

Policies Concerning the Marriage Ceremony  
for Members of First Baptist Church Abilene, Texas

Marriage in the church is a Christian ceremony. Therefore, it is not simply a legal process whereby a man and a woman are officially declared married, nor is it simply a secular event in the life of the community. From the Christian perspective, a man and a woman commit themselves together in the presence and love of God. They make a covenant together and pledge their lives together in holy commitment to each other and to Christ. It is our hope that each marriage ceremony will be a joyful worship experience.

**First Steps in Scheduling a Wedding**

**A. Calendar**

1. All dates are subject to approval by the church staff.
2. If the bride, the groom, or a parent of either has been an active member of First Baptist for at least six (6) months, the wedding reservation may be submitted for approval at any time.
3. Upon approval and then receipt of the reservation/damage deposit of \$150, the rehearsal, the wedding, and the reception will be placed on the master calendar. You will need to designate the facilities in which the wedding and the reception are to be held.
4. Once the wedding is placed on the church calendar, the First Baptist wedding coordinator will work with the bride and groom to fill out all of the necessary forms and to schedule appointments, the custodial staff, and the music ministry.
5. Because First Baptist traditionally presents a musical production in December that sometimes includes large sets and extended platforms, any weddings which are scheduled in the sanctuary that month must be approved by the pastor for worship and music. (The sets and/or platforms may not be moved.)
6. Please call the church secretary promptly if you wish to make any changes in the information that has been recorded on the master calendar.

**B. Double Scheduling**

1. There may be only one (1) wedding per facility (the chapel or the sanctuary) per day.
2. There must be at least two (2) hours between weddings which are scheduled in different facilities on the same day.
3. The wedding which is scheduled on the calendar first shall have priority as to hour, ceremony facility, and reception facility.
4. There may be only one (1) reception in each facility (University Place, Welcome Center, the 3<sup>rd</sup>-floor gathering room, and the dining room) per day.

**C. Minister**

1. Talk with the minister whom you wish to perform the ceremony in order to get his acceptance and to schedule the appropriate dates and times on his calendar.
2. A minister who is not on the First Baptist staff must be approved by the pastor or, in the absence of the pastor, by the pastor for administration.

**D. Other Arrangements**

Arrangements with the caterer, the florist, the musicians, the photographer, and others are to be made by the wedding party, not by the church.

**E. Cancellation Policy**

1. If the wedding is canceled, the bride must contact the First Baptist wedding coordinator as soon as possible.
2. If the wedding is canceled 45 or more days prior to the scheduled day, the entire reservation/damage deposit will be returned.
3. If the wedding is canceled fewer than 45 days prior to the scheduled day, one-half (1/2) of the reservation/damage deposit will be returned. The rest of the payment will be retained by First Baptist.

**Concerns of the Church Relating to Weddings**

**A. Music**

1. Secular music is not to be used in a Christian ceremony. However, it may be used for the prelude and/or the postlude. There is, however, traditional secular music that has become part of most wedding services.

2. If you chose to use the organ, it is required that the wedding party uses an organist from the approved list. The wedding party shall contact the organist and work with him concerning the music that is to be used.
3. Bands may not perform at weddings or receptions in any First Baptist facility

**B. Sound**

An approved sound technician from First Baptist Church must be used.

**C. Equipment**

1. The church owns no equipment for wedding events. These items may be obtained from a florist, or they may be rented elsewhere.
2. The church custodians will clear the platform area in front of the choir rail of the furniture.
3. The choir rail cannot be removed. Removal of the choir chairs involves an additional fee.
4. The florists are asked to remove all of their equipment from the church within one (1) hour after the wedding and reception so that the facilities may be set up for the next scheduled events.

**D. Decorations**

No nails, tacks, staples, pins, tape, wire, or anything that will mar the woodwork may be used.

**E. Furniture/Carpet**

No tape, chalk, or markings of any kind may be used on the furniture, the carpet, the wooden railings, or the architectural woodwork.

