



Revised May 2008

Wedding Policies

First Baptist Sweetwater

Longwood, Florida

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Thank you for your inquiry about First Baptist Sweetwater hosting your wedding. Because of the number of inquires and varied requests, this policy has been provided for your information. It is not expected that all who read this policy will agree with every position taken. It however, does reflect the guidelines under which a wedding will take place on our campus. It is our desire that all who read this policy will appreciate our commitment to base these convictions squarely on the Word of God. Our pastors and church family are more interested in establishing Christian homes than officiating weddings. Therefore, the following guidelines serve as a basis for convictions:

- **Christian Faith** – It is required that the bride and groom be verifiable followers of Christ. As professing Christians, your life, attitude, and choices must represent those clearly articulated in the Bible. Foundational to your beginning a successful marriage is a common faith and reliance on the Lord as your Savior and teacher. 2 Corinthians 6:14 clearly says, *“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”* Our faithfulness to this basic Biblical truth does not negate our desire to meet with those desiring to become Christians.
- **Marriage Counseling** - It is required that the bride and groom agree to a minimum of four sessions with the officiating minister. The initial session should take place prior to announcing any specific wedding date or before any commitment to the use of facilities is granted on the part of the church. The wedding should not be announced until it is approved.
- **Previous Marriages** – Any couple in which one or both persons have been previously married, a written statement regarding the reasons / circumstances for the divorce must be provided. Each circumstance will be evaluated by our Leadership Team. Additional information may be requested.
- **Church Attendance** - It is required that the bride and groom attend church regularly and seek to grow in their understanding of Christian faith and family. We offer meaningful small group Bible Studies each week at FBS.
- **Sexual Purity** – Prior to the wedding, it is required that the bride and groom not live together and obey God's Word and standards of a pure, non-sexual relationship until marriage.
- **Ministerial Privilege** - Prior to the wedding, the officiating minister has the right and responsibility to delay or cancel the wedding and the Church's commitment to the wedding, if he deems, before God, that this union would not be in their best interest.
- **Minister's Fee** – For FBS members, there is no set fee.

These guidelines are based on convictions shared by our pastors. They are open to discussing any concerns applicants may have regarding them. Please know of their interest in you and God's blessings on those couples that choose to honor Him in their wedding preparation and celebration at First Baptist Sweetwater.

Member Wedding- Your wedding should be one of the most joyful events in your life. We want you to work with us to insure that God will be glorified on this special day. Your wedding is the result of sacrifice and hard work from many people. Your *careful* attention to these guidelines will go a long way toward insuring that your wedding day will be all that it should.

Your choice to be married at *First Baptist Sweetwater* is our evidence of your desire for God's blessings on your new union. God's Word is clear. He instructs Christians to be “equally yoked” to other Christians (2 Corinthians 6:14). This foundational word from God is our instruction. We understand and teach that marriage at FBS should be between believers only.

Our pastors and staff will work with you to make sure that your Christian wedding is a solemn, sacred, and holy celebration. There are many details that will need attention. Compliance with these policies will help us make sure that we fulfill our obligations. Thank you for your full cooperation.

Our Church family supports the pastoral commitment for Christian marriage counseling prior to your wedding. It is the responsibility of the officiating minister to provide counseling. Christian marriage counseling should be scheduled prior to announcing your wedding date and should be in process at least six (6) months prior to a planned day. Scheduling of these

sessions is the responsibility of the couple being married. Please plan on a minimum of four one-hour sessions realizing more may be required. Your first session should be scheduled within seven days of the request for your wedding. All subsequent counseling appointments should be scheduled Monday through Friday during office hours. Sometimes a small group session may be provided when peer couples are covering the same Biblical information. Our pastors assume a tremendous responsibility from God when they commit to unite a couple in Christian marriages. In most cases, a pastor may have at least two sessions before committing to officiate a wedding. God's Word mandates His standards of a pure, non-sexual relationship for engaged couples. Violation of these standards will result in postponement, cancellation of the wedding, or relocation to an alternate site.

