



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PITTSBURGH

awakening a new generation to life in Christ

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Wedding Policy January 2017

1. Is it necessary for us to be members of FPCP to be married here?

No. We only require that one of you be a professing Christian, and that you both intend to live going forward in the manner discerned by you in the course of your pre-marriage counseling, and undertaken for you by God on the day you say your vows. According to the polity of The Presbyterian Church (USA), all weddings at FPCP are under the supervision of our governing body (The Session). Your request to be married will be presented to the Session for approval. The Session meets monthly. By far, the best way to live the Christian life is as active members of a faith community. If you are serious about living out your vows, we strongly urge you to become active in your church. We hope you will consider making FPCP your church home.

2. One of us is a Christian and the other comes from a different faith tradition. Is it possible for us to be married at FPCP?

You are undoubtedly discovering that interfaith marriage takes a great deal of attention and care. We advise that you seek the wisdom of a religious leader in your faith tradition long before you contact us about planning a wedding service here. If our pastors are confident that you can live together in ways that are in keeping with the expectations of Christian marriage, they will agree to officiate. Perhaps you will want to use something from another faith tradition in the wedding service. It may be included if it is not contradictory to Christian worship.

3. Can divorced persons be married at FPCP?

Yes! The gospel of Jesus Christ is not about judging people for their pasts. It is about offering them freedom to move forward in new life. However, before the church will agree to marry divorced persons, an honest look at former marriages is necessary so that past mistakes are not brought into a new relationship. Our pastors will lead you through this conversation during pre-marriage counseling.

4. Do we have a choice about who can officiate at our wedding?

The pastors at FPCP are responsible for preparing you for marriage, and for officiating at the wedding service. You may request a particular FPCP pastor, or one will be appointed for you on the basis of availability. If you would like to have an ordained clergy from another church, denomination or tradition participate in your wedding service, please make your request known during your first conversation with the FPCP

pastor who contacts you. Ministers, priests or rabbis must be fully ordained of a recognized body or denomination, and are invited by the officiating FPCP pastor on your behalf. Visiting clergy should not be formally invited until you have talked with a pastor from FPCP and Session approves. The honorarium of an invited clergy will be your responsibility. They are required to attend the rehearsal.

5. **May we ask family and friends to participate in the service?**

Yes. This can be extremely meaningful as two families join together. Often family members or friends are asked to read Scripture or sing. Please make your choices carefully. Also, be prepared for the behavior of children under 6 years of age. They may not understand their role, and may even refuse to comply at the last minute. In keeping with the integrity of the church and its grounds, pets are not permitted. Please leave your pet in the care of a responsible animal lover somewhere else on the day of your wedding.

6. **What should we know about setting a date or time?**

Weddings at FPCP are normally held on Saturdays with a start time between 11 AM and 5 PM. You may also request an evening wedding on Fridays with a start time between 4:30 PM. and 7 PM, as long as there is no wedding scheduled for the next day. You can expect that the building will be available to you and your guests for about two and a half hours on your wedding day. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, during Holy Week, or other religious and state holidays without special approval of the officiating FPCP pastor and the Session. Once our Wedding Coordinator presents your request to the Session, confirms your date and time, and receives your non-refundable deposit, your date is guaranteed. If you are a non-member, your confirmed wedding date and time cannot be supplanted by a member's wedding.

7. **Are we required to have pre-marriage counseling?**

Yes. As part of approval process, counseling arrangements must be in place with FPCP pastor, or alternative counseling from guest pastor or accredited counselor. The first meeting will begin six months ahead of your wedding, and the last will occur no later than thirty days before the wedding. In part, these meetings provide opportunities to make decisions about the particular details of your wedding service. These meetings will encourage you to explore what both of you bring to your marriage—the expectations each may have concerning personality, family, sex, finances and other factors. Most importantly you will be guided to consider life decisions based on a biblical understanding of marriage. Our pastors at FPCP may differ slightly in their personal approaches to your preparation, but will generally focus on the same topics. These meetings are considered privileged and will be kept confidential. Perhaps you are not residents of the Pittsburgh area, or you are contemplating alternate pre-marriage counseling. If so, please mention these matters in your first conversation with the officiating pastor at FPCP so that the pre-marriage

requirements may be agreed upon and satisfactorily met.

