

Wedding Policy

A Guide for Churches and Synagogues

by

Philip E. Baker, AAGO

October 5, 2002



Committee on Educational Resources

Kathleen Armstrong Thomerson, FAGO, Chair

Philip E. Baker, AAGO

Gregory Gyllsdorff, FAGO

Cynthia Holden, AAGO

Councillor for Education

Ronald L. Gould, AAGO

Table of Contents

I	Introduction
II	Prologue for Christian Churches
III	Prologue for Jewish Synagogues
IV	Committee
V	Authority
VI	Scheduling of Weddings
VII	Facilities Available
VIII	Fees
IX	Refunding of Fees
X	Wedding Coordinator
XI	Officiating Clergyperson
XII	Music
XIII	Rehearsals
XIV	Decorations
XV	Liturgical Seasons
XVI	Children
XVII	Photographers
XVIII	Videotapes
XIX	Miscellaneous
XX	Ushers
XXI	Safeguarding of Personal Items
XXII	Contract

Introduction

Why the need for a wedding policy booklet? Many times couples wanting to be married in a religious ceremony need careful guidance as to what is appropriate within the sacred space known as the sanctuary, chapel, temple or synagogue. Public relations can suffer great damage if guidance is not handled with gracious diplomacy, tact, firmness, fairness and wisdom. Emotions and feelings run high and tempers can easily flare around the time of something as important, personal and special as a wedding. It is a time of paramount importance in the lives of those being married, and the faith community should be as supportive as possible in sponsoring this blessed union while adhering to its established policies.

When completed, this wedding policy booklet should be duplicated in sufficient quantity to provide each inquiring couple with a copy. It has proved helpful also to print extracts of the policies governing florists and photographers on additional separate pages so that the bride can give them copies of the policies concerning their work.

Tradition has established that the church and synagogue are of God. Such an institution should therefore project God's love to the world, even though it must have standards to uphold in doing so.

Your congregation is unique. There is not another exactly like it anywhere, even though it might be one of many in a closely-knit denomination. The elements that make it different from all others have to do with the personalities of the leadership, as well as the membership; the architecture of the building; the sound of the instruments; the liturgical preferences of the clergy; the structure of the worship; the ability and taste of the musicians; the skills of the wedding coordinator and many other factors. There are large, magnificent churches/synagogues that host a great number of weddings. There are smaller ones that don't host as many. Weddings take place in evangelical congregations where traditional liturgy does not have a role. Weddings take place in churches where the liturgy is high and of paramount importance. Weddings take place in synagogues of equally disparate traditions. There are places where the liturgical tradition falls somewhere in between those two extremes. There are congregations that employ full-time professional ministers, musicians and wedding consultants. There are congregations that don't.

All of these factors make it of utmost importance to examine the identity of your congregation closely with an objective eye, in order to evaluate the need for a wedding policy booklet. This booklet should be designed and written by those who enjoy the complete confidence and blessing of the congregation's authorities. Such a booklet is of little help to anyone if it is not upheld and supported by those in authority governing weddings that take place in your church/synagogue.

It should be obvious to the serious student of this pamphlet that what is written here is not policy. It is a series of salient points to consider carefully when coming up with your own policies.

An effective wedding policy packet might contain these six items:

- 1) Wedding Policy Booklet
- 2) Contract page
- 3) "Music for your Wedding" leaflet
- 4) Complete text of ceremony
- 5) Extract for photographers
- 6) Extract for florists

Prologue for Christian Congregations

We are grateful that you have given (name of church) an opportunity to share in your wedding. Our goal in providing personnel and the setting for your service is to support you in your new life together, to reaffirm the sacred nature of marriage and to deepen the joy and faith of all who celebrate with you.

We will be working diligently to enable you to experience your wedding as a true spiritual celebration. In so doing, we will take seriously your own personalities and experiences and at the same time strive to maintain Christian integrity in traditions that have enriched the marriages of countless generations of people before us.

The marriage service begins: "Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God....." We will do our best to enhance the consciousness of God's presence, both in your minds and in the minds of those who share in the service. The opening statement continues: "to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony." These words remind us that each person is an individual with unique needs and feelings. We will listen to you with concern, provide careful guidance and trust that our efforts will reveal this church's commitment to you.

At a place called Cana of Galilee, Christ "adorned and beautified" a wedding with His presence. May your wedding, by your devotion, the love of family and friends gathered here and the beauty of the liturgy we plan together, reveal His presence once again.

