

**WEDDING POLICY of
NEW COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

**Approved by the Session of New Covenant Presbyterian Church
September 10, 2012**

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New Covenant Presbyterian Church

A Congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America

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We, as your Church family, want to congratulate you on your upcoming wedding and wish God's blessings on your life together. May your relationship be guided by God and enriched as you commit yourselves to each other in marriage.

Marriage is a divine institution— “a gift of God for the well-being of the entire human family.” We know that because of your desire to marry in our Church, you realize that your wedding is a sacred event—an act of worship.

The wedding policies developed and practiced by this church's Session are designed to promote God's glory, the church's peace, and the couple's happiness. Ultimately, our prayer is that these policies will assist you in beginning your marriage at the right place: in the worship of God gathered with a congregation of church members, friends, and family.

As the wedding ceremony says, “The happiness contemplated by this union is realized only by those who fully appreciate its sacredness and are faithful in the performance of the mutual obligations growing out of it, and who seek daily God's blessing.” By God's grace, may you know this happiness by doing so.

For His glory,

Rev. Jim Plunk
Pastor
New Covenant Presbyterian Church

II. AN UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE AND OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY

A. GENERAL POLICIES

1. The Wedding Policy

The Wedding Policy of New Covenant Presbyterian Church (“NCPC”) is intended to be consistent with the Holy Scriptures, the practices and provisions of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (particularly chapter 59 of the *Book of Church Order*, entitled “The Solemnization of Marriage”), the By-Laws of the congregation, and the laws of the state of Mississippi. The Session of NCPC and its pastor(s) are required by God’s Word, as well as their conscience, not to marry persons disqualified by violation of either church or civil laws. The Session of NCPC considers weddings to be services of worship and retains control and final decisions of approval and disapproval beyond which there is no appeal. This policy is subject to revision by the Session and Diaconate of NCPC.

2. Marriage - General Principles and Policies

In keeping with the laws of Scripture, “Marriage is to be between one man and one woman, in accordance with the Word of God” (*Book of Church Order*: 59-3).

“Christians should marry in the Lord; therefore it is fit that their marriage be solemnized by a lawful minister, that special instruction be given them, and suitable prayer offered, when they enter into this relation” (*Book of Church Order*, 59-3).

All brides and grooms must be confessing Christians with a desire to develop a Christian home and by so doing, to honor the Biblical standards and purposes of marriage. The couple cannot be living together or having sexual relations prior to marriage.

An application providing general information about the wedding party and wedding dates must be filled out and given to the pastor before approval can be given by the Session. The couple to be married should have a preliminary meeting with the pastor of NCPC prior to the submission of this application or at the time that the application is submitted.

All marriages services held on NCPC premises must be approved by the Session, upon request and recommendation by the pastor of the church, and are not final until Sessional approval has been given. All requests are ordinarily considered at a stated monthly meeting of the Session.

All brides and grooms shall receive at least one marriage counseling session by the pastor of the congregation. The pastor will ordinarily use an online assessment tool by Prepare/Enrich.

3. The Wedding Ceremony

A wedding ceremony should be conducted in its entirety in the spirit of a service of worship. The sanctuary, while serving as a multi-purpose facility, is a place of worship. Therefore, all conduct in the sanctuary and all elements of the wedding service should be conducted in accordance with the general practices of a traditional service and with a spirit of reverence and joy appropriate for a service of worship.

4. Counseling

All brides and grooms are required to have at least one marriage counseling session by the pastor of NCPC or by a pastor or counselor approved by the pastor of NCPC.

The couple is to take an online pre-marital inventory by Prepare/Enrich prior to meeting with the pastor. The current fee charged by Prepare/Enrich for this assessment is \$29.95 and is payable by the couple. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to complete the online assessment in a timely manner.

(Prepare/Enrich is a customized couple assessment completed online that identifies a couple's strength and growth areas. It is one of the most widely used programs for premarital counseling and premarital education.)

