

A LETTER TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage! A marriage of two mature committed people is truly a gift from God. This Church would like to express the hope that God will guide, bless and enrich you with every spiritual blessing. Certain procedures and requirements are included in this booklet for your benefit. This policy is developed and approved by the Session of our church and is designed to promote the glory of God, the peace of the church and the happiness of the couple with the hope that your wedding will be a true service of worship to the one, true and living God. Please follow this guide while carefully noting what is mandated, suggested and optional. These policies are intended to allow for a ceremony that is both beautiful and memorable, while preserving the sacred elements that are important to a ceremony conducted in a Christian church.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

From the Book of Order, W- 4.0601

“In Baptism, each Christian is claimed in the covenant of God’s faithful love. Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple

sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community. In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Presbyterian Church, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and in which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.”

Here, marriage is a service of Christian worship and should be celebrated as such. Marriage services are under the direction of the pastor and the supervision of the Session (the governing elders). The Session has delegated some or several aspects of the marriage service and the events which surround it to our Wedding Guild whose members will guide you in your planning.

THE WEDDING GUILD

It is **required** that a FPC Wedding Guild member be involved in all aspects of your wedding at First Presbyterian Church. Their duties include discussing the church’s policies and procedures for the bride and groom before the wedding date can be confirmed, being present at the rehearsal, and organizing the processional and recessional in the actual wedding service. On your wedding day, a Wedding Guild member will be at the church to check last-minute details: temperature, lighting, flowers, candles, etc. and answer any

questions. They will also assist the bridal parties with any concerns that might arise.

THE DATE

When a bride and groom wish to initiate wedding plans, they shall proceed as follows:

1. Establish with the pastor and Office Administrator a mutually acceptable time and date for the wedding and rehearsal so it can be recorded and reserved on their respective church calendars. Then, a meeting with a Wedding Guild member must be scheduled so she can share the wedding policies of the church and items of concern. The wedding plans and fees form must be signed and returned to the church office. Submission of the form ensures that the date can be confirmed with the church office. This must be done prior to making a public announcement or ordering your wedding invitations. Families are advised not to have invitations printed until dates are confirmed with the pastor and Office Administrator. Please note: the church would not be available for weddings during the last two (2) weeks of December, and Palm Sunday through Easter weekend.

2. Confirm your reservation for the church facilities by choosing which facilities are desired (on the attached form) and return to the church office along with your payment of the appropriate fees. (See fee schedule). Please note the fees

will be returned if notice of wedding cancellation is given 72 hours prior to scheduled date.

3. Schedule a meeting with the church organist to plan music and arrange a schedule on her calendar for both rehearsal and wedding dates.

4. It is a requirement of First Presbyterian Church and mandatory for the bride and groom to have pre-marriage counseling with the pastor. The dates and times are best arranged with the pastor directly.

5. It may be possible to have more than one wedding on the same day at First Presbyterian Church, if both parties are agreeable. However, the first request will be given priority. At least three hours must lapse between the two ceremonies, and a four-hour lapse is minimal if a reception at the church follows the first service.

THE CIVIL PREPARATIONS

1. A marriage license must be secured from a Probate Court in South Carolina. The wedding need not be held in the same county in which the license is obtained. Please remember to bring your marriage license with you to the rehearsal or bring to the church office earlier. The marriage license must be in the hand of the pastor before the wedding can be performed. If

no rehearsal is scheduled, please bring the license to the pastor the day before the wedding.

2. A twenty-four (24) hour waiting period is required before you can secure a license. Application for the license must be made by both the bride and groom at the office of the Probate Judge. The license may be picked up by either the bride or the groom during regular office hours. The office is closed on Saturday and Sunday. You must have a valid driver's license, social security card, military ID (if applicable) or legal documents that list name and birth date.

THE PASTOR

1. The authority of the Session, represented by the pastor of this church, is absolute in matters associated with the use of church facilities and the conduct of the wedding service. If in the pastor's judgment the proposed marriage seems unwise, the Pastor is at liberty to decline to participate in the ceremony.

