

# **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

## **The Wedding Booklet**

Policies, Scheduling and Fees

**Westminster Presbyterian Church**  
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## WEDDINGS AT WESTMINSTER

### A MESSAGE TO THE COUPLE

We are glad you have chosen or are considering choosing Westminster for your wedding. Marriage is a significant event in life, and we want to support your marriage by offering you, in addition to our church facilities, valuable counsel and a meaningful ceremony.

Weddings should be scheduled at least six months in advance in order to allow for attendance at a premarital workshop; schedule meetings with the minister, musician, wedding coordinator; and, be accommodated within the ministry schedule of the congregation. Call the church office to schedule your wedding, and the office will provide you with a form to fill out concerning date, time and other details.

**We have policies for both members and non-members.** **Members** are defined (for the terms of this wedding policy) as those who at the time of requesting a wedding date have been church members for more than 12 months; are children of current members; or are recent new members who have 12-months of active participation in the life of the congregation **prior to reserving a date** for a wedding. Active participation is understood to be regular worship attendance, participation in ministries, financial contributions, etc. Anyone not meeting these requirements will be subject to the non-member wedding policies and fees.

The **Non-member** fee schedule is used for recent new members and non-members who do not have 12-months of active participation in the life of the congregation **prior to reserving a date** for a wedding. **There is a \$200 scheduling deposit due at the time a date is requested.** Nonmembers reserving a wedding date will be given confirmation of that date up to twelve months in advance. Prior to twelve months, if a member of the congregation requests the same date, the member will be given priority over the non-member. If the date is not able to be confirmed, the deposit will be returned. If for some reason the wedding does not take place at Westminster, the deposit will be returned. Otherwise, the deposit will be applied to the applicable facility use fees. Although Westminster pastors will marry non-members, at least one of the partners must be a Christian actively engaged in the practice of Christian faith.

This booklet has been prepared to give you an opportunity to know both what you can expect from us, as officiating clergy, and what will be expected of you. Careful reading of this booklet will not only answer many questions, but also prepare you for your personal meetings with one of the pastors. We hope you might read this booklet as early as possible in your planning and prior to your first meeting with a pastor.

Best wishes. We look forward to celebrating your marriage!

The Pastors

## **THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE**

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Scripture tells us from the beginning of creation, God made us for community – and established within us a desire for companionship, partnership, and covenant relationships. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which two people are called to live out together their lives of discipleship before God.

In marriage you commit to each other your love, wealth, future, and lives. The love you share presently will continue to grow in strength and depth. You will learn to think, feel, hope, and dream together. You will share days of joy and times of sorrow. You will grow to "become one."

Further, Christians take seriously the commitment and the limits of marriage. In your wedding ceremony, you will make vows to each other. In these promises, you commit yourself to your partner "for better or worse." You make a commitment to "work it out" even when times get rough, knowing that often by seeing it through, we raise our relationship to new heights of love and joy.

Finally, Christians believe that Christ is an essential part of any marriage. The Bible tells us God gave us marriage as a holy mystery, in which two are joined together and become one, just as Christ is one with the church. In your wedding ceremony, God binds you together in a mystical way that is not acknowledged in a purely civil ceremony. This is because couples can share a complete unity – not just physically, socially and emotionally, but also spiritually. They are united "in Christ" as well as in love. Therefore, we urge couples to be of "like minds" on religious faith, and to establish a church home as early as possible. We would be glad if it were to be Westminster.

May your marriage reflect these hopes.

## **COUNSELING WITH THE MINISTERS**

The first thing a couple should do upon deciding to get married at Westminster is to call the church office. The selection of a date is dependent upon the availability of the facility and the approval by the lead pastor. As soon as possible, one of the ministers will agree to serve as the officiant for your wedding. Upon receiving word as to which pastor, **you should call him/her**, and arrange for your first meeting.

Premarital education and counseling is required and very effective in creating a healthy marriage. To help each couple in this process, we ask each couple to participate in a half day Premarital Workshop led by the Pastoral Counseling Network of West Chester. This workshop will help you begin to look at the issues that are important to married life and identify strengths and areas for growth in your relationship. You will be sent information about the cost and dates of upcoming workshops in separate mailings.

Along with any important issues raised during that workshop, the Pastor celebrating your wedding will be delighted to discuss any items in this booklet, as well as review the spiritual significance of marriage. You will also discuss the wedding ceremony itself. We hope also to simply "get to know you" in a way that enables us to personalize the wedding ceremony.