Prologue for Jewish Congregations

We are grateful that you have given (name of congregation) an opportunity to share in your wedding. Our goal in providing personnel and the setting for your service is to support you in your new life together, to reaffirm the sacred nature of marriage and to deepen the joy and faith of all who celebrate with you.

We will work diligently with you to help you experience your wedding as an occasion of God's action in your life. We will respect your own personalities and experiences and strive at the same time to maintain the integrity of this ancient tradition, which has enriched the marriages of countless generations before us.

The Jewish wedding is much more than a beautiful ceremony. It is an intricate weaving of law, tradition and social mores, deeply rooted in the Torah and cherished in society for the protection of the family and our shared moral convictions. Thus it is both religious and communal. We will work with you to see that your ceremony honors both these aspects of this union. Because it also brings together two individuals, we will listen to you with concern, provide careful guidance and trust that our efforts will reveal this congregation's commitment to you.

Jewish tradition understands the Sabbath as the bride of Israel. As the Sabbath makes a sanctuary in time for the Jewish people, just so marriage must hallow a human relationship, making a sanctuary in space, in our hearts. We pray that your wedding at (name of congregation) will be the beginning of this sanctifying work in your life together.

Committee

Those appointed by the powers that be, mentioned above, to serve on this committee to study and formulate this wedding policy booklet should be members of the congregation who have a deep, abiding, innate respect and appreciation for the propriety and order of activities that are appropriate within the congregation's sacred space. The minister, organist and wedding coordinator probably should be on any committee charged with formulating wedding policies. If they are not on the committee for some reason, they should be carefully consulted and brought well within the loop, as they are the ones who will work with couples and the policies on a day-by-day basis.

Authority

One of the first tasks of formulating a wedding policy booklet is to determine accurately and realistically who is in charge of the local congregation--the line of authority. Where does the buck stop? Without the total support of this person, a policy manual can be simply an extended exercise in futility. In some congregations this final authority is a clergy person; in a synagogue it may be the cantor; in others it may be an executive committee. Projects such as a wedding policy booklet have a way of clearly defining the real lines of authority within a congregation. It is from within these real lines that the booklet must be conceived, written, approved, distributed and enforced.

N. B. It has proved helpful, whenever feasible, to state the reasons for a given policy. If people can readily understand why a policy has been established, they are much more ready to accept it.

Scheduling of Weddings

There are manifold factors to consider when formulating policy governing the scheduling of weddings. If there is only one wedding on a particular day, few problems occur. But in larger congregations, who knows how many couples will request weddings on a given date in the future? Therefore, it would behoove a church/synagogue to have specific time slots when weddings are allowed, such as 10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and so on. There needs to be sufficient time between weddings for housekeeping, for photography, for preparation for the next wedding or a service of worship for the congregation.

There should also be a great concern for staff energy. This is a key factor, which a committee should not lightly dismiss. Most churches/synagogues have found it advisable to block out certain days, weekends or even liturgical seasons when weddings will not take place. These proscriptions should not be a problem as long as there are good reasons for them, that they are set well in advance and supported by the authorities of the congregation. Jewish weddings are not permitted on the Sabbath (from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday) or on the major Jewish holidays and festivals, including Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. Many churches do not accept weddings for the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, as well as certain holiday weekends. Parking capacities should also be considered when setting wedding times. If an earlier wedding is conducting a reception at the church/synagogue, parking for the next wedding could become troublesome. There is also the matter of scheduling the rehearsals, usually on the preceding day. It might be advisable to also establish set rehearsal time slots.

Facilities Available

This section should list the rooms and areas of the church/synagogue that are available for weddings or receptions. The main worship area should be listed along with its comfortable seating capacity as should any alternate areas such as chapels or smaller sacred spaces. In large buildings there might be several of these. Areas appropriate for receptions, along with their varying capacities, should also appear here. You might logically combine this paragraph in your policy booklet with the following section on fees.

Fees

There are churches/synagogues that believe that their members should have access to their facilities at no cost. Other congregations have specified fees for the use of the church and its facilities, often requiring one fee for members and a higher fee for those persons who are not members. Experience has taught that when fees are required, these should be paid at the time that the facilities are scheduled, without exception. This policy can become sticky at this point, as some potential brides and grooms have been known to join congregations solely for the purpose of avoiding fees for the facilities' use. To this end, many congregations have established a policy whereby a party getting married in the church/synagogue must have been a member for at least a year. The other trouble spot has to do with who is a member. Is it the bride or groom? Is it the son or daughter of a member? Is it the grandson or granddaughter of a member? How about aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews? This should prove for a lively evening or two of high spirited debate for the committee.