Additional counseling sessions, conducted either by the pastor or by a trained counselor, are left to the discretion of the pastor. Such sessions may be required when the initial assessment reveals areas that require additional counseling prior to marriage.

5. Fees

There is no charge for use of the building by NCPC members or by the children or grandchildren of NCPC members.

All others are charged a fee of \$800.00. The fee is to be paid to the church office one month prior to the date of the wedding service.

Priority in the use of the building is given to NCPC members. However, a reservation will normally not be changed to accommodate other requests once a wedding date is approved by the Session.

6. Who may be married at NCPC

One of the parties seeking to be married in the NCPC facility must be a member of the congregation, a previous member of the congregation, or have parents or grandparents who are members of the congregation.

All brides and grooms must be confessing Christians with a desire to develop a Christian home and by so doing, honor the Biblical standards and purposes of marriage.

B. SPECIFIC POLICIES RELATED TO THE WEDDING CEREMONY

1. Officiating Ministers

The pastor of NCPC ordinarily is to officiate all wedding services conducted at NCPC and shall have control over all aspects of the wedding service, including the marriage vows. Guest ministers who assist NCPC's pastor must be approved by the Session. It is understood that guest ministers will abide by the policies of this church.

2. The ceremony, including marriage vows

The officiating minister shall use a traditional marriage service from the *Directory of Worship* of the Presbyterian Church in America as provided in the *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 59. A general outline of this service is provided in the appendix.

Any substantial variation in the wedding service (content and order) as given in the *Book of Church Order* must be approved by the pastor of NCPC and must be consistent with the principles of marriage and of a wedding service as stated in this policy.

3. Music

Because a wedding at NCPC is considered a service of worship, the policies and standards of music that govern and apply to any worship service of NCPC must be followed in the wedding service.

All music, soloists, and instrumentalists must be approved by the pastor of NCPC who may consult church musicians as needed. Traditional wedding music, as well as any hymns included in the *Trinity Hymnal*, are generally acceptable.

NCPC's pianist will ordinarily play at all weddings. The fee for this service is to be negotiated with the pianist.

It is the responsibility of the wedding party to contact the church pianist, to make necessary arrangements for music in consultation with the pastor, and to inform all musicians of these policies.

4. Photography

Because a worshipful nature is to be maintained throughout the wedding ceremony, no photography should be done which will disrupt the service or distract from the service. No flash photographs shall be taken during the ceremony. The ceremony begins with the prelude and ends at the close of the recessional.

Photos of the wedding party may be made by the photographer as members of the wedding party enter and leave the ceremony. Otherwise, photographers and videographers are not to be in evidence during the wedding ceremony. Videography and photography are permitted from the walk-way of the balcony.

Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony.

It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the photographer of this policy.

5. Facilities

The NCPC sanctuary is designed as a multi-purpose facility. Therefore, some accommodations found in a dedicated sanctuary may not be available.

Maximum seating capacity of the sanctuary is approximately 225. The walk-way of the balcony may be utilized as an over-flow area; however, seating is not available in the walkway due to the height of the balcony rail. If the walk-way is used, care should be taken to not interfere with the audio system located in the walkway.

The chancel (the front platform where the service is conducted) is approximately 12 feet X 45 feet in size, with two levels of steps across the front. The choir risers are not to be moved.

A bride's room is available.

The groom and other men in the wedding party ordinarily use one of the classrooms for dressing. Windows will need to be temporarily covered.

Set-up for the wedding service and clean-up is the responsibility of the wedding party and should be done in consultation with the church. Arrangements may be made for paid custodial care with the costs being the responsibility of the wedding party. The facility must be returned to its original setting and preparedness for worship services.

Any damages should be reported to the church office as soon as possible.

6. Rehearsal

A rehearsal is essential to the preparation for the wedding service.

As with the wedding service, the rehearsal is under the direction of the officiating pastor.

Wedding directors should see themselves as working under the supervision of the officiating pastor and of providing specific help with the arrangement of the wedding party and the orderly proceedings of the ceremony.

