WEDDING POLICY

First Presbyterian Church

Ellerbe, NC

Approved: 02/12/2020 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**1. Purpose**

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the conduct of any service of matrimony held at First Presbyterian Church and for the participation of the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in any service of matrimony.

**2. Policy**

2.1. All services of matrimony conducted at First Presbyterian Church (FPC) or by the pastor(s) of the church, will conform to the biblical standards for such services, as well as to the standards of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). In addition, the facilities at FPC will only be used for marriages of members, or others if approved by the Session of FPC.

**3. Statement**

3.1. God instituted marriage from the creation of mankind. Holy Scripture establishes this relationship, as found in Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5. The PCA Book of Church Order Directory for Worship states:

59-1. Marriage is a divine institution though not a sacrament, nor peculiar to the Church of Christ. It is proper that every commonwealth, for the good of society, make laws to regulate marriage, which all citizens are bound to obey insofar as they do not transgress the laws of God (Acts 5:29)

59-2. Christians should marry in the Lord; therefore it is fit that their marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister, that special instruction be given them, and suitable prayers offered, when they enter into this relation.

59-3. Marriage is only to be between one man and one woman only(Gen.2:24,25; Matt.19:4-6, 1 Cor.7:2), in accordance with the Word of God. Therefore, ministers in the Presbyterian Church in America who solemnize marriages shall only solemnize marriages between one man and one woman.[[1]](#footnote-1)

3.2 Furthermore, The Westminster Confession of Faith States:

Chapter 24 Of Marriage and Divorce

1. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time,
2. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.
3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry only in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true re-formed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters: neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked, by marrying with such as are notoriously wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresies.[[2]](#footnote-2)

3.3. FPC allows the marriage of two believers in the Lord to be conducted at the church or by its pastor(s), provided the pastor is free in his conscience to marry the two believers. Before a marriage at FPC, Christian counseling must occur to determine the propriety of the marriage under Holy Scripture.

3.4. Marriage services for believers may be ordered as a service of worship. As such, these services will conform to Scriptural principles regarding worship. All aspects of the ceremony must be reverent, orderly and reflective of the biblical understanding of marriage.

4. Procedures 4.1. Who may be married at FPC:

4.1.1. Services of matrimony that conform to Scripture and the standards of the PCA may be conducted at FPC or by the pastor(s) of FPC.

4.1.2. All marriages shall be of one man to one woman.

4.1.3. Given these restrictions and those in 3.3 above, the following persons may be married at FPC or by the pastor of FPC:

4.1.3.1 Communicant members of FPC to other communicant members, or to believing Christians from other churches.

4.1.3.2 Any others wishing to marry at FPC must be approved by the FPC Session

4.2. Who may perform the marriage service:

4.2.1. The pastor conducting a marriage service at FPC shall be the pastor of FPC or a male pastor of an Evangelical Church as approved by the FPC Session.

4.2.2. The pastor of FPC shall obtain approval from the session prior to conducting any marriage service, whether at FPC or at another location.

4.3. Pastoral marriage counseling

4.3.1. The FPC pastor or other male Christian pastor as approved by the FPC session shall conduct Christian marital counseling before the marriage. Ordinarily, there will be a minimum of 3 counseling sessions.

4.3.2. The counseling will ensure the bride and groom are instructed in the biblical understanding of marriage, its requirements, duties and benefits.

4.3.3. The counseling will give guidance on the order and elements of the marriage worship service or ceremony.

4.3.4. The pastor will determine, as best as he is able, the propriety of the marriage under Holy Scripture. If the pastor is not convinced in his conscience of the propriety of the marriage, the service will not be performed at FPC. If the officiant is the pastor of FPC, he shall not perform the marriage service at any location.

5. Services of marriage at FPC

5.1. All services of marriage performed at FPC or by the pastor of FPC must be reverent, orderly and solemn occasions, reflecting the biblical understanding of marriage (Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5).

5.1.1. Marriage services need not be worship services, but in all cases, the order of the service must include a reading from Genesis 2 or Ephesians 5, or other relevant passages of Scripture relating to marriage.