Committees should be aware that if this is an initial effort for your congregation, it need not be perceived as the final one. Documents such as a wedding policy booklet should probably be revised every few years, incorporating additional matters learned through experience.

There may well be a schedule of fees required: one for the main worship space, another for a smaller chapel; and different amounts for the same room--one fee for members, another fee for non-members.

If your congregation offers rooms for receptions, a fee schedule for various services rendered will be necessary. Will outside caterers be allowed within your church/synagogue?

There is also the matter of fees for the participating musicians--organists, soloists, instrumentalists, choir members. Many congregations also include a suggested honorarium for the minister, as most grooms have no idea what is appropriate for clergy. The policy should state the fee for the musicians in such a way as to provide some flexibility. A couple who want traditional music that the musicians already know and can readily perform might well pay a lower fee than a couple asking for music that requires a great deal of additional preparation. In the latter case, the musician should have the liberty of raising the fee to compensate for the extra time and effort.

In arriving at these fees, it would be wise to poll the churches and synagogues in your area to determine what the going rates are for these services. If the organist is expected to attend the wedding rehearsal, an additional fee should be required. In most cases, and with good communication between the minister or wedding coordinator and the organist, he or she can be informed about any special circumstances prior to the ceremony without needing to be present at the wedding rehearsal. Rehearsals with a soloist or instrumentalist can be best scheduled at a separate time when the musicians can give their full attention to the music preparation. By the time the

minister and wedding coordinator have placed each person in the wedding party, explained how they get there, as well as the other countless details, there is usually little time to go through the music.

The organist should have the check in hand for the wedding before the first note is played. The wedding coordinator can collect the payment before the rehearsal, or the wedding policy may require that the check, payable to the organist, be received with the final payment of the wedding/building use fees, due at a stipulated time prior to the wedding day.

There is also the sensitive matter of the "bench fee," a fee paid to the host organist when a couple invites a guest organist to play for a wedding. Inasmuch as the organists of most congregations rely on the revenue from weddings to supplement their salaries, it is reasonable to pay the resident organist a bench fee, whether or not he or she plays for the wedding. This policy honors the profession and the resident organist's position, and it helps uphold the congregation's musical standards.

The host organist should probably meet with the visiting organist to assign registration pistons and answer questions about registration. Depending on the location of the organ console, the visitor might benefit from the opportunity to hear the organ while seated in a pew as the resident organist plays. Many times the sound in the pew is quite different from the balance heard at the console.

In any event, the organist should have the responsibility for approving or disapproving any requests for other organists to come in and play. If he or she does not know of this outside musician, the organist might require a performance tape. Additionally, the organist or choir director should have the final authority on requests for outside soloists to sing. Should other instruments be requested, it should be the host organist who arranges for them. Unfortunately, outside musicians unknown to the organist can sometimes result in diminished music quality as well as increasing, perhaps excessively, rehearsal time with them.

The thoughtful committee will consider the demands on the organist's time. Some play two or three weddings a week. Anything that the committee can do with its policies to make this musician's work go more smoothly will reap great benefits in the organist's performances during regular worship services.

The committee could perhaps gain new insight into the organist's work load when there are two or three weddings on a given weekend. There could very possibly be three wedding rehearsals on Friday and three weddings on Saturday, along with several extra rehearsals with extra musicians. Then the committee could see why the organist is not bright-eyed and fresh on Sunday morning for his or her primary responsibilities. The same principles are true for synagogue musicians, although the days of the week may vary.

Refunding of fees

Plans change for all in every station of life. Should a scheduled wedding be cancelled, the policy governing fee refunds must be clear. Many churches/synagogues refund most of the fee if the wedding is cancelled six months in advance of the scheduled date (usually withholding a small portion for administrative costs). A lesser amount might be refunded if cancelled even closer to the scheduled date. This subject, too, should provide a lively evening of debate for the committee. Most

congregations have amended this policy through the years as their experience has taught them more prudent ways in which to handle this dilemma.

Wedding Coordinator

A congregation blessed with a gifted, charming and effective wedding coordinator serving on its staff is blessed, indeed! A person with the knowledge of proper etiquette and skills necessary to fill this position is truly rare. The wedding coordinator must walk that narrow line between graciously representing the church/synagogue and its mission of loving outreach while upholding the rules and policies governing weddings.

