

*(Revised May 2, 2017 @ Stated Session Meeting)*

WEDDING POLICY  
STUART PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (SPC)  
PO BOX 944  
309 STAPLES AVE.  
STUART, VA 24171  
(276) 694-4628

First off, CONGRATULATIONS and thank you for your interest in having your wedding service with us at Stuart Presbyterian Church. At Stuart Presbyterian we believe your wedding is one of the most important spiritual moments in your life. With that in mind, our goal is to help you have a sacred and memorable day in which you celebrate the mystery of a man and a woman becoming one flesh before God.

We must always remember that a Wedding is more than "a ceremony." it is a Sacred Service in which a covenant is made before God in the presence of witnesses. God designed marriage for the mutual benefit of husband and wife, for the development of their moral and spiritual character and to provide a safe place to raise children in the love and discipline of the Lord.

God is the One who created marriage and the One we pray will sustain your marriage "as long as you both shall live."

This is our prayer for you.

The Elders  
Stuart Presbyterian Church

**\*\* To request a wedding date be reserved, please carefully read the attached policy, and fill out the Wedding Policy Receipt and Agreement Form as well as the Building Request Form and return those to the Church Office.**

**\*\* PLEASE NOTE THAT SUBMITTING THESE FORMS DOES NOT GUARANTEE A RESERVED DATE. A date is only reserved once the Church Session confirms your date has been approved.**

## THEOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

### **A. Holy Bible**

"<sup>24</sup> .... a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

"<sup>6</sup>... from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'

<sup>7</sup>'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:6-9).

(Additional Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-33; Matt. 5:31-32)

### **B. Westminster Confession of Faith**

Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, designed of God to last so long as they both shall live. Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character, for the propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

(Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 24, Articles 1 & 2).

### **C. Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Book of Worship, Chapter 5**

**5-1 Marriage Ordained by God:** While marriage is not a sacrament of the Church, it is ordained of God and intended to last as long as the couple shall live. God has designed marriage to be between a man and a woman for the mutual help of husband and wife and for the development of their moral and spiritual character, and for the propagation of children who are to be reared in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

**5-2 Who Should Marry:** A man and a woman who are able to give their consent may marry unless their blood relationship is forbidden by Scripture. The husband and wife should share a common Christian faith and a common intention to build a Christian home. Christians would be wise to seek as a husband or a wife those who share a common faith and heritage.

- 5-3 The Church's Role in Marriage: Marriage ordinarily should be performed in the place of common worship by an ordained Minister of the Church, and with the family of faith present. In approving marriage, the Church affirms the divine institution of marriage and invokes God's blessings upon those who enter the relationship according to God's Word. As the Church hears the vows a couple make to one another, it should assure the couple of God's grace within their new relationship.**
- 5-4 The Remarriage of Divorced Persons: It is the divine intention that persons entering the marriage covenant become inseparably united, thus allowing for no dissolution save that caused by death of either husband or wife. However, the weaknesses of one or both partners may lead to gross and persistent denial of the marriage vows, yet only in cases of extreme, unrepentant, and irremediable unfaithfulness (physical or spiritual) should separation or divorce be considered. The remarriage of divorced persons may be sanctioned by the church, in keeping with the redemptive Gospel of Jesus Christ, when sufficient penitence for sin and failure is evident, and a firm posture of an endeavor after Christian marriage is manifested. Divorced persons should give prayerful thought to discover if God's vocation for them is to remain unmarried, since one failure in this realm raises serious questions as to the rightness and wisdom of undertaking another union. If the Minister has any questions about the readiness of divorced persons to remarry according to these principles, the Church Session should be consulted and its concurrence sought.**
- 5-5 The Minister's Role in Marriage: It is the duty of the Minister to consult with the couple contemplating marriage. They should be given godly advice concerning the establishment of a Christian home, as well as instruction in the meaning of marriage in God's sight, and the biblical teachings of the roles, duties, and relationships within the home. The Minister should give such other counsel which seems needful, wise, and helpful that the couple may be well prepared for their new estate in marriage. Should the Minister be convinced that genuine faith is absent, that full responsibility for one another is missing, and that the**

