

Wedding Policy

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to assist individuals in the arrangements necessary to hold a wedding service in First Baptist Church, Oneonta, Alabama.

Scope: This policy will apply to all individuals who desire to use the facilities of First Baptist Church as the location for a wedding service.

General Statement of Policy: In light of the debate and controversy regarding the State of Marriage, First Baptist Church Oneonta, located at 300 Third Avenue East, Oneonta, Alabama, chooses to state unequivocally our "Marriage Statement".

- We believe marriage is a unique relationship. Marriage is God's idea. It did not originate from a law or social trend or any other human invention. It began with God. In the beginning of the human race, God made one man and one woman. He united the man and the woman, intending for them to live together for companionship and to replenish the earth. God placed this sanction on marriage, calling it a good relationship. "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22) Marriage is God's unique human relationship. The language of Genesis 1-3 illustrates the natural unity of a husband and wife. The Hebrew words "ish" and "ishah" denote male and female. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)
- We believe marriage is an intimate relationship. Marriage is a relationship designed for ultimate intimacy. "Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:6b) The expression "joined together" indicates the idea of togetherness. It means connected or glued together. Marriage is a relationship designed to last a lifetime. "And said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (Matthew 19:5) God intended the marriage relationship to last until death breaks the contract. No earthly contract is more intimate or has lasting effects.
- We believe marriage is an exclusive relationship. Getting married means to forsake a mother and father relationship. "And said, for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (Matthew 19:5) Jesus emphasized leaving and cleaving. Of course the Lord did not mean to disdain your parents and have nothing else to do with them. The Lord emphasized that loyalty to one's married spouse should have priority over one's parents. Some fail to forsake parents. They try to cleave emotionally and financially to their parents while trying to cleave to a married spouse. A marriage is in serious trouble if a spouse tries to cleave to both parents and spouse simultaneously. Getting married means to forsake all other intimate partners. Intimacy includes both emotional and sexual involvement. Sometimes a husband (man) or a wife (woman) will turn to someone other than a spouse for intimacy and for sharing hurts, frustrations, dreams, and other matters. Unfortunately, some married spouses do not forsake other sexual partners. But God commands, "You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)
- We believe marriage is a purposeful relationship. God intended man and woman to live together as companions. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" (Genesis 2:18) The expression "a helper suitable for him" means someone to answer to all his needs. The Genesis

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writer described the purpose of marriage as a relationship. The husband (man) answers to the needs of the wife (woman). The wife answers to the needs of the husband. The needs of both include verbal exchange, emotional sharing, and sexual experience. No other relationship on earth can meet all of these needs except the marriage relationship. God intended man and woman to live together to propagate the human race. After God united man and woman He said, "God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28) Having children is a solemn responsibility of couples. Rearing those children requires a team effort.

- We believe marriage is an imperfect relationship. The marriage relationship at its best has strains. Marriage at its best involves adjustments on the part of the man and the woman. Marriage experts identify adjustment areas as gender roles, decision-making, contrasting backgrounds, in-laws, values, social life, sex, money, and children. Some marriages are better than others, but no marriage is perfect. Many couples have a sense of dissatisfaction because their marriages are not absolutely perfect. Couples need to identify problem areas and learn by God's help how to deal with these strains in relationships. The marriage relationship needs to experience constant forgiveness. Inevitably one partner will hurt the feelings of the other. To keep the relationship healthy, the offender needs to learn to say "I'm sorry. I was wrong. Please forgive me." The offended needs to learn to say, "You're forgiven." Marriage involves a relationship of falling down and getting up, falling down and getting up. Of course, some couples do not fall as regularly as others. Unfortunately, when some couples fall, they fail to get up and grow, and divorce severs the relationship.

In conclusion, in following Biblical principles, it is clear that marriage is a union between one man and one woman and that God sanctions only the union in marriage of a man to a woman, including civil unions. Therefore, First Baptist Church Oneonta sanctions only a ceremony compatible with those standards. Therefore, same sex couples will not be married in any facilities or on any properties owned by First Baptist Church Oneonta. Further, ministers of First Baptist Church Oneonta shall not perform any same sex marriages or civil unions whether on or off church-owned properties. In the event a minister of First Baptist Church Oneonta performs a same sex marriage or civil union ceremony, then that will be considered grounds for immediate termination of the minister performing said ceremony.