**F. Candles/Flowers**

1. If candles are to be used, they must be in contained in glass or metal and must have plastic sheeting under the candles. Candelabras must also have plastic sheeting under them. The one exception shall be the unity candle.
2. Flowers and candles may not be placed on pianos, organs, wooden railings, or architectural woodwork. Candelabras may not be placed next to or attached to the pews.
3. If any damage is done by candles or floral decorations, the florist and/or the family are responsible for repair or replacement of the damaged items.
4. Greenery and decorative items may not be moved from the rooms in which they are used.

**G. Advent Decorations**

Advent decorations in the sanctuary will be in place from the Sunday following Thanksgiving through Epiphany, and they may not be removed.

**H. Photography/Videography**

1. No flash photographs may be taken either by professional or amateur photographers during the ceremony because this interrupts the sanctity of the celebration. Time exposures are acceptable at any time. The photographer is asked to be discreet and position themselves so no disruption is caused. Photographs may be taken prior to and immediately following the ceremony. Photographers are NOT allowed behind in the choir loft or on the main platform area at any time during the ceremony.
2. The ceremony may be videotaped if NO disruption is caused and if the filming is done discreetly by a camera set on a tripod.

**I. Birdseed/Flower Petals**

1. Silk flower petals may be dropped in the aisle during the wedding, however birdseed, fresh flower petals, and other such items may not be thrown inside any First Baptist facility.
2. Birdseed, fresh flower petals, and bubbles may be used, but must be distributed and thrown only outside the buildings.
3. Rice may not be used.

**J. Rehearsal Dinners**

Rehearsal dinners may be held at the church if an appropriate facility is available. (Refer to the building use policies.)

**K. Time Allotments**

1. The building will be available to the wedding party for two (2) hours for the rehearsal.
2. On the day of the wedding, the building will be available as early as six (6) hours before the wedding.
3. All floral arrangements and other decorations must be removed from the wedding facility within one (1) hours following the ceremony.
4. All decorations and food must be removed from the reception facility within one (1) hour following the reception or before 11:00 p.m., whichever comes sooner.
5. All personal items must be cleared out of the dressing areas before departing for the reception.

**Conferences****A. Pastoral Conference**

A conference should be scheduled with the minister who is to perform the ceremony.

**B. Counseling**

1. Counseling is required of all couples that have a wedding at First Baptist. This can be done through the Engaged Couples program through the Ministry of Counseling and Enrichment. It can also be done through any of the First Baptist pastors.
2. Counseling can also be done through any licensed counselor or pastor. If this option is chosen, the pastor or counselor needs to contact the wedding coordinator (673-5031) - (suzanne.shaw@fbcabilene.org) to inform them of the meetings. A letter or email is due one (1) month before the wedding, stating that the couple has completed their counseling.

**Rehearsal**

- A. The wedding rehearsal will be directed by the First Baptist wedding coordinator.
- B. The rehearsal requires approximately one (1) hour, and it is important that it begin promptly.

**Reservation/Damage Deposit**

- A. A deposit of \$150 shall be paid by check at the time the reservation is made. It will be deposited in the church bank account. This serves two purposes. It reserves the facility, and it serves as a deposit in case breakage or damage occurs.
- B. The deposit shall be refunded within 21 days after the wedding if there is no breakage or harm to the facilities which are used and if the church kitchen is left as it was found.

**Fees**

- A. All wedding fees must be paid in full three (3) weeks prior to the wedding. Individual checks will be issued by the church to those parties who are included in the fee structure.
- B. See the attached fee schedule for a list of the fees that are involved in having a wedding.
- C. **Musicians**  
The wedding party is responsible for paying the organist and other musicians directly. The musicians set their own fees, and this must be paid directly to them no later than the evening of the wedding rehearsal.
- D. **Minister's Honorarium**  
The honorarium may be given to the minister before the wedding rehearsal.

