WEDDING POLICY

Marriage is a relationship instituted by God for the mutual happiness of mankind and for the glory of His name. Therefore, a Christian wedding is a joyous and holy occasion, as a man and a woman unite their lives together in Christ to form a Christian union. The wedding—in all of its parts—is a service of worship, not a theatrical production. Focusing upon this principle brings glory to God and gives true meaning to the wedding service.

First ARP rejoices in this occasion and is eager to make each wedding memorable and beautiful. In God's eyes, the beauty of the wedding does not lie in the externals, but in the sincerity and devotion of those who take part in the ceremony. Simplicity, rather than extravagant display, accords with the Christian character of the occasion. Marriages may be performed for couples if one or both are members of First ARP Church or with prior approval of the Session.

The procedures set forth here, at the discretion of the Session of First A. R. Presbyterian Church, are intended to answer your questions and help you plan the details of your wedding. Our pastors and church staff will also be happy to assist in any way possible.

ARRANGEMENTS

As you begin to plan for your wedding, the first step is to arrange an initial meeting between you, your fiancée and one of our pastors. This initial appointment can be arranged by calling the church office (704-864-3468) or by emailing one of our pastors directly. At this initial meeting the pastor will discuss with you the procedure for pre-marital counseling, which normally consists of eight one-hour sessions with the pastor. Although a date may be tentatively reserved on the church's calendar through the church secretary, the date must be confirmed on the pastor's calendar as well as the church's calendar when the couple meets with the pastor.

- Weddings will not be scheduled on Christmas day or Easter weekend and must not conflict with regular Sunday services and programs.
- No weddings will be scheduled after 8:00 P.M.
- No receptions may be held in the fellowship hall on Sunday when an evening service is scheduled.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

The First ARP Church wedding coordinator shall be responsible for assisting in the planning and directing of all rehearsals and weddings held in our church and to ensure that the church's wedding policies and procedures are followed. The wedding coordinators are church members who are thoroughly trained in church procedures as well as social etiquette. Their service represents part of their commitment to the ministry of First ARP Church.

MUSIC

Music is a traditional and beautiful part of the ceremony. All music must be approved by The Director of Music. If the current Organist is not the organist for the wedding, the current Organist must meet with the Organist that the bride wishes to play, to be approved and to have a consultation about the organ, otherwise, the organ is not available. All music must be sacred and appropriate for a worship service and must be approved by the Director of Music and he/she must sign off on the Wedding Music Form.

- When special music is used, the vocalists will arrange rehearsal time with the musicians prior to the wedding rehearsal.
- All vocal selections must also be approved by the Director of Music.

RECEPTION AND REHEARSAL PARTIES

State and local laws require that any person hired to prepare and serve food at wedding receptions and rehearsals be licensed and inspected by the Gaston County Health Department. This requirement applies to both catering services and individuals hired by the family to provide food and beverage for wedding guests.

- The fellowship hall or the Ministry Activity Center is available for receptions and rehearsal parties.
- Music played in the fellowship hall for receptions and rehearsal parties is to be in good taste—if you have any question about what is appropriate, please contact the wedding coordinator.
- The fellowship hall, kitchen facilities, and the reception appointments shall only be used under the supervision of The Church Hostess.
- Smoking and all alcoholic beverages are prohibited on church property.

DECORATIONS

- Delivery of all floral arrangements must be scheduled through the church secretary several days in advance.
- Please do not attach any decorations to the brass sconces, walls, or trim inside the church building.
- The individual who reserves the church for a wedding must accept full responsibility for any damages to the church building.
- The furniture and carpet must be fully protected at all times from moisture, wax marks, and scars.
- Please do not move the pulpit, lectern, or choir chairs.
- If the piano needs to be re-positioned, the wedding coordinator, pianist, or organist must be present to supervise.
- All decorations shall be removed immediately unless special permission is granted to postpone removal and cleaning until the following day.
- The buildings must be left in the condition in which they were found.

By advance arrangement with the church office, flowers may be left for Sunday services as an honorarium or a memorial.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDINGS

The desire of the bride and groom for a pictorial and, in some cases, an auditory record of this highly important event is understandable. The sacred nature of the ceremony, however, requires that this be done as unobtrusively as possible. Specifically:

PHOTOGRAPHY

- Refrain from all flash photography during the actual ceremony.
- No photographs may be taken from the choir loft or from any point closer to the front of the sanctuary than the back of the sanctuary.
- Please make your guests aware that there will be no personal photographs allowed during the worship service.

RECORDINGS

- An audio recording of the wedding ceremony is available upon request.
- Live Streaming is available upon request (all music used is submitted to the Director of music and will be included in the church's monthly streaming reports).
- All videographers must abide by the following guidelines:
    - All video cameras attended by a videographer must be placed at the back of the sanctuary as inconspicuously as possible.
    - Unmanned video cameras may be placed inconspicuously with the prior approval of the pastor and wedding coordinator.

ORDER OF WORSHIP SERVICE

The Order of Worship Service for the marriage will be decided by the minister, bride, and groom. The minister shall approve it before the wedding program is printed.

An Example of an Order of Service is below:

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

- Prelude
- Seating of the Families
- Processional
- Welcome and Prayer
- Meaning of Marriage
- Declaration of Intent
- Scripture Readings
- Wedding Message
- Exchange of Vows and Rings
- Marriage Blessing
- Declaration of Marriage
- Benediction
- Presentation of the Couple
- Recessional

(any vocal solos would occur prior to the Processional or where appropriate during the service. (i.e. The Lord's Prayer being sung) Congregation Hymns may also be included if desired.)

APPENDIX A: WEDDING INFORMATION FORM

First ARP Church Gastonia, NC

TO THE BRIDE:

For us to make proper preparations so that your wedding will go smoothly, we keep this form at the church. Please fill in all the items you can and send this form back to the Church Administrator as soon as possible.

If you have any questions, or if we can help you in any way, please call the church office (704-864-3468).

- **Bride's Full Name:**
  - (Member of this Church? Yes _____ No _____)
- **Groom's Full Name:**
  - (Member of this Church? Yes _____ No _____)
- **Wedding Date:**
- **Wedding Time:**
- **Rehearsal Date:**
- **Rehearsal Time:**
- **Minister/s:**
  - Name: _____ Church: _____
  - Name: _____ Church: _____
- **Organist:**
  - Name: _____
- **Florist:**
  - Name: _____ (If on a weekend, will the flowers be left for the morning worship services the next Sunday and has the Director of Music been notified of what should be included in the bulletin?) YES or NO they will not be left
- **Photographer:**
  - Name: _____
- **Videographer:**
  - Name: _____
- **Rehearsal Dinner/Party - Time:**
  - **Place:**
    - Fellowship Hall _____ Caterer: _____
    - Other Location: _____