

# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## WEDDING POLICIES

701 Florida Avenue  
Bristol, Tennessee 37620  
Voice: 423-764-7176  
Fax: 423-764-5836

## WEDDINGS IN THE CHURCH

The guiding principle in planning a wedding ceremony in a Presbyterian Church is that the Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God. The use of the facilities of First Presbyterian Church is not intended merely to be a place to be married, but rather, a setting for sacred worship that results from serious thought, planning, and preparation by the participants.

The following guidelines governing Christian weddings at First Presbyterian Church are intended to assist you in your planning and to ensure that the ceremony celebrates the gift of marriage by glorifying God. The *Directory for Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) offers general principles that govern the celebration of Christian marriage. These are the rules by which we celebrate Christian marriage and are printed in Appendix A.

We want your wedding to be a joyous celebration and will do our part to make that a reality. Thank you for considering First Presbyterian Church as a location for your wedding.

## **WEDDING POLICIES ON USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES**

The term “Users” used herein is intended to refer to the bride and groom, and any parties financially responsible for these arrangements.

The term “Church” used herein refers to the First Presbyterian Church of Bristol, Tennessee, located at 701 Florida Avenue, and its employees and representatives.

### **LOGISTICS**

#### **SCHEDULING**

Initial arrangements for the wedding, rehearsal, and/or reception are to be made through the Church Business Administrator. Church members may request a particular date up to two years in advance. Non-members may request a date up to one year in advance.

To request the use of Church facilities, Users must contact the Church Business Administrator upon completion of the application to schedule a meeting to review the policies and the application. If the service of one of the Pastors or one of the Directors of Music Ministry is desired, the Church Business Administrator will contact them to confirm their availability for the requested date.

The request must be approved by the Session of First Presbyterian Church. The Session usually meets on the fourth Monday each month. Once voted on by the Session, the Church will notify Users of the Session’s decision.

Use of Church facilities is scheduled so as not to interfere with the regular activities and meetings of the Church. Church-related activities and meetings take precedence over other activities.

First Presbyterian Church strives to keep its facility and grounds in good condition. However, the Church may have to alter wedding plans due to mechanical, electrical or plumbing problems; weather damage; or any other unforeseen circumstance. First Presbyterian Church is not financially liable for any expenses incurred by any member of the Wedding Party or the Responsible Person due to any such occurrences.

#### **FEES, DEPOSITS AND CANCELLATIONS**

We desire to set neither prohibitive charges nor restrictions for the use of our Church facilities. However, there are certain expenses, which may be incurred and are to be assumed by those requesting the facilities for weddings. Please refer to the Schedule of Wedding Fees attached to the Wedding Application and to the section below titled “Church Wedding Staff” for more information.

A deposit of one half of the anticipated fees is to be submitted with the wedding application. The deposit check will not be deposited until the wedding application has received final approval by the Session.

Approximately six weeks before the wedding, an invoice will be prepared for any outstanding balance and/or additional services incurred. Users should make their check payable to First Presbyterian Church. Payment is due no later than one month before the wedding date. Failure to pay in a timely manner may result in a reduction of services provided. Additional invoices will be prepared if needed. Billing questions should be directed to the Church Business Administrator.

After a reservation has been confirmed and placed on the Church's calendar, the reservation may be cancelled by the Users. The deposit paid will be refunded less a \$75 cancellation fee for weddings cancelled 90 days or more in advance. If cancelled less than 90 days in advance, all deposits paid shall be forfeited. The cancellation must be received in writing by the Church Business Administrator.

The Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, or the officiant conducting the ceremony if other than the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, reserves the right to cancel the wedding at any time up to the time of the ceremony if Church policies are not adhered to. Fees paid will not be refunded under such circumstances.

## **SEATING CAPACITY AND OCCUPANCY**

The seating capacity for the main rooms is listed below:

Sanctuary	550
Chapel	100
Fellowship Hall	150
Courtyard	100

Occupancy of the Church building will be limited to two hours for the rehearsal and five hours for the wedding ceremony. This includes the time prior to the wedding ceremony. If the reception is held at the Church, the time will be extended. The building must be vacated within two hours after the commencement of the ceremony when the reception is not held in the Church.

## **ARRANGEMENTS OF DETAILS**

All persons desiring to be married in the First Presbyterian Church must use the services of the Church's Wedding Liaison. If the Wedding Liaison is not available to assist during the rehearsal and/or ceremony, the Church will select a qualified Church representative in her place. Regardless, the Wedding Liaison will conduct the meetings with the Users. Please see page 8 for more information about the Wedding Liaison.