All rehearsals should begin at the designated time. The officiating pastor should open the service by stating the purpose of the rehearsal and of the wedding, with a call to the wedding party to be supportive of the bride and groom, and with prayer.

7. Wedding Coordinator

The wedding coordinator shall ordinarily be a member of NCPC or someone with a relationship with the congregation who is knowledgeable of the requirements of a wedding and who is in agreement with the wedding standards and policies of NCPC. The names of possible directors may be provided by the church office if requested.

The honorarium for a wedding coordinator is the responsibility of the wedding party. Any coordinator who is not a member of NCPC is to be given a copy of the NCPC wedding policy and must be in agreement with it.

8. Audio system

NCPC does not have a professional audio technician on staff, although we do have knowledgeable volunteers who operate the sound system for worship services of the church. An audio system operator is generally required for a wedding service. Arrangements for someone to operate the audio system should be made through the church office in consultation with those who are knowledgeable of the audio system.

Honorariums for operating the audio system are the responsibility of the wedding party.

9. Decorations, floral arrangements, and furniture

Floral arrangements for weddings are to be in keeping with the simplicity, beauty, design, and purpose of the sanctuary.

Nails, tacks, tape, wires, screws, or fasteners that leave marks, holes or coloring are not to be used to fasten decorations on furniture or anywhere in the building. No decorations should be done in a manner that would permanently deface the building. Only non-drip candles are allowed.

Delivery times, as well as special needs for air conditioning or heating should be coordinated with the church office.

It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the florist of this policy.

10. Printed Order of Ceremony

A printed order of the wedding service is the responsibility of the wedding party.

11. Reception

On-site facilities for a reception are not available.

C. MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES

1. Smoking is not permitted in the church building or on the church property.
2. The consumption of alcoholic beverages and use of illegal drugs is not permitted on any part of the church property.
3. While normal precautions will be taken to protect personal items during the use of the building, NCPC is not responsible for items if lost, stolen, or damaged.
4. Any damage, destruction, or loss of church property are the full responsibility of the bride and groom. Responsibility includes repair, cleaning, or replacement of church property.
5. In keeping with the purpose of the sacraments as given in the doctrinal standards of the Presbyterian Church of America, the sacrament of Communion is not to be included in the wedding ceremony.
6. Care should be taken so that children who participate in the wedding ceremony are mature enough to act in a way that would not distract from the service.
7. The use of rice, birdseed, bubbles, flower petals, or confetti is not permitted..
8. Wedding dates may not conflict with the normally-scheduled services of the church.
 9. It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain a marriage license. The license is to be provided to the officiating minister prior to the wedding.
10. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform photographers, florists, musicians, and others of the applicable policies. Copies of these policies are included with this wedding policy.
11. The couple may leave flowers for Sunday morning worship services if desired. Information for an appropriate acknowledgment to be made in the Sunday bulletin should be given to the church office (a form is included with his policy).
12. Honorariums are the responsibility of the wedding party. Pianists and others may have preset fees.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

This is an example order of service that will ordinarily be followed. The call to worship, hymn(s) and special music, Scripture reading, and sermon content are changeable. The wedding vows are not.

Any substantial variation in the wedding service (content and order) as given in the *Book of Church Order* must be approved by the pastor of NCPC and must be consistent with the principles of marriage and of a wedding service as stated in this policy.

THE PRELUDE

THE SEATING OF PARENTS / GRANDPARENTS

THE PROCESSIONAL

THE CALL TO WORSHIP

THE CONGREGATIONAL HYMN / SPECIAL MUSIC (optional)

THE WORDS OF EXPLANATION

Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God, to join this Man and this Woman in holy marriage; which is instituted of God, regulated by His commandments, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be held in honor among all men. Let us therefore reverently remember that God has established and sanctified marriage, for the welfare and happiness of mankind. Our Savior has declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. By His apostles, He has instructed those who enter into this relation to cherish a mutual esteem and love; to bear with each other's infirmities and weaknesses; to comfort each other in sickness, trouble, and sorrow; in honesty and industry to provide for each other, and for their household, in temporal things; to pray for and encourage each other in the things which pertain to God; and to live together as the heirs of the grace of life.

