

## Bethel Wedding Policy

### **Introductory Statement**

Congratulations on your engagement! And best wishes on your upcoming wedding and marriage! This is one of the most exciting times in your lives. We look forward to sharing with you throughout the preparations leading up to the day of the blessed event.

Weddings are an important ministry of Bethel Presbyterian Church. In the Presbyterian tradition of conducting any and all church affairs “decently and in good order” we have established time-tested policies and procedures to ensure that you will have a joyous and smoothly-running marriage ceremony at Bethel, free from unwanted surprises.

### **The Meaning of Christian Marriage**

In accordance with The Book of Order, (W-4-900), Presbyterian Church (USA), marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the wellbeing of the entire human family. Should a couple request to be married here at Bethel within the confines of our property or the reaffirmation of a civil union previously conducted outside of our church, (the couple) must be a natural born man and a natural born woman. No other unions of the same sex couples or transgender couples shall be permitted. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.

It is at the discretion of the minister and the Session to authorize the use of church property for any marriage service.

### **The Purpose of a Christian Wedding**

In a service of a Christian marriage, a lifelong commitment is made between two individuals to each other in the presence of God, publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith. The service begins with scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The couple shall declare their intention to enter into a Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. Prayers shall be offered for the couple and in the name of the Triune God, the minister shall declare that they are then joined in marriage.

### **Who Can Be Married at Bethel**

To be married at Bethel Presbyterian Church, at least one of those being united in Holy Matrimony in a service at Bethel shall be a member of Bethel church. An exception to this policy may be made for non-member couples that are sponsored by a member of Bethel Church at the discretion of the minister and Session.

### **Officiating Minister and Pre-marital Counseling**

Customarily, the minister of Bethel will officiate at wedding services held at Bethel. However, special permission may be given, and an invitation extended to a guest officiant. For approval, Bethel's minister (through the church office) must be provided the proposed guest officiant's name, title, complete physical address, email address and cell phone number. After consultation between the guest officiant and the minister and approval by Bethel Session, Bethel will send an invitation to the guest officiant.

Additionally, you will be required to participate in premarital counseling with the minister or with a certified pastoral counselor or therapist. Counseling is particularly important as you plan your ceremony and your future. It typically includes the theological and biblical understanding of marriage, communication skills, conflict resolution and other issues you identify. In this way, the church can help you prepare not only for your wedding day, but for life together in marriage and the fulfillment of your marriage commitments to one another.

### **Scheduling a Wedding at Bethel**

To schedule your wedding in Bethel church sanctuary, you will need to complete and return a contract that is available through the church office (540-886-6041 or bethelpc@gmail.com). Weddings may not be scheduled during Holy week, on Christmas Eve or holiday weekends. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of Bethel's minister. Dates are reserved through the church office on the church calendar. Your date will not be confirmed until all forms have been submitted, a security deposit has been paid and written acknowledgement and agreement to these policies and procedures has been received at the church office.

Once your request has been submitted it will be given to the Session of Bethel Presbyterian Church for approval. The Session meets once each month and is charged with approving the use of the church property for all weddings.

### **Wedding Planner**

If an outside wedding planner or consultant is to be used, the planner's name, mailing address, email address and cell phone number must be supplied to the church office before the date can be confirmed.

### **Wedding Fees**

Wedding fees are due in the church office a month before the scheduled wedding date. In the event of financial hardship, the fees may be altered at the discretion of the Session.

### **Building Access**

You will have use of designated areas within the church up to two hours prior to the start of the ceremony and one hour after the wedding ends. Should more time be required, please consult with the church office to determine whether an extension may be possible. Use of two rooms will be available for dressing. The seating capacity for the Sanctuary is approximately 250 people.

### **Music**

Keep in mind your wedding is a service of worship. The music selected for the wedding should embody the same high standards applied to the music chosen for Sunday morning worship. In keeping with the purpose of the occasion, yet reflecting its festive nature, the wedding music should serve to strengthen and deepen the meaning of the marriage ceremony. The music you select for the ceremony must be approved by the minister, in consultation with Bethel's music director.

Arrangements for securing an organist, pianist or other musicians for the ceremony are your responsibility. Bethel's organist is available to play for weddings in the sanctuary, but guest organists are welcomed with prior approval. If an organist other than Bethel's is used, they must contact Bethel's music director to arrange a practice schedule to acquaint themselves with Bethel's organ. All musicians should attend the wedding rehearsal.