## **COMMUNION**

Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the Session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present. If communion is to be served, you **MUST** check the appropriate box on your application stating your intent.

## **DECORATIONS**

Since the celebration of marriage is a service of worship, simplicity and beauty should dictate the use of flowers and other appointments. Considerable thought, planning, and expenditures have resulted in our lovely Sanctuary and Chapel, either of which may be used for a wedding. The furnishings and symbols make them places of dignity, and we feel that they cannot be enhanced by elaborate decorations. To maintain the beauty of the rooms we require that no nails, staples, thumbtacks, tape, or wire is to be used on any surface.

All decorations provided by User or User's designee, must be approved by the Wedding Liaison. Decorations shall not be placed earlier than 3 hours before the start of the wedding ceremony; alternate arrangements must be made with the Wedding Liaison. Removal of decorations is the responsibility of User and is to be done immediately following the wedding ceremony (or after professional pictures have been taken). Custodians can assist with placing and removing decorations but only as directed by the Wedding Liaison.

User is responsible for communicating facility access with the florist and other vendors.

### **Candles**

Only candelabra as provided by the Church or approved by the Wedding Liaison may be used and only dripless candles may be used in the candelabra. If the Church's candles are used, the cost of the candle wax will be billed to the User. Should the User desire a unity candle, User will be responsible for securing the unity candle stand and all candles needed to light the unity candle. Candles in the Church's candelabra may not be used to light a unity candle.

It is suggested that candles be lighted thirty (30) minutes prior to the beginning of the wedding. Candles are to be extinguished promptly at the conclusion of the ceremony or after pictures have been taken, whichever is later.

### **Flowers**

To avoid any misunderstandings, the floral designer must contact the Wedding Liaison for approval of flowers and decorations no less than two weeks prior to the day of the wedding. Unless stated otherwise, it is the responsibility of the floral designer to contact the Wedding Liaison by leaving a message with the Church office. The delivery time of the flowers must be approved by the Wedding Liaison.

If you have a Saturday wedding ceremony and plan to have an arrangement at the front of the Sanctuary, please notify the Wedding Liaison if you would like to donate the arrangement for the following Sunday morning worship service. The Wedding Liaison will pass this information along to the

proper people so that the Church can properly recognize the gift of the arrangement in the worship bulletin.

Floral arrangements must be removed immediately following the wedding ceremony unless prior arrangements have been made to leave them for Sunday worship services (see paragraph above). If leaving the arrangement for use by the Church on Sunday morning, please plan to pick up any containers the following week during business hours.

Rose petals, either real or artificial, may not be placed or dropped on the floor.

### **Furnishings**

The pews, communion table, baptismal font, and other furniture may not be moved from the Sanctuary; and nothing may be placed on the communion table. Additionally, no symbols or paraments in the Sanctuary, Chapel, or Fellowship Hall are to be removed or covered.

A priedieu, or kneeling bench, is available for use during the ceremony upon request.

If desired, tables can be furnished for various uses such as refreshments for the wedding party and gifts that may be brought to the Church. User is responsible for furnishing cloths for the tables if desired.

## **RECORDINGS**

### **Photography**

All media activities must be completed at least 45 minutes before the commencement of the wedding ceremony. This includes removal of photographic equipment.

No flash photographs are to be taken during the processional, ceremony, or the recessional. Photographs may be taken in the Narthex and time exposures may be made from the balcony.

### **Videography**

A video camera or fast film can also be used in the balcony but photographic equipment **cannot** be visible during the service.

### **Audio**

If a guest minister officiates at the wedding without the assistance of one of First Presbyterian Church's ministers, an audio operator must be used during the wedding ceremony and may also be used during the rehearsal.

If the User desires, an audio recording of the service can be made by the Church. To receive such a recording, the User should notify the Wedding Liaison and one of the Directors of Music Ministry of this desire no later than two weeks prior to the wedding rehearsal.

## **REHEARSAL**

It is customary for the rehearsal time to begin at 5 p.m. the evening before the wedding. However, under certain circumstances, User may negotiate this time with the church. Once the time for the

rehearsal is set, the Church will insist on prompt adherence to the announced schedule. The Pastor, or other officiant, shall direct the rehearsal.

## **DRESSING**

The Wedding Liaison must approve with the Church Business Administrator, prior to the wedding, which rooms will be used for dressing. Only the Sanctuary, Chapel, Fellowship Hall, Courtyard, Parlor and rooms for dressing will be made available to members and non-members.

On the wedding day, the wedding party may arrive at the Church up to three hours before the scheduled commencement of the ceremony. The building must be vacated within two hours after the scheduled commencement time of the ceremony.