It is helpful if the wedding coordinator is one of the first persons that a couple meets early on in conversations concerning the scheduling and planning of the wedding. No church or synagogue wants to give any caller the "run around." The wedding coordinator is responsible for listening carefully, answering questions and helping counsel and guide the couple through the planning process, advising them of the wedding policies. The scope of this job is very broad and encompasses all of the activities surrounding the wedding that take place on the premises of the church/synagogue.

In larger congregations there might be so many weddings that one hostess cannot administer them all. Such communities might need several people who can serve in this capacity under the wedding coordinator's close supervision. These alternates must combine the coordinator's same grace and firmness.

The wedding coordinator should in no way be confused with an outside professional wedding consultant whom the bride might hire to help bring the wedding together (reception, invitations and the like). An outside wedding consultant would, most probably, have little or no knowledge or experience concerning those matters that are of utmost importance to the local congregation. This person should not be given a position of authority for the conduct of the wedding without the expressed consent of the congregation's wedding coordinator or clergy. Certainly he or she should not be in charge of the rehearsal, nor give permission to a photographer or florist concerning variations from established wedding policy. Functioning properly under the wedding coordinator's guidance, the consultant might prove quite helpful.

Officiating Clergy

The clergy person charged with the responsibility of performing a marriage ceremony will probably require several meetings to counsel with the couple before the marriage. It is the hope of the faith community that this wedding will be a sacred one, abiding forever. Marriage is of God, not to be taken lightly nor entered into unadvisedly. The clergy person will want to meet with the couple to go through the service and vows carefully, and to help them work through any difficulties that might be weighing upon them.

Cantors are Jewish clergy whose primary job is leading congregations in prayer and song. Cantors frequently co-officiate with a rabbi, but many also act as the sole leader for wedding ceremonies. A cantor is trained in Jewish liturgical music, which includes chanting from the Torah and singing life-cycle prayers, such as the beautiful seven wedding blessings. Most states license cantors to perform weddings, and some will meet with couples, as described above, to plan and counsel. (1)

The clergy person should also give the couple a copy of the wedding ceremony text, which they can use to study and coordinate other participants' roles in the service.

If the officiating clergyperson is not from the church/synagogue hosting the wedding, there is a certain protocol to be observed. First, the host clergy should be in contact with the clergyperson who is to officiate at the wedding and invite him or her to do so. Second, the officiating clergyperson should be given a copy of the wedding policy booklet with a note to the effect that he or she is expected to abide by the host congregation's policies in all aspects.

The officiating clergyperson may ask clergy from other congregations to participate in the ceremony if he or she so desires.

Music

There is probably no other matter connected with a wedding that is as potentially controversial as the selection of the music. When a wedding takes place in a church/synagogue, the music used should honor the congregation's beliefs. Those who go into a church/synagogue that is not their own must remember that they are guests. One does not go into another home as a guest and re-arrange the furniture. Herein lies a major reason for the wedding policy booklet. In most congregations only sacred music is permitted, and must be approved by the organist. Adherence to this policy usually runs parallel with the extent to which the liturgy is revered and practiced. The committee should set the guidelines for the music it believes is appropriate for its congregation. It is most wise and prudent to set these guidelines in close consultation with the organist and other musical leaders on the staff or in the congregation.

It has proved practical to print a "Music for Your Wedding" leaflet to distribute to couples. Here follows a rather well-done sample which the committee might use as a model in writing their own material:

The wedding is a service of worship in which a man and a woman come to unite their lives in the eyes of God and in the company of those dearest to them. The music for their wedding should reflect this profound joy! Our organists are familiar with a wide variety of literature and will be happy to assist the couple in finding sacred music that reflects the couple's unique feelings, yet upholds the integrity of the worship service. All musical selections will be discussed with and approved by the organist.

Only the staff organists of this church /synagogue shall play the organs. Staff musicians will be happy to arrange for one of our excellent vocal soloists, if desired. If the bride or groom asks a friend to sing at the wedding, this outside soloist must be approved by the organist. The organist may request a tape of this soloist's performance. When approved, the soloist can arrange a rehearsal time with the organist. Music must be prepared before the rehearsal. Arrangements for any additional instrumentalists, if desired, must be made by our organist. The brochure "Music for Your Wedding" outlines in further detail musical selections and instrumental options. A cassette tape is now available which might make a personal interview with the organist unnecessary. No recorded music will be used for the wedding itself.

