

**Banner Elk Presbyterian Church**  
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## **POLICY FOR CHURCH WEDDINGS**

A church wedding is one of the happiest and holiest moments in life. When two people join their lives to establish a Christian home surrounded by a Christian congregation within a church building, the following assumptions are made:

- The church wedding is a public worship service of praise and thanksgiving to God for the love given to all and especially for the love that the couple has for each other.
- As a Christian service of worship, the bride and groom make their commitment to one another, to God, and to the gathered congregation.
- If this church is chosen as the place for the wedding, the couple agrees to follow the policies of the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church.

The members of the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church want your wedding to maintain its individual and special nature. We also want it to be a wedding that you will be proud of today and in the future and that will reflect the beliefs and practices of our church. You will find the Wedding Consultant to be very helpful to you at this joyous time.

### **Use of the Church:**

All uses of the church sanctuary and other rooms within the church building must be approved by the Session. Following that approval, a member of the Church Wedding Committee will contact you. As the authorized representative of the church, this person will meet with you while plans for the wedding are being made to ensure all church policies are met. This person will also attend the rehearsal and the wedding service.

### **Rehearsal:**

The church will be opened fifteen (15) minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time, unless otherwise requested. Please remind participants that this is a place of worship and appropriate behavior is expected. Rehearsals should begin promptly, and proceed in a quiet, dignified, and reverent manner.

### **Wedding Ceremony:**

In the Presbyterian Church, the wedding ceremony is a service of worship and should reflect the dignity and solemnity of the Worship of Almighty God. For that reason, the wedding service, even for a non-member wedding shall reflect a Christian understanding of marriage.

All wedding ceremonies, which are not taken directly from the Book of Common Worship, must be approved by the Worship Committee of the Session at least one month before the wedding. This service must be submitted in writing for approval.

It is appropriate to observe the Lord's Supper during a wedding ceremony as long as the celebration of the Sacrament is offered to all individuals present.

### **Minister/Pastor:**

The pastor of the church will ordinarily officiate in all weddings of the church members. However, it is understood that many families may want a family member or friend who is a minister to officiate. The pastor is always pleased to share the leadership of the wedding with these persons.

It is also understood that many couples that have no connection with the Banner Elk Church will wish to use ministers other than the pastor of the church. This is acceptable under the following conditions:

1. A number of local Presbyterian ministers are approved to perform weddings in the Banner Elk Church. A list of these persons will be provided upon request.
2. Other clergy may be approved by the Session of the church. Their names and addresses must be provided on the attached form.

Weddings are time-consuming and require considerable effort by the minister. It is appropriate therefore for the minister to receive honoraria for his or her time and effort. No fee structure is set for church members and the pastor considers his service to be part of his ongoing ministry to the congregation. The fee for the church building does not include the fees for the minister or the musicians.

Although a fee is not set for a church member's wedding, it is expected that some honoraria be given. The range is typically from \$100 for a simple wedding to \$250 for those in which the pastor also performs the pre-marital counseling.

### **Pre-Marital Counseling:**

All couples seeking to be married in the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church must coordinate appropriate counseling sessions with the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church pastor. Ordinarily, the minister who is conducting the wedding will also do the counseling. However, it is acceptable for the counseling to be done by another minister or by a pastoral counselor of the couple's choice. A signed letter, on letterhead stationery, verifying completed counseling sessions by the minister or the counselor service, must be provided prior to the wedding date.

### **Wedding Consultant:**

The Wedding Consultant of the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church is a church member who feels called to serve God and couples as they plan and participate in a Christian Wedding. The members of the wedding party and the consultant will be in contact throughout the planning of the wedding, and the consultant will be present at the rehearsal and at the wedding. At least a month prior to the wedding date, this consultant will communicate with the wedding party and wedding director to finalize wedding plans by receiving information, going over church policies, and answering questions in order to facilitate a joyful Christian wedding.

### **Wedding Director:**

The direction of the wedding is always in the hands of the officiating minister. Persons asked by the wedding party to "direct" the wedding will do so only under the directions of the officiating minister. The Wedding Director must be recommended or approved by the Wedding Committee. The Wedding Director will receive a copy of this Wedding Policy. The Banner Elk Presbyterian Church Wedding Consultant represents the facility and does not direct weddings.

### **Music:**

The church organist shall play for all church weddings unless unavailable. If the wedding party wishes to use an organist other than the church organist, they must request a waiver from the church organist and they should expect to pay a "music consultation fee" since he/she will need to work with the guest organist for practice times, music to be played and instrument registrations. Since the wedding is a service of worship, the use of any music that is not sacred must be approved in advance. **The church organist will be responsible to clear all music for its appropriateness for worship and for a wedding within the church.** Fees for the organist must be arranged directly with him/her.