## **OTHER POLICIES**

### **Alcoholic Beverages**

Alcoholic beverages are expressly forbidden on the Church premises at any time. Immediately prior to both the rehearsal and the wedding, it is expected that the members of the wedding party will refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages. Likewise, smoking is not permitted on the premises of the Church at any time.

### **Birdseed, Rice, Rose Petals, Etc.**

No rice, confetti, birdseed, Rose petals (real or artificial) or any similar item is to be thrown or dropped on the floor in the Sanctuary, Chapel or anywhere inside the Church building. Only birdseed can be used outside of the building. If birdseed is used, the Custodian must sweep the walkways for safety reasons.

### **Personal Items and Rented Equipment**

First Presbyterian Church strives to keep the facility as secure as is reasonable during an event such as a wedding by only unlocking certain doors. However, neither the Church nor the Custodial Service is responsible or liable for any personal property of any member of the wedding party or their guests at any time. This also pertains to florists, photographers, caterers and any other person or business that is a part of the wedding arrangements or activities. All personal articles should be removed after the ceremony and reception, if applicable.

Occasionally, the bride asks if she can leave her dress at the Church the night before her wedding. Should she decide to do that, as with all other personal property, she does so at her own risk. Likewise, neither the Church nor the Custodial Service is liable for items left unattended during the wedding ceremony by any member of the wedding party or their guests or vendors. The individual who signs the wedding contract as the responsible party is responsible for loss of any personal property.

All equipment whether rented or brought in by User is to be removed from the Church at the conclusion of the ceremony (or reception if the reception is held at the Church).

### **Wedding Bulletins**

The wedding bulletin is the responsibility of the User.

## CHURCH WEDDING STAFF

### OFFICIANT

A pastor of the Church shall ordinarily serve as the officiant of the worship service. In order to ensure the Pastor's availability, couples should initially discuss with the Pastor the proposed date of the wedding service when making preliminary arrangements.

Since premarital counseling and wedding officiating are part of the Pastor's ministry to the Church, there is no fee assessed for the Pastor's services for weddings of members of First Presbyterian Church of Bristol.

If another minister is desired to serve as officiant or to share in the wedding service, that minister serves at the invitation of the Session of First Presbyterian Church and with the understanding that the guest minister will honor these policies and procedures for the wedding service.

### Premarital Counseling and Approval

Given the serious nature of the commitment necessary for Christian marriage, the officiant will not conduct the wedding service until the couple has completed premarital counseling. Ordinarily this process involves four to six hours of pastoral conversation in three separate sessions. Depending upon the particular situation of each participant, more counseling may be necessary. Ordinarily the officiant shall provide this counseling, though other arrangements may be made with the agreement of the officiant.

No wedding shall be performed if the pastor is not convinced in good conscience of the advisability of the marriage. The pastor, as officiant, reserves the right at any time to decline to conduct the wedding service up to the time of the ceremony if Church policies are not adhered to.

### WEDDING LIAISON

Any wedding taking place at First Presbyterian Church must use the services of the Wedding Liaison. The Wedding Liaison's role is to assist the Users so that this special occasion is a joyous one. The Wedding Liaison interprets Church policies and procedures on behalf of the Church. If the wedding reception is held at the Church, the Wedding Liaison must stay until the conclusion of the reception.

The fee for the Wedding Liaison's services is part of the base fee which can be found on the Schedule of Wedding Fees. The fee includes conducting **two consultation meetings lasting no more than one hour each**, assisting during the rehearsal, assisting three hours before the wedding ceremony and assisting during the wedding ceremony.

The Wedding Liaison will also see that an initial meeting is scheduled with the Minister, if applicable, as well as one with one of the Directors of Music Ministry. The Wedding Liaison serves as the liaison with the custodial company and is required to give them a written list of setup needs no later than 72 hours before the rehearsal. She also contacts the Church as needed for coordinating other staffing needs.

The Wedding Liaison is not to be confused with a Wedding Planner. A Wedding Planner is one who designs a wedding performing such duties as hiring the florist, musicians and photographer; selecting the flowers; and negotiating expenses. A Wedding Planner usually charges 10 – 15% of the cost of the wedding. A Wedding Liaison simply makes sure the wedding flows in a smooth, concerted way.

While it is permissible for User to use the services of an independent Wedding Planner or Director, the independent Wedding Planner/Director shall work under the authority of the Church's Wedding Liaison.