5.1.2. The order of the marriage ceremony must be in conformity to Scripture and to the Standards of the PCA

5.1.2.1. Songs must have lyrics that are in accord with biblical truth.

5.1.2.2. No song, tune, instrument, reading or any other aspect of the service of marriage shall be allowed that is out of accord with Scripture, as understood in the standards of the PCA.

5.1.2.3 Ordinarily, the order of the service must be submitted to the Pastor 45 days before the date of the service and approved by the FPC Session.

5.2. Christian marriage service (**These are examples from PCA Book of Church Order**)

5.2.1. MARRIAGE SERVICE

Whether the marriage is in the church or in a private house, the betrothed shall present themselves attended by witnesses, the man having the woman at his left hand, before the minister, who shall say:

**The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace (Numbers 6:24-26).**

**If any here present can show just cause why these persons may not lawfully be joined together in marriage, let them now speak, or hereafter forever hold their peace.**

**Marriage is a divine ordinance instituted for the promotion of man’s happiness and the glory of God. The sacredness of the relation is revealed by the fact that the Holy Spirit has selected it as an apt emblem of the union existing between our Lord and His bride, the Church. Hence, beloved friends, take heed to the exhortation of the inspired apostle, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Ephesians 5:26). “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). The happiness contemplated by this union is realized only by those who fully appreciate its sacredness and are faithful in the performance of the mutual obligations growing out of it, and seek daily God’s blessing.**

**And now as you enter into this new relation, consecrated by heaven’s benediction and hallowed by all that is tenderest and truest in human affection, I entreat you both to join with me in the prayer that God may bless this union, and sanctify it to the furtherance of your good and to the glory of His most holy Name**

The Prayer

**Most gracious God, fountain of life and love and joy, look with merciful favor upon these your servants now to be joined in holy wedlock, and enable them ever to remember and truly keep the vows which they make as they enter into covenant with one another and with you, in accordance with the Holy Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Covenant

Here the parties join their right hands, and the minister says:

**Do you, M--, take N--, whom you now hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded wife, and do you promise in the presence of God and these witnesses to be to her a faithful, loving and devoted husband, so long as you both shall live?**

The man answers:

**I do.**

The minister shall say:

**Do you, N--, take M--, whom you now hold by the hand to be your lawful and wedded husband and do you promise in the presence of God and these witnesses to be to him a faithful, loving and obedient wife, so long as you both shall live?**

The woman answers:.

**I do.**

If a ring is given and received, the minister shall say:

**Let this ring be the token of your plighted faith, and the memorial of your mutual and unending love**

Then the minister, addressing himself to the company present, says:

**Forasmuch as these persons have covenanted together in marriage in accordance with the laws of the commonwealth, I do now pronounce them husband and wife, after the ordinance of God. “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6).**

The Prayer

**Almighty and ever blessed God, our heavenly Father, place the seal of your loving approval upon the union of these two hearts and lives in the sacred bonds of matrimony. Enable your servants, by the gift of thy sufficient grace to be faithful in keeping the vows they have now assumed. Whether in prosperity or in adversity, in sickness or in health, in sorrow or in joy, may their love and sympathy for each other never fail. Into your holy keeping we now commit them, praying that they may ever live “as being heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7). For Jesus’ sake. Amen**.

Benediction

Then the married pair standing, or kneeling, the minister shall pronounce the benediction:

**God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favor look upon you, and so fill you with his grace that you may live faithfully together in this life and in the world to come may have life everlasting. Amen.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

5.2.2 A SECOND MARRIAGE SERVICE

At the time and place appointed for the solemnization of matrimony, the persons to be married shall take their places before the minister, the man having the woman at his left hand, and all present reverently standing.

The minister shall say:

**Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the presence of God to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony. Marriage was instituted by God himself in the time of man’s innocency and uprightness. The Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18). Thereupon God created woman of man’s own substance and brought her to the man. Our Lord Jesus Christ honored marriage by His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. And He confirmed it as a divine ordinance and a union not to be severed when He declared, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:6). Moreover, the apostle Paul set forth the sacred and exalted nature of marriage when he likened it to the mystical union that subsists between Christ and His Church. The purpose of marriage is the enrichment of the lives of those who enter into this estate, the propagation of the race, and the extension of Christ’s Church to the glory of the covenant God. Let us reverently hear what the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the duty of husbands to their wives and of wives to their husbands: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify, and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word. ...So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies” (Ephesians 5:25-28).“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body” (Ephesians 5:22-23). These two persons are come to be joined in this holy estate of marriage. If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be wedded, let him now declare it, or else hereafter forever hold his peace. I require and charge you both that, if either of you knows any cause why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, you do now confess it.**

