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WEDDINGS AT RIVERSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Policy Statement

Riverside Presbyterian Church
116 Barrypoint Road
Riverside, Illinois 60546

Riverside Presbyterian Church Staff

Office: (708) 447-1520 - rpcoffice@sbcglobal.net

Rev. Dr. Scott H. Jansen, Pastor (708) 447-3741 - scott.jansen@comcast.net

Dr. Sally Sloane, Minister of Music (708) 383-1180 - musikhse@comcast.net

Donna Ulrich, Wedding Coordinator (708) 447-4404 - DonnaUlrich@aol.com

The Pastor of Riverside Presbyterian Church welcomes the opportunity to assist couples who desire a Christian marriage and who intend to establish a Christian home, to prepare for and to enter into this sacred relationship. In fulfilling their pastoral ministry, pastors will be guided by the standards for Christian marriage set forth in the Directory for Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Principles from the Directory which constitute the norm for weddings at Riverside Presbyterian Church are set forth in this policy.

I: A THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of humanity. It is a civil contract between a woman and a man. For Christians, it is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship. In a service of Christian marriage, a lifelong commitment is made by a woman and a man to each other, and is publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the community of faith.

In preparation for the marriage service, the Pastor asked to lead the service shall, prior to the service discuss with the man and the woman:

- the nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one of them is a professing Christian,
- the legal requirements of the state,
- the privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage,
- the nature and form of the marriage service,
- the vows and commitments they will be asked to make,
- the relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship,
- the resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

This discussion is equally as important in the case of a first marriage, a marriage after the death of a spouse, and a marriage following divorce. If the Pastor is convinced, after discussion with the couple, that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the minister shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony.

Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of the Pastor and the supervision of the Session. The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service which focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life. 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 present.

An order of service that may be used is from the Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* (1993). It begins with scriptural sentences and a brief statement of purpose. The man and the woman shall declare their intention to enter into Christian marriage and shall exchange vows of love and faithfulness. The service includes appropriate passages of Scripture, which may be interpreted in various forms of proclamation. Prayers shall be offered for the couple, for the communities which support them in this new dimension of discipleship, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness. In the name of the triune God, the minister shall declare publicly that the woman and the man are now joined in marriage. A charge may be given. Other actions common to the community and its cultures may appropriately be observed when these actions do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. The service concludes with a benediction.

Music suitable for the marriage service directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. Please refer to the list of suggested music that is attached to this policy. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer. Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshipers' consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life.

A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the opening statement, the declaration of intention, the exchange of the vows by the husband and wife, and the public declaration by the minister reflect the fact that the woman and man are already married to one another according to the laws of the state.

II: INFORMATION FOR PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

In planning for your wedding, it is advisable to have an initial conference with the Pastor as soon as possible. The date of the wedding should be cleared through the Pastor and church office. Dates and times are to be set according to the schedule of the officiating pastor and the availability of church facilities. Weddings will not be scheduled on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Palm Sunday weekend, Holy Week, Easter weekend, or any federal holiday.

The wedding shall be under the sole direction of the officiating pastor. All weddings are to be performed by Riverside Presbyterian Church clergy. If you desire to ask other clergy to assist in the service, you should make your desire known to the officiating pastor so that an invitation may be extended to the guest clergy.

At least one counseling session before the wedding must be scheduled with the officiating pastor. Please feel free to call upon that pastor for advice and counsel at any time.

If the church is already decorated for a scheduled season or event, such as Advent/Christmas, it is preferable to use the existing seasonal decorations in your own decoration theme. White is the liturgical color that is appropriate for services of marriage. The cloth parament on the pulpit and the tablecloth on the Communion table will therefore be white.

As an important liturgical symbol of the presence of Christ in our midst, the Communion table may not be moved from its central position in the sanctuary. If the couple wishes, the unity candle may be placed on it. Except for flower arrangements surrounding the unity candle, flowers may not be placed on the Communion table for weddings. Normally for a wedding the table will be moved to a position between the wedding party and the rest of the congregation, so that the entire congregation can be gathered around Christ's table.

The sanctuary comfortably seats 250 persons.

Riverside Presbyterian Church does not provide aisle runners. When a bride and groom wish to have an aisle runner or runners, they should arrange for a florist to provide and install such. The florist may make an appointment with the Wedding Coordinator to do this.

From a desire to be good stewards of the environment, we ask that only birdseed or rose petals be thrown as the bride and groom are leaving the church. Specifically, neither rice, confetti, nor balloons may be used for this purpose.

The use of any alcoholic beverage is prohibited in the church building and in all adjacent parking areas and outside grounds.

We appreciate your cooperation in maintaining the church building as a smoke-free environment.

III: MUSIC

The bride and groom should make an appointment to consult with the Minister of Music well in advance of the wedding date to decide upon the music for the ceremony and the use of musicians.

Because a church wedding is a service of worship before God, requiring reverence on the part of all present, the music used in the ceremony should direct attention to God. Your choice of music must be approved by the officiating pastor and the Minister of Music. Secular or non-religious music is acceptable during the Prelude, but not during the marriage service itself.