**blessings of God are not likely to rest upon such a relationship, the marriage ceremony should not be performed. It is the duty of the Minister to meet all civil requirements in performing and properly registering the marriage. In addition, the Minister shall report the marriage to the Church Session which shall record it in its permanent records. It is wise for a Minister to keep a personal record of marriages which includes the names, the dates, the place, and the civil body issuing the authority to marry.**

**5-6 The Service of Christian Marriage: The marriage ceremony is an act of worship. For that reason, it is under the direction of the Minister only and shall always be characterized by reverence throughout. Music should be appropriate to the occasion and the Church Session or the Minister may determine what music is acceptable. Appropriate hymns sung by all are always proper. The decorations and all appointments should not be ostentatious or so call attention to themselves as to distract the worshipers from their duty to God on such a solemn occasion. The service itself should be conducted with dignity and reverence, beginning with prayers for the new home being established and for the members of the new family. Vows shall be exchanged, appropriate Scriptures read, and a charge may be given which sets forth both the duties and privileges of marriage. The Minister shall conclude the ceremony by publicly declaring that the couple is now husband and wife and the benediction shall be pronounced.**

**5-7 The Blessing of a Civil Marriage: Persons who have been married by a civil authority may desire to have that marriage blessed by a service in the Church, performed by a Minister of the Gospel. It is proper to perform such services, provided all the conditions for a couple preparing for marriage are observed. A marriage should never be sanctioned that does not meet the criteria laid down herein.**

## **COUNSELING**

Since marriage is a binding and lasting covenant with each other and God, the establishing of pre-marital counseling is vital. It is deemed so important that the Book of Worship of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) binds the pastor to this obligation (Book of Worship, 5-5)

The discussion during these sessions will include though not be limited to the following areas: nature of the couples Christian commitment, legal requirements of the state, privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage, nature and form of the marriage service, vows and commitments and their relationship to lives of discipleship, resources of the faith and Christian community to assist in fulfilling marriage commitments children, and finances (Book of Worship, 5-5).

At least three counseling sessions are required; and additional sessions may be added at the minister's discretion. During these sessions, you will be provided with information on the proper procedures for obtaining a Virginia marriage license. Once obtained, **the marriage license must be presented to the minister at the wedding rehearsal**.

Should the minister be convinced that genuine faith is absent, that full responsibility for one another is missing, and that the blessings of God are not likely to rest upon such a relationship, the marriage ceremony will not be performed. (Book of Worship, 5-5)

## **RESERVATIONS**

Ordinarily, the pastor and the church shall be contacted six months prior to the wedding ceremony. This is important to clear dates on the church calendar, and to provide time for counseling.

Couples should avoid holidays when scheduling their wedding. No weddings will be scheduled on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday).

Whether it is a holiday season or not, church activities going on at the time of the wedding must be taken into consideration when choosing the wedding date.

Do **NOT** send out invitations or make other wedding commitments until you have cleared the date with Stuart Presbyterian Church (hitherto referred to as SPC)!

### **WEDDING REHEARSAL**

A wedding rehearsal is required. Ordinarily it is held the evening before the wedding. The time shall be arranged with the SPC minister. All members of the wedding party shall arrive on time for the rehearsal. SPC staff members often have other commitments and plans for the evening, so it is crucial that the rehearsal begins on time and proceeds efficiently. If everyone cooperates, the rehearsal typically takes one hour.

The members of the wedding party and their guests should remember at all times that they are in a holy place dedicated to the worship of God.

### **WEDDING DIRECTOR**

A formal wedding director is not required. However, it is very helpful to have someone who will help the wedding party with the procession and be available to work with the pastor and musicians.

If a wedding director is used, it MUST be understood that the minister is in charge of all aspects of the wedding service.

### **THE WEDDING SERVICE**

The couple has many options and freedoms in planning the wedding service. However, "The marriage service is an act of worship. For that reason, it is under the direction of the Minister only and shall always be characterized by reverence throughout" (Book of Worship, 5-6).

