



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
Church of Nashville

Marriage is a gift God has given to 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.

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.

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 that 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.

In preparation for the marriage service, the pastor asked to lead the service 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.

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 worshippers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life.

~ *Book of Common Worship, Presbyterian Church (USA)*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NASHVILLE

WEDDING POLICY

We are happy that you have decided to have your Christian wedding at First Presbyterian Church. The Session has established certain policies, which will be helpful in planning your wedding. Any exceptions to the policy must be approved by the entire pastoral staff.

FACILITIES

The facilities belonging to the congregation are available upon request only to church members, the children of church members, and current church staff. Both the church sanctuary and Stanford Chapel are available for weddings. The sanctuary seats approximately 800 people, the chapel seats approximately 100 people. The Cheek House (100 maximum capacity), and Courtenay Hall (350 maximum capacity) are available for receptions.

SCHEDULING

The scheduling of all weddings at First Presbyterian Church is done by first completing an online Wedding Request. Completing a Wedding Request will reserve a tentative date for a wedding service on the church calendar. The date will only be confirmed after one of the pastors has met with you, approved the wedding, and agreed to officiate at the wedding.

After the approval of your application and the initial meeting with the officiating pastor, you will receive a letter from the church confirming your wedding; however, the wedding date will not be finalized until your wedding fee is received by the church office.

No weddings are scheduled on Sundays, Holy Week, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve or New Year's Day.

Please inform the church of any changes in date or time for the rehearsal or wedding as soon as possible.

PASTORS

Only an ordained pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Nashville may officiate at weddings in our facilities. If you so wish, the officiating pastor may extend an invitation to a pastor from another church to participate in the wedding service. Participation by an assisting pastor will be determined by the pastor at First Presbyterian Church officiating at the service, and shall be limited to a prayer and/or participation in the exchange of vows.

Every effort will be made to provide the requested pastor to officiate. Occasionally, because of the many responsibilities of church pastors, the pastor you requested may not be able to officiate at the time of your wedding. Be assured, however, that another FPC pastor will be available to officiate at your wedding. The final decision on this will rest with the pastoral staff of our church.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

All persons marrying at First Presbyterian Church are required to attend premarital counseling. Premarital counseling is also a requirement of the State of Tennessee in order to obtain a marriage

license. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to contact the officiating pastor to make arrangements for premarital counseling several months prior to the wedding.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

The Wedding Coordinator will review the church's policies and will assist you with your wedding plans. The coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and ceremony to ensure that all details go smoothly. Outside wedding directors may assist the church wedding coordinator at the service and rehearsal, but must be under the direction of the church wedding coordinator and must abide by church policies.

ORDER FOR THE SERVICE OF MARRIAGE

The wedding ceremony shall be planned with the designated pastor under guidelines prescribed by the *Book of Order* (W-4.9000) and the Session. The wedding is a corporate worship service of God. In the Presbyterian Church, it indicates what we believe about God and marriage. Since a marriage ceremony is a worship service, the order shall include affirmation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and an affirmation of commitment by both bride and groom to each other. The ceremony may include affirmation of families, particular vows along with the exchange of rings, prayer and the sealing of the commitment as the pastor deems appropriate in planning the service with the couple.

A typical order for a service of marriage may be the following: The entrance of the family, pastor, groom, groomsmen and bridesmaids into the sanctuary, the processional of the bride, greeting and call to worship by the pastor, a hymn, the meaning of Christian marriage, prayer, vows, exchange of rings, dedicatory prayer, declaration of marriage, exchange of a kiss, benediction, recessional. The pastor has various resources and advice that will help a couple plan a joyfully unique and Christ-centered service for their marriage. All suggestions, changes and instructions in this service must be approved by the officiating pastor.

If the serving of communion is requested, it must be approved by the officiating pastor, authorized by the church Session (*Book of Order*, W-2.4012), and "the invitation to the Lord's Supper is extended to all who have been baptized [bridal party and congregation]" (*Book of Order*, W-2.4011). Communion during a marriage service is served by intinction.

MUSIC

It is the policy of the Session of First Presbyterian Church to offer unto God only music of the highest quality in the wedding ceremony, as is the case with any service of the church. It is important that the music conform to the Christian ideals of marriage. Secular music, no matter how beautiful or filled with the sentiments of love, is not appropriate for a worship service.

The bride and groom are expected to arrange an appointment with the Wedding Music Coordinator (one of the church's staff organists) for the purpose of planning music for the service. The Wedding Music Coordinator will direct all musical elements of the wedding service, including assisting the bride in the selection of music, and directing other instrumentals and vocalists. One of First Presbyterian Church's organists plays for all weddings celebrated in our church facilities. If the bride desires to have vocalists or instrumentalists of her own choosing, they must be approved in advance by the Wedding Music Coordinator.

DECORATING

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with a beautiful sanctuary and chapel. Decorations should be restrained and tasteful, respecting the simple existing architectural beauty of the worship spaces. The dossal cloth and paraments used during the wedding ceremony are white.

