



A  
CHRISTIAN WEDDING  
SERVICE

FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH OF HIGHLANDS

CHRIST'S CHURCH WITH ITS DOORS OPEN WIDE

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#### **Introduction**

The Session and Staff of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands congratulate you upon your decision to be united in Christian marriage at our church. This bulletin of guidelines has been prepared so that we may render every possible service of support to you as you prepare for the day of your wedding. A wedding service in a Christian church is an acknowledgement of the institution of marriage as a gracious gift of God and a joyous celebration of our acceptance of this gift. Every wedding ceremony is to be regarded as a service of worship and thanksgiving to God for the gift of marriage. This primary focus upon the worship of God should be our principal consideration in the wedding planning and the wedding service itself. All aspects of the ceremony, including the music, decorations and photography, are in service to this worshipful purpose.

The following steps, if followed carefully, will assist you in planning your wedding.

It is out of our church's accumulated experience in arranging weddings that these guidelines have evolved. We have learned what works—as well as what does not work—and we want your wedding day to be a joyous occasion and a wonderful memory for many years to come. So please, help us to help you by observing these guidelines.

#### **Setting the Date**

Setting the date for your wedding by contacting the church office is your first step. It is important that the date of your wedding be first cleared with the church calendar. Because of the careful planning that is necessary for all weddings, it is strongly advised that you consult with the church office concerning your wedding date at least six months in advance.

When you contact the church, a date and time will temporarily be reserved for your wedding. Next, you need to inquire about the availability of the church's presiding Minister. You will also receive from the church office a *Wedding Registration Form*. This completed application, with the name of the officiating Minister and a damage deposit of \$750.00 will then be taken to Session for approval. After approval from Session, your wedding date will be officially confirmed.

No weddings are scheduled on Sundays, legal holidays or other special religious days. The church schedule limits weddings to no more than two per month.

In selecting the time of your service, weddings may be scheduled only between the hours of 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. The facility will be open for your use three hours before the time of your service. Please consult with the church's Wedding Director should you have any questions.

#### **The Officiating Minister**

Arrange a date as soon as possible to meet with the Minister who is officiating at your wedding. Your Minister will be in charge of all elements of the wedding service. The order of service must be one that is consistent with the Directory of Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Within those guiding traditions, your Minister may offer various options for your choosing; however, please be aware that different elements of a service that you have witnessed at weddings in other churches may not be acceptable in our church. This is a point where misunderstandings can arise, so please be aware that your Minister is under obligation to conduct marriage services that are consistent with the Presbyterian tradition and that other proposed orders of service may not be a negotiable matter.

You may invite a guest Minister to participate in your wedding; however, we urge you

not to do so until you have first consulted with a Minister at First Presbyterian Church of Highlands. We ordinarily welcome the participation of ordained clergy from denominations in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church, as well as Catholic or Orthodox Priests and Jewish Rabbis.

However, as a courtesy to guest Ministers, the Called Minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands assigned to your service will be in charge of all the details of your wedding service. As a matter of pastoral protocol, it is the responsibility of a Minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands to invite and encourage the participation of guest Ministers. When a Minister of our church has reviewed and approved your wedding plans, such a proper invitation will be extended.

A premarital consultation is required with the officiating Minister. Appointments should be made well in advance, and both bride and groom are expected to be present. In the event that your current location makes this improbable, you may make arrangements with the officiating Minister for counseling elsewhere.

#### **Wedding Planning**

When your wedding date has been approved by Session, you will be given the names of the church's Wedding Director and Organist/Music Coordinator. You will need to contact each of them to arrange a meeting. It is very important to arrange these meetings as soon as possible.

If, in addition, you retain an outside Wedding Coordinator, please be aware that his/her services will be an addition to the Church's Wedding Director and whose services are to be confined to certain matters only, and not to the elements of the worship service. The church's Wedding Director will need to meet with the Wedding Coordinator as soon as possible.

Many details, if carefully observed, will enhance the dignity and spiritual elegance of your wedding service. The Church's Wedding Director, working with you and your wedding coordinator within these established guidelines, will be assisting you with such important matters. Some of the most important that you need consider are:

#### **Wedding Party**

Due to the size and configuration of the historic sanctuary, the actual wedding party standing by the bride and groom must be limited to ten attendants, including the best man and maid of honor. This does not include the bride, groom, Minister(s) or musicians. Additional attendants may sit or stand in the choir loft.

