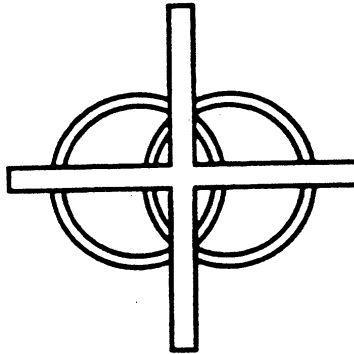


# THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE



**INFORMATION, GUIDELINES, AND POLICIES  
TO ASSIST YOU IN PLANNING  
YOUR WEDDING SERVICE**

*Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians, marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a life-long commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.*

*(The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA), The Directory of Worship, W-4.9000)*

## **The Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church**

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Greetings!

On behalf of the members and staff of our congregation, the Session congratulates you on your decision to wed. It is a most significant occasion and an exciting and joyous time in life. We rejoice with you as you prepare for your upcoming wedding.

Marriage is both a personal and family or community event. If the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church is not your home church, we encourage you to be married in your own church. If this is not possible or desirable, one of the pastors of this congregation is willing to discuss with you celebrating your wedding service at the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church.

We consider marriage to be a most holy and special bond; we take it most seriously. We want your wedding service to reflect both the sacredness and joy of the occasion. This booklet is intended to give you all the information necessary to make your wedding service a meaningful one, and to assure that the wedding and surrounding tasks run smoothly.

Many blessings!

*The Session of the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church*

(This booklet and the wedding policies were approved by Session on September 15, 2009)

## **AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

“A Christian wedding service is unlike a civil one. While both meet the obligations of the laws of the state, the Christian wedding is significantly different. It is a worship service, and, as is the case in all services of worship, the focus is on God. In the marriage service, we especially give thanks to God for the gifts of love and fidelity. During a marriage service, a particular couple hears again the understandings and obligations of Christian marriage. Then, by exchanging vows and ring(s), they willingly enter into a life-long commitment to fulfill them. The ‘high point’ of the service is not the pronouncement of marriage, but asking God to bless the marriage, and, by the wonders of God’s grace, to enable the man and woman to fulfill their vows, thereby more fully enjoying all the blessings of life which God desires for humanity. It is a requirement that at least one of the partners must be a professing Christian.” (From the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Directory of Worship, W-4.9002(a)(1)).

Because this wedding service is a sacred event, we believe that a couple should take time to appropriately understand what Christian marriage is and then to prepare for their service. Preparation for marriage requires attention to the laws of the state, the requirements of the Church, and your own particular concerns. It can seem to be very complicated and, at times, almost overwhelming. This booklet is intended to assist you and the staff of the church will answer your questions and guide you along the way.

## **RESERVING THE CHURCH**

Since the wedding service is a worship service, it is most appropriate that it take place in either the church sanctuary or Johnson Chapel. However, Presbyterians understand all of creation to be sacred, so requests to celebrate wedding services in places other than the sanctuary or chapel will be considered on a case by case basis. Also, when neither the sanctuary nor chapel is available, one of the pastors may be willing to officiate at a wedding service held in another location. Arrangements for such wedding services are made between the officiating pastor and the couple.

Wedding services may be held on any day of the week. Please note, however, that the sanctuary and the chapel are not available during Holy Week or on Easter Sunday, the Monday following Easter, Thanksgiving Day, the Friday following Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, the day following Christmas Day, or on any federal holiday. There may be other times and occasions when the sanctuary and chapel are not be available because of previously scheduled events. More than one wedding can be scheduled on the same day; but there must be at least four hours allotted between weddings so that the sanctuary can be prepared for the next wedding, and so that each wedding party has enough time to prepare, take pictures, celebrate the service, greet people, and depart for their reception.

As you begin to settle on a particular date for your wedding, call the church office to see whether that date is free. If the date and time you desire are open, please complete the Wedding Application Information Form and deliver it to the church office. Non-members should include a letter explaining why they want to be married at the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church and a non-refundable Wedding Date Reservation Fee with the application form. (Please see the separate Fee Schedule for more information.)

For your information, our sanctuary seats approximately 500 persons and has eighteen rows of pews on the main level. Johnson Chapel can comfortably accommodate 25. Both are handicap accessible, and devices to assist the hearing impaired are available if requested in advance.

