

Wedding Policy

First Presbyterian Church

Oxford, Mississippi

At First Presbyterian Church, our goal is to help make your wedding lovely and meaningful. In order to do that, we have listed below the guidelines adopted by the Session, our ruling body charged with the responsibility to develop policies governing the use of church property. These guidelines seek to assure and to preserve the beauty, dignity and atmosphere of reverence that should surround any worship service. Use of FPC for your wedding is subject to Session's approval and the following policies.

Format and Approvals

In the Presbyterian Church (USA), a wedding is a service of worship to God, ordinarily conducted within the house of God. Reverence shall be expected on the part of all present, and the conduct of the service shall be under the direction of the pastor with assistance from the Director of Music.

The Session has directed that the format and style of a wedding service at FPC be reflective of the Reformed Protestant tradition of worship. Our pastors will be most valuable in helping you plan your order of worship and setting the content for your wedding program, final approval of which must be given by the presiding pastor prior to printing.

Use of the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church for weddings shall be available to both members and non-members. Use of the sanctuary requires payment of a deposit, submission of a **Wedding Application**, submission of a signed **Wedding Contract** and subsequent approval by the Session. Please contact the church office at 662-234-1757 if you have questions.

Officiant:

The pastor and/or associate pastor of First Presbyterian Church shall officiate all weddings. Outside clergy are not permitted, but lay leaders (non-ordained) may be utilized for scripture readings only.

A series of premarital conferences should ordinarily take place between the FPC pastor and the couple to be married. Alternately, when the couple resides outside of Oxford, a local pastor may be used for these conferences. He or she shall consult with the FPC pastor concerning the couple's readiness for marriage prior to the ceremony.

Music:

Once the Session approves your wedding date, please set an appointment with Mr. Creighton Holder, the Director of Music and Organist at First Presbyterian Church (cholderfpc@gmail.com). Mr. Holder will assist you with planning all music for your wedding and familiarize you with a variety of appropriate selections. As noted previously, because a wedding is a service of worship to God, all music must be sacred in nature; secular texts are not permitted. When organ music is desired, the FPC organist shall play for all weddings. The organ is strongly encouraged as the primary instrument for processions and recessions. A piano, string quartet or other instruments may be used in portions of the ceremony. Professional soloists and additional musicians are available through the church Music Department and from the University of Mississippi's Department of Music. Other guest vocalists and instrumentalists may be invited to participate in the wedding but must be approved by the church's Director of Music.

Texts of vocal solos are to be limited to Scripture and sacred poetry. Soloists and instrumentalists may rehearse one hour before the service and must provide copies of their music in the proper key to the organist in advance of the rehearsal. No taped accompaniments during a wedding ceremony are permitted.

As with our pastor's presence, our Director of Music's presence will ensure the ceremony runs smoothly and in accordance with the Presbyterian Order of Worship.

Wedding Coordinator:

Ordinarily, each couple being married at First Presbyterian Church should obtain the services of a wedding planner or coordinator who will work in concert with the pastor and Director of Music on details of the wedding and who will organize and manage the wedding rehearsal.

Wedding party members and coordinators may visit the church on their own prior to the wedding.

Scheduling:

Weddings may not be scheduled more than one year in advance of the first business day of the month in which the desired wedding date falls. For example, a July 10, 2020 wedding may not be scheduled before July 1, 2019. As previously mentioned, dates are approved by the Session. In order to have your proposed date approved, you must submit a completed **Wedding Application**, a deposit (see below) and a signed **Wedding Contract**. Ordinarily, no weddings may be held at the church on holiday weekends.

Fees:

The undersigned **non-member** must remit a fee of \$4,800 for the use of the FPC sanctuary, 50 percent payable at the time of reservation, with the balance due NO

LATER THAN two weeks prior to the wedding date. This fee **includes** rental of the sanctuary, payment of the clergy, payment of the Music Director and payment of the Property Manager. A damage deposit of \$1,000 is to be paid no later than two weeks prior to the wedding date and is refundable within seven days after the wedding.

The undersigned **church member** must pay a fee of \$600 for the use of the FPC sanctuary, 50 percent payable at the time of the reservation, with the balance due two weeks prior to the wedding date. This fee **includes** payment of the clergy, Music Director and Property Manager. **The Session has directed that members must be on the active roll for a period of at least one year to qualify for the member fee.**

Mail or deliver all checks to:

First Presbyterian Church
924 Van Buren Avenue
Oxford, MS 38655

Rehearsals:

Wedding rehearsals shall ordinarily be scheduled on the Friday evening before the wedding and last not longer than one hour. Rehearsals may be scheduled in one of the following time slots on Friday:

- 4:30 - 5:30 pm
- 5:00 - 6:00 pm
- 5:30 - 6:30 pm
- 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Preparation for and Conduct of the Ceremony:

The sanctuary is reserved using a 7-hour time block. As an example, a couple wishing to be married at 4 pm might reserve the sanctuary from Noon to 7 pm. The sanctuary will be available at the beginning of the reserved time period and all decorations and other preparations must be set up and removed within the time period. Clean up after a Saturday wedding must begin immediately after the end of the wedding ceremony. In all cases, clean up must be completed by 10 pm.

Care of the Sanctuary:

In accordance with state fire codes, attendance for the wedding may not exceed 350 people.