The Minister of Music of Riverside Presbyterian Church will play the organ for all weddings in the church, or secure a substitute, except when couples desire a service without music or with RPC instrumentalists only, such as a string quartet or handbell ensemble. RPC also has access to several professional musicians such as vocal soloists, string, woodwind, brass, and bagpipe soloists. For soloists, the organ will usually be needed to accompany them. These musicians' services and fees may also be enlisted through the Minister of Music. When couples decide to include a guest musician unknown to the Minister of Music, the fee for the Minister of Music will be an additional \$50, due to extra consultation and rehearsal time.

Following is a list of organ music frequently played for weddings:

Trumpet Voluntary - Jeremiah Clarke	Arioso - J. S. Bach
Trumpet Tune - Jeremiah Clarke	Air from Suite #3 - J. S. Bach
Selections from Water Music - G. F. Handel	Rondeau - Charpentier
Rondeau - Jean Joseph Mouret	Canon in D - Pachelbel
Air - Purcell	Rigaudon - Campra
Voluntary - Purcell	Bridal Chorus - Wagner
Martial Air - Purcell	Wedding March - Mendelssohn
	Wedding March - Guilmant

IV: AVAILABLE SANCTUARY ACCESSORIES

Riverside Presbyterian Church makes available to couples a number of sanctuary accessories for weddings. The Wedding Coordinator is available by appointment with couples regarding decisions about accessories. Available accessories include the following items:

- Seven Branch Altar Candelabra (pair)
- Single Head Aisle Candelabra
- Triple Head Aisle Candelabra
- Unity Candle (after the wedding the unity candle belongs to the couple)

There is no charge for the above accessories.

Couples may wish to arrange the printing of the wedding bulletins. In such a case the program copy should be approved by the officiating pastor before taking it to the printer.

V: FEES

Riverside Presbyterian Church makes every effort to assist in limiting the cost of your wedding. Weddings, however, involve some extra services which the church is unable to underwrite. If, in the opinion of the officiating pastor, circumstances warrant it, the pastor may on rare occasions authorize the waiver of some of the following fees.

	Non-Members	Members
Security Deposit (Refundable)	\$200	\$100
Clergy	\$350	\$250
Minister of Music	\$200	\$150
Minister of Music with guest musicians	\$250	\$200
Soloist from RPC List	\$75-\$150	\$75-\$150
Wedding Coordinator	\$200	\$200
Custodial Services	\$75	\$75
Use of Bride's Parlor	\$40	\$25
Use of Sanctuary	\$500	\$200
Use of Social Hall for Reception with kitchen	\$150	\$150
Use of Social Hall for Reception without kitchen	\$100	\$100

A deposit of \$200 is required for the scheduling of non-member weddings (\$100 for members). This amount will be used for the security deposit referenced above and will be refunded after the wedding provided no harm has been done to church facilities. Weddings are not on the church calendar until this deposit has been received by the church office. Checks should be made out to Riverside Presbyterian Church. The remaining balance of all fees should be paid by a check made out to Riverside Presbyterian Church six weeks prior to the date of the wedding. If, however, the wedding is canceled by the wedding party after being scheduled, the deposit is non-refundable.

VI: REHEARSALS, RECEPTIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEOTAPING

The wedding rehearsal is usually held on the day preceding the wedding and is conducted by the officiating pastor, unless the Pastor delegates the conducting of the rehearsal to the Wedding Coordinator. The Organist and any additional musicians will not be present for the rehearsal. One hour should be reserved for rehearsal time, and promptness at rehearsals is appreciated.

The bride and groom should bring the marriage license to the rehearsal to be signed by the officiating pastor.

The wedding party may expect to have access to the church building 15 minutes prior to the wedding rehearsal, and an hour and a half prior to the time of the wedding.

Wedding receptions in the Riverside Presbyterian Church Social Hall can be scheduled with the Wedding Coordinator and Church Office, using a caterer. Arrangements for use of church equipment (linens, serving pieces, etc.) should be made through the Wedding Coordinator. The consuming or serving of alcoholic beverages is not permitted in the church building or on church property.

The upstairs Parlor is reserved especially for the bride and her attendants. Members of the wedding party who prepare themselves for the wedding in the church building are asked to pick up their trash and leave church rooms in a tidy and orderly condition.

On any given day, weddings must be scheduled at least three hours apart.

Arrival time for all ushers should be no later than a half hour before the wedding. They shall be responsible for seating guests, lighting candles, and ushering out parents and guests after the recessional.

Photographs are permitted before the ceremony and afterwards; but during the ceremony itself photographs may only be taken by a designated photographer from the narthex entrance as quietly as possible and with available light only. Photographers taking photos of bridesmaids and bride in processional are particularly asked to do their work as unobtrusively as possible. The church makes this request because the marriage ceremony is a service of worship and any outside intrusion disturbs the reverence that should be a part of the service. A sheet of guidelines for commercial photographers is attached and must be signed by the photographer and returned to the church office prior to the wedding in order for the photographer to be permitted to take photographs at Riverside Presbyterian Church weddings.

Video photographing of the ceremony is permitted, providing that the equipment and the photographer are located at the back of the sanctuary or in the choir loft with the equipment on a fixed tripod. Mobile video photography is not permitted.