

*Wedding Policy of
The First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta*

Introduction

We affirm that our congregation is called to play a role in blessing, supporting, nurturing and sustaining individual households within our community.

We affirm, along with the *Book of Order* [the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)], that Christian marriage is a gift God has given to humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful disciples in the household of God and members of the wider community.

We AFFIRM the authority given to our Teaching Elders (pastors) by the *Book of Order* to use their judgment, consistent with their understanding of the Reformed tradition, to decide whether to celebrate any marriage service. Any Christian marriage service deemed appropriate by a Teaching Elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta and permitted by the laws of the state may be performed at First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta.

Weddings of Non-Members

We welcome couples who are not members of First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta to celebrate marriage at this church. It is our hope that you would consider joining the congregation if you do not already have a church home. The Wedding Director, in consultation with the Senior Pastor, bears the discretion in permitting non-member weddings.

Initial Arrangements and Scheduling

To discuss the scheduling of your wedding call or email the Wedding Ministry office (404-228-7765, weddings@firstpresatl.org.) If you get our voicemail, please leave your name and number and someone will get back to you by the following business day. Your call is important to us so speak slowly and clearly.

The Wedding Director will discuss your plans with you and check the church calendar for availability of your requested date. Once a date is confirmed you should complete the *Wedding Reservation Request* form and schedule a meeting with the Wedding Director. The wedding may be booked after that meeting and upon receipt of one half (1/2) of the fee and the signed contract with the church. The balance is due 60 days prior to the wedding. Should you need to cancel, \$500 is non-refundable. You will receive written confirmation of the date and funds received.

First Presbyterian does not schedule weddings on holiday weekends, during the entire Advent/Christmas season, on Church function weekends, or on Sundays. We ask that weddings be scheduled during the hours between 11:00am and 6:30pm.

Wedding Director

All weddings and rehearsals will be led and supervised by the Wedding Director or your assigned Wedding Coordinators and a First Presbyterian Church pastor. They will serve even when an outside consultant is used.

The Wedding Director and all Wedding Coordinators are trained, experienced, and thoroughly knowledgeable in all areas involving church and social etiquette. They will officiate along with the pastor in the management of the rehearsals and weddings.

Pastors

In addition to required pre-marital counseling, a pastor from the First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta will schedule an in-person meeting to:

- 1) Ensure that at least one of the persons to be married is a professing Christian;
- 2) Discuss with the couple the nature of their covenant and the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage;
- 3) Discuss with the couple the form and significance of the marriage worship service;
- 4) Ensure that the couple understands the vows they will make;
- 5) Discuss with the couple the relationship of their commitments to discipleship; and
- 6) Connect the couple with the wider church community, offering them resources to strengthen them in their marriage and in their lives as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

This pastor will be present and participate in both the rehearsal and the wedding service. Outside, ordained clergy may be invited to co-officiate with your assigned First Presbyterian Church pastor so long as it can be established that the individual is in good standing with his or her governing body/denomination. Pastors are assigned by the Senior Pastor. Requests will be honored when possible.

Pre-marital Counseling

Pre-marital counseling is required of every couple married at First Presbyterian Church. For those local to Atlanta, you will receive counseling from the officiating FPC pastor with the exception of Tony Sundermeier who will have Rev. Katie Sundermeier do the counseling. The \$250 cost of counseling and a minimum honorarium of \$350 to the FPC pastor are included in the wedding fee. However, the couple can certainly supplement that amount if they so desire. For those that live out of town or prefer using another clergy person or certified premarital counselor, we expect three-hours of counseling to be achieved and permission given for the First Presbyterian Church pastor to consult with the counselor/clergy providing the counseling to ensure the appropriateness of the marriage.

Music

All music must reflect the sacred nature of the wedding service and embody the same high standards applied to the music chosen for Sunday morning worship. Thomas Bara, First Presbyterian Church's organist, generally plays for all weddings held in the Sanctuary or Chapel. His fee is included in your wedding fee. If the church organist is not available, a substitute will be obtained by our organist. He will meet with you to discuss the music. You are welcome to make suggestions, or otherwise he can suggest music from a large and varied repertoire. There are no provisions to play pre-recorded taped music in the Sanctuary or the Chapel.