Another factor of utmost importance concerning music selection involves listening carefully to the resident organist. This person is the most knowledgeable concerning which music sounds best on the instrument that is in the worship space. The resident organist also knows which literature he or she plays the best, resulting in the most effective music. Another factor which sometimes escapes careful

consideration is so simple it sounds as though it shouldn't have to be said at all. Nevertheless, here it is: that music which sounds best and most effective on the organ is organ music--that is to say, music that has been written specifically and intentionally for the organ. There are those organists who have taken on the task of reviving transcriptions for the organ. Relatively few of these people actually prove successful in doing so.

Many times a couple will bring a CD of music they like and want for their wedding. If it is not organ music but for strings, brass quintet or whatever, it is not going to sound the same on the organ. The committee should understand these issues, and grant their organist the authority to respond professionally.

N.B. Just because a piece of music has religious words or thoughts does not make it a work of sacred music. The style of the music also has a great deal to say about what kind of music it is.

Rehearsals

It is important to have a system for setting the rehearsal time. Should the congregation allow for weddings to be held on Friday night, it can be a mistake to schedule a rehearsal for a Saturday wedding too close to the Friday wedding time. Most people want the rehearsal as late as possible, but in a church/synagogue with many weddings, it is not always possible to honor these preferences. Some congregations have occasionally been able to schedule the rehearsal for a Saturday wedding on a Thursday late in the day. This is rare, but perhaps viable.

The main emphasis on this point of rehearsals is to publicize, promote, advise and insist (is that strong enough?) that the wedding parties be on time for the rehearsal without exception. It is arrogant and rude to keep ministers, organists, wedding consultants and other members of the wedding party waiting at such a time when emotions run so very high. This event has been planned for months and the wedding party can jolly well plan ahead and be punctual, even early. Wedding coordinators might want to advise participants to arrive 15 or 30 minutes early, particularly in cities where traffic can resemble nightmares. There should be a stated time when the rehearsal will begin, and when it will end. Otherwise rehearsals have a way of going on and on, with little reason. There may be another rehearsal following, which also needs to begin on time.

There should be an understanding in advance of the rehearsal about who will conduct it. It is usually either the clergy person or the wedding coordinator. Outside wedding consultants should not be allowed to assume this responsibility without the consent of the congregation's wedding coordinator and clergy.

Decorations

Policies governing flowers, decorations and candles can be complicated and extensive. The committee needs to consider many issues when determining them. A few facts that might contribute to the deliberations are:

- Candles emit waxy, dark smoke, which over time stains walls and decor, even organ pipes.
- Many rooms are splendid and magnificent indeed with their stained glass, marble altars, carved wooden pews and other appointments. The room might need little or no additional decoration.
- Liturgical faith communities already use candles on their altars. Adding additional candles for a non-liturgical, romantic reason diminishes the importance of those rich in symbolism on the altar.

- Space is a scarce commodity in the altar area. With a large wedding party, candles might be a hazard. If additional candles are permitted, votive candles or cylinders containing candles on springs might be required. Wax tapers can droop and bend when lit, spilling wax all over the carpet or floor causing potentially expensive damage.
- The manner in which flowers, greenery or wreaths are placed down the aisles on pews needs careful attention. Tacks, pins, nails, glue and tape damage the furniture.
- Congregations would do well to consider requiring a deposit from florists who are providing services for a wedding. This deposit will greatly encourage them to return promptly after the wedding to remove their equipment and clean up. The amount of the deposit should be sufficient to provide for paying to have these services performed should the florist default.
- Many congregations require that sheets of clear plastic or paper be placed under the added candles and candelabra, as damage to marble from hot wax cannot be repaired without extensive refinishing, even professional polishing of the marble. If candelabra are brought in by the florist, the committee will probably want to have prior approval given by the wedding coordinator.
- The issue of fresh cut flowers, as opposed to plastic or silk flowers, is one that should be considered and debated by the committee formulating these policies.

Liturgical Seasons

Most probably the very heart of the difference among our various traditions concerns recognizing the different liturgical seasons. There are those congregations that observe them to the fullest extent. There are others for which this is not a priority. Your committee should be governed by an accurate assessment of your congregation's position concerning this matter. The liturgical seasons might or might not be a factor in understanding the wedding as a service of worship. This has a great deal to do with determining the types of music allowed within the sacred space. Wherever your committee comes down on this matter, it should be carefully considered so that the policies are strictly enforced.

