

## Decorations

Pedestals are available for flower arrangements. No flowers or decorations are permitted on the communion table. Only silk flower petals may be dropped down the aisle. To avoid damage to pews and walls, tape, staples, tacks, nails, screws, wire or glue are not permitted. Aisle runners create a serious safety hazard and are discouraged.

Candelabras are available for your use, and the required drip-free candles are provided at a nominal fee. Candles are lit prior to the arrival of guests.

Bird seed, flower petals, and bubbles are permitted outside the building. No substance may be thrown inside the building. Rice, confetti, glitter and sparklers are prohibited.

All decorations inside and outside the facility must be removed by the wedding party immediately following the ceremony.

## Photography

Weddings are considered a worship service. Your photographer may take pictures during the processional and recessional, but rarely is there an exception to having any flash photography after the Call to Worship until the closing Benediction. The pastor will be happy to restage any elements of the service.

FPC's guidelines will be provided to the bride and groom to be given to the photographer and videographer.

Family and friends are discouraged from using flash photography, as well as videotaping from the pews or side aisles, during the ceremony.

## Receptions

For those who hold their wedding ceremony in our Chapel or Sanctuary, Saturday receptions accommodating up to 150 guests are available in the Welcome Center only, and must conclude by 3:00 p.m. Please contact the church's Administrative Coordinator to discuss availability and guidelines for receptions on other days of the week.

## Contact Information

Main Phone  
863.686.7187

Executive Secretary — x232  
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Administrative Coordinator — x224  
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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# Wedding Guidelines

First Presbyterian Church  
Lakeland, Florida



*“Though one may be overpowered,  
two can defend themselves. A cord  
of three strands is not quickly broken.”  
Ecclesiastes 4:12*

**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.

All weddings at First Presbyterian Church, and all weddings conducted by the ministers of First Presbyterian Church, must be approved by the Session. According to the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (USA) marriage is defined as follows:

“Marriage is a gift God has given to all 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 and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.

If they meet the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a couple may request that a service of Christian marriage be conducted by a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), who is authorized, though not required, to act as an agent of the civil jurisdiction in recording the marriage contract.

A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who may agree to the couple’s request only if, in the judgment of the teaching elder, the couple demonstrates sufficient understanding of the nature of the marriage covenant and commitment to living their lives together according to its values. In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the Session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service.

The marriage service shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to this covenant and to the forms of reformed worship, under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the Session. In a service of marriage, the couple marries each other by exchanging mutual promises. The teaching elder witnesses the couple’s promises and pronounces God’s blessing upon their union. The community of faith pledges to support the couple in upholding their promises; prayers may be offered for the couple, for the communities that support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness.

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service may be similar to the marriage service except that the statements made shall reflect the fact that the couple is already married to one another according to the laws of the civil jurisdiction.

Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a Session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the Session believes is contrary to the teaching elder’s or the Session’s discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.” (PCUSA Directory of Worship W-4.9000)

The Session of First Presbyterian Church of Lakeland, after prayerful consideration, and based upon our interpretation of the Word of God, permits marriage services only between one man and one woman.

### **Planning for a Wedding**

Contact the Executive Secretary for information, and to schedule an appointment with an FPC pastor. No date is confirmed without approval of the pastor and Session.

### **Counseling**

Couples to be married at First Presbyterian are required to complete four (4) hours of pre-marital counseling available at no charge through the Parish Psychologist or one of the pastors.

### **Wedding Ceremony**

The wedding is dedicated to the glory of God. All elements of the service should point the participants to God’s presence and the love the couple has for each other and God. The pastor 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. Flower girls and ring bearers should be at least five (5) years old.

### **Wedding Coordinator**

First Presbyterian Church provides Wedding Coordinators to help plan the wedding and assist at the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Once the wedding is approved, the Wedding Coordinator will contact the bride and groom. Outside wedding consultants are welcome, but must work with the church’s coordinator and follow all church guidelines.

### **Wedding Music**

Weddings conducted in the church become a worship service. Sacred music is the norm with guidance from the Church Organist. Live music is recommended and pre-recorded music is discouraged. Soloists are arranged by the bride and groom, and rehearsals scheduled with the Church Organist. All music should be approved at least two months prior to your wedding date. The organist reserves the right to play typical wedding music if selections have not been made one month before the ceremony.

### **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, ushers, musicians, flower girls and ring bearers must be in attendance at the rehearsal so all know where to sit, when to stand, etc. To ensure a successful rehearsal, please have all participants arrive on time. The rehearsal will take approximately one hour. The marriage license should be brought to the rehearsal. The Executive Secretary will ensure the license is sent to the County for recording.

### **Other Details**

Seating capacity of the Chapel is 100 guests, and the Sanctuary seats 850. The church is available two hours prior to the ceremony for dressing and pre-wedding photographs, and changing rooms are available for your use. Hair and makeup should be done prior to arriving. The church is not responsible for any personal items lost, damaged or stolen. FPC building and grounds is a smoke free and alcohol free environment. Kindly notify members of the wedding party and families of this policy.