2. Ordinarily the pastor or one of the teaching elders (ministers) affiliated with First Presbyterian Church will have the privilege of conducting weddings in its sanctuary. The invitation for another minister to take part in the service **must** come from the pastor of First Presbyterian Church. **Couples should not invite other clergy to take part in the service before consulting the Church pastor.**

3. Should you desire to have another minister officiate or assist in the wedding service, this information should be made known to the First Presbyterian Church Pastor. The Pastor will then be responsible for extending an invitation to the visiting minister on behalf of the Session and the couple. A member of our Wedding Guild is responsible for interpreting the policy of the church for the visiting minister, and assisting with the rehearsal for the wedding.

THE REHEARSAL

1. First Presbyterian Church has a Wedding Guild of experienced volunteers who assist the bride and groom in organizing and directing the rehearsal and wedding. If you wish to use another director, this request should be made at the initial meeting with the Wedding Guild member.

2. The rehearsal time is usually scheduled for one hour. All those involved should arrive on time. The pastor must be consulted before the rehearsal time is set.

4. Please arrange for the organist to be present for your rehearsal.

THE MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

1. As the marriage ceremony is a service of worship, the music selected for the wedding should embody the same qualities of worship that are found in other worship services. Wedding music should focus on God and emphasize the faith of the Christian community. Music that emphasizes romantic love or sentimentality is more appropriately used at the reception. The Music Director and church organist can assist you in selecting music that will help meet the requirements of your wedding service. ***The use of recorded music is not permitted. The couple is required to discuss preferences and finalize music selections with the Director of Music.***

2. The church organist is expected to play for all weddings and rehearsals (if needed). Exceptions can be made only after consultation with the organist. The fee schedule for this service is noted on the last page of this booklet. Music submitted to the organist cannot be changed within one week of the wedding.

3. Should you desire someone other than the church organist to play for your wedding, this must be noted on the fee schedule form when submitted. After approval has been granted, the guest organist must schedule their practice sessions with the Director of Music so as not to interfere with the practice time of the church

organist. The Office Administrator will provide a form for the guest organist to record the program of music that is to be used, including vocal selections. This form must be returned to the Director of Music for approval at least two (2) weeks before the ceremony. These guidelines also apply to any other musicians who are participating in the wedding (other than a church staff member).

THE WEDDING PARTY

1. All attendants, groomsmen and ushers are expected to be on time for the wedding rehearsal as it is a time for planning and practice to ensure a beautiful wedding. Usually one hour is allotted for this time.

2. For most weddings in the sanctuary, members of the wedding party should be at the church at least two (2) hours prior to the time of the wedding. The wedding party and ushers should be dressed and ready for photographs two (2) hours before the ceremony. The photographer should be scheduled for this time. **All** photography in the sanctuary must cease (1) hour before the wedding and photos should conclude **no later than thirty (30) minutes** following the service to allow the bridal party to participate in their reception and prevent their guests from waiting. The ushers should be in the narthex ready to begin seating guests 45 minutes before the ceremony.

3. Please arrange for an usher(s) to light any candles to be used 45 minutes before the ceremony.

4. The McAlpine Room is available for the bride and her attendants to dress. Leave the room in neat order after the wedding. Personal property should be removed from the room promptly after the wedding. The church cannot be responsible for property left in the building during the wedding, reception, or following the wedding/reception. No personal property may be left in the church buildings overnight either before or after the wedding.

5. A room is available for the groom, groomsmen and ushers if needed. The Wedding Guild member will advise the location of this room.

6. If early access to the church building is needed, arrangements should be made with the church office or Wedding Guild **one week** before the wedding.

7. There is no smoking or use of any tobacco products allowed within the church buildings. Alcohol on the church premises is strictly prohibited. Under no circumstances will any member of the wedding party be permitted to participate in the rehearsal or the ceremony while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

THE DECORATIONS

“Flowers, decoration, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worship’s consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian Life.” (The Book of Order, W-1.3034)

The Wedding Guild member will be available to assist you in planning decorations for the sanctuary. It shall be the responsibility of the bride or groom to ensure property is free of damage. To prevent damage to the building or furniture, the following rules must be adhered to:

1. Nails, screws, tacks, staples, or tape may not be used on the floor, carpet, walls or furniture. It is the responsibility of the decorator to safeguard church property from damage and accept liability for any damage that results from failure to follow guidelines. The decorator may not stand on pews, chairs or other church furnishings.

2. The florist can provide appropriate ribbon or floral markers for designating pews for family and honored guests.

3. Symbols of worship in a Presbyterian worship service are the pulpit, baptismal font and the communion table. Each of these represents

the Proclamation of God's Word through scripture and sacraments. These symbols remain in place in a wedding service, although some movement of table and font may be allowed.

