

Wedding Policies

Policy One: Non-members

Grove Presbyterian Church frequently receives phone calls from persons who are not members of the congregation but who nonetheless are interested in having their wedding celebrated in our building. This often results because it is a pretty building and admired by persons who drive up Bloom Street. Perhaps that is why you are now reading this policy. Please read the policy and then decide whether or not you still wish for your wedding to take place here.

I wish to raise with you a couple of preliminary points:

- ▲ Please do not mistake the church with the church building. The church is the congregation which happens to worship in this building.
- ▲ I'm sorry if you have already booked a reception site and are now searching for a pastor and a church building.
- ▲ I hope you are more interested in your Christian marriage than your wedding.
- ▲ I will and can only perform a Christian worship wedding service. If you are not Christian or not interested in growing your marriage as Christians, I will help direct you toward those who can appropriately perform your wedding ceremony.
- ▲ I don't do gimmicky weddings. This is a worship service, not an audition for 'Funniest Home Videos,' so please refrain from wanting to wear costumes, dancing down the aisle, or having your pet dog in the procession.
- ▲ Weddings planners can be useful and helpful, but in this building, they will listen to me.
- ▲ Sometimes couples already have in mind someone they want to perform their wedding instead of me, even though they want the wedding in our building. I will consider this request on the following conditions: 1). I must invite them with corroboration by my Session; 2) The officiant will comply with all aspects of our policies as well as the Presbyterian view and practice of marriage and weddings; 3) the officiant must be an ordained minister in good standing with their denomination (I will need confirmation of their credentials).
- ▲ We only schedule one wedding per day.

Policy Two: Members

The wedding ceremony is a privilege for pastors to perform. I prefer at least a six month notice by the couple asking me to officiate at their marriage service. Indeed, given the increasing busyness of the church calendar, a minimum of six months is needed should you desire to reserve the sanctuary. We prefer to schedule only one wedding per day.

Once contacted by the couple, I invite them to confer with me that we may discuss our respective objectives and hopes. I sometimes do not require the couple to be members of the Grove congregation because I may find it helpful and advantageous to provide the couple the welcome and the chance to discuss the value and depth of the Christian

context for marriage. Though I do not require the couple to be members of Grove church, I nevertheless do expect at least one of them to be a practicing Christian, involved in a church, and I do expect that they will develop and improve their marriage within the context of a community of faith.

Christianity requires participation in a congregation.

When the couple is willing to make this commitment and agree to the expectations placed before them, the couple invites me to continue working with them. Non-members will complete and submit the application form as their request for Session to authorize the wedding to take place in the Grove sanctuary. I may require a letter from pastor or the governing body of the church to which one or both belong. The marriage ceremony remains under the direction of the pastor (not marriage coordinators or anyone else) and the supervision of the Session.

I am obligated as a pastor to evaluate the couple's commitment, responsibility, maturity, and Christian understanding for entering into this new estate. This discussion is important in the case of a first marriage, marriage after the death of a spouse, or a marriage following divorce. We spend the next months preparing for the wedding ceremony and the marriage. We will meet in educational conferences (I choose not to call the pre-marital sessions counseling sessions as counseling implies therapy). Should the pastor become convinced that Christian conviction and responsibility are lacking and that this union is not one that promises to be blessed by God, the pastor retains the prerogative (indeed, the duty), at any time, to postpone the ceremony.

The marriage ceremony always is a service of worship, never a closed event. We gather to worship God, giving particular thanks for the chance to solemnize wedding vows. The couple is the occasion; God is the reason for our gathering. Hence the marriage ceremony is an open worship event that proclaims God through the reading of Scripture, the praying of prayers, and the vows spoken as our response to God's activity in the couple's lives. Photographs taken during a worship service always are inappropriate and unseemly. We are participants, not spectators.

The Pastor's Expectations of the Couple

Pastor Andrews appreciates the chance to meet with you and hear of your interest in making your wedding and your marriage most meaningful. He wants you to know that you are welcome to contact me any day, any time, should you feel the need to talk or share a concern.

