

## **POLICY FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES**

### **New Bethlehem Presbyterian Church**

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**Definition of Marriage:** Marriage is a gift God has created, defined, and given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Christian marriage is a covenant through which one natural man and one natural woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage a lifelong commitment is made by a natural woman and a natural man to each other, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith. Marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life.

1. Permission for the use of the building for any marriage service shall be requested of the Session of the church through the Pastor and in writing to the Session. The Session must approve all wedding ceremonies to ensure that they conform to our policies.
2. The Session, being guided by Scripture, prohibits same gender or transgender weddings or ceremonies on church grounds. Any such approval is at the sole discretion of the session.
3. The Directory for Worship and Church Operations Manual (Session Handbook) shall guide the pastor and the Session in granting permission for marriage service to be held in the Church.
4. The installed pastor of New Bethlehem Presbyterian Church shall conduct the ceremony. Guest ministers may be invited by the Session to co-officiate the ceremony with our pastor, at the discretion of the Session. Our pastor has final authority in those instances.
5. The Directory of Worship calls for the couple to be instructed and counseled in the meaning of Christian marriage, the covenant of marriage and the form and purpose of the marriage service. If the minister is convinced after discussion with the couple that the marriage is unwise, the minister shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony.
6. The couple shall consult with both the Pastor and the church organist on appropriate music for the marriage service.
7. Normally, one of the parties getting married must be an active member of the church in order for the marriage service to be held in the church. The Pastor will review exceptions made for non-members to be married in the church.
8. The Pastor or church office shall provide the couple seeking permission to be married in the church with a copy of these policies and the current schedule of fees for weddings.
9. The Pastor shall review with the couple to be married in the church the current policies regarding building use which follow:
  - The church can supply candelabra (limited to two, due to fire hazard). *The couple must purchase candelabra candles from the church.*
  - If a wedding service bulletin is desired, the couple must provide the bulletin for the church secretary to complete or may provide their own completed bulletin in consultation with the pastor.
  - No flash pictures or flood lamps during the service; video taping to be done from the rear of the sanctuary.
  - No rice or birdseed is to be used following the service due to difficulty in removing from ground and church.