4. All candles used must be non-drip (your florist can supply). Should drips occur, the florist is responsible for removing wax from floor or furnishings. Extinguish all candles immediately after the photo session.

5. A kneeling bench is provided for those couples who wish to use it in their service. Please inform the Wedding Guild member if you will need it for the ceremony.

6. Silk flower petals instead of "fresh" petals should be used by the flower girl. "Fresh" flower petals tend to stain the carpet.

7. The florist may use the church floral containers, but they may not be removed from the church buildings. It is the responsibility of the florist to make early arrangements for entering the church to decorate and for delivery of flowers prior to the wedding if other than normal hours. (Hours are 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. on Fridays. On Saturday, arrangements may be made with the Wedding Guild member or church office.

8. All decorations must be removed from the building immediately following the wedding unless other arrangements have been made. The premises must be restored to their original condition.

9. If you wish, wedding flowers may be used in the regular Sunday worship service to honor the bride and groom or to honor or memorialize a loved one or friend. A note will be printed in the bulletin. This desire should be expressed at the meeting with the Wedding Guild member as there is a reserved FPC flower calendar to consider.

PHOTOGRAPHY

1. The wedding is a sacred service and pictures are a treasured possession. Photographers must not interfere with nor intrude upon the worship experience of the bride and groom and the congregation.

2. Flash photography may NOT be taken during the ceremony by the photographer or guests. Please make guests aware of this policy.

3. No pictures which require additional lighting of any kind may be taken during the ceremony and no photographic equipment which makes noise may be used during the ceremony. Movies, videotapes or other pictures

may be made during the ceremony if they require no additional light and make no sound.

4. The photographer may take flash photography of the bride and her escort as they enter and leave the sanctuary in the processional and recessional provided the photographer comes no farther than the entrance of the sanctuary. The photographer must not delay the processional for photographs.

5. Pictures may be made before the wedding begins or following the ceremony.

6. After the wedding, photos with the pastor shall be taken first so the pastor can be excused.

7. It is recommended that the photographer be at the church two (2) hours prior to the service. **All** photography in the sanctuary must cease (1) hour before the wedding and photographer should conclude photos no later than thirty (30) minutes following the service to allow the bridal party to participate in their reception and prevent their guests from waiting.

8. The photographer must be given a copy of this policy statement to review and sign before the wedding. (See attached). This signed form **MUST** be returned to the church office at least one week before the wedding date.

THE RECEPTION

1. If you plan a wedding reception at the church, reservations for the facilities should be made at the time the wedding is scheduled (this should include the use of the kitchen if needed).

2. The wedding party is responsible for securing caterers. The church kitchen and equipment may be used, but it must be clearly understood the kitchen is to be clean and in good order after the reception. A fee will be charged for any broken or damaged supplies, equipment or any misuse of church property.

3. No nails, tacks or wire may be used on walls, tables, furnishings, etc. in Memorial Fellowship Hall.

4. Throwing of rice, birdseed or confetti of any kind is strictly prohibited inside the church buildings. It is also requested that only birdseed be used outside the church.

5. No food or drink is allowed in the sanctuary.

6. Loud music which disturbs church neighbors is not permitted.

7. **NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES ARE TO BE SERVED OR CONSUMED ON CHURCH PREMISES.**

It is the responsibility of the couple to give the photographer, decorator (florist), and/or visiting musicians a copy of these guidelines that relate to their function. Each party must initial and return their section to the church office prior to the wedding date.

It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to incur expenses for the pastor and organist's travel and lodging if necessary.

PLEASE SEE WEDDING PLANS AND FEE SCHEDULE WHICH THE WEDDING GUILD MEMBER WILL PROVIDE.

FPC WEDDING FEES	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
FPC PASTOR	\$150.00-\$250.00	\$250.00-\$350.00
FPC WEDDING GUILD MEMBER	\$100.00	\$200.00
FPC ORGANIST	\$300.00	\$400.00
FPC SANCTUARY	\$0.00	\$500.00
FPC SEXTON (prepare and clean sanctuary, narthex and bridal suites, remove/replace chairs in choir loft)	\$150.00	\$250.00
FPC MEMORIAL FELLOWSHIP HALL and KITCHEN (rental, preparation and cleaning)	\$175.00	\$350.00

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