

WEDDING POLICIES

Westminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

Hattiesburg, Mississippi

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

In the Reformed tradition, a wedding ceremony is a worship service. This requires that at least one of the people to be married must be confessing Christian, and the couple must agree to have a Christian wedding. Westminster believes that a Christian wedding is a joyful and reverent event blessed by God that creates a covenant relationship based on a lifelong commitment made by a woman and man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith. Westminster is a particular church of the Presbyterian Church (USA). In 2015 the Book of Order of the PC (USA) was amended to expand the definition of marriage. After prayer, reflection, and discussion, the Session concluded that this broader view of marriage is contrary to the Session's discernment of the Spirit's will and our understanding of the Word of God. This is not a position we enter into lightly, and we ask couples to respect our core beliefs regarding Christian marriage.

RESERVING THE CHURCH

Step by step procedure: To avoid scheduling conflicts and misunderstandings, all weddings at Westminster must be approved, at least 90 days in advance, by the church's pastor and the church's governing board - the Session.

A wedding will not be considered approved until all of the following steps have been accomplished at least 90 days before the wedding:

1. The couple completes and files with the church secretary the [Wedding Reservation Form](#).
2. The couple speaks with and gets approval from our Pastor regarding:
 - A. Pre-marital counseling
 - B. Having another pastor conduct the wedding
3. Payment of fees: Half is paid when you submit the Wedding Reservation Form; the balance is due 30 days before the ceremony. When your Wedding Reservation Form and half the fees are received, we will tentatively reserve the date for you. If another couple's Wedding Reservation Form and applicable fees requesting the same date are received prior to yours, they will have priority for that date. If your wedding is not approved, your initial fees will be refunded. If the wedding is approved, these fees are non-refundable. You should receive confirmation within two weeks after the church office receives your request and applicable deposits as outlined below.
4. You contact our Wedding Liaison and set a time for her to meet with you and your Wedding Planner
5. You contact our Organist and have his agreement to play for your wedding.

Only when all these steps are complete will you receive confirmation from the church office that your wedding request has been approved.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

If our pastor agrees to conduct pre-marital counseling you will be required to complete a pre-marital inventory Prepare Enrich and attend each session. The cost of the materials is approximately \$50.

WEDDING CEREMONY LIAISON

Before submitting your Wedding Reservation Form, you must contact our Wedding Liaison and discuss with her the date you are proposing. If she is not available, you will need to find your own Wedding Director. In our tradition, a Christian wedding is a worship service. This is why we typically provide, at no expense, a Wedding Liaison who will assist you in planning your wedding in our facility. If you do not have a Wedding Director, the Wedding Liaison will assist the Pastor in coordinating the bridesmaids, ushers, etc. for the wedding. If you have your own Wedding Director, she/he must coordinate with our Wedding Liaison. This will help minimize stress and ensure a well-planned ceremony. Our Pastor is in charge of approving the content and design of the worship service, readings, music, decorations, and the like.

MUSIC

Sacred music appropriate for worship plays a vital part in the wedding service; an organ prelude and postlude are customary. You may also have one or more soloists or an organ interlude. If you wish to have organ music you must contact our Organist to discuss the date you are proposing before submitting your Wedding Reservation Form. The couple and the organist are responsible for the selection of the music, subject to the approval of Westminster's Pastor. It is our policy that our organist, Dr. Randall Harris, shall play at all weddings at Westminster if he is available. Dr. Harris' fee is \$200 and should be paid directly to him. If he is not available for your wedding, you may obtain an outside musician who is familiar with our organ.

Note: Dr. Randall Harris and the Pastor must approve the incorporation/use of any outside organist. If you do not wish to have organ music you may use a pianist of your choosing.

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN

The focal point in a wedding is the couple. We strongly encourage you to use our excellent nursery facilities near the sanctuary for small children. You will be responsible for providing supervision in the nursery. During the worship service, any child under the age of 4 may come down the aisle or stand briefly with the wedding party (flower girl, ring bearer, etc.), but shall immediately return to a pew and sit with an adult or move to the nursery. If a child disrupts the service, the Pastor may ask someone to escort the child to the nursery.

DECORATIONS AND FURNITURE

Floral arrangements for weddings are to be in keeping with the beauty, elegant simplicity, and religious symbolism of the sanctuary. The communion table and baptismal font may be moved to the side and restored after the ceremony.

DRESSING ROOMS

The church parlor is available for the bride and attendants to use for dressing as needed. The church is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items. Please do not mar the furniture with food or beverages.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In our tradition, worship is reverent. Photographs may be taken before and after the ceremony, but not during the service. Your photographer must coordinate with the Pastor prior to the service. Videography is permitted from a stationary position in the sanctuary or the balcony.

FEES

Members of Westminster: \$0

Non-members: \$1,000

Cleaning fee: \$300 (\$100 refundable)

Pastor: The The Pastor does not charge for his services; however you may wish to give an honorarium.

Organist: Fees and arrangements are made directly with the organist.

Note: Half of the fees must be included with your Wedding Reservation Form. All remaining fees must be paid one month before the ceremony.

MISCELLANEOUS

1. Smoking/tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) are strictly prohibited on church property.
2. Alcohol is not permitted on the premises. Violation of this policy will result in automatic forfeiture of all cleaning fees.
3. Persons under the influence of alcohol and/or other illicit drugs will not be permitted to participate in the wedding or reception and may be asked to leave the property.
4. Only non-drip candles are allowed.
5. No rice, please. Birdseed outside the building is perfectly acceptable.
6. After Saturday weddings all furnishings not belonging to the church must be removed and the church restored to its original status by midnight. For weddings on all other days of the week the deadline is noon the following day. Failure to comply will result in forfeiture of all cleaning fees.
7. Please lock and secure the building when you leave.
8. Please return the key to the Wedding Coordinator or arrange for it to be delivered to the church on Monday following the wedding.
9. The bride and groom are jointly responsible for any damage suffered by the church before, during, or after the wedding that are related in any way to the wedding.
10. The church is offering its building as a service to the public. In the event the church is not available or in a condition to accommodate your approved wedding, the church's liability shall be limited to refunding the fees you have paid.
11. In accordance with the laws of the state of Mississippi you must obtain your marriage license at least five days before the wedding. Please provide it to the pastor at the rehearsal Failure to comply will result in cancellation of the wedding ceremony.

These policies have been adopted by the Session of the church. Please feel free to discuss these with the Pastor or our Wedding Coordinator. We wish you God's blessing upon your preparation, your wedding, and your life together as husband and wife.