SO YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED!

Congratulations on this new step in your life journey! We would be delighted to work with you in planning and preparation and will answer many of your specific questions concerning costs of facility use at your one-on-one consultation. However, here are some things people usually want to know…

How do you go about getting married at Ginghamsburg Church?
The first step is to call the church and ask for a wedding brochure to be sent to you, or access the brochure online at www.ginghamsburg.org/marriageprep. After filling out and returning the information sheet in the brochure (or submitting the online form) you will be contacted by a representative of the marriage preparation ministry to set up a one-on-one consultation. The bride and groom each will be sent a questionnaire to complete and bring to your meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to get to know you better, discuss requirements for marriage at Ginghamsburg and review the premarital process. As you choose to move ahead under the guidelines of Ginghamsburg, you will receive our wedding packet and will be connected with one of our wedding coordinators.

Following your consultation you will be registered for the PREPARE Couple Inventory and given instructions on how to complete PREPARE on line. This inventory is designed to identify areas of strength in your relationship along with areas in which you may need to grow as a couple. You will receive the results of your inventory from your marriage coaches, who will provide plenty of opportunities for you to discuss and practice skills in each area of the assessment with your fiancé during your sessions together.

The third step is completed in partnership with marriage coaches. Marriage coaches are couples selected and trained to encourage and mentor pre-marital couples. They have been married for at least five years, demonstrate Christ-centered marriages and family relationships and will be open and honest with you about experiences within their own marriage. You will be matched with a coaching couple who will meet with you six-eight times to facilitate discussions on the pre-marital curriculum you will use. These meetings may be individual or could be within a small group setting that includes one or two other premarital couples. Your coaches will be a source of encouragement and support, as they challenge you to grow in your marriage relationship.

What are the specific requirements to be married at Ginghamsburg Church or by a Ginghamsburg pastor?
All couples wishing to be married at Ginghamsburg Church or by a Ginghamsburg pastor must complete all three components of the marriage preparation process (see above). In addition, according to our understanding of biblical truth the following are required:

1. **Both bride and groom must be followers of Jesus, individually professing a growing, personal relationship with Jesus as their Lord and savior.** The Bible instructs the church to insure those in a marriage relationship are "equally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Because the Bible is so clear on the importance of spiritual compatibility in marriage, Ginghamsburg Church will not marry pre-Christians or a Christian to a pre-Christian.

2. **The bride and groom must abstain from living together and sexual intimacy.** We believe God's best intentions for us are found in his word, the Bible. In the Bible God gives clear boundaries for the use of his gift of sex. Sexual relationships are to be expressed only within the protective boundaries of the marriage covenant. Within marriage we are provided the commitment and safe space to develop the best possible sexual relationship, and we are protected from the consequences of using sex outside of marriage.

   Many pre-married couples at Ginghamsburg Church are honoring God by abstaining from sexual intimacy, but others are not. Couples who are living together are asked to move apart. Couples who are sexually intimate are asked to covenant with Ginghamsburg Church to abstain from their sexual relationship until their wedding day. We believe God's best for your marriage relationship is found in taking this time to develop the other parts of your relationship as you reserve your physical union until after your wedding. We encourage you to make this commitment with each other and us.

3. **The bride and groom must be involved in the life of Ginghamsburg Church.** Because we see marriage as a sacred covenant…a lifetime commitment…the connection with faith community is critical. The church provides the support, encouragement and accountability needed to help couples hold on to their commitment to each other, and to grow together as followers of Christ. You do not need to be a member of Ginghamsburg Church to be married here; however you must attend regularly (two times a month, minimum) for at least six months before you begin marriage preparation. Our hope is that couples married at Ginghamsburg will continue to grow together as active participants in a cell group and in service for God.

   We understand that couples connected to Ginghamsburg may live in other communities…as a result of school, military service or a job…yet want to be married at their "home church." These couples must be involved in a faith community in their location. And they must make themselves available to either complete our marriage preparation process or provide authentication of an equivalent premarital counseling process through their current local church.

How long does it take to complete the marriage preparation process?
Most couples are able to complete the process in four to six months. Because of the amount of use of our buildings receive for worship and a variety of events, Ginghamsburg requires a minimum of four months notice to schedule our facilities, pastors and support teams. Your one-on-one conference should preferably be scheduled six months prior to your wedding date in order to do the proper planning with our staff. Give yourself the gift of time…start the process early and enjoy this special time!

Do I have to be engaged to participate in the marriage preparation process?
So glad you asked! No, you don't need to be officially engaged. The best time to prepare for marriage is when the idea first presents itself…even before the ring! We encourage couples that are dating seriously and looking at future options together to participate in marriage preparation.

Who will officiate at my wedding?
We have a group of individuals accredited by the United Methodist Church called licensed local pastors. One of these pastors will be connected with you to do your wedding.

What facilities on the Ginghamsburg campus are available to be used for weddings?
Due to our weekend services, weekly events and other special activities, use of our facilities is somewhat limited. The main worship area is available on some Friday nights. The newly remodeled Discipleship Center on the south campus is available for Friday, Saturday and Sunday weddings. The ARK provides a lovely setting for very small, intimate weddings. We recommend you send in your requested date early to ensure your date is available.

What will we talk about with our marriage coaches?
You will explore such topics as spiritual beliefs, role expectations, budgeting and financial management, communication skills, conflict resolution and your family of origin, among others. You will be gently but firmly challenged to learn and demonstrate the biblical principles upon which Christian marriage is based. And along the way you will have fun as you form a lifelong friendship with people who are committed to the best for you and your marriage.

What is the cost of marriage preparation at Ginghamsburg? The cost of your marriage preparation process is $85.00. This includes the cost of the PREPARE inventory and the materials you will use together with your marriage coaches. There is no compensation for our marriage coaches. They are unpaid servants, giving their time as an act of service to God on your behalf.