

# *Wedding Guidelines*



## **First Presbyterian Church**

**2050 Oak Street  
Sarasota, FL 34232**

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**[www.firstpressarasota.org](http://www.firstpressarasota.org)**

## *Who May Be Married at First Presbyterian Church*

Christian marriage is a covenant relationship made by a man, a woman and God. All weddings performed at First Presbyterian Church are religious in nature and based on the awareness that our Lord, Jesus Christ is a participant in the relationship and in the blessing of the marriage. To say that you desire your wedding to take place at First Presbyterian Church is to say that you desire to include Christ as a partner in your marriage.

Ordinarily, the Celebration of Christian Marriage happens in the church where either the bride or the groom is a member. This enables the couple's biological and spiritual families to be present as witnesses and for encouragement as the couple begins their married life together.

Non-members of First Presbyterian Church often request a wedding in the sanctuary and arrangements can be made after a visit with one of the pastors. This Wedding Guide is designed to assist couple's in planning their wedding at First Presbyterian.

Be assured during conversations with one of the pastors you will be encouraged to consider membership within this church family or membership in another denomination. An active life within a Christian Church is essential to a healthy growing marriage.

Other ministers may be invited by the host pastor to assist in the wedding celebration. Please make this request early in conversations with one of the pastors at First Presbyterian.

## *Planning for a Wedding*

The first step in preparing for a wedding at First Presbyterian Church is to meet with one of the ministers. All weddings are performed at the discretion of the minister. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of planning ahead. It is not unusual during peak wedding months for weddings to be scheduled a year in advance. Register the time and date of your wedding as early as possible with the church office, the minister, the organist and the wedding coordinator by completing the enclosed application. After the minister has agreed to perform the wedding, a \$50 deposit is due at the time you reserve the date with the church office.

The ministers will ordinarily schedule three counseling dates with the couple. If a couple lives out of the area, some of these sessions may be handled by a college or military chaplain, or another minister. One extended session with a minister of this church will be required for any wedding performed at First Presbyterian Church.

## *Planning the Order of Service*

The wedding is dedicated to the glory of God. Therefore all the elements of the service should point the participants to God's presence and the love the couple has for each other and God.

During the counseling sessions, the ministers will confer with you as to the kind of wedding service you prefer, the elements to be included and the vows that you will make. It is best if the bride and groom can be as involved as possible in the planning of the wedding service so that it expresses their intentions and glorifies God.

## *Wedding Music*

When a wedding is conducted in the church, the wedding service becomes a worship service. Therefore, sacred music is the norm with guidance from the officiating pastor.

### *Vocal Music*

Hymns may be sung by the congregation in place of, or in addition to, the soloists. There are many appropriate, hymns, and the officiating pastor will be happy to help with the selection. Solo selections will need to follow the same procedure.

Generally pre-recorded tapes are discouraged during the Wedding Celebration. The wedding is an exciting present-tense experience of God's Spirit. Live music is preferred.

### *Soloists and Instrumentalists*

The bride and groom arrange for their own soloist if there is to be one. The soloist should arrange necessary rehearsals well in advance with the organist. The church will provide recommendations for soloists on request; it is best to contract soloists at least one month prior to the wedding.

### *Organists*

The regular church organist plays for all weddings when schedule permits. Substitutes are arranged by the organist. The church organist will help you select the wedding music to be used. Arrange a meeting with the organist at least two months before your wedding date.

## *Other Details of the Service*

First Presbyterian Church building and grounds is a smoke free and alcohol-free environment. Kindly make your plans accordingly and notify members of the wedding party and families of this policy.

### *Church Receptions*

The Fellowship Hall is available for receptions. Please note the fees for Fellowship Hall on the fee schedule. Persons desiring to hold a reception at the church should make arrangements to wash and dry punch bowls, cups, and any service pieces. Tablecloths, dishcloths, etc., are also the responsibility of those planning the reception. Before making plans to decorate for a reception, please confer with your wedding coordinator. Please call the church office for more information on reservations and arrangements.

### *Wedding Coordinator*

First Presbyterian Church provides Wedding Coordinators to help plan the wedding and assist at the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. An outside Wedding Coordinator is sometimes helpful to all. Please talk to the officiating pastor prior to signing a contract with a wedding coordinator outside the church. There will be a minimal charge of \$100/\$250.00 for the Wedding Coordinators of the church. Once the wedding is approved, one of our Wedding Coordinators will contact the bride and groom to assist with the planning.

### *Flowers*

Available room in the chancel is limited. Please arrange for flowers that are of the right size for the space in the sanctuary. Sometimes too many flowers clutter the area so use good artistic judgment. Please inform the church office and the wedding coordinator of the time flowers will be delivered so the church might be open.

### *Other Decorations*

Tape and staples are not permitted in order to avoid damage to pews and walls when bows, ribbons, etc., are used. Aisle runners create a serious safety hazard and are not permitted.

### *Birdseed*

Bird seed may be distributed and used outdoors. Rice, confetti, bubbles and flower petals are not permitted.

### *Photographs of the Wedding*

Rarely is there an exception to having any flash photography from the time of the clergy's Call to Worship until the closing Benediction. Thus this does free the photographer under the guidance of the officiating pastor for pictures during the processional and the recessional.

### *Candles & Candle Lighting*

The church supplies two seven-candle standing candelabra. Only special drip-free oil candles supplied by the church may be used. Use of the candelabra with candles cost \$50. For the wedding, candles are lit prior to the arrival of guests so that ushers are free to seat guests. Also, it is much more pleasant for guests to arrive with candles burning.

### *Ring Bearers and Flower Girls*

Flower girls and ring bearers should be at least five years old.

### *The Rehearsal*

The purpose of the rehearsal is to provide everyone involved in the wedding with familiarity and comfort so that the wedding day runs smoothly. The bride and groom, their parents, all attendants, all ushers, all musicians, flower girls, and ring bearers must be in attendance at the rehearsal so all know where to sit, when to stand, etc. If the bride and groom desire the pastor, organist, soloist, wedding coordinator, and their spouses to participate in the rehearsal dinner, please inform them two weeks in advance. Church staff will not assume they are invited unless specifically asked in advance. To ensure a successful rehearsal, please have all participants arrive on time. The rehearsal will take about one hour.