The following guidelines must be followed for decorating:

- Rearranging of furniture in the church or Cheek House is not permitted.
- Candelabras (not in excess of four candelabras) may be used in the chapel and sanctuary, provided proper precautions are taken to protect the floors and furniture. The church has one pair of brass candelabra that may be used. If you would like to use the church's candelabra, please make arrangements with the church's Wedding Coordinator. Candle decorations are not to be used in the narthex.
- Only drip-less pillar candles less than 3-inches in diameter, are allowed for use in the sanctuary windows. Drip trays must be used under the candles, and the entire candle and wick must be covered by a hurricane glass cover.
- No tacks, nails, screws, adhesives, or tape that leave a residue, are to be used in the church. Floral decorations must be arranged so that there is no necessity to anchor or fasten them to the building or furniture.
- Columns in the sanctuary must be kept free of decorations.
- When potted plants or greens are used, floors and furniture must be protected from stain or drippings.
- Aisle runners are not permitted.

FLOWERS

It is the responsibility of the florist (or wedding party) to remove all flowers and decorations from the church immediately after the wedding ceremony. However, the flower arrangement on the chancel table may be left for the Sunday worship service, if previously approved.

- Wedding floral arrangements in the sanctuary may be one of the following:
 - 1) One arrangement on the floor in front of the communion table, with the arrangement height not higher than the communion table.
 - 2) One arrangement on the table behind the communion table.
 - 3) Two arrangements placed on the church pedestals that are on both sides of the chancel at the top of the chancel steps.
- Floral decorations may be placed on the tables in the narthex.
- Small bouquets may be attached to the ends of pews with ribbons.
- Only artificial flower petals may be dropped by the flower girl(s).
- Flowers on the railings are not permitted.

- Flower arrangements over the doorways in the sanctuary are not permitted.

During the Advent/Christmas season, the church's Flower Committee provides seasonal floral arrangements to decorate the sanctuary, and no other floral arrangements will be allowed except on the weekend of the first Sunday in Advent. If additional wedding flowers are desired for that weekend, the church's floral arrangements/decorations are not to be removed, moved or changed, and the wedding floral arrangement must be approved by the Flower Committee.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographs in the sanctuary or chapel may be taken prior to the ceremony until the first groomsman leaves the narthex to begin ushering guests. At this time, all photography must cease until the conclusion of the ceremony. Please share this information with your photographer, family and friends.

A photographer may take pictures from the balcony of the sanctuary during the service; however, there must be no noise or flash. Photos may not be taken from the balcony while the organist or musicians are playing. Before taking photos of musicians, permission from the musicians must be obtained.

A photographer may take pictures, without any noise or flash, of the bride and groom leaving the sanctuary. The photographer must not enter the sanctuary and may only take the picture through the open center narthex doors.

If photos are taken after the ceremony, they must be completed within 30 minutes of the conclusion of the ceremony.

VIDEOS

Video cameras may be used discretely to record the service only if (1) the equipment is stationary and placed in the balcony, (2) the equipment does not obstruct the view of worshippers, and (3) no lights are used. An out-of-sight, remote-controlled video camera may be placed in the chancel. Videographers must wear appropriate dress.

WEDDING PROGRAMS

Wedding programs are not provided by the church. If you will be providing wedding programs, please consult with the Wedding Music Coordinator about the order of service for the programs. If the officiating pastor is not a pastor from First Presbyterian Church of Nashville, note the pastor's church affiliation on the wedding program. Please provide a copy of the wedding program to the Wedding Coordinator before the wedding rehearsal.

REHEARSALS

The Wedding Coordinator and designated pastor will meet with the wedding party for the rehearsal. Please plan to arrive promptly. If all members of the wedding party are punctual, the rehearsal should take no longer than one hour.

Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal and give to the church Wedding Coordinator. Also bring your wedding programs, if used, to the rehearsal.

RECEPTION

Cheek House (100 maximum capacity) and Courtenay Hall (350 maximum capacity) are available for receptions. If you plan to use the church facilities for your wedding reception, please contact the Facility Manager to discuss your setup needs. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on church premises. It is the responsibility of the parties using the facilities to leave them in a clean and orderly condition. Breakage costs will be assumed by the parties using the facilities.

GENERAL RULES

- The use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages is not permitted in any part of the church or grounds.
- The Bride's Room, located in the Cheek House, is available for the bride and her attendants to dress.
- The Choir Room, located next to the sanctuary, is available for the groom and his attendants to gather in prior to the service. It is recommended that the men dress at home.
- Food or drink provided for the wedding party prior to the ceremony is allowed only in the following areas: (1) Food for the bride and bridesmaids may be placed on the table in the entrance hall in Cheek House; (2) Food for the groom and groomsmen may be placed on a table in Choir Room.
- Please arrange to have at least one usher or groomsman for each 50 guests.
- The use of a Unity Candle during the wedding ceremony is discouraged.
- No material of any kind may be thrown by members of the wedding party or guests, including, but not limited to, birdseed, rice, flower petals, confetti and soap bubbles.
- The church does not provide nursery accommodations for children.
- The church is not responsible for valuables left unattended during or after the wedding. Please assign someone to gather valuables from the Bride's Room prior to the ceremony.
- The use of guest books before the wedding service is strongly discouraged. Stopping to sign guest books causes congestion and delays in seating.
- The wedding party and guests must leave the facilities within 45 minutes after the conclusion of the ceremony.
- Weddings are given priority in church facility use; however, funerals or other unforeseen circumstances in the life of the church may require the sharing of facilities.
- The church facilities will be unlocked three hours prior to the wedding ceremony for the bridal party's use. If additional times are needed, please inform the Wedding Coordinator.