

FIRST & CENTRAL POLICY ON “SERVICES OF COMMITMENT”

Approved by the Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church

Wilmington, Delaware

(Approved December 11, 1995)

(Amended May 12, 1997)

Whereas,

First & Central Presbyterian Church already welcomes, by practice and policy (Mission/Vision statement), every person regardless of race, class, or sexual orientation into the full life of the church, and;

First & Central has a long-standing practice of being open to allow the use of our building for a wide variety of services and programs as long as they are consistent with our mission and values, and;

First & Central wishes to celebrate and affirm commitments to faithfulness in all relationships, but there is currently no mechanism to affirm faithfulness for same-sex partners where marriage is not legal (State of Delaware) or appropriate (Presbyterian Church), and;

The Presbyterian *Book of Order* has ample support for establishing special services or occasions of worship for member nurturance or in support of life transitions; and there is no exclusion of same-sex commitment services provided it is clearly understood as not being a marriage, but rather a commitment to mutual support and faithfulness, and;

First & Central has had recent positive experiences of the value of expanding its programs and services to meet a broader range of needs and desires among the congregation (Services of Healing and Wholeness, Taize), and;

The Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church believes it can count on its pastor to evaluate the appropriateness of any requested service and assure that such service is designed and conducted with sensitivity to everyone.

Therefore,

We as the Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church authorize use of our building for Services of Commitment when such services:

1. celebrate faithful relationships;
2. have support of the pastor;
3. are designed and conducted with sensitivity to the values of the entire congregation; and
4. acknowledge the sacred nature of commitments made in this religious context.

Session gives responsibility for meeting these requirements to our pastor (in consultation with the Worship Council), as is true for other services of worship or celebrations such as funerals, weddings, and administration of sacraments. We take this action in our belief that, as part of its ministry, the church is called to support covenants that celebrate love, affirm commitment, and encourage fidelity. We also hope that this will remind us of other situations

(retirements, major career shifts, graduations, marriage recommitments) where we could bring the event into some church ritual to signify our celebration and support as a church community.

I. GUIDELINES FOR SAME-SEX “SERVICES OF COMMITMENT:”

A. Naming the Ceremony

1. Since the Presbyterian Church (USA) has stated that Presbyterian pastors may officiate at same-sex services of commitment and Sessions (governing bodies) of Presbyterian congregations may allow church properties to be used for the celebration of same-sex services of commitment if the pastor, the Session, and the couple understand that it is not a marriage; and since marriage is defined by the State and by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in language involving persons of opposite-sex; services for persons of same-sex are named “Services of Commitment” or “Holy Union Services.”
2. While the word “marriage” is not used in reference to same-sex services, these “Services of Commitment” or “Holy Union Services” are regarded as sacred covenants equal to the sacred covenants made in opposite-sex marriages and, thus, equally blessed in the sight of God and the church.
3. Because of the positions of our denomination, it is necessary that the couple use the language of “Service of Commitment” or “Holy Union” in their invitations and other materials related to the service.

B. Religious Affiliation of Couple

1. It is not required that couples be affiliated with First & Central Presbyterian Church in order to have a “Service of Commitment” here.
2. At least one member of the couple should identify themselves as Christian.
3. While the actual ceremony will occur in a Christian setting, an interfaith service may be planned, if appropriate.

C. The Service As Worship

1. “Services of Commitment” are services of worship and should have the dignity and integrity of worship. Therefore, “the press” and other media shall not be invited to cover the occasion as a news event or as a political statement.
2. The atmosphere surrounding the service should be sensitive to the religious nature and significance of the occasion.

D. Scheduling

1. The date and time of both the service and the rehearsal (if needed) must be set in consultation with the pastor performing the service.
2. It is expected that clergy on the staff of First & Central Presbyterian Church will perform all Services of Commitment (as is also true for weddings, baptisms, etc.).

3. We welcome the participation of other clergy. However, their participation must be cleared with the Pastor prior to the invitation being extended to clergy outside the congregation.
4. Because Services of Commitment are services of worship performed by the church, our facilities are not rented for services of non-members performed by clergy not associated with First & Central Presbyterian Church.

E. Counseling

1. Counseling must be arranged with the pastor performing the service. Ordinarily, this counseling shall include at least three meetings with the couple. Therefore, arrangements should be made at least three months prior to the day of the wedding.
2. It is the couple's responsibility to make themselves available for the counseling.

F. Music

1. All music arrangements must be made through First & Central Presbyterian Church's Minister of Music. The couple is responsible for contacting the Minister of Music as soon as possible after the date for the service has been set with the Pastor in order to insure the services of the Minister of Music and to arrange for a consultation on the selection of the music for the service.
2. Ordinarily, First & Central's Minister of Music will provide organ music for services. If other musicians are desired, the Minister of Music must approve them. Other musicians should not be invited until the Minister of Music has been consulted.
3. The use of vocal soloists or instrumentalists must be arranged and coordinated with First & Central's Minister of Music. Rehearsal times will be coordinated by the Minister of Music.
4. In selecting music (organ, vocal, etc.) it should be kept in mind that the Service of Commitment is a service of worship.

