

THE WEDDING POLICY
WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Marriage, as held in the Christian Faith, is a divine institution which is established by Almighty God as a part of His loving purpose for humanity. Our Savior Jesus Christ said, "The Creator made them from the beginning male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be made one with his wife: and the two shall become one flesh." Thus marriage is a gift and a calling of God, not to be taken lightly or entered into from selfish motives. Rather, a couple who comes to the church to be wed should be moved by reverence and devotion, fully realizing the purpose to which God has appointed for marriage. To be married in the church is more than simply making a civil or legal contract. It is the exchanging of solemn vows in God's presence and the seeking of His eternal blessing upon the marriage union. For this reason the church solemnizes marriage in the context of worship, acknowledging God as an essential participant in married life. The whole basis for a wedding service conducted within a Presbyterian Church is predicated upon the desire and intention of the prospective bride and groom to have a Christian marriage.

Session Approval

In the Presbyterian Church, the Session is charged with the authority and responsibility for determining the time and place of all religious services, for determining what music may be used in such services, and for determining how the church facilities are used. Each wedding service must have the approval of the Session. This is ordinarily done through the pastor of the church. When requesting permission to use the church building, the wedding party, the minister, and a wedding liaison, who may be appointed by the Session, should be clear as to the day and hour of the wedding and rehearsal, the specific facilities to be used, as well as other pertinent information.

Each request for permission to use the church facilities for a wedding and/or wedding reception will be considered individually and a decision rendered by the Session based upon appropriateness of scheduling and the willingness of the wedding party to adhere to these policies.

Though exceptions can be made for small weddings, the Session typically will not approve weddings to be scheduled on the following days: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Saturday before Easter, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or any other date which will conflict with church activities. In every instance the wedding party must have the consent of the Session before notice of the place of the wedding is made public.

"Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires 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. If so scheduled, 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."

The Minister

A Presbyterian Minister has been called by a local church to be the Pastor of that congregation, wherein he/she exercises his/her ministerial functions. Every individual Presbyterian Minister has the authority and responsibility of determining whether or not to perform a wedding. Though the minister should consult with the Session, this prerogative stands apart from the Session by virtue of a minister's particular calling to office.

In preparation for marriage the couples shall converse with the minister on the following topics:

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 faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

Ordinarily the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church will perform all wedding services in the church. There are times, however, when a couple may desire another Presbyterian Minister (other than the pastor) to officiate or assist in the service. Should that be the case, this request would require the Session's approval. This request is ordinarily made through the pastor, who upon the approval of the Session will issue an invitation to the other minister. In any event, the pastor of the church shall always have complete oversight and responsibility for compliance with this wedding policy.

Ordinarily, ministers of other denominations are not permitted to conduct weddings in this church; however, with the approval of the Session they may be asked to assist in the service. This request is ordinarily made through the pastor, who upon the approval of the Session will issue an invitation to the other minister. A Presbyterian Minister will be in charge of the service and the order of the service will conform to the Directory for Worship as outlined in the Book of Order.

Wedding Liaison

A member of Westminster Presbyterian Church shall be appointed by the Session to serve for all non-member weddings held in the church facilities that are not officiated by our pastor. The wedding liaison will be present during any preparation (i.e., decorating of) the sanctuary, and/or Westminster Hall in order to assure that the Wedding Policy is followed."

The Worship Committee is responsible for recommending a person to serve as the wedding liaison.

Rehearsals

Rehearsal should begin promptly at the time scheduled and should proceed in a quiet, dignified manner. Members of the wedding party throughout the entire rehearsal should remember they are in a place dedicated to the worship of God.

In order to prepare for the details of the wedding a couple may engage a wedding consultant. While the suggestions of such consultants are welcome, the minister is in complete charge of the rehearsal and wedding.

Music

In worship we offer God our best gifts, to His honor and glory. All music in worship must, by the very nature of worship itself, direct attention to God and express the faith of the church. Secular or popular songs, however meaningful to the couple, must be reserved for another place of celebration. And since, in the end, our music is considered an offering to God and in respect to the traditions of Westminster Presbyterian Church, taped music including taped accompaniments of solo or choral music are allowed only at the reception.

There is a wealth of beautiful music that is suitable for weddings. Careful selection will assure a program that is pleasing to the bride and groom and reflects their individuality, yet maintains the propriety of the glory of God. The simple rule remains: If it is suitable for Sunday worship service in Westminster Presbyterian Church, it is suitable for your church wedding.

Our church organist is expected to play at all weddings. If the organist is not available to play at the wedding, he/she will try to arrange for a substitute organist. If our church organist is available, but you desire a guest organist, WPC follows the polity of the American Guild of Organists; a guest organist must meet with our organist, who will assess the musician's competence and experience with respect to the church's instrument.

Though our Book of Order informs us that the pastor has to give the final approval for any music to be used in the service, all requests for organ music, hymns, and special music must be presented and approved by the organist or Director of Music well in advance of the wedding. We recommend that any special music to be used in the wedding be approved at least six weeks before the wedding.