8. Is it possible to include the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (Communion) in our wedding service?

Yes. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated if both the bride and the groom are baptized. Under the auspices of The Presbyterian Church (USA), the celebration of the Lord's Supper must be approved by the Session and must be served to all baptized persons attending the service. Your officiating pastor will be glad to speak further with you about this. Keep in mind that this decision should be made early enough to receive Session approval before your wedding date.

9. What about music? Do we need to find an organist or other musicians?

No. The scheduled organist plays the organ for all weddings held in the sanctuary and is responsible for the entire musical content of your wedding. Decisions about preludes, processional, hymns, solos, ensemble pieces and recessional are the proprietary concern of the Music Minister or church organist, who will work closely with you in selecting music that will be joyful, worshipful and of the highest quality possible. Music, especially music that is sung, will be chosen to give you and your guests' pleasure, as well as reflect the biblical view of love and marriage. When the Wedding Coordinator confirms your wedding date, you will be asked to contact the music director early in your planning process. Your wishes concerning soloists, or other guest musicians, can be discussed in your first conversation with the director. If our Music Minister or organist is unavailable for your wedding, a suitable replacement will be arranged. All musical selections and arrangements with other musicians must be completed thirty days before the wedding. Guest soloists and instrumentalists must be present at the rehearsal and approved by Music Minister or organist. If you hire any musicians, be sure that they are able to be present at the rehearsal.

10. What is the role of FPCP's Wedding Coordinator?

The Wedding Coordinator will be your first contact from the church, and will provide the key relationship you need for bringing together all the factors contributing to a wonderful wedding experience. Our coordinator will handle your questions, explain guidelines and policies, and arrange introductions with the 4 officiating pastor and Music Minister or organist. You will receive much needed practical advice from the coordinator's first-hand experience, as well as suggestions to make your day special. Our Wedding Coordinator works closely with the staff and members of the church, and has the authority to make decisions not addressed in our written guidelines and policies.

11. We have hired a wedding planner. Can we use our planner in place of the FPCP's Wedding Coordinator?

No. The rehearsal and wedding service are the responsibility of the pastors, Wedding Coordinator, staff and members of FPCP. If you are using a consultant, please make it

clear that her or his involvement is limited to the reception and other non-church activities.

12. Should we plan to have a printed program or bulletin?

It is not necessary. However, you may want to have a printed program with the order of your wedding service, especially if there is congregational participation (as in the singing of a hymn, reciting the Lord's Prayer, etc.). All programs must be approved by the Wedding Guild three weeks before the wedding. Please choose your wording carefully to reflect a Christian worship service. Choose words such as "service" or "celebration," rather than "ceremony" or "sacrament." We require that you add a note asking guests to refrain from flash photography and turn off all electronic devices.

13. What about parking Downtown? What should we advise our guests to do?

There is no parking available at the church for use by the bridal party, wedding guests, photographer, videographer, florist or other service providers.

Arrangements may be made with the Wedding Coordinator for limousine drop off and pick up service. A security officer will be retained to make sure sightseers do not impede the movement of the bridal party into or out of the church, nor interrupt the wedding service.

Street parking near the church is scarce. There are several convenient parking garages nearby. Fees may vary depending on the day and time:

Mellon Square Garage

- o Smithfield and Liberty Garage
- o Ninth and Penn Garage
- o Third Avenue Garage
- o Ft. Duquesne and Sixth Garage

Once you have a wedding date, you will want to be attentive to other downtown events that might impact traveling, parking and hotel accommodations for your rehearsal and wedding. Football, hockey, baseball and events in the nearby 5 Cultural District could make things a little challenging, or at least require extra time. Websites like The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership www.downtownpittsburgh.com will be helpful in listing the calendar of city events and parking options.