For music during the reception, refer to the "Fellowship Hall" section below.

### **Flowers and Decorations in the Sanctuary**

With careful attention, the sanctuary has been made a place of worship, with flowers considered part of our offering to God. Flowers or decorations may not be placed on the pulpit, the Communion Table, Baptismal Font or organ console and piano. Only silk petals may be scattered during the processional and must be removed immediately following the ceremony. Any decorations Bethel Church has in place in the Sanctuary for a liturgical season or special day may be changed or removed only at the discretion of the minister.

No nails, tacks, pins, tape, screws, or other attachment may be used in any part of the building, on walls, fixtures, or pews. The church furniture may not be removed from the worship space in the Sanctuary. All arrangements, candles, and other decorations placed there for the wedding must be removed immediately following the ceremony. Only consumable birdseed can be thrown in the "rice throwing" ceremony outside the church building. Rice and confetti are not allowed. Please advise your guests.

### **Photography and Videotaping**

A wedding ceremony is a Holy service before God; therefore, no flash photography is allowed once the bride and escort reach the Minister until the couple has been introduced and the exit music begins. All devices must be silenced during the service.

Photographers must make any repositioning movement immediately and quietly once the bride has reached the Minister so as not to detract from the service. Photographers are encouraged to attend the wedding rehearsal and coordinate with the pastor and the wedding planner at that time. The photographer will be given a copy of this policy. The pastor retains approval authority in all decisions.

The following must be included in the printed wedding bulletin;

*Please respect the sanctity of the service by refraining from taking flash photographs once the bride has reached the altar until the couple leaves the altar. Please ensure that all cellular phones and pagers have been silenced before the service begins.*

### **Rehearsal**

A rehearsal may be held on the evening before the ceremony. Those present will include the pastor, wedding planner, sound technician, bridal party, ushers, musicians, and the person(s) who will be escorting and/or giving the bride away. It is suggested that the photographer be present.

The pastor must be given the wedding license at the rehearsal.

### **Sound Technician**

The sanctuary sound system may only be operated by Bethel's trained sound technician. Other sound technicians may be considered for approval by Bethel's music director and/or sound technician, if necessary. This person will be compensated by the wedding party.

### **Bethel Fellowship Hall**

The Bethel Fellowship Hall may be used for your reception. Reservations for the Fellowship Hall must be made with the church office when your wedding date is reserved. Bethel Church office will consult with you about the days/times that are available for decorating the Fellowship Hall and will also assist you with an orientation tour of the kitchen facilities.

Non-religious or popular music may be used at the reception, though do keep into consideration the appropriateness of the lyrics for the space and occasion. All food and drink must be consumed in the Fellowship Hall, kitchen or outdoors. No alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, or vaping products may be used on church property. The kitchen and reception area must be cleaned and cleared of unused food, drink and decorations immediately following the reception. All trash must be bagged and tied securely and placed in trash cans behind the kitchen before leaving. Light custodial assistance will be provided by the church according to the fee schedule.

### Security

Bethel will not be responsible for the security of automobiles or any other personal property of the wedding party or guests. This applies to the entire grounds as well as the building.

### Chapel and Pavilion

The Chapel and Pavilion are in the woods to the east of the church. They are accessible by road with limited parking at the site. The Chapel has bench seating and the Pavilion has picnic tables. The fire pit requires a special permit for use.

### Fees

#### Bethel member

Deposit - \$100.00\*  
Fellowship Hall - 0  
Sanctuary - 0  
Pastor - Honorarium  
Custodian - \$100.00  
\*\*Organist - Negotiable  
\*\*Sound Tech - \$150.00  
Chapel in the Woods - 0

- \* Deposit returned in full/part depending on damages or excessive clean up.
- \* \* Attends both rehearsal and wedding ceremony.

#### Non- member

Deposit - \$250.00 \*  
Fellowship Hall - \$200.00  
Sanctuary - \$200.00

Pastor - Negotiable  
Custodian - \$100.00  
\*\*Organist - Negotiable  
\*\*Sound Tech - \$150.00  
Chapel in the Woods - \$150.00

- \* Deposit returned in full/part depending on damages or excessive clean up.
- \* \*Attends both rehearsal and wedding ceremony.