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I. Scheduling

1. The following criteria must be met to reserve your wedding date:
 - A. Obtain from the Pastor's Assistant the "Wedding Policy" of First Baptist Church Oneonta.
 - B. Phone the Pastor's Assistant to discuss your desired date. She will note your request on her calendar and hold this date for you for two weeks.
 - a. If either the Pastor or one of his staff ministers is to officiate or participate in your wedding, the date must be cleared by contacting the appropriate minister. Please communicate directly with the assistant of the Pastor/Staff Minister whom you wish to engage for your wedding. If you choose a minister other than one from First Baptist to perform your ceremony, your minister must be approved through the Pastor's office. We ask that he complete the visiting minister's form and return it to the Pastor's office at least 30 days prior to the wedding date. We will approve only ministers who are licensed and/or ordained. They will be required to provide you with premarital counseling.
 - C. After carefully reading the Wedding Policy, complete and sign the "Application for Use of Church Facilities" and return it to the Pastor's Assistant. Only after your request has been approved and you have paid a \$50.00 deposit shall the date be considered confirmed. The deposit will be applied to the total cost.
2. Please keep in mind the following as you request church facilities for your wedding:
 - A. Weddings, rehearsals, and receptions will not be scheduled on Sundays and Wednesdays.
 - B. We do not schedule weddings, rehearsals, and receptions on holidays or holiday weekends, including New Year's Day, Easter, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day.
 - C. We will do all we can to work with your schedule and selection. However, the use of our church facilities for church sponsored programs/events including, but not limited to, Vacation Bible School, Revivals, musical concerts, and Fall Festival will take precedence when necessary. Therefore, if you schedule your wedding date more than six months in advance, please be aware that some changes may need to be made to accommodate church-wide functions that may be scheduled for that same date.
 - D. Weddings will not be scheduled earlier than 10:00 a.m. or later than 7:00 p.m.
 - E. Saturday weddings will be held no later than 6:00 p.m.
 - F. Persons who are not members of First Baptist Church Oneonta may make reservations no more than 60 days prior to their requested wedding date as church members will have preference prior to 60 days.

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II. Conduct

1. A wedding is a worship service. Members of the wedding party are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the atmosphere of the place of worship. It is the responsibility of the Bride and Groom to familiarize the members of the wedding party with the policies of the church.
2. When children are a part of the wedding party, it is suggested and requested that they be at least five years old. Younger children usually prove to be a distraction.
3. All child care areas of the church must be in readiness for capacity use in the Sunday School and Worship Services each Sunday. The church, therefore, cannot provide facilities or personnel for child care for weddings. Families will need to make private arrangements away from the church if this service is needed.
4. Members of the wedding party must refrain from using alcoholic beverages or drugs prior to and during any activity held at the church. No alcoholic beverages may be brought to the church or served on the church premises at any time. No rehearsal or wedding will be conducted if any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. It is the responsibility of the Bride and Groom to be certain this policy is understood and followed by the members of the wedding party and those who service the wedding (florist, caterer, photographer, videographer, etc.).
5. Smoking is not permitted in any of our church buildings. It is the responsibility of the Bride and Groom to be certain that this policy is understood and followed by all members of the wedding party and those who service the wedding (florist, caterer, photographer, videographer, etc.).

III. General Policies

1. Birdseed and flower petals may not be thrown inside the church building, but may be used outside as the Bride and Groom depart. Because of the hazard involved in walking on rice, the use of it is prohibited inside the building and discouraged outside the building.
2. Only silk flower petals may be dropped by flower girls.
3. Food and drink are not permitted inside the Sanctuary. The wedding party may have soft drinks in the Bride's and Groom's rooms only.
4. Breakage of and/or damage to any church equipment/facilities must be reimbursed at replacement value by the Bride and Groom.
5. The church is not responsible for lost or stolen articles or equipment.
6. The church will gladly use wedding flowers for the worship services when this is possible. Floral arrangements will be placed in the vestibule. Please discuss your desire with your florist and indicate your plans to the Pastor's Assistant.

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IV. Arrangements with the Minister

1. There are several ordained ministers on the First Baptist staff who can assist you with your wedding as their schedules permit. Please contact the minister of your choice directly.
2. Each of our ministers requires that you participate in premarital counseling. You and your minister will establish guidelines used in your premarital counseling.
3. At least two weeks prior to your wedding date, you should contact your minister's assistant and arrange a conference to finalize the details of your wedding ceremony. This conference is especially important because your minister may not be able to attend the rehearsal.
4. To avoid the possibility of an embarrassment, the minister (who cannot legally perform the wedding ceremony without the license in hand) **REQUIRES THAT THE MARRIAGE LICENSE BE BROUGHT TO THE CHURCH OFFICE AND LEFT WITH HIS ASSISTANT A DAY OR TWO PRIOR TO THE DATE OF THE WEDDING.**
5. Although the Lord's Supper is often used as part of the wedding ceremony in other worship traditions, Baptists see the Lord's Supper or Communion as a church and congregational ordinance. As a result, the Lord's Supper or Communion will not be served at First Baptist wedding services.

V. Musicians and Music

1. Because of the importance of the wedding service, the music should be appropriate for use in a church worship service as opposed to a social gathering. Some of the popular music frequently used in weddings may have sentimental meaning for the bride and groom; however, this music may not qualify as sacred or religious music. The Minister of Music has the authority to approve or disapprove all music for wedding ceremonies held at First Baptist Church. You are to contact our Minister of Music, at least two weeks prior to your wedding for approval of your wedding music.
2. We encourage you to engage the services of one of our church musicians. They will assist at both the rehearsal and wedding if you so desire. Their fees are a gratuity. Gratuities are to be paid directly to the musician(s) on or before the night of the wedding rehearsal.
3. The Minister of Music must approve a guest musician at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

VI. Sound Technician

1. Because of the sophisticated nature of the sound system at First Baptist Church you are required to use our sound technician for a Sanctuary wedding. Contact Wayne Shaddix (625-3933) for scheduling someone to work with you on your wedding.
2. The sound technician will be at the wedding rehearsal as well as the wedding.
3. The technician's fee is \$50.00. This fee is to be paid directly to the technician on the night of the rehearsal.

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