Marriage is, therefore, a divine ordinance instituted for the promotion of our happiness and of the glory of God. The sacredness of the relation is revealed by the fact that the Holy Spirit has selected it as a picture of the union existing between our Lord and His bride, the Church. The happiness contemplated by this union is realized only by those who fully appreciate its sacredness and are faithful in the performance of the mutual obligations growing out of it, and seek daily God's blessing.

Seeing what great importance and solemnity God confers on this ordinance, let us go before His throne, by virtue of Christ, to seek His blessing.

THE PRAYER OF INVOCATION THE

DECLARATION OF INTENT

The minister shall then say:

[THE GROOM], will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live with her after God's commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love her, honor and cherish her, so long as you both shall live?

The man shall answer: I will.

Then the minister shall say:

[THE BRIDE], will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live with him after God's commandments in the holy estate of marriage? And will you love him, honor and obey him, so long as you both shall live?

The woman shall answer: I will.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE BRIDE

The minister shall say: Who gives this woman to be married to this man?

The father of the woman, or someone in his stead, shall place her right hand in that of the minister, and the minister shall cause the man to take with his right hand the right hand of the woman.

THE READING OF SCRIPTURE

THE MARRIAGE MEDITATION / CHARGE TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

THE MARRIAGE VOWS

The man shall say:

I, [THE GROOM], take you, [THE BRIDE], to be my wedded wife, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

The woman shall say:

I, [THE BRIDE], take you, [THE GROOM], to be my wedded husband, and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful wife, in sickness and in health, in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.

THE EXCHANGE OF RINGS

To **[THE GROOM]**: What token do you give of this covenant? [a ring]

The man shall then put the ring on the third finger of the woman's left hand, and shall say after the minister:

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

To **[THE BRIDE]**: What token do you give of this covenant? [a ring]

The woman shall then put the ring on the third finger of the man's left hand, and shall say after the minister:

This ring I give you as a symbol and pledge of constant faith and abiding love.

THE CONGREGATIONAL HYMN / SPECIAL MUSIC (optional)

THE PRAYER OF BENEDICTION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

Most merciful and gracious God, bestow upon these Your servants the seal of Your approval, and Your Fatherly blessing; granting unto them grace to fulfill, with pure and steadfast affection, the vow and covenant which they have made. Guide them together, we pray, in the way of righteousness and peace, that, loving and serving You, with one heart and mind, all the days of their lives, they may be abundantly enriched with the tokens of Your everlasting favor, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

By the authority committed unto me as a Minister of the Church of Christ, I declare that [bride] and [groom] are now husband and wife, according to the ordinance of God and the law of this state; in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.

THE AARONIC BENEDICTION

May the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace. Amen **THE RECESSIONAL**

WEDDING RESERVATION FORM
New Covenant Presbyterian Church

Wedding Date: _____ Time: _____

Rehearsal Date: _____ Time: _____

Bride's Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Member of New Covenant Presbyterian Church? _____ Yes _____ No If
not, where? _____

Groom's Contact Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Member of New Covenant Presbyterian Church? _____ Yes _____ No
If not, where? _____

(continued on next page)

(Reservation form continued)

If neither the bride or groom or their immediate family members are members of New Covenant Presbyterian Church, please state your reason(s) for desiring to use the building:

Do you request that another minister participate in the wedding service, subject to the stipulations of the wedding policy? If so, provide the name of the minister requested:

Name: _____

Church: _____

AGREEMENT

We have read the Wedding Policy provided with this application and agree to abide by these conditions, in consideration of NCPC's agreement to allow our use of its facilities.

Bride: _____ Date: _____

Groom: _____ Date: _____

For Office Use:

Request Received by Church Office: (date) _____

Approved by Session: _____

Approved by Pastor (following counseling session): _____

Fees Paid (if applicable): \$ _____ on _____.

FLOWER MEMORIAL / HONOR FORM

Wedding Flowers Left for Sunday Service (if desired)

If you are leaving flowers for the Sunday worship service and would like information to be included in the bulletin, please fill in the information requested below and return to the church office.

