

## **INTRODUCTION**

As Jesus Christ has blessed this relationship, and it has been declared holy throughout the life of the church, those who pledge themselves to each other in the sight of God are promised God's help as they enter into the joys and duties of marriage life together.

The most meaningful statement about marriage was made by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, "But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one. So they are no longer two, but one. What therefore God has joined together let no one put asunder." (Mark 10:6-9)

Humanly speaking, marriage is a civil contract among a man, a woman, and the state. When a wedding is performed in the context of Christian worship, the proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation in Jesus Christ is a promise of blessing to the marriage. As the man and woman respond affirmatively to Christ on their wedding day, their marriage sets a precedent of being in the presence of the Lord.

## **PREMARITAL AND POST-MARITAL COUNSELING**

Well in advance of the wedding day, the Pastor and the couple will participate in at least three sessions of premarital counseling together. These sessions would cover a wide array of topics focused on entering into marriage with greater joy and understanding of each other as well as how best to navigate the difficulties and strains in marriage life. The Pastor's job is to help the couple not just prepare for a life of marriage to one another, but to help them see how their faith will shape their marriage as they follow Christ together. After the wedding day, the Pastor will reach out to have at least one session of post-marital counseling to check in on the health and adjustment of the couple.

## **THE PASTOR, SESSION, AND STATE**

Ultimately, the Pastor must decide whether they can faithfully marry the couple. Also, the Session of elders of First Presbyterian Church of Albert Lea must vote to approve both the wedding and/or the use of our sanctuary. In addition, before any man and woman are joined in

marriage, care must be shown to fulfill all the lawful requirements of the state in which the wedding is to be performed.

### **RECOGNITION OF A CIVIL CEREMONY**

If a husband and wife previously married in a civil ceremony so desire, a service for the recognition of a marriage similar to that already specified for a Christian wedding ceremony may be performed.

### **WEDDING CEREMONY ELEMENTS**

The wedding ceremony begins with a brief statement of the meaning of Christian marriage. At appropriate times during the ceremony, prayers are given for the couple as they enter their new season of life. Worship in song, congregational or otherwise, is also appropriate as we turn our attention to God's presence. Vows are exchanged between the man and the woman and if so desired, a ring or rings may be given. Scripture appropriate for the occasion should be read and the minister should deliver a charge to the couple, laying before them the privileges and obligations which they are about to receive and undertake. Before the conclusion of the service the Pastor declares publicly that this man and woman are now joined in marriage according to the ordinance of God and the law of the state. The service concludes with a benediction.

### **PASTORAL DISCRETION**

At First Presbyterian Church of Albert Lea, freedom is allowed for individual planning, expressions, and taste in the carrying out of the wedding ceremony, insofar as they contribute to the worship of God and always with the counsel and consent of the Pastor.

### **PLANNING FOR YOUR WEDDING**

1. Before the date of the wedding is announced it is to be confirmed with the Pastor, coordinated with the church calendar, and approved by the Session.
2. Arrangements for premarital counseling with the Pastor should be made following the approval of the wedding from Session. It is required that the Pastor have at least three premarital counseling sessions with the bride and groom present together.

3. The couple should sit down with the church Office Administrator (and their assigned Wedding Coordinator from the church, if applicable) to go over any administrative details for the wedding.
4. The marriage license should be delivered to the Pastor one week in advance of the wedding day.
5. It is expected that the Pastor of the church shall officiate at all weddings. When it is the wish of the bride and groom to ask another clergy person to participate in the service, the Pastor of the church should be consulted early in the process in order that he/she may discern the appropriateness of the request. When officiating, the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church will preside over the rehearsal. The Pastor should be consulted concerning the policies of the Church.
6. The Order of Service will be determined by the Pastor in discussion with each couple. The Pastor will provide examples of how to shape a worshipful wedding ceremony.
7. A couple may choose to use traditional vows provided by the Pastor or write their own vows. If a couple wishes to write their own vows, they must be written with the assistance and approval of the Pastor. Wedding vows must be written as expressions of convictions about the meaning of Christian marriage as well as expressions of personal, mutual devotion and love.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY**

Photography and videography are allowed during the wedding ceremony, but should make every effort not to be a distraction for those attending and worshiping.

### **ALCOHOL AND SMOKING**

We ask that there be no drinking or smoking on church property. This includes before, during, and after the wedding ceremony and reception.

## **FEES**

The following fees are to be given to the church Office Administrator two months prior to the wedding day and will be deposited one week before the wedding.

Use of the Sanctuary*	\$300.00*
Pastor	\$400.00
Organist/Pianist	\$150.00
Custodian	\$100.00
Wedding Coordinator**	\$150.00**
Audio/Visual Operator	\$75.00
Damages Deposit (refundable)	\$100.00

\* Use of the sanctuary is free for all active covenant partners of First Presbyterian Church of Albert Lea or upon the discretion of the Pastor.

\*\* A Wedding Coordinator is required for all ceremonies with more than 50 in attendance.

## **RECEPTIONS AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

For any receptions being held at First Presbyterian Church, the bride and groom are responsible for hiring a caterer and providing servers if the caterer does not. Additional fees for a reception at First Presbyterian Church should be given two months prior to the wedding day and will be deposited one week before the wedding.

Use of the Church*	\$200*
Wedding Coordinator**	\$100**
Custodian	\$150
Damages Deposit (refundable)	\$100

\* Use of the church is free for all active covenant partners of First Presbyterian Church of Albert Lea. For reference, seating capacity for Westminster Hall is comfortably 144. An additional seating for 56 is available in the Multipurpose Room.

\*\* A Wedding Coordinator is required for all receptions with more than 50 in attendance.

*These guidelines have been approved and adopted by the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Albert Lea, Minnesota as of April 2022. Any exceptions to stated policies must meet with the approval of the Session and the Pastor.*