Let us pray:

**Most holy and most merciful Father, at once the God of nature and of grace, creator, preserver and redeemer of mankind, fill these, your servant and your handmaiden, with a sense of the solemnity of the vows they are about to make. May they look to you for your assistance, and enter into these sacred obligations in humble dependence upon your enabling grace. Grant this, O Father, with the forgiveness of our sins, through Jesus Christ, your Son. Amen.**

After prayer the minister shall say:

**Who gives this woman to be married to this man?**

The father of the woman, or someone in his stead, shall place her right hand in that of the minister, and the minister shall cause the man to take with his right hand the right hand of the woman.

The minister shall then say:

**M--, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live with her after God’s commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love her, honor and cherish her, so long as you both shall live?**

The man shall answer:

**I will.**

Then the minister shall say:

**N--, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live with him after God’s commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love him, cherish and obey him, so long as you both shall live?**

The woman shall answer:

**I will.**

The man shall say:

**I, M--, take you, N--, to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.**

The woman shall say:

**I, N--, take you, M--, to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful wife in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.**

The man shall then put the ring on the third finger of the woman’s left hand, and shall say after the minister:

**This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.**

The minister shall say to the woman:

**Do you, N--, receive this ring as a token of your pledge to keep this covenant and perform these vows?**

The woman shall say:

**I do.**

The minister shall say:

**Let us pray**.

After prayer the minister shall say:

**By virtue of the authority committed unto me by the church of Christ and the law of the state, I now pronounce you, M--, and N--,husband and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.[[4]](#footnote-4)**

5.3. The order of the service of marriage shall be submitted to the Pastor, ordinarily 45 days prior to the ceremony and approved by the FPC session before the marriage service.

6. Receptions

6.1. Receptions following marriage services and rehearsal dinners held in the FPC Fellowship Hall. Individuals must abide by the Rules of the Fellowship Hall use:

6.1.1 Empty all trash at the end of the event (fresh trash bags are found under the window sink).

6.1.2 Wipe down all tables.

6.1.3 Sweep all floors (Brooms/ dustpans are behind the refrigerator).

6.1.4 Lauder dirty dish clothes/ towels, tablecloths and return them where found.

6.1.5 Turn off AC or heat.

6.1.6 Turn off all lights.

6.1.7 Leave kitchen in order. (clean up any spills including the ovens)

6.1.8 If kitchen is closed off upon arrival, close it up when you leave.

6.1.9 Lock all doors and make sure doors are fully latched closed.

6.1.10 The individual who reserves the fellowship hall, is responsible for

ensuring the above items are completed.

7 Decorations in the sanctuary and fellowship hall.

7.1 Decorations in the church facilities must be applied or affixed in a manner that does not require use of nails, screws, staples, tape, glue, etc. (Items which could damage the church property).

7.2 Individual requesting the use of the building(s) are responsible for removing all decorations at the end of the event.

7.3. Any damages shall be promptly repaired. The parties using the church facilities shall be responsible for full and prompt payment of any and all charges incurred in the repair of the facilities.

8. Prohibitive activities at FPC

8.1 The following activities are prohibited in and on the properties of FPC.

8.1.1. The use of tobacco products.

8.1.2. The use of alcohol.

8.1.3. The use of illegal substances.

8.1.4. Excessively loud, disruptive or inappropriate music or noise.

8.1.5. Disruptive, inappropriate or illegal conduct.

8.1.6. Rice, birdseed, flower petals or confetti thrown inside the church.

**The above policy is an adaptation ofthe Wedding Policy of Rebobeth Presbyterian Church, Waxhaw, NC. (ARP).**

References:

The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2019 Chapter 59 *The Solemnization of Marriage*

Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XXIV: Of Marriage and Divorce

**Approved on 02/12/2020**

1. The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2019 Chapter 59 *The Solemnization of Marriage* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 24, Sections 1-3 Of Marriage and Divorce [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2019, Appendix A [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America, 2019 Appendix B [↑](#footnote-ref-4)