Our Director of Music and our organist as regular members of our staff, are familiar with the order and tradition of the church, and will be happy to suggest suitable musical selections for you to consider and places in the service where solos, hymns or instrumental selections are appropriate. Nevertheless, the pastor has the final approval of all music and its placement in the service.

Decorations

When a couple plans to use the church for their wedding, they are urged to be mindful of the heritage of the Presbyterian Church. The symbols of our faith should be respected in their entirety. The Communion Table, Baptismal Font, and Pulpit all represent the means by which we experience God's grace as Christians; they are reminders of what we believe as a Church. Therefore, the Pulpit, Baptismal Font and Communion Table must remain in highly visible places in the chancel area of the Sanctuary. As you plan your wedding our pastor will be glad to make suggestions on rearranging these pieces of furniture, but keep in mind that the size of our chancel limits our ability to make any major changes.

Decorations should accentuate the simplicity of the Sanctuary, and we discourage wedding planners going to any great expense to be elaborate. Decorations that would mar the walls, woodwork, floors or furnishings in any way may not be used. Nails and screws, etc., are not to be used to attach decorations to furniture, walls, floors, or any other part of the facility. Potted plants must be placed on plastic in order to protect against damage to carpet or woodwork. All candelabras must hold dripless candles. The use of candles in the aisles, pews or windows is not permitted.

Decorating and the removal of decorations is the responsibility of the wedding party. Decorations must not be left in the building over 24 hours after a wedding. In the event of Saturday weddings, decorations must be removed and furnishings restored that same day, and the sanctuary must be left ready for Sunday morning worship.

Professional decorators, consultants, and/or florists employed by the wedding party must be informed of and abide by this policy. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to so inform such employees. In any event, such persons employed for a wedding in Westminster Presbyterian Church, must abide by the pastor's decision in all matters respecting the service, the building, and its use.

Photography

The wedding ceremony is a worship service; consequently we discourage the taking of photographs

during the service. **No flash photographs** may be taken in the sanctuary from the time the "Processional" begins until after the Benediction. The only exception is the photographer may take one picture of the bride as she enters the sanctuary. Videotaping and flashless photography are permitted from the back of the sanctuary only, yet care must be taken that the photographer in no way disrupts the worship service. No spot-lighting may be used. Pictures may be made in the sanctuary prior to and at the conclusion of the service. Photographs may also be taken at the reception, in the vestibules, and in Westminster Hall.

Batteries of lights and movie equipment are prohibited until after guests have dispersed. All photographers, professional or otherwise, must be informed of this policy by the wedding party.

Reception

The Westminster Hall may be reserved for the wedding reception and/or rehearsal dinner, if desired. It is recommended that a catering service be engaged for these functions, as the church has no provision for catering. No alcoholic beverages will be served on church property. Westminster Presbyterian Church will not be responsible for equipment and/or personal items left at the church. The throwing of rice, bird seed or other substances is not permitted on the church grounds.

Fees

There are two fee schedules: one for non-members and one for members of Westminster Presbyterian Church who have been active in the life of the church for at least six-months.

Non member fees:

Sanctuary	\$ <u>350</u>
Parlor	\$ <u>200</u>
Westminster Hall	\$ <u>200</u>
Wedding Liaison	\$ <u>150</u>
Custodian	\$ <u>150</u>

A security deposit of \$500 must be made before the wedding date may be placed on the church calendar. This deposit will be refunded within fifteen (15) days after the wedding if there has been no damage to church and the decorations, flowers, etc. were removed in accordance with this policy. Any cost incurred by the church in excess of this amount will be charged to the person making the security deposit. The church expects payment for all the above fees at least five (5) days prior to the wedding day.

Member fees: (there is no charge for the use of the church facilities)

Wedding liaison (if assigned by the Session)	\$150
Custodian (if needed)	\$100

No security shall be required of members. Any cost incurred by the church as a result of damage to the church, however, will be charged to the member. The church expects payment for all the above fees at least five (5) days prior to the wedding day

MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO NEGOTIATE FEES DIRECTLY WITH THE CHURCH ORGANIST AND DIRECTOR OF MUSIC.

MISCELLANEOUS

If worship bulletins are used, it is the responsibility of the wedding party to have them printed at their own

expense. Before printing the worship bulletin must be approved by the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

The minister will use the traditional marriage service from the Book of Common Worship of the Presbyterian Church. Any unusual request pertaining to the wedding ceremony must receive approval from the Session.

No evening wedding will be scheduled to begin after 8:00 PM. If a reception is held in the church building the wedding shall be scheduled to begin no later than 6:00 PM.

No smoking is permitted in the facility.

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the facility or on church property.

The wedding party is responsible for the safety and actions of their guest.

The wedding party is responsible for providing adequate security to ensure the safety of all who attend.

The items in the church kitchen belong to the church and should not be used by the wedding party.

Failure to abide by any part of this wedding policy shall be brought to the immediate attention of the Session and may result in complete revocation of privileges and forfeiture of all fees.

Approved by the Session: June 23, 2013