Final approval of the choice of music, the soloists and/or other musicians will be made by the organist. **Please do not invite any musician(s) or vocal soloist(s) to participate before consulting the organist.** There will be additional fees for soloists and musicians arranged through the organist. Contact Tom for more information – tbara@firstpresatl.org.

Decorations

The architecture, furnishings, and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chapel form a beautiful setting of reverence and quiet elegance. The following regulations are thus given to preserve the proper atmosphere and safeguard the furnishings:

- Flowers must be placed in FPC's urns on the pedestals. The large urns have the following measurements: top opening, 13.5" diameter; depth of interior, 12"; overall height, 24 inches. All arrangements should use a 7½" paper maché liner. Arrangements should be completed and in place no later than two hours prior to the ceremony. Florists may not use the Sanctuary or Narthex to create or complete their arrangements. If florist is not familiar with FPC, we suggest they visit in person to see the space.

- If desired, you may place a flower arrangement on the table in the Narthex and decorations outside the Peachtree Street entry, such as on the lanterns and the railings.
- The narrow width of our center aisle necessitates that no decoration may be placed on the center aisle pews. The church has lovely needlepoint endcap pew markers for reserved seating if you would like to use them. Many brides have found that the needlepoint endcap markers are the best way to designate reserved seating for families.
- For an additional fee of \$150 you have the option of using the church's 12 pew torches in the Sanctuary or in the Chapel. These attach to the pews and are spaced on the center aisle. When the candles are lit they provide beautiful soft lighting and add to the elegance of the Sanctuary or Chapel. No decorations may be attached to the torches.
- You will be given the opportunity to choose either 2 or 4 church candelabras and the unity candle, all of which use candles provided by First Presbyterian Church. Other candles or candelabra cannot be used.
- The church provides a Kneeling Bench if you would like to use it.
- Any special arrangements need to be discussed with the Wedding Director or your Wedding Coordinator.

For the safety of everyone and the protection of our church building, the following policies must be adhered to:

- No nails, tacks, pins, screws, staples, tape, or wire may be used in any part of the building or on any fixtures.
- All decorations must adhere to fire code.
- No asparagus fern or berries of any kind may be used in floral decorations, bridal bouquets, or boutonnieres.
- All decorations, flowers, etc. must be removed immediately after the ceremony and all parts of the building used must be left clean.
- To protect the building and preserve the grounds and walkways, no rice, birdseed, confetti, rose petals, potpourri, or anything else may be thrown either inside or outside the building.
- Aisle cloths are not permitted.
- First Presbyterian Church, its staff and wedding volunteers are not responsible for property left on the premises before, during, or after the wedding.

Rehearsals

Wedding rehearsals should be conducted in a prompt and timely fashion. It is essential that the wedding party be punctual for the rehearsal and wedding. The couple should ask the wedding party to arrive 30 minutes earlier than the scheduled time of the rehearsal due to the location of the church and rush-hour traffic conditions.

A period of one hour is scheduled for wedding rehearsals. Tardiness in beginning the rehearsal will necessitate forfeiture of that portion of the hour reserved for the rehearsal. Rehearsals for two weddings are sometimes scheduled “back-to-back”, making it imperative that everyone be on time. ***Both your marriage license and several copies of your wedding program should be brought to the rehearsal.***

The Wedding Day

The church facility will be available for you and your wedding party three (3) hours prior to the wedding and for one-half (½) hour following the service.

Dressing Area

The church provides a complete dressing room for the bride and her attendants. There is a room for the groom and his attendants to meet, but they must arrive at the church fully dressed for the ceremony; we do not provide a dressing room for the gentlemen. Both rooms must be cleared of all belongings immediately after the wedding. The church assumes no responsibility for returning garments and belongings.