Just as you come to me expecting to serve some of your needs, so does the Pastor come to you with certain expectations and hopes:

- ◆ Pastor Andrews invites the couple to review the **Our Marriage and Wedding Covenant** page (which you shall affirm). Please read the statement about how we Presbyterians view marriages and weddings. These pages put before you many of our theological views of love and marriage as well as many of our practical ground rules.
- ◆ At least one of you should be a baptized Christian. Couples who are not members of the Grove Presbyterian Church must complete and submit the accompanying application. A letter from the pastor of the church at which you are attending inviting Pastor Andrews to officiate may be required. This application will be presented before the Session (the congregation's ruling board) for their action on your request for a religious wedding ceremony.
- ◆ Only under extraordinary circumstances will Pastor Andrews be able to work with you without, at least, a six month advance notice. We presume you are contacting the Grove Church as the very first step in your wedding plans. A wedding at Grove Church is not a right; it is a privilege to be granted and a joy to be shared.
- ◆ We expect the couple to understand that Grove Church is more concerned with the marriage than the wedding. At the wedding we are gathered not to honor you but to honor and worship God, giving thanks for this occasion when you are able to solemnize your marriage vows. The couple is the occasion for the service of worship; God, however, is the reason we are gathered. Therefore, Pastor Andrews' doesn't do gimmicky weddings.

Thank you for your commitment and interest. Pastor Andrews looks forward to working with you toward a meaningful wedding and a fulfilling marriage.

Our Marriage and Wedding Covenant

We agree...

...that the officiating pastor will present our petition to be married at Grove Church before the Session (the ruling body of Church elders) for their approval...

...that our wedding banns will be announced at Grove Church for two Sundays prior to our wedding day inviting all persons to attend the public worship service...

...to look forward to attending, if at all possible, the worship service at Grove Church immediately preceding our wedding day for recognition and prayer...

...to look forward to meeting with the officiating pastor one year following our wedding for a time of review and sharing...

...that if any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol or narcotics the officiating pastor will refuse to perform the ceremony...

...to meet for at least three more educational conferences with the officiating pastor so that we may prepare for the best possible and most reverent worship service and to discuss the ingredients for the best, most reverent, and meaningful marriage...

...and we promise that our marriage will be grounded in faith in God and dedicated to a religious practice of the faithful life, including regular worship among other Christians in a community of faith...

Statement of Your Beliefs

1. In ***Our Marriage and Wedding Covenant*** you agree and promise that your marriage will be grounded in faith in God and dedicated to a religious practice of the faithful life, including regular worship among other Christians in a community of faith. Please describe how you intend to fulfill this promise?
2. In asking the Grove Presbyterian Church to support your request for your wedding to take place in its sanctuary you are affirming your desire for a religious wedding and a religious marriage. Why do you want a religious wedding? What led you to decide on selecting this Church for your wedding?
3. Please give here a brief statement of your faith. What does it mean to be a Christian? to follow and believe in God, as God is known in Jesus Christ?
4. How do you understand the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage? What sort of vows and commitments are you offering to your husband?
5. How can the Christian community assist you in fulfilling your marriage commitments?
6. What do you believe are the ingredients for a strong, working, healthy relationship?
7. Do you have any special questions for Session of the Grove Presbyterian Church?

The Church's Expectations

Setting the Wedding Date

Before the date is planned, please telephone the Church office (275-0692) to make sure the Church and the Pastor are available. The marriage service in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is to be performed by the Pastor; or someone designated by the Pastor. In almost every instance, the Pastor will be present to direct and take part in the service.

Rehearsal

A rehearsal date should also be set, usually the evening before the wedding. Forty-five minutes to one hour should be allowed for the rehearsal. If wedding music is to be provided for the wedding, it is recommended that the organist play for the rehearsal. In ordering invitations, the suggested form for the address of the Church is 330-332 Bloom Street, Danville, Pennsylvania, 17821.

License

It is recommended that the marriage license be obtained at least one week before the wedding. If the license is not mailed to the Church, then you are asked to bring the license with you to the rehearsal. (Licenses can be obtained 60 days in advance.)