G. Photography

1. Flash photography is not permitted during the wedding service. The Pastor will be glad to remain after the service for posed photographs. Non-flash photographs during the service may be permitted, if arranged previously with the pastor.
2. If there is an official photographer (professional or volunteer), she/he must remain at the rear of the Sanctuary or Chapel (behind the last person in the congregation) or in the balcony at all times. The Pastor requests that the photographer meet with the pastor briefly before the ceremony to review the ground rules.

3. If videotaping is desired, the camera and other equipment must be placed in the balcony at the rear of the Sanctuary. A hand-held camera may be used at the rear of the Sanctuary or Chapel (behind the last person in the congregation). A fixed, unstaffed camera may be set up in the choir area to focus on the front. Additional lighting is not permitted.
4. Photographers and persons videotaping must stay out of the aisles and behind the congregation at all times.

H. Flowers

1. Simplicity is encouraged. The use of elaborate or excessive decoration is strongly discouraged. Use of sticky tape to attach flowers and/or other decorations to the pews is not permitted.
2. Flowers may not be placed on the Communion Table in the Sanctuary. Ordinarily arrangements are placed on the two side flower stands in the Sanctuary or one arrangement on the flower stand in the Chapel.
3. If the flowers are to be offered for the regular Sunday morning worship of the congregation of First & Central Presbyterian Church, the church office should be notified so that acknowledgement can be given in the worship bulletin for that Sunday.

I. Candles

1. Candelabra are available for use at weddings. Pew candles are also available for use in the center aisle.
2. All candles will be provided by the Church. (See appropriate fees.)

J. Time of Arrival on the Day of the Service

If the participants in the service do not dress at the Church, all persons in the official party (including the couple) must be at the Church 30 minutes prior to the service.

K. Miscellaneous

1. All fees should be paid in full at least one month prior to the day of the service.
2. The throwing of rice, birdseed, rose petals, confetti, or other items is not permitted inside or outside the church building.
3. For safety reasons, aisle runners are not permitted.

4. For safety reasons luminaries (candles in bags lining the walk and or stairs) are not permitted.
5. First & Central Presbyterian Church is not responsible for any articles left in our facilities after a service.
6. No alcoholic beverages are permitted on church property.
7. No smoking is permitted in our buildings.

L. Facilities for Reception

1. Memorial Hall (the church's fellowship hall located beneath the Sanctuary) may be reserved for receptions. This room has a capacity of 200 persons.
2. No alcoholic beverages are permitted on church property.
3. No smoking is permitted in our buildings.
4. The church's kitchen may be used by caterers for the preparation of the food for the reception. In such a case, the caterer must provide all kitchenware needed and must leave the facility as it was found.

II. INFORMATION

A. The Counseling

The counseling provides an opportunity for the pastor and the couple to become better acquainted. It is also an important time for the couple to discuss with the pastor many of the issues and concerns facing committed couples in our day. During these times of sharing, areas discussed will include: future plans and goals, mutual support and responsibilities, time and financial planning, family relationships, sexual relationship, adjustments after entering into commitment, and the role of religion and faith in such relationships.

B. The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is intended to assist in assuring that the participants in the service have clarified any questions regarding individual roles and responsibilities in the service, that the procession and recession are properly ordered, and that the ushers understand their responsibilities.

Please note that the Pastor directs the rehearsal.
Please do not bring wedding consultants or directors to the rehearsal.

III. FEES

A. Members of the Congregation

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|---|----------------------|---|
| 1. Sanctuary or Chapel: | no charge | |
| 2. Custodian: | \$100.00 | Rehearsal and Service |
| 3. Organist: | \$150.00 \$ 30.00 | Sanctuary service additional fee for each rehearsal with soloists or other musicians |
| 4. Soloist: | \$200.00 | (if arranged by Church) |
| 5. Trumpeter | \$225 | |
| 6. Pastor: | honarium | at member's discretion |
| 7. Use of Memorial Hall and or Kitchen: | no charge | (for reception) |
| 8. Candles: | \$50.00 | |

B. Non-Member Commitment Service Package Costs \$3,000 and includes the following:

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|----------------|------------|
| 1. Sanctuary | \$1,075.00 |
| 2. Custodian | \$200.00 |
| 3. Organist | \$400.00 |
| 4. Soloist | \$200.00 |
| 5. Trumpeter | \$225.00 |
| 6. Pastor | \$600.00 |
| 7. Coordinator | \$200.00 |
| 8. Candles | \$100.00 |

C. Required Deposit (Non-members only)

In order to assure that the date requested is held on the church calendar and on the calendars of the Pastor and Minister of Music, a deposit of one half the total cost of the commitment service package in the amount of **\$1,500.00** needs to be paid.

1. IN CASE OF CANCELLATION, DEPOSIT IS NOT REFUNDABLE!

2. Please Note: the deposit must be paid in order to reserve the date.

3. To pay deposit please write check to: "First and Central Presbyterian Church"

4. Payment of the balance of fees:

The remainder of all fees **MUST** be paid in full at least **ONE MONTH** prior to the service.