#### **Arrangements for Facilities**

Weddings scheduled in the historic sanctuary are limited by fire code to a maximum of 250 people including the balcony. A total planned attendance of 200 or less is recommended for your comfortable use of the sanctuary.

#### **Decorations**

The sanctuary of the church must be treated as a house of worship in the manner in which it is decorated for your wedding. In choosing floral or other decorations, respect must be shown to the primary symbols that identify the sanctuary as a place of worship. The pulpit, baptismal font and piano may not be moved or decorated with flowers, candles or any other adornments. Due to the limited space at the front of the sanctuary, the communion table may be moved to another location. When decorations are governed by regard for the wedding ceremony as a service of worship, we do not encounter those misunderstandings that always arise whenever the church is regarded as a hall that has been rented for the staging of a secular wedding.

No adhesive or any device which penetrates the surface of the furniture or building may be used to fasten decorations.

Only mechanical (encased) candles may be used. All candles, candelabra, and unity candles should be supplied by the florist.

A kneeling bench, if desired, should be supplied by the florist.

All decorations must adhere to fire code. Decorations, extra chairs or other standing items placed in the center aisles of the sanctuary are in violation of the fire code and are not permitted.

Any seasonal decorations that have been placed in the sanctuary by the church may not be removed, changed or altered for any reason without prior approval from the church's presiding Minister, church office, or Elder of Worship.

Church materials such as Bibles, hymnals, pew envelopes and permanent decorations are not to be moved.

All wedding decorations must be removed from the sanctuary immediately following the ceremony to help us prepare for Sunday worship.

### **Photographs and Video Taping/Recording**

The eyes of your family and friends need to be upon you as you celebrate this joyful day. These guidelines will help ensure that the inappropriate activity of a photographer or guest does not become a distraction from the main purpose of this service.

All arrangements with photographer(s) should be made in consultation with your Minister and the church's Wedding Director, and should be discussed well in advance so that all plans are made in compliance with established guidelines. There are separate guidelines that govern these matters of which you need to be aware. Your photographer or videographer may not take photographs at random during the wedding service. It is your responsibility to provide your photographer with the following regulations:

Flash photography is not permitted during the wedding ceremony. Please instruct your guests about this policy prior to the start of the wedding. This can be done by placing a statement in the Order of Worship: *Flash photography is not permitted during the worship service.* Wedding party photographs may be taken either before or immediately following the ceremony.

Use of video equipment or cameras having silent shutters is permitted from the balcony only, providing no artificial lighting is used and that such activity does not disturb the worship experience of others. During the service, the proceedings may be videotaped, but only from the balcony, and only with available light. Microphone cords must not obstruct the movement of guests seated in the balcony. Video cameras may not be placed in the aisles or at the front of the church, including the choir loft. *The photographer's failure to comply with these requirements may result in the Minister stopping the service and asking the photographer to leave.*

Taking formal posed pictures in the sanctuary prior to the wedding service is encouraged to facilitate a quick transition from the wedding to the reception. Any formal photographic sessions, either before or after the wedding, must be done within the entire time allotted for the weddings.

### **Facility Regulations**

Neither alcoholic beverages nor tobacco products of any kind are allowed on the church campus.

No beverage of any kind, except water, may be brought into the historic sanctuary.

No rice or confetti may be thrown inside or outside the church building. It is environmentally appropriate to use birdseed outside the building, and this is permitted.

Receiving lines for small weddings may be held in the narthex or outdoors. Usually receiving lines are held at the place of the reception.

Please be sure that any apparel or refreshments that may have been brought to the church campus be removed from the premises, and that the areas are cleaned up before you leave the building.

Each member of the wedding party and his/her guests are responsible for their own safety. Please be aware of uneven sidewalks, rough ground and other unavoidable hazards and remember to use handrails or other safety provisions.

Parking is limited in the downtown area and on Church Street. On weekends, some additional parking is available in front of and behind the Highlands Community Child Development Center, located on Church Street across from the church.