Pre-Marital Conferences

A significant phase in preparation for the wedding is the pre-marriage conferences with the Pastor and the prospective bride and groom. Please telephone the Church office to make an appointment to begin this series. The role the pastor performs is one of an educative counselor.

Music

Organ music for wedding services can be provided by the organist of the Grove Presbyterian Church for members only. The organist will provide names of other organists who frequently play for wedding services. If the bridal couple wishes to have an organist known to them, they must get the approval of the Church organist in order to be able to use the organ. It will be necessary to know the organist's background and experience in playing a pipe organ. If the Church organist is to participate, he will be happy to discuss with you a program of music to be played at your wedding. If you wish to select the music, please telephone the organist or the pastor's secretary at least three weeks before the wedding.

Photographers

Photographers are requested to refrain from taking pictures during any part of the wedding worship service. Arrangements can be made for the wedding party to pose for pictures either before or after the service. A wedding is not a spectacle. Speak to the Pastor about plans for video taping. Equipment must be unobtrusive and the photographer must avoid detracting from the worship service. Video cameras must be on fixed tripods.

Decoration of the Church

Arrangements for floral decorations should be made through the florist of your choice except at the Christmas and Easter seasons, when arrangements should be made with the Church office to use the Church decorations. Details of your floral arrangement may be worked out with the Pastor. It should be noted that florists not familiar with our Church should be told that it is not permissible to put tacks or nails into the woodwork, not to attach wires to the carved woodwork or the pews. Flowers should not be placed on the Communion table. Please ask your florist to communicate with the Church before making final plans, to make sure the Church will be available and open the hour desired for setting up the decorations. Florists are expected to supply the flower containers. If you wish to leave your floral decoration at the Church, the Church will be happy to make use of them. The Deacons will distribute them, after the Sunday service, to the sick and shut-in members of the congregation. Aisle ribbons, carpeting for the aisle, or white crash, to be unrolled over the carpeting must be ordered by your florist, at your request. Rice may not be thrown. Candles for any special use will be the responsibility of the couple.

Floral Checklist

Name of Florist: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Price: _____

- ◆ Bouquets for bride and bridesmaids (take swatch of fabrics with you)
- ◆ Bride's going away corsage, and/or "throw-away"
- ◆ Corsages for Mothers, Grandmothers, Soloists, etc.
- ◆ Boutonnieres for Groom, Ushers, Fathers, Grandfathers
- ◆ Flowers for Sanctuary
- ◆ Flowers for Reception
- ◆ Flowers for cake (cake knife)
- ◆ Aisle Runner
- ◆ Aisle Flowers, Bows
- ◆ Candelabra Flowers, Bows
- ◆ Special Instructions (Guest Book)

Fee Schedule for Use of Church Facilities

[As adopted by Session on 8 September, 2003]

All fees are due and payable a week prior to the wedding to the Church office.

If One or Both is a Member of Grove Presbyterian Church:

a.	Use of the Sanctuary	no charge
b.	Use of the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen (reception)	no charge
c.	Custodian's fee for cleaning Sanctuary	\$ 30.00
d.	Organist Fee	
	For consultation and ceremony	\$100.00
	For consultation, ceremony, and rehearsal	\$125.00
	Plus, if accompanies soloist	\$ 25.00
e.	Bulletins	actual

If Neither is a Member of Grove Presbyterian Church:

[all fees must in turned into the church office a week prior to the ceremony – financial hardships can be discussed, but please put these fees in the context of what other expenses you may be spending unnecessarily]

a.	Use of the Sanctuary	\$300.00
b.	Use of the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen (reception)	\$300.00
c.	Custodian's fee for cleaning Sanctuary	\$ 50.00
d.	Custodian's fee for cleaning Sanctuary and the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen	\$100.00
e.	Organist Fee	
	For consultation and ceremony	\$150.00
	For consultation, ceremony, and rehearsal	\$175.00
	Plus, if accompanies soloist	\$ 50.00
f.	Bulletins (if having office print)	actual
g.	Contribution to the ministry of Grove Church (in lieu of an honorarium to the pastor)	300.00