Wedding Party: _____
Date of the Wedding: _____

“The flowers in the sanctuary are
from the wedding of _____
and are given
in loving (circle one) MEMORY or HONOR

Of: _____

(names)

_____ of the _____.”
(Relationship) (Bride or Groom)

Please provide any other information needed:

CHECKLIST OF IMPORTANT ITEMS

- _____ Submit wedding application to the church office / pastor.
- _____ Have a preliminary meeting with the pastor of NCPC.
- _____ Receive notice of approval by the Session, pending completion of at least one premarital counseling session with the Pastor of NCPC.
- _____ Complete the online assessment with Prepare/Enrich.
- _____ Meet with the pastor to go over the results of the Prepare/Enrich Assessment
- _____ Arrange for any other counseling sessions that may be deemed necessary prior to the wedding service.
- _____ Notify the photographer, videographer, florist, and musicians of the applicable policies (forms are included in the NCPC Wedding policy to assist with this).
- _____ Contact the NCPC pianist to confirm availability for your wedding date.
- _____ Arrange for a knowledgeable person to operate the audio system (the church will assist with this as able)
- _____ Submit Flower Memorial / Honor form to the church office, if desired. _____

Payment of fees where applicable

INFORMATION FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER / VIDEOGRAPHER

A wedding at New Covenant Presbyterian Church ("NCPC") is considered a service of worship. The following policies are established to help maintain the worshipful nature of the wedding service.

1. Because a worshipful nature is to be maintained throughout the wedding ceremony, no photography should be done which will disrupt the service or distract from the service.
2. No flash photographs shall be taken during the ceremony. The ceremony begins with the prelude and ends at the close of the recessional.
3. Photos of the wedding party may be made by the photographer as members enter and leave the ceremony. Otherwise, the photographer / videographer are not to be evident during the ceremony and are not to be on the platform with the wedding party during the service. Video equipment not requiring the presence of the photographer/videographer should not be obtrusive.
4. Videography and photography are permitted from the walkway of the balcony.
5. Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony.

Your careful consideration of the above and your cooperation will be gratefully appreciated. Please contact the church office with any questions regarding NCPC's wedding policy.

New Covenant Presbyterian Church
Telephone: 601-276-7340

INFORMATION FOR THE FLORIST

A wedding at New Covenant Presbyterian Church (“NCPC”) is considered a service of worship. The following policies are established to help maintain the worshipful nature of the wedding service.

1. Floral arrangements for weddings are to be in keeping with the simplicity, beauty, design, and purpose of the sanctuary.
2. Nails, tacks, tape, wires, screws, or fasteners that leave marks, holes or coloring are not to be used to fasten decorations on furniture or anywhere in the building. No decorations should be done in a manner that would permanently deface the building. Only non-drip candles are allowed.
3. Delivery times, as well as special needs for air conditioning or heating, should be coordinated with the church office.

Your careful consideration of the above and your cooperation will be gratefully appreciated. Please contact the church office with any questions regarding NCPC’s wedding policy.

New Covenant Presbyterian Church
Telephone: 601-276-7340

INFORMATION FOR MUSICIANS

A wedding at New Covenant Presbyterian Church is considered a service of worship. Because of this, the policies and standards of music that govern and apply to any worship service of New Covenant Presbyterian Church ("NCPC") must be followed in the wedding service.

The following policies are established to help maintain the worshipful nature of the wedding service.

1. All music, soloists, and instrumentalists must be approved by the pastor of NCPC who may consult church musicians as needed. Traditional wedding music, as well as any hymns included in the *Trinity Hymnal*, is generally acceptable.
2. The pianist of New Covenant Presbyterian Church will ordinarily play at all weddings.
3. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to contact the church pianist and to make necessary arrangements for music in consultation with the pastor.

Your careful consideration of the above and your cooperation will be gratefully appreciated. Please contact the church office with any questions regarding NCPC's wedding policy.

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