

Sixth Presbyterian Church Washington, DC

Wedding Policy

Adopted by Session, October 19, 2010

Marriage in the Christian Tradition

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. The wedding is a special worship service of Sixth Presbyterian Church, in which a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other and publicly witnessed.

Officiating

The pastor of the church will officiate at all weddings. If the couple wishes another clergy person to participate, the invitation will be approved and extended by the pastor. The wedding service shall be under the direction of the officiating minister.

Former pastors, associate pastors, and ministers who do not have a pastoral relationship with Sixth Presbyterian Church may officiate at services only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session.

Content of the Service

As a service of Christian worship, the service focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. The service begins with a brief statement of purpose. The man and the woman declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes passages of Scripture, as well as a brief homily.

Prayers are offered for the couple, for the communities which support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God the minister declares publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction.

Application and Scheduling

The pastor will endeavor to perform weddings of church members or their children at their mutual convenience. No weddings are scheduled on Sundays, holidays, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, during Holy Week, or in the event of a previously scheduled church commitment.

Weddings of non-members are conducted solely at the discretion of the pastor of the church. The decision not to perform a non-member wedding in no way reflects on the worthiness of the couple. It simply means that the routine workload of the pastor sometimes prohibits additional non-member weddings.

Ordinarily, the pastor cannot make a commitment to conduct a wedding nor can a date and time be confirmed until after the application form is returned to the church and an initial interview is held. Therefore, those wishing to be married at Sixth Presbyterian Church should schedule such an interview early, before other plans are made. In particular, the reception should not be scheduled until the date and time for the marriage service are confirmed.

Preparation

After the wedding form has been returned to the church, the couple should schedule the first pre-marriage conference. The pre-marriage conferences will cover various topics, including:

1. the nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian,

2. the legal requirements of the District of Columbia,
3. the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
4. the nature and form of the marriage service,
5. the vows and commitments they will be asked to make,
6. the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
7. the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce.

If the minister is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the minister shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony.

Music

Music is an important part of the service. Because a wedding is a worship service, the music for the wedding should be appropriate for worship, directing attention to God and expressing the faith of the church. Various instruments are appropriate, but if the organ is to be used, the church organist or his designee will play for the service. The officiating minister, in consultation with the organist, has final approval of all music for the wedding.

The couple should contact the organist early to discuss the music. If they want a soloist, the church can suggest names, or they can secure their own soloist. Financial arrangements are between the soloist and the couple. The soloist should furnish the organist with a copy of any music to be sung. It may be necessary to schedule additional rehearsal time for the soloist and the organist, at an additional cost.

Decorations

In decorating the sanctuary, simplicity is best. Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to a place of worship, and they should enhance the worshipers' consciousness of God. In all of the activities surrounding the wedding, excessive expense and ostentation should be avoided. Flowers for the wedding may be delivered during business hours on weekdays. The church will be open two hours before the scheduled time of the wedding, and flowers may be delivered then. No nails or thumb tacks are to be used on the furnishings in the sanctuary. Florist's wire and masking tape may be used to hold decorations in place.

Blessing of a Civil Marriage

When a couple has been married in a civil ceremony, they may want to confirm it in the context of worship. The service is similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of the vows by the husband and wife, and the public declaration by the minister reflect the fact that the woman and man are already legally married to one another.

Video Recording and Still Photography

Photographs and videos are valued mementos of the wedding service. Care should be taken, however, that they do not become more important than the wedding itself. Flash photographs may not be made during the processional, the ceremony, or the recessional – only existing light photographs may be taken at those times. During the ceremony, photographs may be taken from the back of the sanctuary. Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary following the wedding or in the sanctuary before the wedding provided they are completed one-half hour before the service.

Video recordings may be made from the back of the sanctuary, as long the camera operator remains stationary throughout the service and uses existing light only. It is the responsibility of the couple to instruct their photographer and videographer of these policies.

Rehearsal

Normally, a rehearsal is scheduled for all weddings the evening before the wedding day. If another date is desired, this can be arranged with the officiating minister. The entire wedding party should attend, along with the parents of the bride and groom. Other friends and family are welcome to be present.

Marriage License

A couple must have a valid District of Columbia marriage license to be married, and it must be given to the officiating minister no later than the rehearsal time. After the wedding, it will be completed and returned to District officials. A wedding cannot be performed without this in hand.

Conduct

Since the wedding is a service of worship, reverence is expected on the part of all present. All members of the wedding party should plan to arrive at the church on time, no later than the scheduled time for the rehearsal, and no later than one hour before the scheduled time of the ceremony. Smoking is not permitted in the church. Alcohol may not be served or consumed on church premises. The throwing of rice or birdseed is not permitted on church property.

Wedding Coordinator

The couple should choose a person, perhaps a friend of the family, to act as coordinator for the wedding service. The job of the wedding coordinator is to guide the activities in the back of the church. The wedding coordinator works with the ushers as they escort and seat guests, and guides the wedding party during the processional and after the recessional. It is essential that the wedding coordinator be present at the rehearsal.

Printed Bulletins

If printed bulletins for the wedding service are desired, it is the responsibility of the couple to have them typed and duplicated. The officiating minister will determine with the couple the form and content of such a bulletin.

Fees

Below is the schedule of fees. All fees are to be paid in full on or before the time of the rehearsal.

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>
Wedding Fee	0	500
Minister	0	250
Organist	250	250
Custodian	150	150