## **YOUR WEDDING COORDINATOR**

The wedding coordinators are well-versed in the wedding ceremony procedures and wedding etiquette. They will assist the minister in the rehearsal, but their most important function is to help prepare the sanctuary for the wedding and to assist the wedding party before the wedding. Their services are invaluable. Usually the wedding coordinator contacts the bride a month before the wedding to discuss needed details. There is a fee for required coordinator services (see included fee schedule).

## **WEDDING MUSIC**

Selecting music is an important part of planning your wedding at Westminster. If you are intending to have organ music, please contact Tim Evers, the church organist, as soon as possible to save the date. Normally it is expected that Tim will play for weddings, unless there is other music (strings, harp, guitar, etc.) being provided. Please contact Tim directly at 610-399-3377 ext. 115. As your date approaches, you will meet with the organist who will help you select the music most appropriate for your wedding. If you wish to use an outside organist, our church organist will need to approve this person to use the church organ.

At this meeting, you will select processional/recessional music, music to be played during the service, and music for the seating of your guests (prelude). Please keep in mind that the service itself is a ceremony of worship and music should be suitable for a church service.

Westminster's organist can also suggest instrumentalists or soloists if you would like. Early booking of these musicians is necessary. Each extra musician has a separate fee, and there is a slight additional charge for the extra rehearsals our organist will incur.

## **THE CUSTODIAN**

A custodian works to ensure proper preparation of the church facilities both before and after your ceremony with an established fee. Additional custodial services will increase the fee (see included fee schedule).

## **QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED**

1. DATES FOR WEDDING: Weddings will ordinarily not be scheduled the weekend of Thanksgiving, the three weekends before Christmas, Easter weekend or weekends including federal holidays (e.g. Memorial Day, Labor Day). While we will attempt to accommodate all other dates requested, there may be other conflicts that make a date unavailable, so it is important to request a date as soon as possible.
2. REQUEST FOR PARTICULAR MINISTER: Due to the number of weddings at Westminster, weddings are assigned based on availability and work load. Requests for a particular pastor may not be able to be accommodated.
3. DIVORCED COUPLES: Will you marry a couple if one or both partners have been divorced? The answer is usually yes, provided the minister is confident any problems contributing to the divorce have been addressed in the premarital education. Each case must, however, be appraised individually.
4. REHEARSAL: How long is the rehearsal? The rehearsal is normally about one hour. It is usually the night before the wedding, but it may be any time agreed on by the couple, the pastor, and the wedding coordinator. All participants in the wedding will need to be present so that each knows his or her part in the ceremony.
5. OUTSIDE CLERGY: May I have another pastor perform the ceremony here? Outside clergy are always welcome to share in officiating at a wedding, but one of our pastors is required to participate in any wedding on the premises. If you would like another pastor to share in the service, it is the custom to secure our permission, and for us then to invite your minister to assist and work out the details of that participation.
6. RECEPTION: May we have our reception here? Our church Fellowship Hall is available for receptions and will be approved on an individual basis for an additional fee. They must be catered by someone who has food preparation licensing. Normally the hall holds about 200 people comfortably. Smoking is not permitted inside the church; neither are alcoholic beverages. For a reception here, the custodian would receive an increased fee. The kitchen should be left in the condition you found it. The church's custodian will take care of vacuuming the carpet and putting away tables and chairs.
7. PHOTOGRAPHERS: Photographers are welcome to take nonflash pictures during the ceremony. We ask for no flash pictures during the ceremony proper. Guidelines for photographers will be given to the wedding couple at the time of the meeting with their coordinator.
8. VIDEO RECORDINGS: Can the ceremony be video recorded? Yes, it may be video recorded from a position that is not visible. The video photographer will not be permitted to roam through the sanctuary during the ceremony.

9. PLACE OF THE CEREMONY: Can we have the ceremony at home or outside? Besides the sanctuary, we can perform the ceremony in our Chapel. One of the ministers may perform the ceremony at home or in another suitable place, providing the setting does not detract from the spiritual significance of the ceremony.

