

THE WEDDING
AT
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
HICKORY, N.C.

A Christian wedding is a service of worship intended to glorify God and to unite persons in a holy covenant of marriage. Therefore, the following guidelines are designed to enhance the service of worship and to provide standards for all weddings at First Presbyterian Church.

1. The service shall be conducted under the sole direction of the pastor(s), who shall have the final authority over the form and content of the service.

As early as possible after the decision to marry is made, the couple should meet with the pastor(s). A pastor is responsible for participating in weddings as a representative of the Church of Jesus Christ, and thus is responsible for providing education and counsel in preparation for marriage. In that light, it is the policy of this church that the couple shall meet together with the pastor(s) prior to any agreement to perform the wedding. The participation of a pastor shall be at his or her professional discretion.

The couple should reserve the wedding date and time on the church calendar after consultation and agreement with the pastor, complete the attached application, and return it to the church as soon as possible. No wedding may be scheduled more than one year in advance.

The couple may request either pastor, or both, to conduct their wedding. If the participation of a minister not on the staff of this church is desired, that should be made known as early as possible, in order that the Session may take action on this request.

2. Permission to be married in First Presbyterian Church shall be granted to:

- Members and children of members of First Presbyterian Church.
- Non-members who have been active participants in the life of the church for at least six months prior to the wedding date and children of such persons. (Note: Only one of the persons to be married must fit into the above categories.)
- Exceptions to the above may be granted only by action of the Session.

If either the bride or groom is a member of this church, or if their parents are members of this church, there shall be no fee to use the church building, sanctuary, fellowship hall, or kitchen.

Any gratuity for the pastors' participation is at the discretion of the bride and groom.

When permission is granted for non-members to have their wedding ceremony conducted in the church, "Guidelines To Be Used In Preparing For Marriage" and the "Policy On Use Of Church Facilities" shall be followed (see attached). Weddings for non-members shall not be placed on the church calendar more than four months prior to the wedding date.

3. It is the couple's responsibility to obtain a North Carolina Marriage License from the office of the Register of Deeds at the Catawba County Courthouse in Newton. The Register of Deeds will furnish information regarding the legal requirements for securing such a license. It is necessary for the couple to bring their license to the pastor prior to the wedding. It is also the responsibility of the bride and groom to enlist two witnesses to sign the license. These two persons are to be informed that they are required to come to the pastor immediately after the ceremony for the signing.
4. Ordinarily the regular church organist will play for weddings in the church. If the regular organist is unavailable, or for some valid reason another organist is desired, the regular organist will be so advised. It is the couple's responsibility to secure a commitment from the organist to play at the wedding.

All music and all persons performing the music at a wedding are subject to the approval of the church organist. It is advised, therefore, that a conference be arranged with the organist, well in advance of the rehearsal, to discuss the selection of music, both vocal and instrumental, appropriate to a church wedding. Secular music which is not appropriate for a worship service may not be used. Hymns are appropriate and, if desired, the congregation may be invited to sing a hymn(s) during the ceremony. No taped or recorded music is to be used in the wedding ceremony.

The organist fee for services in preparing and playing for the wedding, and for the rehearsal are negotiable with him/her. The couple shall be responsible for engaging and paying any soloists or instrumentalists.

5. When there are several attendants taking part in the ceremony it is necessary to arrange for a rehearsal. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to assure that all participants are present on time. It may be helpful to provide out-of-town participants with directions to the church.

Given the physical arrangement of the sanctuary, it is necessary to designate one person to function as wedding director. That person should be present at the rehearsal. A director may be enlisted from experienced members of this church, or may be employed. The bride should meet with the director prior to the rehearsal to clarify details of processions, recessions, standing positions during the ceremony, etc. If the director has not directed a wedding at this church previously, he or she shall meet with the pastor(s) and organist prior to the rehearsal in order to discuss plans for the ceremony and the rehearsal.

Wedding bulletins, though not a tradition of the church, may be printed listing the order of service, the music, the participants, etc. Such bulletins are neither provided nor printed by the church; thus, arrangements for the same are the responsibility of the couple.