Non-Member Wedding Request – We discourage couples, who have no member relationship, from requesting the use of the Church's facilities. Priority must be given to the approved ministry events and to those who have shared and sacrificed for this ministry. There have been some exceptions to this policy for extreme circumstances when deemed necessary by a minister. No such request would be granted or calendared more than twelve (12) months prior to the scheduled wedding date. All previous guidelines must be in full compliance. (Some consideration may be offered to former members, who left in good standing, who have a continued immediate family relationship with the Church). Request for one of our ministers to officiate your wedding will require verification of your standing and active participation from your present church.

Scheduling a Wedding Date on The Church Calendar

Church members may schedule facilities at their earliest convenience. Your wedding will be scheduled at a time that *does not* conflict with regular or already approved ministries of the Church. The weeks prior to and following Christmas, New Years, Easter, Vacation Bible School and SSSF (and other major calendared events) are very demanding times at FBS. We *discourage* the use of facilities during these celebrations. Guidelines for weddings during these and other scheduled times have more specific requirements and limitations for decorations. Please understand that we can offer no exceptions. Our experience has demonstrated the need for full compliance with this request.

There are several tasks, which need to be accomplished for scheduling these facilities. (1) Talk with our Wedding Coordinator. She is best qualified to answer your questions about facilities and schedules. She will check the Church Calendar and give you vital information to assist you. Complete the Wedding Compliance Form and return it to the Wedding Coordinator. She will finish her file and re-verify the availability of your requested date.

Early in the planning process, you are required to comply with the following:

(1) Contact our Church Office (407) 862-3893. While a Christian minister outside our staff is not precluded from officiating your wedding, our pastors are the official representatives of our Church family in all matters of ministry. Pastoral approval is necessary for outside ministers to officiate. A minister must be listed on the Wedding Compliance Form in order for the application to be considered.

(2) Contact the Music / Worship Ministry (407) 862-3893. They are to assist in the selection of music that will be appropriate for your Church wedding and reception at FBS. The Church has instructed our music staff to make all final decisions on music to insure that selections reflect worship, praise, and adoration for God. There are no exceptions to this Church mandated policy. (Occasionally, a couple may have a song they like very much that is special but not appropriate for a Church wedding. We appreciate music that is meaningful to you but ask that you enjoy it in some other environment.) Approval must be completed sixty (60) days prior to your wedding and before any printed material is processed.

Time of Events on the Wedding Day

Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, church holidays, during the month of December or times of other special events (SSSF and VBS) or after five o'clock (5 PM) on Saturday if the reception is to be held at the church. Weddings may be scheduled up to six o'clock (6 PM) if the reception is to be held elsewhere. Bridal parties who wish to use the Fellowship Hall following their off-campus wedding must vacate the facility no later than 9 o'clock in the evening. All applicable charges and fees are the same.

Fees and Payment Policies

We are so often asked to help brides with some of the "basics" of wedding preparation. Therefore, we have included some helpful ideas as you prepare. First, experience has demonstrated that your wedding will be more important to you and your families than to most that will participate or attend. As you plan your budget, remember that outside-of-the-family people involved in your wedding will probably expect to be financially compensated for their services to you. Some may travel to assist and may incur the expense (sitters for the rehearsal and ceremony, travel, motel etc.). Everyone will spend time and energy preparing for your wedding. As you budget, give attention to the consideration of musicians, minister, and others helping with "your day." In most cases, their services

are not required by the church and will probably take place on what would otherwise be considered their time off. Weddings can be expensive so plan carefully. The following are required:

- Deposit (For damages or overcharges. Balance will be returned within fifteen days) \$300.00

- Facilities Fee (Three hours)

Worship Center	\$300.00
Chapel	\$100.00
Fellowship Hall	\$150.00
Classroom	\$ 50.00

There will be an additional \$50.00 (per hour / portion) assessment beyond three hours.

- Wedding Coordinator
Rehearsal and Wedding *only* \$150.00
Reception (add) \$ 50.00
- Sound Technician \$ 85.00
- Candelabras \$ 40.00
- Custodial
Worship Center / Chapel * \$ 75.00
Rehearsal Dinner * \$ 75.00
Reception set-up and clean-up * \$ 75.00

* An additional \$25.00 per need request will be added for holiday events.