Children

There is no question as to the charm of having young children, particularly family members, participate as members of the wedding party, as flower girls or ring bearers. Sometimes, however, these beautiful young ones are just too young to be able to carry out their responsibilities dependably. Your committee might want to set a minimum age requirement for little people to be involved in the ceremony. Four years of age has proved to be a popular minimum age. In any event, it is wise to suggest that any member of the wedding party under the age of six visit the worship space several days before the crowd gathers for the rehearsal, so that they can become more accustomed to the large space and actually experience walking down the aisle. It is easy to overwhelm young people with big rooms and long aisles.

Photographers (Standard and Video)

Many members of the congregation are greatly bothered by cameras with flashes used during the service. Flash photography can be terribly distracting. The committee needs to consider whether this is sufficiently important to forbid flashes during the service. Should the committee want to discourage flashes, the following type rule might fit your congregation's situation:

Cameras with flash attachments will not be allowed in the worship space any later than thirty minutes preceding the ceremony, or any earlier than the dismissal of the congregation by the minister. Photographs may be made in the vestibule or narthex preceding the ceremony, as long as no flashes are aimed toward the interior of the worship area. The wedding party may return to the altar for

photographs after the ceremony should they so desire, following the conclusion of the recessional music.

Time exposures may be made during the progress of the sacred ceremony if made only from the rear of the worship space, out of the view of the congregation, provided they create no noise or other distraction. (If the organ is located in the rear of the worship space, perhaps in a balcony, the committee might want to ban photographers from that area as well, as they can distract musicians).

A video of the wedding may be made using ONE camera from the rear of the worship area, using available light. No additional lighting is permitted.

No flash photographs may be made down the aisle during either the processional or recessional, as these are considered an integral part of the service. (Such flashes have a tendency to blind the organist or minister in the process.)

Photographers failing to abide by these rules will not be allowed to perform their services in (name of church/synagogue), and families scheduling weddings in the future will be so informed. Ignorance of these rules will not be considered a valid excuse for failing to abide by them.

Videotapes

This seems to be the era of the videotape. Most congregations now allow them, provided that they are out of sight and not a moving distraction during the progress of the service. To this end, it is usually advisable to have the video camera placed before the service and left there until the ceremony is finished. Permission for this sound recording could be an issue. The congregation might be served by musicians that are on contract, under management, or not free to grant blanket permission to record their work. This matter should come to the attention of the committee when formulating the wedding policy booklet so that it can happily accommodate all concerned. Perhaps an additional fee may be in order if a sound recording is desired under these circumstances.

Miscellaneous

Other important areas should be addressed, even if they don't have a separate category of their own. One involves the consumption of alcohol by members of the wedding party before the wedding on the congregation's premises. Many potentially lovely weddings have been spoiled by frivolous antics brought on by capricious use of alcohol before the ceremony or rehearsal. Most committees will probably want to forbid it.

As a large wedding party can draw several people who are not at ease inside of a sacred space, they might need to be reminded if smoking is prohibited.

Another troublesome matter is the practice of throwing rice, confetti or bird-seed on church/synagogue premises. This can be an additional clean up task late on a night before early morning worship the next day.

Ushers

Ushers hold an important key in setting the tone, image, dignity and propriety for the wedding. They need to be carefully briefed by the wedding consultant on what is expected of them, their duties and acceptable ways to perform them. Among the issues is the "reverence factor" appropriate in the

worship space. Loud greetings do not necessarily mean warm, cordial greetings. The greeting and seating of wedding guests should not be a noisy element, distracting from the event's solemnity and the carefully chosen music being performed. Ushers should remind wedding guests whom they observe with cameras that no flash photographs will be allowed, if indeed this is the policy the committee sets.

Safekeeping of personal items

The safekeeping of personal items is an important point that the committee should not overlook. First of all, the wedding coordinator should counsel wedding parties not to bring anything of value to be left in the dressing areas during the ceremony. Dressing rooms are only so secure in a public building. Prudent congregations issue a disclaimer concerning valuables left in the building. There are insurance policies available from secular firms that might help allay fears in this area.

Contract

When the couple has reached the point of actually scheduling the wedding, the bride or groom (or other responsible party) should sign a contract that the church/synagogue provides. It will seem sad to some that a contract is necessary for doing business with a church/synagogue. Experience has proved that a lack of understanding on these important matters results in situations that are far more sad. Here follows a sample of how a contractual phrase might read:

I have received, read and do understand the policies regarding weddings at (name of church/synagogue) and agree to abide by these policies. I further understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that florists, photographers, and other professionals connected with my wedding, as well as the wedding party understand and abide by these policies.

Any deposits required should be paid at the time the contract is negotiated.