14. Is the church accessible for people with disabilities?

There is an accessible entrance on Oliver Avenue. Several places within the sanctuary accommodate people with walkers and wheelchairs. Accessibility from Oliver Avenue should be arranged before the wedding day so that a smooth welcome and transition can be assured. A sound system for the hearing impaired is available. Arrangements for its operation should be made with the officiating pastor prior to the wedding rehearsal. Accessible restroom facilities are located near the sanctuary in an alcove off

the Chapel.

15. How do we obtain a marriage license and when does the church need it?

As the engaged couple, you must file for a marriage license in person at the County Building on Grant Street. The license is dated to expire in 60 days. It must be received in the church office no later than 7 days prior to your wedding. You will find further information at: www.alleghenycounty.us/wo/plan.aspx.

16. What about smoking and alcohol?

Smoking and drinking alcohol anywhere in the building or on the grounds are prohibited. A person who seems to be intoxicated, or otherwise impaired, will be asked to leave the church and grounds. Our experience has been that the combination of drinking and stress before the wedding service is a bad mix. A serious incident may become the basis for refusing to perform the wedding. Don't allow drinking to spoil your big day. Please wait to begin the party at the reception.

17. What is the church's policy for outside vendors, florists, photographers, etc?

Our Wedding Coordinator will provide specific church policies for florists, photographers and videographers. You will be responsible for obtaining signed agreements from them to make sure they understand and will adhere to these instructions.

We recommend the following professionals who are also church members:

Florist: Megan McFarland, Fragile Paradise, 412-281-1300, www.fragileparadise.com

Bagpiper: George Balderose, 412-323-2707, www.pittsburghpiper.com

Flute/violin: Jami Bale, Sapphire Strings, jjbale2003@gmail.com

18. What are some other considerations we need to keep in mind?

If you've read this far, you must be getting serious about your decision! Here are some other guidelines and policies that you will want to think about.

The grandeur of the sanctuary does not require elaborate decoration. Whatever decorations are used must be removed immediately after the wedding. If you wish, you may leave one or two floral arrangements to be enjoyed in your honor during Sunday's worship.

To be eligible for the "member" wedding fee structure, the bride, groom or at least one parent must be an active member of FPCP for a minimum of six months prior to requesting a wedding date.

For safety reasons, no aisle runner may be used. No glue, tacks, nails or any materials that may damage church property can be used to affix decorations inside or outside the church. We must also ask that no birdseed, rice, balloons, artificial snow, confetti

or the like be used inside or outside the church.

There is a bride's room and other spaces available for use by the bridal party on the day of the wedding. Our Wedding Coordinator will help you understand your options for getting ready.

The church is not responsible for personal items, including wedding gifts that are left in the church. Our Wedding Coordinator and volunteers will try to help you secure things, but you should pre-plan with family or friends if you have any concerns. It will be the responsibility of the bride and groom to repair or replace anything damaged in the church during the rehearsal or wedding service.

For a Saturday wedding, a one-hour rehearsal will usually be scheduled for you within the window of 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM on the preceding Friday. For a Friday evening wedding, a one-hour rehearsal will be scheduled for you within the window of 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM on the preceding Thursday. Rehearsals begin promptly, even if someone is missing. Should your rehearsal begin 30 minutes late, there will be a \$150 fee. The rehearsal will last only one hour. This is plenty of time to get organized if your group is attentive and cooperative. We hope you understand that this out of consideration for the time commitments of the pastor, Wedding Coordinator, Music Minister, organist and custodian. Please take care that everyone in your wedding party is aware of this policy.

The church and its grounds comprise a sacred space set apart for worship. You will want to help your wedding party, family and friends uphold the dignity and joy of your wedding by observing decorum in attire, speech and behavior. Clothing and shoes should be appropriate for the space you are using. Please advise your wedding party that excessively casual or excessively revealing clothing at the rehearsal or wedding service is unacceptable.