***Letter from the Pastor***

Hello and welcome to St. Paul’s United Methodist Church!

My name is Rev. Erin Fitzgerald, and I am the pastor at St. Paul’s. Thank you for considering our church as the site for your upcoming nuptials. It is a joy to witness the love of God at work in your relationship, and I pray that God’s blessing will be upon you during this special time.

In the spirit of Christian hospitality, St. Paul’s is willing to host weddings for both members and non-members of this church. The staff and I are prepared to assist you and your family in every way possible, as we want to design a meaningful wedding ceremony and worship experience that will celebrate your marriage vows and give praise to God.

As the pastor, I have the distinct honor and privilege of conducting your wedding ceremony and confirming your marriage vows within an order of worship. If and when you would like to have another pastor play a role in the service, please just let me know. I will gladly serve alongside an ordained minister from another Christian denomination as long as he/she respects my role as pastor of St. Paul’s UMC and my ordination as a clergywoman in the United Methodist Church.

With all that said, I invite you to take a look at our wedding brochure. We have included this information for the purpose of planning your ceremony with care and thoughtfulness so that it may be a holy and meaningful occasion. Please let us guide you with the grace and wisdom that comes with our years of experience.

After reading over all of the information presented in this brochure, please contact the church office to arrange an initial appointment with me to discuss the details of your wedding as well as any questions you might have. At that time, I will offer a basic plan for the work we will do together in pre-marital counseling in preparation for your wedding and show you around the church.

I look forward to meeting with you and working with you soon. A joyful and successful wedding day is a wonderful occasion, one that I hope you will have at St. Paul’s as you embark upon a long and loving marriage.

God bless you,

Rev. Erin Fitzgerald

***Invitation to Pre-Marital Counseling***

Now that you know *who* you want to go home to at night, it is time to consider *how* you will do that in faithful, healthy, and meaningful ways – every day, for the rest of your life. We’ve already got a start at planning your wedding day, now it’s time to think about planning your marriage.

Pre-marital counseling is *mandatory* for all couples who wish to be married here at St. Paul’s. This is a community of faithful believers and a loving fellowship. We, as the church, want to celebrate you, support you, and walk with you as you enter this sacred covenant relationship with God and your beloved.

Pre-marital counseling is a professional service provided by me as the church Pastor, at minimal cost to you. The average requirement is 4-6 one-hour sessions. On occasion and in unique circumstances, I may recommend additional sessions or refer you to a professional Marriage and Family Therapist.

We will utilize the Prepare-Enrich Relationship Assessment to help identify areas for conversation and structure our time together. Each session will give us an opportunity to explore different topics related to marriage, get to know each other better, and plan the wedding ceremony. These meetings can take place on weeknights, weekends, on holiday breaks when you are home on vacation. I can meet you at the church office, a half waypoint or in the comfort of your home, or even in a Google hang out or Skype video chat. If you are willing to commit to this process, I am willing to be as flexible as is humanly possible and professionally responsible.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to set up the first appointment and talk over important details. Thank you!

God bless you!

Rev. Erin Fitzgerald

***Use of facilities***

* Absolutely no alcohol (including champagne) or tobacco (including chew) may be consumed within the church building. Smoking is only permitted outside near designated containers.
* The date and time of the rehearsal and wedding should be registered well in advance with the church office, pastor, organist, and wedding steward.
* Weddings may not be scheduled on the same weekend as high holy days (Christmas, Easter, etc.), important church wide activities, or West Michigan Annual Conference.
* The pastor reserves the right to decline services based on the wedding date.
* The sanctuary seats 400 hundred people.
* There are 34 pews, 2 of which are handicap accessible.
* The aisle is approximately 61 feet long (measured to the front step).
* Chancel furnishings and equipment should remain in place for all wedding ceremonies. The altar, chancel seating, music stands, piano, pulpit, etc. should not be removed from their regular locations without permission.
* Upon request and with proper notice, St. Paul’s will provide assistance to remove chancel furnishings. Please note that there may be an associated fee and that the risers cannot be removed.
* Upon request and with proper notice, St. Paul’s will provide an audio technician who will record the ceremony and run a picture slide show as well as the sound system. It is the couple’s responsibility to contact Denny O’Neil if they would like this service.   
  Denny O’Neil (cell), (email)

***The rehearsal***

* The rehearsal should take place 1-2 days before the actual wedding so as to accommodate out of town guests.
* All members of the wedding party are expected and required to be present for the rehearsal. The pastor(s) will direct the rehearsal with the help of the wedding steward, Terry Harris.  
  Terri Harris (cell), (email)
* Please plan for the rehearsal to last approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes, as we will need to walk through every detail of the ceremony so that each member of the family and wedding party is prepared for the events that will take place on the day of the actual wedding.
* Please obtain a marriage license from Kent County and present it to the pastor at the beginning of the rehearsal.