The service itself should be conducted with dignity and reverence, beginning with prayers for the new home being established and for the members of the new family.

Vows shall be exchanged, appropriate Scriptures read, and a charge may be given which sets forth both the duties and privileges of marriage.

The Minister shall conclude the ceremony by publicly declaring that the couple is now husband and wife and the benediction shall be pronounced (Book of Worship, 5-6).

Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the Session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all believers present (Book of Worship, 3-3 G. & I.)

### **MUSIC (Book of Worship, 5-6)**

Since the Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God, special care should be taken to assure that music accompanying the ceremony be suitable and reverent. Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the Church . The music performed by the pianist, organist and any other vocal or instrumental soloists should not only be meaningful to you, but also be appropriate for a worship service.

Music most appropriate for a wedding service is sacred music, not secular or popular music. However, some secular numbers are part of the marriage tradition (such as "Trumpet Voluntare") and are appropriate. When choosing music, please remember that all music must be approved by the SPC session, music director, and minister. In other words, do not assume that any music is appropriate until it has been approved by Stuart Presbyterian Church! If the church deems music inappropriate for the wedding service, you might consider playing it at the reception. However, if the reception is in the church fellowship hall, it is considered a continuation of a Christian worship service. Therefore, music must be appropriate for this sacred setting and occasion.

It is the responsibility of the wedding party to contact the church organist/pianist for reservations and negotiation of fees as far in advance as possible (at least 12 weeks prior to the wedding). If the wedding party desires an organist/pianist other than the church's organist/pianist, then please inform the SPC music director and minister.

If you are using a vocal soloist or other musicians, it is very important that they practice with the organist/pianist beforehand.

## THE USE OF CHURCH FACILITES

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers consciousness of God's presence, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of the Christian life. As such, all decorations and use of church facilities must be approved by the SPC session and minister.

Couples using the church facilities shall observe the following rules:

1. The minister of the church is in charge of the rehearsal as well as the wedding ceremony and shall be consulted before any furnishings are moved. *Further, the wedding party or person(s) appointed by the wedding party shall return all furnishings to their proper place.*
2. If the couple desires the participation of a guest pastor, it is the responsibility of the couple to inform the minister of SPC at least twelve weeks prior to the service, so that an invitation can be extended by the SPC session and minister.

The guest pastor must communicate with the SPC pastor and abide fully with this policy.

The guest pastor must be properly ordained in a recognized Christian Church and licensed to perform weddings in the commonwealth of Virginia.

The bride and groom are responsible to communicate this agreement with the guest pastor.

3. Extreme caution must be used when purchasing candles for a candelabra. Candles shall only be used in the chancel area and must be the dripless type. (By definition the chancel area is the raised platform. Therefore, **No candles shall be placed in the windows, aisles, etc.**) "Drop Cloths" shall be used beneath all candelabras (regardless of the use of dripless candles).

The Church does not provide candelabras and kneeling benches, etc. These must be provided by the wedding party.

4. Family pew markers may be used, but shall not be fastened to the pew by adhesive tape, staples, tacks, or clamps. They must be fastened by elastic or ribbon to avoid damaging the pews.

5. Decorations may not be fastened to the woodwork or wall surfaces. The church's seasonal decorations shall not be moved.

6. Rules regarding Photos and Videos

Because the wedding ceremony takes place within the context of worship, photography must not detract from the beauty and solemnity of the service. Therefore, flash photography is not allowed during the ceremony.

Professional photos may be taken during the wedding service provided no flash is used. All cameras and video cameras shall remain stationary in a location approved by the SPC minister at or before the rehearsal.

During the service, the professional photographer may only photograph from the rear of the Sanctuary with existing light. No photographs can be taken during the prayers. The photographer must remain behind the body of the congregation at all times.

In other words, disruptions of the service in any way must be avoided. Please remember that any portion of the ceremony can be "re-staged" after the service. However, out of consideration for your guests, we recommend that as many photos as possible be taken prior to the service.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the wedding party, to inform wedding guests of these rules (A note in the wedding bulletin is helpful in this regard).