## **DIRECTORS OF MUSIC MINISTRY**

The purpose of the music is to enhance and enrich this special service of worship. The Directors of Music Ministry of First Presbyterian Church are skilled musicians and will be invaluable in assisting you in planning the music for your wedding. Music should be consistent with the spirit of worship. For this reason, only sacred music, whether vocal or instrumental, may be used. Pre-recorded music, i.e. tapes or compact disks, may not be used. One of the Directors of Music Ministry will be happy to assist the wedding party in selecting appropriate music. All final selections must be approved by one of the Directors of Music Ministry. Your meeting with the Directors of Music Ministry must take place no less than 6 weeks prior to the ceremony.

In addition to assisting with music selections, the Directors of Music Ministry are also accomplished pianists and organists and they offer those services to you. If the services of a guest organist, pianist, or other instrumentalist are desired either in place of or in addition to the services of the Church's Directors of Music Ministry, prior approval must be obtained from the Directors of Music Ministry.

The basic services fee for the services of one of the Directors of Music Ministry is listed on the Schedule of Wedding Fees on the Wedding Application. The basic services fee includes meeting with the bride and groom, playing for the wedding rehearsal and playing for the wedding ceremony. Other services are available and the fees for some of the other services are listed on the fee schedule. If other services are needed, the fee will be established by the Directors of Music Ministry. The cost for these services will be billed by First Presbyterian Church. As with other fees, payment is due one month before the wedding date.

## **CUSTODIAN**

The custodial services for weddings are provided by a company selected by the Church to perform such services. The Church has an established policy that requires the Custodian to be on site during wedding rehearsals, ceremonies, and receptions. This includes admitting others, such as the florist or caterer as well as family and friends who may be providing services such as these, into the building during non-business hours. The Custodian is to remain on site while others are in the building and Users are to pay the Custodian for these services. The Wedding Liaison will provide a schedule of setup arrangements to the Custodian in writing no later than 72 hours before the wedding. The Wedding Liaison will also distribute the schedule to the Church Business Administrator and any others involved.

If the Wedding is held during the winter months, keep in mind the possibility of an additional expense for snow and ice removal from sidewalks and parking lots. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks is

performed by other businesses. Should this become an issue, please contact the Church Business Administrator for more information.

## **NURSERY ATTENDANTS**

First Presbyterian Church highly values the care of our youngest visitors and members. With that in mind, the Church has adopted specific policies pertaining to the operation of our nursery. There shall be at least two adults in the nursery even if there is only one child under our care. Should there be a large number of children, additional help may be needed.

So that the nursery is ready to be used by the next group of children, our nursery attendants sanitize all toys used, change any linens used, and perform all other cleaning duties needed. Our nursery attendants perform these tasks as quickly as possible, thereby, minimizing the time charged to the wedding party.

The fees for nursery services are listed on the Schedule of Wedding Fees. If you desire the use of our nursery and staff, please be sure to communicate the number of children being cared for with the Wedding Liaison.

## **AUDIO OPERATOR**

Please see the Audio section on page 6.

## **DAMAGES, RELEASE AND HOLD HARMLESS**

The User will assume full responsibility for any damages to the Church and its furnishings incurred during or due to such use.

The User will agree in writing that as part of the consideration for allowing use of the Church, the User will release, indemnify and hold harmless the Church, and its officers, agents, employees and contractors from all claims, losses, causes of action and expenses, including legal expenses and attorneys' fees, that might arise, directly or indirectly, from such use.

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**Guidance on Christian Marriage  
from  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Directory for Worship  
W-4.9000**

**Christian Marriage**

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the wellbeing of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

**Preparing for Marriage**

- a. In preparation for the marriage service, the minister shall provide for a discussion with the man and the woman concerning
  1. the nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian,
  2. the legal requirements of the state,
  3. the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
  4. the nature and form of the marriage service,
  5. the vows and commitments they will be asked to make,
  6. the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
  7. the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

- b. If the minister is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the minister shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony. In making this decision the minister may seek the counsel of the session.

**Time and Place of the Service**

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service under Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the minister

and the supervision of the session (W-1.4004-.4006). The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. Others may be invited to participate as leaders in the service at the discretion of the pastor. Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present. The marriage service may take place during the Service for the Lord's Day upon authorization by the session. It should be placed in the order as a response to the proclamation of the Word. It may then be followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

### **Form and Order of Service**

The service begins with scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The man and the woman shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation. Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the minister shall declare publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. A charge may be given. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction.

### **Music and Appointments**

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. (W-2.1004) The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer. Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life. (W-1.3034; W-1.4004-.4005; W-5.5006)

### **Recognizing Civil Marriage**

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of vows by the husband and wife, and the public declaration by the minister reflect the fact that the woman and man are already married to one another according to the laws of the state.