***The wedding day***

* If the bridal party would like to get dressed at the church, they should allow ample time to be ready at least thirty minutes before the ceremony. There are private rooms (with access to mirrors and restrooms) for the bride, groom, and their attendants to dress at the church. Attendants are asked to please remain in these assigned rooms and not wander unnecessarily through the church building.
* The photographer may arrange for a private “first look picture” with the bride and groom somewhere in the church building or on church grounds.
* The photographer may arrange pictures of the family and wedding party up to *two hours before and/or one hour after* the ceremony.
* All members of the wedding party should be “ready and waiting” thirty minutes before the wedding. Out of respect for the pastor and the wedding steward, the ceremony will begin promptly at the designated hour. Exceptions will only be made in the event of an emergency.
* At the conclusion of the ceremony, the bride and groom may form a receiving line in the lobby or narthex outside the sanctuary.
* The use of birdseed, confetti, rice, and sparklers is *not* permitted on church property. If the couple would like to have guests blow bubbles upon their exit from the building, they must only be used outside.

***Outside services***

* Candles:
* St. Paul’s will furnish *two* candles on the altar at no charge. Additional candles and candelabras are permitted and should be provided by the florist.
* Wax candles need to have a piece of plastic placed underneath so as to protect the floor and furniture. Should the sanctuary carpet need to be professionally cleaned due to dripped wax, the bride’s family will be responsible for the sum of the bill.
* The ushers and/or the wedding steward will be responsible for lighting the candles and extinguishing the flame at the conclusion of the ceremony.
* Flowers:
* Flowers may be placed on the altar in vases provided by the florist, however they must not block the view of the altar or cross.
* If flower petals tossed on the floor by a flower girl must be *artificial*.
* The florist should be instructed to avoid taping decorations to the floor, pews, walls, woodwork, or any other part of the building. Pipe cleaners, ribbons, or rubber bands may be used.
* The bride’s family is responsible for removing all decorations and flowers on the eve of the wedding. If you desire to leave your flowers on the altar to beautify Sunday morning services, please notify the church office. Your names will be placed on the flower calendar and your marriage will be honored in the bulletin.
* Music:
* All music needs to be approved by the pastor and organist at least one month in advance of the wedding.   
  Georgene Greene (cell), (email)
* St. Paul’s will arrange for staff member, Georgene Greene, to play organ and/or piano for all weddings held in the sanctuary. In the event of a scheduling conflict, Georgene will arrange for a substitute.
* Upon request and with proper notice, Georgene will accompany and rehearse with soloists who are scheduled to perform during the wedding ceremony. Please note that there may be an additional fee for any additional or unscheduled rehearsals.
* Arrangements for other musicians should be brought to the pastor’s immediate attention.
* Photography:
* With the exception of the processional and recessional, no pictures are to be taken from the center aisle or front of the sanctuary. The photographer may move along the side aisles or sit in a front pew to capture special moments such as the first kiss, etc.
* The photographer shall not stand behind the bride, groom, and pastor or use the altar as a prop at any time during the wedding ceremony.

***Outline of Traditional United Methodist Wedding Ceremony***

Greeting

Declaration of Intent

Response of the Families and People

Prayer

Scripture Reading

Homily

Pastoral Prayer

Exchange of Vows

Blessing and Exchange of Rings

Declaration of Marriage

Blessing of Marriage

Dismissal

*\*\*Please note that hymns of praise and special music selections may also be included, at the discretion of the bride and groom, pastor, and organist.*

*\*\**For more information, see pages 864-869 of the United Methodist Hymnal.

*Contact information and planning notes*

* **Bride**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Member: YES NO

Address:  
Phone:

Email:

* **Groom**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  Member: YES NO

Address:   
Phone:   
Email:

* Initial contact and tour   
   Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Pre-marital counseling appointments  
  1. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  2. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  3. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  4. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  5. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  6. Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Wedding date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Rehearsal date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Musician(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:   
Email:

* Soloist(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_   
  Phone:

Email:

***Cost and fees***

* Couples who are not members of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church will be asked to send a non-refundable deposit of $25.00 to hold the date of the wedding. This payment should be made (payable by check to St. Paul’s UMC) within thirty days of reserving the date on the church calendar.
* The following fees are to be made payable by check and should be delivered directly to the individuals performing the service on the day of the rehearsal:

Honorarium for Pastor *Erin Fitzgerald* (non-member) $250.00  
 (member) $200.00

Organist fee for *Georgene Greene* (non-member) $200.00  
 (member) $150.00

Wedding Steward fee for *Terry Harris* $150.00  
*Please note that there may be an additional fee charged if and when the wedding steward is asked to be present for more than six hours (total) on the day of the rehearsal and/or wedding.* $25.00/hour

Audio technician fee for Denny O’Neil $100.00

Custodian fee for Scott Nowak $100.00  
*Please note that there may be an additional fee charged for the removal of chancel furnishings.* $50.00

Sanctuary rental fee (non-member) $200.00

*If the ceremony is to be conducted at St. Paul’s UMC for a non-member of the congregation with an outside minister presiding.*