7. Wedding bulletins are the responsibility of the wedding party.

8. The classrooms and bathrooms may be used as dressing rooms. Please be careful to not leave valuables in these rooms. The church cannot be liable for items brought to the church if lost, stolen, or damaged.

All rooms must be left as found. The wedding party is responsible for cleaning these rooms afterwards (disposing of trash, placing furniture back in order, etc.).

9. The wedding reception may be held at the church provided prior permission has been obtained from the pastor and session. Decorations and clean-up (including outside grounds) are the responsibility of the wedding party. The church will not be responsible for any decorations left after the wedding and reception are concluded.
10. Rice or confetti shall not be used. We suggest using bird seed or bubbles. Both should be used outside only.
11. The use of any tobacco product is strictly prohibited in any of the buildings.
12. Food and drink shall not be taken into the sanctuary
13. The use of **alcoholic beverages or chemical substances is STRICTLY PROHIBITED in the church buildings or anywhere on the church grounds.**
14. It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to notify all guests and members of the wedding party of these rules.
15. Any variations from these rules must be approved by the minister and session.

## WEDDING EXPENSES

The honorarium for the minister is to be set by the wedding party.

The organist/pianist and any other vocal or instrumental fees shall be set by those persons. However, the church recommends that you consider an honorarium when requesting the services of our organist/pianist.

The fees for the use of facilities are as follows:

Member ..... Sanctuary Use – No charge  
Fellowship Hall Use - No Charge  
Chapel Use - No Charge

Sanctuary Cleaning - \$75  
Fellowship Hall Cleaning - \$100  
Chapel Cleaning - \$40

Non-member ..... Sanctuary Use - \$300  
Fellowship Hall Use - \$200  
Chapel Use - \$200

Sanctuary Cleaning - \$75  
Fellowship Hall Cleaning - \$100  
Chapel Cleaning - \$40

All fees shall be paid when scheduling wedding and reserving facilities six months in advance. Any deviation from this reservation and fee policy must be approved by the Church Session.

Any damages resulting from the wedding, rehearsal, or reception will be the responsibility of the wedding party.

**IN CONCLUSION:**

*Our intention in this policy is to be very clear about the fact that at Stuart Presbyterian Church, a wedding is first and foremost a service of Christian worship, to which guests are invited. We are pleased to extend our hospitality to your wedding party, and simply ask that you follow this policy. If some provision of this policy is unacceptable to you, please advise the minister. Your concern will then be reviewed by the Session. Any decision the Session makes will be final.*

**WEDDING POLICY RECEIPT AND AGREEMENT**

We, the undersigned, being the bride and groom whose wedding is to be held at Stuart Presbyterian Church of Stuart, VA, do hereby state and affirm that we have received a copy of the wedding policy of the church, and that we have read and understood it in detail. We solemnly pledge that we will abide by it in full and will assure that all members of our wedding party, families, guests, vendors and representatives will comply with the policy in all of its particulars. We pledge to see that our photographer(s) in particular understand and will follow the policy regarding photography.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bride

\_\_\_\_\_  
Groom

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please Return to: Stuart Presbyterian Church  
PO Box 944  
Stuart, VA 24171

**Building Use Request for Wedding**

Couple's Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Requested Date & Start Time of Ceremony: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Number in Attendance: \_\_\_\_\_

**Check All that Apply:**

\_\_\_\_\_ We wish to use the SPC Sanctuary for the wedding service.

\_\_\_\_\_ We wish to use the SPC Chapel for the wedding service.

\_\_\_\_\_ We wish to use the Reception Hall for a reception following the service.

\_\_\_\_\_ We wish to use the small Reception Hall for a reception following the service.

\_\_\_\_\_ We request that the SPC Pastor officiate at our wedding service.

\_\_\_\_\_ We request that a non-SPC Pastor officiate at our wedding service.

If this is your request, please provide the following:

Pastor's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign below indicating your agreement with this request:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Bride's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Groom's Signature)

Please Return to: Stuart Presbyterian Church  
PO Box 944  
Stuart, VA 24171