The church's Wedding Director will discuss many other details with you (and/or your Wedding Coordinator) as you prepare for your wedding day. She will be present at your rehearsal and on your wedding day to guarantee that everything goes according to plan. If questions or problems arise as you proceed with your planning, be sure to call the church's Wedding Coordinator.

### **Reception**

Coleman Hall may be reserved for receptions. Arrangements should be made with the church office. Coleman Hall can accommodate 160 people for dinner and has a commercial kitchen. Please refer to *Your Reception in Coleman Hall* for more information. The cost for Coleman Hall is a separate item.

### **Wedding Music**

Your next important call is to the church's Organist/Music Coordinator whose name you will receive from the church office upon confirmation of your wedding date. The Organist/Music Coordinator will be available to ensure the appropriateness of all musical arrangements for your service. Guest musicians or soloists should not be invited to participate before your consultation with the Organist/Music Coordinator. Remuneration for any outside musicians is your personal responsibility. Additional rehearsal time required of the Organist/Music Coordinator with outside musicians will be on a private contract basis between you and the Organist/Music Coordinator.

Suggested musical selections are as follows:

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring  
"Air" from Water Music Suite – G.F. Handel  
Air for the G String – J.S. Bach  
Canon in D Major – Pachelbel  
Trumpet Voluntary (Prince of Denmark's March) – Jeremiah Clarke  
Te Deum - Charpentier  
Highland Cathedral w/bagpipes – Uli Roever  
Hymn to Joy w/bagpipes - Beethoven  
Hornpipe (from Water Music Suite) – G.F. Handel  
Trumpet Tune – Purcell  
Trumpet Tune – Stanley  
La Rejouissance – G.F. Handel  
Rondeau – Mouret  
Arrival of the Queen of Sheba – G.F. Handel  
Festive Trumpet Tune – German

Because a wedding service is a service of worship, the music chosen must be consistent with the spiritual purpose of the occasion. Popular or secular music selections which are not in keeping with the worshipful nature of the service are therefore discouraged. Pre-recorded music shall not be used. The final decisions about all musical arrangements are at the discretion of the church Organist/Music Coordinator in consultation with the Director of Worship & Music and the Pastor.

### **Liturgy and Readings**

All liturgical readings, scripture and additional poetry or other readings must be consistent with a Christian worship experience and must be approved, in advance, by a Minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands. What is or is not acceptable will be at the sole discretion of the ministerial staff of the church.

### **Bulletins/Programs**

Wedding parties are responsible for providing their own bulletins and programs.

### **Eligible Parties & Fees**

The following are eligible to reserve the church sanctuary or other facilities at First Presbyterian Church of Highlands for wedding ceremonies and other related events.

1. If the bride and/or groom are active members of First Presbyterian Church of Highlands or if the bride and groom are members of the immediate family (i.e. children or grandchildren) of full or affiliate members of the church.
2. If the bride and/or groom are sponsored by a full or affiliate member of First Presbyterian Church of Highlands or by a Minister of this congregation.

The Session has established an inclusive fee of \$2,800 which covers the church's professional services. This fee is due no later than two weeks before the day of the rehearsal. A deposit of \$750 is due at the time of scheduling. If the deposit is not received within two weeks of Session approval the date will not be reserved on the church calendar.

The following are also eligible to reserve the church sanctuary or other facilities at First Presbyterian Church of Highlands for wedding ceremonies and other related events.

1. If the bride and/or groom are active members of another Presbyterian Church (USA), who present a letter of recommendation from their Minister or Session.

The Session has established an inclusive fee of \$4,000 which covers the church's professional services. This fee is due no later than two weeks before the day of the rehearsal. A deposit of \$750 is due at the time of scheduling. If the deposit is not received within two weeks of Session approval the date will not be reserved on the church calendar.

First Presbyterian Church of Highlands may, under special circumstances, grant an exception to these eligibility requirements. Such requests must be submitted to Session along with the *Wedding Registration Form*.

### **In Conclusion**

We are pleased you have chosen to be married at the First Presbyterian Church of Highlands and look forward to working with you as you make your plans. As you will learn during the coming years, as difficult as it may seem to plan a wedding, it is far more challenging to make and keep a good marriage. It is the sincere desire and prayer of our church and staff that you experience both a beautiful wedding day and an enduring marriage. We will always be here to support you in your marriage. For now, however, we want to help you with that first step: your wedding day!