Soloists, vocal and instrumental, should be arranged well in advance of the rehearsal day and music selections chosen appropriate to a worship service. The use of accompaniment

tapes/CD is prohibited, as there is a grand piano as well as the organ available. Time to rehearse the special music should be planned before the rehearsal for the wedding party if at all possible. The organist will be available for the wedding rehearsal for a reasonable time of 1 to 1 ½ hours.

### **Decorations:**

It is mandatory that all florists and/or friends decorating for a wedding plan with the Wedding Consultant before doing any decorating. It is impossible to list all the “do’s” and “don’ts” of decorating the sanctuary. Therefore, the consultant has complete discretion in what may and may not be allowed. Any damage to the church will be billed to the florist or person doing the damage. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to make the florist/decorators aware of church policy regarding decorations. A few specifics to keep in mind are:

1. No nails, screws, thumbtacks, or other such fasteners that make holes are allowed.
2. Candles are allowed only in candelabras, or as unity candles, or as memorial candles. Candelabras may be placed on the floor of the chancel/choir area, close to the front edge, or on the floor of the sanctuary.
3. You must use dripleless candles
4. All floral and/or rental equipment must be removed from the church premises immediately following the wedding.
5. Flowers from the wedding are appreciated for use in the Sunday worship service.
6. Chancel furniture behind the piano and the organ may not be moved.
7. The Baptismal and Communion Table may not be removed from the sanctuary (they may be moved within the room). The chancel steps may be moved into the large hallway to the left of the sanctuary if needed.

### **Photography:**

Because it is a service of worship, pictures will only be taken before and after the ceremony. No flash photography will be permitted during the ceremony; however, non-flash photography and video taping with the camera remaining in place is permitted from the balcony. If you are using a wedding program, please print the following information:

**“To maintain the integrity of the worship service, we respectfully request that members of the congregation refrain from taking photographs or video taping except from the balcony.”**

If you are not using a wedding program, please request that the pastor make the above announcement before the ceremony begins. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to make the photographers aware of this policy by reviewing and sharing the church’s Policy for Photographers and Videographers.

### **Keys:**

If the wedding party needs keys to the church, they must be procured before 1:00pm on Thursday, for a weekend wedding. Keys are to be returned to the Wedding Consultant following the wedding clean-up.

### **Clean Up:**

The church custodial service will clean up after all weddings. However, **before leaving for the reception**, it is the responsibility of the wedding party to:

- Return all furnishings, banners, papers, posters, and any other items moved, to their proper position in the sanctuary and narthex. We recommend that several people be assigned to assist with this task. The Wedding Consultant will show these people where items need to be placed after the service.
- Be sure all personal belongings are removed from the church.
- Remove all rental/florist equipment from the church premises.

**Pressing**

The designated “pressing room” is the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor men’s bathroom. If other rooms are used, sensitive smoke alarms will automatically call the Banner Elk Fire Department.

**Cost**

**For members:**

The use of the church is available to church members at no cost, but must be scheduled through the Church Office. All church policies are required to be followed by church members. To receive the no cost policy, you must have been an active church member for at least two years prior to the wedding request.

- Church – no cost
- Pastor - (see page 2 regarding customary honoraria)
- Musicians .....\$150.00

**For non-members the following fees are applicable:**

(Write a separate check for each individual who must be paid.)

1. Church.....\$600.00 Due: with Wedding Request Form  
(\$200.00 non-refundable fee is included)
2. Pastor, Wedding and Rehearsal (minimum).....\$200.00 Due: 30 days prior to wedding
3. Musicians (minimum)..... \$200.00 Due: 30 days prior to wedding

**Procedure for Reserving the Church:**

Once the church office has your completed Request Form, your request will go to Session, the decision-making board of the church, for approval. Session meets the third week of each month. Once your request has been approved, you will receive a call to confirm the date.

Requests for use of the church must be made six weeks in advance. Wedding requests are processed and approved in the order in which the completed form is received. Only one wedding may be scheduled on any given day.

If a wedding plan has not been finalized with the Wedding Consultant 30 days prior to the wedding, the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church has the right to cancel the wedding reservation and return all fees.

All cancellations or changes must be made 48 hours prior to the rehearsal by calling the church or the Wedding consultant in order to receive a refund.

**Conduct:**

- Smoking is not permitted within the church facilities
- No rice may be thrown inside any part of the church building or on the church steps, sidewalk, or lawn. Suitable substitutes such as birdseed or bubbles may be used outside the church.
- No alcoholic beverages may be used or served on church premises.
- No wedding or rehearsal will be conducted when any member of the wedding party is under the influence of alcohol.
- It is the responsibility of the persons making arrangements for the wedding to see that all members of the wedding party are informed concerning the above policies.

**Miscellaneous:**

- The church seats 220 people.