Use of candles is discouraged. Ceremonial candles used near the front of the sanctuary or candles contained by votive holders or hurricane globes will be allowed only after consultation with the pastor. Fire safety and continued damage to the carpet and woodwork from dripping wax require this policy.

Only live flowers and greenery are allowed in the sanctuary. Flower petals, however, may not be used without a runner to protect the carpet. Floral arrangements may only be placed to the left and right sides of the Chancel. Flowers are prohibited in the choir loft, behind or in front of the organ console when the organ is utilized, and are never permitted on top of the organ console under any circumstances.

Couples wishing to place flowers in the sanctuary for the Sunday worship service following the wedding may do so only after consultation with the church secretary. The liturgical calendar or pre-existing reservations may make it necessary for the church to decline this kind overture.

Nothing shall be hung from the walls. Floral arrangements, however, may be hung on the outside front doors of the sanctuary but must be removed following the service.

Only ribbon may be used to secure any decorations to the pews. Tape and staples may not be used. Care will be taken to avoid marring the finish of the pews.

Seasonal decorations in the sanctuary may not be disturbed or moved for any wedding.

Removal of church furnishings and chancel furniture is discouraged. The communion table may be moved to accommodate the wedding party, but must be returned once the service has concluded.

Food and beverage are prohibited in the sanctuary and narthex. Smoking is prohibited except outside on church grounds. Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited on church grounds. Snacks and beverages may be used by the wedding party in the auxiliary rooms while preparing for the wedding but must be cleaned up after the ceremony. All personal belongings and wedding-related items must be removed from the church premises immediately following the service.

Due to safety concerns, use of rice, confetti or birdseed is prohibited on the church grounds.

THE SANCTUARY MUST BE LEFT AS IT WAS FOUND: CLEAN AND IN ORDER.

Photography:

The use of flash photography is prohibited during the wedding ceremony. Photography and videography is permitted only from the rear of the church during the service and must be unobtrusive.

Fellowship Hall:

Use of Fellowship Hall for receptions is available to church members at no extra charge. Non-members may not have access to Fellowship Hall for a reception. To allow for clean up and set up for Sunday services, Saturday night Fellowship Hall events must end by 8

pm. If the couple wishes to engage the Property Manager to clean the Fellowship Hall following a reception, they may do so through a separate agreement. In any event, the couple is responsible for cleanup once the reception has concluded.

Miscellaneous:

Any issue concerning a wedding at FPC not specifically covered in this policy will be resolved by the Session in consultation with the pastors and the Director of Music.

Revised June, 2015

Presbyterian Book of Order Standards for Christian Marriage

As a reminder to Presbyterians and to inform others initially, marriage-related segments of a Directory for Worship are presented here. Although included as an attachment to the wedding policy for this local church, they are in important ways primary, not secondary. In the *Book of Order*, these words appear: “As the constitutional document ordering the worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA), this Directory for Worship shall be authoritative for this church.”

W-4.9001 Christian Marriage

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well being 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.

W-4.9002a. Preparing for Marriage

In preparation for the marriage service, the pastor 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.

W-4.9002b. If the Marriage Is Unwise

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

W-4.9003 Time and Place of the Service

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

W-4.9004 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 pastor 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.

W-4.9005 Music and Appointments

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. 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.

Attachment to updated Wedding Policy

Wedding Application

First Presbyterian Church

Oxford, Mississippi

Please complete the following **Wedding Application** and return it with your signed **Wedding Contract** and your deposit:

Contact person: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail _____

Date and time of rehearsal: _____

Date and time of wedding: _____

Estimated Number of People in the Wedding Party _____

Bride _____

Physical Address _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State and Zip Code _____

Telephone: Home _____

Business _____

E-mail _____

Groom _____

Physical Address _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State and Zip Code _____

Telephone: Home _____

Business _____

E-mail _____

Church Member: Bride _____ Groom _____ Other _____

If neither bride nor groom, relationship of the member to the betrothed couple

Revised February 2017

Wedding Contract

First Presbyterian Church

Oxford, Mississippi

The undersigned agree(s) that First Presbyterian Church is not responsible for loss or damage to persons or property belonging to the undersigned or any of the undersigned's employees or guests using church facilities and, thereby, releases the church from any claims for loss or damage to persons or property that arise out of or are connected with the undersigned's use of FPC.

The undersigned agree(s) to defend, hold harmless and indemnify FPC, its officers, employees and agents against all claims for loss, damage or injury sustained by persons or property arising out of or connected with the undersigned's use or occupancy of the church.

The undersigned is/are completely responsible for the facilities and property and assume(s) liability for any and all damages to the sanctuary or other church property, including personal property, that may occur as a result of the use of the church pursuant to this agreement.

I have read the Wedding Policy and the Wedding Contract and agree to abide by the stipulations in both documents.

The undersigned agree(s) to obey all applicable federal, state and local laws and the policies of First Presbyterian Church.

AGREED, this the _____ day of _____, 20__.

SIGNATURE(S) _____

PRINTED NAME(S) _____

Please make a copy of the **Wedding Contract** for your records and mail or deliver the original, an original copy of your **Wedding Application** and your deposit to:

First Presbyterian Church
924 Van Buren Avenue
Oxford, MS 38655

Revised June 2015