- 6. A marriage ceremony in a church is a service of worship. Therefore, no flash photographs are permitted during the processional, ceremony, or recessional. Time exposures requiring no movement** or distracting noises on the part of the photographer, may be taken from the balcony or the rear of the sanctuary. After the ceremony, when all of the guests have left the sanctuary, the wedding party may return for the taking of photographs.

It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the photographer, as well as friends, of these policies concerning photographs.

Any video or audio recording of the service must be done without any distracting movement or noise on the part of those making the recording. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange for such recording, if desired, and to inform those making the recording of these policies.

- 7.** It is recommended that decorations be kept to a minimum. Only two floral arrangements shall be used in the chancel area of the sanctuary and appropriate arrangements may be placed on the window sills. If the couple wishes for one of these floral arrangements to be used for a subsequent worship service, that desire should be made known to the church office (322-6343) as soon as possible and not later than one month prior to the wedding to ensure that there is no duplication, and that an appropriate announcement may be included in the worship bulletin.

Any decorations used are the responsibility of the couple or their families. It shall be made clear by the couple to those arranging the decorations that precautions must be taken to protect the church property from candle drippings, water spills, adhesive tape, etc. Nothing shall be nailed or attached to floors, walls or furnishings that will deface the property. All decorations shall be removed as soon as possible after the ceremony, and the facilities returned to the condition in which they were found.

- 8.** The fellowship hall and kitchen are available for wedding receptions. The Policy On The Use of Facilities of First Presbyterian Church shall be followed.

- 9.** No alcoholic beverages are permitted on church premises at any time.

- 10.** Smoking is not permitted in the church buildings at any time.

- 11.** The church custodian shall be advised of the rehearsal, wedding and reception by the pastor well in advance. The wedding party shall contact the custodian(s) regarding the time for opening and closing the facilities and any other necessary arrangements.

The church custodian shall open and close all necessary buildings in a timely manner, and adjust heating and air-conditioning controls as needed. He shall be responsible for cleaning all buildings

and/or rooms used in connection with the wedding (and with the reception if it is held at the church). Cleaning of the kitchen shall be the responsibility of the wedding party and/or the caterer.

Since most weddings take place outside the normal working hours for which the custodian is compensated, it is expected that the couple will reimburse him for his services in connection with the wedding and the reception. Such reimbursement shall be on the following scale:

Wedding and Rehearsal - \$200.00

Reception at the Church - \$200.00

Should any further custodial services be needed (e.g., following a rehearsal dinner or a bridesmaid's luncheon held at the church, or cleaning of the kitchen in cases where a regular caterer is not used) such service shall be compensated at a rate to be arranged with the custodian and pastor.

- 12.** The Church Parlor and other rooms in the church facilities are available for the bridal party to dress and shall be reserved, if desired, through the church office as early as possible.
- 13.** Members of the wedding party are responsible for the security of their valuables at all times.
- 14.** Rice may not be thrown in the church buildings, or on any walkways around the church. Upon the bride and groom's departure from the church, birdseed may be thrown instead.
- 15.** There shall be no individual communion served for a wedding ceremony.
- 16.** Exceptions to this policy can be made only with the approval of the Session.
- 17.** Commentary about marriage can be found in the "Directory of Worship" in our Book of Order, W-4.9000 - W-4.9006

GUIDELINES TO BE USED IN PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

AT

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Session of First Presbyterian Church affirms the covenant of marriage as a sacred commitment, an opportunity for life-long growth, and a source of great joy. We believe the community of faith can help married couples nurture and build meaningful, loving relationships as God intends.

Therefore, the Session endorses the following guidelines for our pastors and for couples as they plan to be united in marriage at First Presbyterian Church.

The pastors will:

- Set an example of honoring marriage by word and deed;
- Encourage a waiting period of at least six months between the initial contact between the pastor and the couple and the date of the wedding;
- Conduct a pre-marital preparation process of at least four pre-marital counseling sessions using Biblical instruction, a pre-marital inventory, and a discussion of such aspects of marriage as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, the sexual relationship, children and parenting roles, and spiritual beliefs;
- Encourage sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage;
- Conduct at least one post-marital counseling sessions six months to one year after the wedding;
- Encourage participation in weekend events and special workshops for engaged and married couples;
and
- Instruct couples to abide by the wedding policy of First Presbyterian Church.

March 28, 1999