10. RECEIVING LINE: Where is the best place to have the receiving line? Many times the best place is at the reception, so that the wedding party can take pictures immediately after the service. When there are many guests, it takes a long time to pass through the receiving line. If, however, you desire a receiving line at the church, the line can be formed in the narthex. In good weather, the courtyard makes a nice setting. Realize this can easily add 30-60 minutes to your time at the church.

11. MARRIAGE LICENSE: We cannot perform the ceremony without the license in hand. Apply for your license at least two weeks ahead of the wedding day by following the directions specified by the county marriage license department.

12. THROWING RICE, CONFETTI, ETC.: May we throw rice at the bride and groom as they leave the church? Rice, birdseed, rose petals, etc., can be dangerous or leave stains, and are therefore not permitted. Bubbles are permitted for use outside the building. A newer tradition of ringing of bells is very much encouraged.

13. CHANGES IN THE CEREMONY: May we change the ceremony or write our own? Usually we will permit changes in the wedding ceremony or even the writing of a new one. The basic integrity of the service must be maintained, as well as its distinctive Christian quality. Your pastor will work with you to personalize the service.

14. DRESSING AT THE CHURCH: Can the wedding party dress at the church? Yes, this is often done. There is a room where the wedding party can dress with a full length mirror provided and rest rooms nearby. The wedding coordinator will need to know the time of arrival of the party so that the facilities can be ready.

15. ON THAT DAY: How soon must we be at the church? Wedding party should arrive one hour prior to the ceremony. How soon must we leave the church? A suggested time that would be appreciated is sixty (60) minutes after the ceremony has concluded.

16. INTERFAITH MARRIAGES: Will you marry someone who is not a Christian? We will marry persons of any Christian denomination, and would be willing to talk with any Christian individual who is considering marriage to someone who professes another faith. Our constitution requires that "at least one is a professing Christian."

17. SAME-GENDER MARRIAGES: Will you marry people of the same gender? Same gender marriages, as authorized by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and allowable by the Presbyterian Church (USA), may be celebrated at Westminster. It is up to the discretion of each pastor whether or not they will officiate at any marriage, including a same-gender marriage. We will be glad to have you talk with a pastor who would be glad to officiate at a same-gender marriage.

18. COMMUNION: May we receive the Sacrament of Communion at our wedding? Yes, you may receive the Sacrament of Communion at your wedding; however, we rarely do so, as it is required that the entire congregation participate in the sacrament, and not just the couple. This adds a good bit of time to the ceremony and would require additional fees for setup. If you would like to consider this, please talk with a pastor.

19. RESERVED SEATS: May pews be reserved for the family? As a rule, the first pew on each side of the center aisle is reserved for the parents of the bride (left pew) and the parents of the groom (right pew). Additional pews may be set aside for grandparents or other special guests. The wedding coordinator will instruct the ushers accordingly.

20. RUNNER FOR CEREMONY: If desired, the florist provides the white runner for the center aisle. The center aisle measures 50 feet long.

## **FEE SCHEDULE**

(Fee grants use of building for 3.5 hours)

	<b><u>Members</u></b>	<b><u>Non-members</u></b>
Sanctuary Use Fee (seats 500)	\$0	\$1,000
Chapel Use Fee (seats 50)	\$0	\$300
Premarital Workshop		
Minister	\$350	\$450
Organist/Pianist	\$250	\$325
Custodian	\$175	\$250
Wedding Coordinator	\$175	\$200

### **Additional/Optional Fees if requested**

Sound Technician	\$100	\$200
Guitarist	\$175	\$225
Organist rehearsal with soloist	\$100	\$100
Soloist	\$175	\$225
Fellowship Hall and Kitchen (for reception)	\$350	\$600
Custodial Fee for reception	\$100/hour	\$200/hour

**Payment of all fees shall take place prior to or at the wedding rehearsal.**

## **A FINAL WORD**

By coming to a church and requesting the services of a minister of the church, you acknowledge the significance of Christian marriage. We trust that you find yourselves in harmony with the Christian nature of the celebration and that the ceremony will be a witness to your own personal religious faith. Where a couple is indifferent to personal Christian faith, it would seem more appropriate for them to be married in a civil ceremony with a justice of the peace.

We look forward to assisting you in your wedding plans and will do our best to see that all goes smoothly for you. We hope you understand that our concerns for you and your marriage extends beyond the wedding day. You are invited to make your church home here at Westminster and to call upon us if we can be of further service to you.

Fees Approved by Session July 2023  
Wording Revised October 2022