Photographs

First Presbyterian Church encourages the wedding party to take photographs at the church. Pictures of the wedding party may be taken before or after the ceremony, but not during the service, with the exception of the couple’s professional photographer in the balcony. The ceremony begins with the first note of the organ prelude and ends with the last note of the organ postlude. The wedding is a worship service.

Photos may be taken until 40 minutes before the ceremony and no longer than 30 minutes after the ceremony.

Videography

We permit **one stationary camera in the balcony, which may have an attendant and one stationary camera on one side of the choir loft just behind the wooden partition. It is permissible to have an attendant in the choir loft only if they operate the camera from a monitor out of sight of the Sanctuary.** This is accomplished when the videographer chooses an optimal stationary position on a tripod behind the wooden screen at the front of the choir loft and then operates the camera using a monitor behind and below the wooden screen, staying out of view. A hand is permitted to come up if remote operation is unavailable to make an adjustment to the camera but the primary concern is that the operator remains substantially out of view of the Sanctuary. Cameras may not be mounted on or secured to any church fixture. During the ceremony, we do not permit videographers on the main floor of the Sanctuary. Any questions about camera placement should be directed to our Wedding Coordinators.

Sound System

Use of the church sound system will be arranged with the church staff by the Wedding Director. A First Presbyterian staff member must operate the sound system during any wedding. Use of the sound system and staff costs are included in the fee.

Schedule of Wedding Fees

For Members

The wedding fee for church members is \$2,000 for the Sanctuary or \$1,800 for Winship Chapel, which covers the FPC Pastor, FPC Organist, Pre-marital Counseling, Security, Custodial, and Sound System. A minimum honorarium for the FPC pastor is included in the wedding fee. However, the couple can certainly supplement that amount if they so desire.

A deposit of \$750 is required to schedule and confirm the wedding date. The balance of \$750 is due 60 days prior to the wedding date.

Schedule of Wedding Fees

For Non-Members

The wedding fee for non-church members is \$5,000 for the Sanctuary and \$3,000 for Winship Chapel. Both fees cover the FPC Officiating Pastor, FPC Organist, Pre-marital Counseling, Security, Custodial, and Sound System.

A deposit of \$2500 (\$1500 for Chapel) is required to schedule and confirm the wedding date. The balance of \$2500 (\$1500 for Chapel) is due 60 days prior to the wedding date.

Optional Fees

Additional musicians (instrumental and vocal) – may be arranged with the organist. Fees vary and are paid directly to the musicians. Contact Thomas Bara, tbara@firstpresatl.org for more information and fees.

If a wedding ceremony is scheduled to last more than 45 minutes, there will be an additional fee of \$150 for the organist and \$150 for the FPC clergy.

Pew Torches - \$150 – may be arranged with the Wedding Director.

Miscellaneous

The Marriage License – The marriage license must be in the hands of the pastor before the wedding can be performed. Remember to bring it with you to the rehearsal.

Receptions – Only members of First Presbyterian may schedule a reception at the church. Fees vary according to room location, catering, security, etc. Consult the Wedding Director for more information.

Alcoholic Beverages & Smoking – Wedding services at First Presbyterian Church are worship services held in our Sanctuary or Chapel, and therefore to be respected as such. **Neither alcoholic beverages nor tobacco are permitted anywhere on the church premises.**

Parking- Parking is available in our parking lot behind the church and at our parking lot/ deck (Lanier Parking) across Peachtree Street from the church. Wedding guests will not be charged for parking while attending the wedding service. **Our lots are closed and locked when the wedding guests leave, unless special arrangements have been made with the FPC security.**

Security – Two of our security guards are required to be present on the premises during your wedding. Your fee includes them. Should additional security be required by the wedding party, an additional fee will be charged.

Bride's Book – A bride's book or guest book should not be used in the Narthex of the church, but rather be used at the reception.

Helpful Phone Numbers

Wedding Directors	
Connie Dewberry	678 642-0059(cell)
Duggan Lansing	404 966-0564 (cell)
Music Department	404-228-7732