will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the church office for more information.

Is there a cancelation policy?

Should you cancel your wedding prior to attending a retreat, you will receive a \$750 refund.

Should you cancel your wedding after attending a retreat, you will receive a \$570 refund.

Should you change venues, but continue on with marriage mentoring through CG you will receive a \$370 refund.

Roles and Responsibilities at a Glance

Church office staff

- Receives your wedding application and fee
- Confirms availability of your date and preferred officiant
- Schedules couple for Foundations of Marriage retreat
- Provides the Prepare Inventory to the couple prior to Foundations of Marriage retreat
- Assigns a wedding coordinator
- Assigns a mentor couple

Wedding coordinator

- Contacts the couple approximately two weeks after application is approved
- Meets with couple 6-8 weeks before the wedding to discuss details of the ceremony and wedding day
- Provides access to the church facility and to the church's wedding items
- Coordinates audio and visual needs for the ceremony
- Works with the pastor to run the wedding rehearsal
- Handles the details of the wedding ceremony and acts as a "go-to" person during the wedding day

Staff Pastor

- Meets with couple in advance of the wedding to discuss the service order and elements of the ceremony
- Works with wedding coordinator to run wedding rehearsal
- Conducts the ceremony

Mentor Couple

- Meets with the couple 4-5 times before and after the wedding ceremony and 3 times after the ceremony
- Provide a safe place for couples to talk about issues or questions
- Facilitates a discussion about the Prepare Inventory and debrief on Foundations of Marriage retreat