## **THE OFFICIATING PASTOR**

Ordinarily, the pastor/head of staff or one of the associate pastors of this congregation will officiate at all weddings performed in our facilities. At the time of application, you may request that a particular minister of this congregation officiate. If s/he is available and willing, that person will officiate. Otherwise the pastor/head of staff will appoint the officiating pastor from the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church staff.

We at the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church welcome the participation of other Presbyterian ministers and clergy of other denominations and faiths in our wedding services. If you desire that another member of the clergy assist in your wedding service, please note that request on your application and discuss it with the officiating pastor. There are several factors that are considered before the pastor/head of staff will invite another clergy person to assist in a wedding service. A primary factor is “mutual recognition of ministry.” In other words, would the clergy being invited to assist be willing to invite a Presbyterian minister to assist at a wedding service

s/he was conducting? In all instances the pastor/head of staff of this church makes the final decision and issues the invitation if it is deemed to be appropriate.

In the case of inter-religious weddings, it must be understood that only Christian services are conducted in our facilities. Various practices and traditional activities of other faiths may be included as long as they are consistent with the Christian understanding of marriage and the focus of the worship service.

### **PRE-MARITAL CONVERSATIONS AND COUNSELING**

The Session affirms that pre-marital conversations and counseling are necessary prerequisites before marriages can be celebrated in our church. During this process of preparation, the following topics will be included in the conversations: the meaning of Christian marriage; the legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which the marriage is to take place; a discussion of the vows and commitments you are asked to make; practical aspects of married life including communication issues, financial matters, sexual activity, life goals, issues related to family and children, and the place of faith in married life. As necessary, the pastor may raise additional issues that s/he feels may pose difficulty in married life so that they can be addressed. The couple is also invited to raise issues that they would like to discuss with the help of a pastor. Generally, as a part of these conversations, each person will be asked to take a standardized assessment instrument which the pastor will compile and discuss with the couple.

While it is certainly not the usual outcome of these pre-marital conversations, you must be aware that Church law allows that, if the pastor is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, s/he will assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them, but may not conduct the wedding ceremony. Public announcement of the wedding should not be made until after pre-marital conversations and counseling has begun. Therefore, you should schedule your appointment to begin this process with the officiating pastor at least six months before the wedding date.

### **THE WEDDING SERVICE**

As noted above, the wedding service is a service of worship, and, as such, the focus is on God. What makes it special and unique is that during this service two persons recognize God's continuing presence in their lives—calling them to married life together—and they, in turn, ask God's blessing on their committed life together.

There are usual Orders of Service which the officiating pastor will share with you during your time of preparation. Your personal requests and suggestions will be seriously considered; we want this service to reflect your uniqueness. However, it must always be remembered that there are specific requirements of a wedding service. It must also be understood by all involved that the wedding service is under the sole direction of the officiating pastor.

The usual order of a wedding service would include:

Prelude  
Entrance of the Families  
The Processional  
Greeting and Call to Worship  
Hymn (*optional*)  
Statement on the Gift of Marriage  
Prayer  
Declarations of Intent  
Affirmation of Families (*optional*)  
Affirmation of the Congregation (*optional*)  
Readings from Scripture  
Meditation  
Hymn (*optional*)  
The Exchange of Vows and Rings  
Prayer and the Lord's Prayer  
Announcement of the Marriage  
Charge and Blessing  
Recessional

Secular readings may be included in the service if they are appropriate to a worship service and approved by the officiating pastor. If there are such selections, they will be read before the reading of scripture. Friends or family members may be invited to read both the secular and scripture selections.

The following is a suggested list of scripture readings that you may wish to include in your service. It is appropriate to have a reading from both the Old and New Testament.