Please remember that all payments for facilities and services of FBS and personnel are to be paid two weeks prior to the Wedding. While we know that damages are never intentional, they do occur. The cost of damages will be the responsibility of the wedding couple. Damages must be repaired to their original condition in a timely manner with the cost passed on to the new couple. Your deposit will be used to cover initial costs of the damages. Thank you for understanding and helping us take care of what God has provided through His people.

When your request has been approved, please understand that the facilities requested are available on the day of the wedding. In some cases, the facilities could be available the day before for decorating. For Saturday night weddings, we request that you cooperate with our need to have the facilities clean and properly prepared for our Sunday ministries.

Florist, Caterer, Photographer, Video-photographer & Others

When you contract services of a florist, caterer, photographer, videographer or other professional, it is the couple's responsibility to insure that they receive and comply with the information and guidelines about the use of our facilities. Their compliance with these policies will insure that an intentional worship attitude is maintained. Each is fully responsible for their clean up.

Decorations

Your wedding coordinator and florist are available to advise you on decorations. We understand your desire for personal taste in decorating for the event. Final approval of all decorations is the responsibility of the Wedding Coordinator and/or Church Administrator. We do not allow any movement of the choir wall or its adjacent equipment including the orchestra music stands, etc. The wedding arrangements/decorations are limited to the congregation side of the modesty rail. Ample space is provided and decorations are limited to this area only. Pew decorations must not scar or damage the wood or painted areas by their method of attachment.

Flowers and Candles

Flowers and candles are beautiful but they can make a mess. The wedding coordinator has observed many weddings and can give some helpful suggestions. Only "chase candles" are allowed and care must be given to protect carpets under all candles. Plastic floor coverings are required. Any flower petals dropped or placed on the carpet must be silk. The "de-decorating" process must begin immediately following the wedding. Any decorations or flowers that the party wished to retain must be immediately taken or they will be taken to the dumpster for removal. Your florist or decorator is responsible for immediate removal of their items following the wedding. Our staff will immediately begin to prepare the worship center for the next day's ministry activities.

Photography and Video Photography

Photographs and video of your wedding will help you remember the joy of the day for years to come. You will want to spend time before the wedding day considering what poses you would like and plan this with the photographer.

There are **two** important matters we expect you to discuss with your photographers; (1) NO moving about the worship center during the worship ceremony to take pictures. (2) NO "flash" photography or spots during the worship ceremony. The photographer is welcomed to quietly take a few "available light" pictures from the back of the worship center during the ceremony. The last "flash" before the ceremony should be the bride walking down the aisle with her father. The next "flash" can be of the bride and groom exiting after they are presented to the congregation as "husband and wife."

The videographer is free to video the entire ceremony as long as it does not cause a distraction. If there is a desire for a camera to be located in the choir loft, behind the wedding party, it must be a stationary camera without an operator. The camera in the choir area should be well concealed.

Remember the Location!!

We are pleased to provide these worshipful facilities for your Christian wedding. We also have some wedding equipment that you may wish to use. Please use all of the equipment, facilities and property with sacred respect.

- Remove only furniture and furnishings as directed by the Wedding Coordinator.
- The use or possession of firearms, tobacco products, alcohol, and controlled substances on all Church property is not permitted.
- Only our tube-type "chase candles" will be used. Floor protection must be afforded and is the responsibility of the florist or wedding couple. Open flames are of great concern to the safety and welfare of your guests.
- Pew decorations must not scar or damage the wood or painted areas by their method of attachment.
- Flower petals dropped or placed for the bride must be artificial. Real petals stain carpets, and their oils leave a residue, which attract soil.
- Birdseed only (no rice or confetti) may be used to celebrate the couple's departure. No inside celebrations may take place--**outside only** please.
- No dancing is permitted in facilities related to the Church.
- We cannot be responsible for valuables left in dressing rooms during the wedding. Only bring items that you intend to wear.
- Only areas designated for weddings may be used for dressing. Please make sure those rooms are clean on your departure. **No food** in these rooms. Only water is permitted.