**Facility Statistics**

- A. **Chapel**  
The chapel seats 175 people and has a piano, an organ, and a center aisle.
- B. **Sanctuary**  
The sanctuary (including the balcony) seats approximately 1,650 people and has a piano, an organ, and a center aisle.
- C. **University Place**  
University Place seats 200 people and has a piano.
- D. **Dining Room**  
The dining room seats 300 people at round tables and 400 people at long tables. There is a piano in the room. The dining room can be divided by a folding wall into two (2) sections (about one-third [1/3] and two-thirds [2/3]).

**Other Important Matters**

**A. Sunday and Holiday Weddings**

- 1. There shall be no weddings in the sanctuary on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, and New Year’s Day or during Holy Week.
- 2. There shall be no weddings in the chapel on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
- 3. There shall be no weddings in any First Baptist facility on Wednesdays and Sundays.

**B. Reception at First Baptist**

- 1. There are two ways in which the reception may be handled.
  - a. The event may be catered. The caterer will then use his own equipment and personnel for preparing, serving, and cleaning.
  - b. A family member or a friend may be responsible for the event.
- 2. Tables will be set up by the custodians after prior arrangement with the wedding coordinator.
- 3. The kitchen must be left as it was found, with the dishes washed and dried.
- 4. Only First Baptist employees and those designated by the church may operate the dishwasher.

**C. Inappropriate Activities**

Dancing, alcoholic beverages, and smoking are not allowed in any First Baptist facility.

**D. Disclaimer**

- 1. First Baptist Church is not responsible for the safety of guests who attend weddings and receptions. The conduct and behavior of the guests is the sole responsibility of the wedding party. Removal of guests due to disorderly conduct remains the right of First Baptist Church.
- 2. Effort will be made to protect personal items such as wedding dresses, purses, silver, glassware, and other items that are brought to the church for the wedding or rehearsal, but the church cannot be held responsible for such items if they are lost, stolen, or damaged.

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If you have any questions concerning these policies or any other matters that may have been omitted from this statement, please call the church secretary/wedding coordinator (673-5031).

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**Important Contacts to Make**

Church secretary/wedding coordinator (673-5031) - (suzanne.shaw@fbcabilene.org): to reserve church facilities for rehearsals, rehearsal dinners, weddings, and/or receptions.

Counseling and Enrichment ministry secretary (672-9999), a First Baptist Church pastor (673-5031) or an approved licensed counselor or pastor: to schedule engaged couples’ premarital counseling (as soon as the wedding is placed on the church calendar)

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We pray God's richest blessings upon both of you and your families during this planning period prior to your wedding celebration.

<b>First Baptist Member</b>			
<b>Reservation and Damage Deposit</b>	<b>\$150</b>	<b>Reservation and Damage Deposit</b>	<b>\$150</b>
<small>This is refundable if there is no damage</small>		<small>This is refundable if there is no damage</small>	
<b>CHAPEL WEDDING</b>		<b>SANCTUARY WEDDING</b>	
Facility Usage	N/C	Facility Usage	N/C
Custodial Fee	\$100	Custodial Fee	\$100
		Removal of Choir Chairs	\$ 50
Sound Technician	\$ 75	Sound Technician	\$100
Wedding Coordinator	\$150	Wedding Coordinator	\$175
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$325</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$425</b>
<b>RECEPTION</b>		<b>RECEPTION</b>	
Facility Usage	N/C	Facility Usage	N/C
Custodial Fee	\$ 75	Custodial Fee	\$ 75
Wedding Coordinator:	\$ 50	Wedding Coordinator	\$ 50
Dishwashing - (per 100 dish sets) (after 3 hours—\$20 per hour)	\$ 50	Dishwashing - (per 100 dish sets) (after 3 hours—\$20 per hour)	\$ 50
<b>REHEARSAL DINNER (Catered only)</b>		<b>REHEARSAL DINNER (Catered only)</b>	
Facility Usage	N/C	Facility Usage	N/C
Custodial Fee	\$ 50	Custodial Fee	\$ 50