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-31	<i>Humankind created in the image of God.</i>
Genesis 2:18-24	<i>Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.</i>
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	<i>Set me as a seal upon your heart.</i>
Proverbs 3:3-6	<i>Trust the Lord with all your heart.</i>
Isaiah 54:5-8	<i>Your Maker is your husband.</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	<i>The Lord will make a new covenant.</i>

Psalms

Psalms 8	<i>Mortals crowned with glory and honor.</i>
Psalms 67	<i>May God be gracious to us.</i>
Psalms 95:1-7	<i>O come, let us sing to the Lord.</i>
Psalms 100	<i>Make a joyful noise to the Lord.</i>
Psalms 103:1-5, 15-18	<i>Bless the Lord, O my soul.</i>
Psalms 117	<i>Great is God's steadfast love.</i>
Psalms 121	<i>I lift up my eyes to the hills.</i>
Psalms 128	<i>Happy is everyone who fears the Lord.</i>

Psalm 136:1-9, 26	<i>O give thanks, for God is good.</i>
Psalm 145	<i>I will extol you, O God my King.</i>
Psalm 148	<i>Praise the Lord.</i>
Psalm 150	<i>Let everything that breathes praise the Lord.</i>

Epistles

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18	<i>A living sacrifice . . . let love be genuine.</i>
1 Corinthians 13:1-13	<i>Faith, hope, love . . . greatest is love.</i>
1 John 4:7-12	<i>Let us love one another . . . God is love.</i>
Revelation 19:1, 5-9	<i>Rejoicing at the marriage of the Lamb.</i>

Gospels

Matthew 5:1-10	<i>The Beatitudes.</i>
Matthew 5:13-16	<i>Salt of the earth . . . light of the world.</i>
Matthew 19:3-6	<i>No longer two, but one flesh.</i>
Matthew 22:35-40	<i>Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind.</i>
Mark 10:6-9	<i>What God has joined, let no one separate.</i>
John 2:1-11	<i>The wedding at Cana.</i>
John 15:1-17	<i>Jesus, the true vine.</i>

If you wish to have a worship service bulletin, you may do so. The officiating pastor may have samples you can review. It is the couple's responsibility to have the bulletins designed and printed. However, to avoid mistakes, the officiating pastor should review the bulletin before it is sent to the printer.

### **MUSIC AT YOUR SERVICE**

Since the wedding service is a sacred service of worship, sacred and some classical music is appropriate music before, during, and after the service. Hymns and other forms of congregational participation are encouraged. Other music, such as popular love songs, Broadway show tunes, and movie themes, are more appropriately incorporated in the reception following the service.

The Director of Music is the keyboard artist (organ and/or piano music) for all weddings at the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church. S/he will be happy to arrange a music consultation with you, at the organ, at which time a number of appropriate pieces of music suitable for processional, recessional, congregational hymns, and prelude will be played, from which you may select your choices. If one or more vocalists or instrumentalists are desired, s/he will also be happy to arrange for them, drawing upon an inventory of musicians with whom s/he has worked. If the wedding does not begin on time, resulting in unanticipated additional prelude music, additional fees may apply.

### **FLOWERS, CANDLES, AND DECORATIONS**

The sanctuary and chapel are places of worship. Therefore decorations, including flowers, should be appropriate and modest. Simplicity should always be the standard. Flowers may be

placed on top of the organ case behind the communion table, or on small tables in front of the pulpit and lectern. No flowers may be placed on or directly in front of the communion table. Ordinarily, flowers should be no taller than the cross.

Flowers may be left for the following Sunday's worship service. If you chose to do this, the church office should be notified well in advance so that acknowledgement may be made in the Sunday worship bulletin. To avoid misplaced or lost flowers, please advise your florist that no flowers may be delivered more than two hours before the scheduled time of the wedding unless specific arrangements have been made with the church.

Any flowers that are to be attached to the pews must be fastened with devices which do not damage the wood. If the florist or family wishes to retain any fasteners, flowers, stands, etc., it is their responsibility to remove them immediately after the wedding service. The church cannot be responsible for caring for such items.

The church has two pairs of large brass candelabra (a total of four) which are available for use at weddings. There is an additional charge for their use, and the church provides candles. No candles may be placed along the aisles or in the windows of the sanctuary or chapel.

Because the aisles of the sanctuary are tiled, aisle runners and flower petals present slipping hazards and are therefore prohibited. For that reason, and ecological ones as well, rice, flower petals, confetti, seed, balloons, etc, are not to be thrown anywhere on the church premises, inside or outside.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY**

Pictures are important to families as years pass and memories are recalled. Pictures may be taken before or after the service anywhere in the building. With one exception, no photography is permitted in the sanctuary from the time the prelude begins until the postlude ends. An exception is made for pictures taken without flash from the balcony or from the narthex, as the wedding party enters and exits.

When previously approved by the officiating pastor, and when done without extra lighting, video taping from unobtrusive locations such as the balcony is permitted. If an unobtrusive camera is placed in the chancel area or the main floor of the sanctuary, it must be turned on before the prelude, and remain on and unattended until after the service.

## **REHEARSAL**

It is wise to have a rehearsal the day prior to the wedding service so that all involved understand what is expected of them and feel comfortable about the service. Those expected to be present at the service include the wedding party, parents, readers, and ushers. The date and time of the rehearsal will be scheduled with the officiating pastor. Ordinarily, the rehearsal should take about forty-five minutes. As a courtesy to all involved and because other activities may be scheduled in the church, it is imperative that everyone arrive promptly.

## **DRESSING ROOM**

A dressing room is available for the use of the wedding party. A second room may be available if desired and requested. If dressing rooms are reserved, the wedding party will be shown their location after the rehearsal.

## **PARKING**

You and your guests should be aware that parking is limited around the church. The church has a parking lot that is entered from Oliver Street (south of the sanctuary.) It has a capacity of approximately 30 cars. All other vehicles must be parked on city streets, and parking regulations must be observed.

## **RECEPTIONS**

Our church has two rooms that are available for rehearsal dinners and/or wedding receptions. There are additional charges for the use of these rooms. China, silverware, and food service are not provided by the church and must be arranged by the families with an outside caterer. The couple and the caterer must discuss needs with the Church Administrator well in advance of the wedding day.

## **USE OF ALCOHOL**

The consumption of alcoholic beverages is limited to wine or champagne served only in the designated reception room following the service. Open bars or kegs of beer are prohibited. The only exception to this provision is the inclusion of wine as part of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper within the wedding service. Smoking is also prohibited throughout the church.

One more word about the use of alcohol: if, at the time of the wedding service, the officiating pastor believes that the judgment of either or both marriage partners is impaired by the use of alcohol or any other substance, s/he may exercise their prerogative to refuse to permit the service to continue.

## **THE WEDDING LICENSE**

You must have a license issued by the jurisdiction in which the wedding service will take place. The Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church is located in the District of Columbia. Contact the District of Columbia Marriage Bureau as soon as possible for details. Please note that the church does not keep the legal copy of the wedding license after the wedding. If you need copies in the future, you must contact the Marriage Bureau.

## **FEES, DEPOSITS, AND OTHER ARRANGEMENTS**

The separate list of current fees should be reviewed. Please note that a distinction is made between Active Members and Non-members. To qualify for Member Fees, one or both of the

partners in the marriage or one of their parents must have been an Active Member (as defined in the Presbyterian *Book of Order*) of the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church for a minimum of 18 months immediately prior to the date of the marriage ceremony.

Non-members are required to provide a non-refundable Wedding Date Reservation Fee when they make a wedding reservation. This deposit will be refunded if the wedding cannot be scheduled for any reason or if the pastor thinks it unwise to perform the service.

At least two weeks prior to the wedding please contact the Church Administrator who will review all arrangements and fees with you. No later than one week before the rehearsal, payment is expected for all fees due. All fees to the church may be paid by a check made payable to: "The Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church." Checks for the organist, vocalists, instrumentalists, custodian, and officiating pastor (if necessary,) may be made payable to each person individually. The Church Administrator will distribute all checks to the appropriate persons.

In planning your wedding at the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, if the fee schedule presents a demonstrable hardship, please submit a written request detailing the verifiable and justifiable nature of the hardship to the pastor/head of staff, who will determine if fees will be adjusted.

## **FINAL WORDS**

We hope this booklet is helpful to you as you plan for your wedding. Do not hesitate to contact any member of the church staff if we can be of assistance. May God's grace abound in your lives during this most exciting time.

## **A BLESSING**

*May the grace of Christ attend you,  
the love of God surround you,  
the Holy Spirit keep you,  
that you may live in faith, abound in hope, and grow in love,  
both now and forevermore. Amen.*  
*(From "The Service of Christian Marriage," The Book of Common Worship)*