

# Wedding Policy

## Massanutten Presbyterian Church

### **Marriage in the Presbyterian Church (USA) as Expressed in the *Book of Order (W-4.9000)***

*Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community.*

*In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges.*

*If they meet the requirements of the civil jurisdiction in which they intend to marry, a couple may request that a service of Christian marriage be conducted by a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who is authorized, though not required, to act as an agent of the civil jurisdiction in recording the marriage contract. A couple requesting a service of Christian marriage shall receive instruction from the teaching elder, who may agree to the couple's request only if, in the judgment of the teaching elder, the couple demonstrates sufficient understanding of the nature of the marriage covenant and commitment to living their lives together according to its values. In making this decision, the teaching elder may seek the counsel of the session, which has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service.*

*The marriage service shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to this covenant and to the forms of Reformed worship, under the direction of the teaching elder and the supervision of the session (W-1.4004–.4006). In a service of marriage, the couple marry each other by exchanging mutual promises. The teaching elder witnesses the couple's promises and pronounces God's blessing upon their union. The community of faith pledges to support the couple in upholding their promises; prayers may be offered for the couple, for the communities that support them, and for all who seek to live in faithfulness.*

*A service of worship recognizing a civil marriage and confirming it in the community of faith may be appropriate when requested by the couple. The service will be similar to the marriage service except that the statements made shall reflect the fact that the couple is already married to one another according to the laws of the civil jurisdiction.*

*Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the session believes is contrary to the teaching elder's or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.*

## **Introduction**

In light of the understanding of Christian marriage expressed in the *Book of Order*, Massanutten Presbyterian Church offers the following directives and guidance as you plan your wedding. You will find information about logistical details, as well as some of the theological convictions to which we are committed. The staff of Massanutten Presbyterian Church is eager to help make your wedding a fitting service of worship as you commit your life to one another before God. Your careful attention to the following guidelines will help to ensure a day of celebration that gives glory to God.

Massanutten Presbyterian Church is happy that its staff and facilities can be a part of your wedding and wishes to provide an environment conducive to the genuine celebration of marriage. The Sanctuary (seating approximately 550) and the outdoor chapel (limited seating) are areas which have been thoughtfully and prayerfully prepared and dedicated for the worship of God. We ask that those using them be conscious of their purpose.

## **Who May Be Married at Massanutten Presbyterian Church**

To be married at Massanutten Presbyterian Church, at least one of the persons to be married must be baptized, and weddings are ordinarily restricted to members of the congregation or college students who regularly participate in the life of the congregation during their time in school. Additionally, you will be required to participate in premarital counseling, either with one of the pastors or with a certified pastoral counselor or therapist. Counseling is very important as you plan your ceremony and your future. It typically includes the theological and biblical understanding of marriage, communication skills, conflict resolution, and other issues you identify.

## **Reserving a Wedding Date**

Weddings are customarily held on Saturdays and not on holidays or holiday weekends. To reserve a wedding date at Massanutten Presbyterian Church, please contact our Office Manager at 540-434-6194 or [kleecy@massanuttenchurch.org](mailto:kleecy@massanuttenchurch.org). She will talk with you about the availability of your desired date, work with you to complete the required forms, and answer any questions you may have. She will also connect you with a Wedding Coordinator who will work closely with you as your wedding date approaches.

Please note that your wedding will not be finally confirmed on the church's calendar until you have completed all required forms, indicated your acknowledgment to be bound by these guidelines, and submitted a security deposit.

Once your request has been submitted, it will be sent to the Session of Massanutten Presbyterian Church for approval. The Session is responsible for approving the use of church property for all weddings.

## **Wedding Coordinator**

After the wedding date is confirmed, the Office Manager will set up an appointment with you to discuss Massanutten Presbyterian Church's wedding policies. Questions about arrangements, officiating clergy, music, fees, and use of the facilities will be discussed at this conference. The Office Manager and/or the Wedding Coordinator will be the main contacts for all questions relating to your wedding. All weddings and rehearsals will be supervised and directed by Massanutten's clergy and Wedding Coordinator. If an outside wedding consultant has been employed, we require that his or her involvement be limited to the reception and other non-church activities. Couples who desire to have non-Massanutten clergy assist in the service will provide the Wedding Coordinator with the officiate's name, title and complete address. After approval by Massanutten's session, an invitation will be sent to the guest officiate.

## **The Wedding Service**

Because you have decided to be married in a church, your wedding will be a service of worship honoring God in recognition of the love between two people. As Christians, we view marriage as a means of discipleship and seek to allow our relationship with Christ to form the pattern for the covenant of marriage. The vows of marriage will be made in response to the Word of God, in the context of prayer, and in the presence of a faith community. In consultation with the pastor, the liturgy for your service will be based on the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship and include scripture readings and a brief homily.

The pastors will consider special requests from the couple regarding the service itself, so long as the additions or alterations do not diminish the Christian understanding of marriage. If you desire that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be served, prior approval of the Session of the church is required, and provision should be made for serving the elements to all baptized persons who wish to partake.

## **Music**

Your wedding is a service of worship. The music selected for the wedding should embody the same high standards applied to the music chosen for Sunday morning worship. In keeping with the seriousness of the purpose of the occasion, yet reflecting its festive nature, the wedding music should serve to strengthen and deepen the meaning of the worship service.

While suggestions for appropriate music are welcome, the Pastor, in consultation with the Director of Music and Organist, will make final determination regarding the **choice** of music in the service.

Arrangement for securing an organist or other musicians for the service is your responsibility. Ordinarily the Massanutten organist plays for weddings in the sanctuary, but guest organists are welcomed with prior approval. If an outside organist is desired, the church organist will make arrangements for practice schedules and orientation to our church organ.

If the wedding service involves special music (i.e. soloists or instrumentalists other than the church organist), the sanctuary is reserved for their rehearsal with the organist 1 ½ hours before the service. Please take this into consideration when planning any photography before the wedding.

All music to be used in the service must be approved at least four weeks prior to the service.

### **Rehearsals**

Wedding rehearsals are customarily held the late afternoon or early evening the day before the wedding. They are scheduled in conjunction with the Pastor and Wedding Coordinator. The Pastor will ordinarily conduct the rehearsal with the assistance of the Wedding Coordinator and any other church staff. Your entire wedding party (readers, parents, ushers, and attendants) should ordinarily be present for the rehearsal to receive instructions. The couple should ensure the wedding party's timeliness as the rehearsal should require more than one hour to complete.

### **Building Access**

You will have use of designated areas within the church up to two hours prior to the start of the wedding and one hour after the wedding ends. Should more time be required, please consult with the Wedding Coordinator to determine whether an extension may be possible.

### **Decorations**

Because careful and prayerful labor has made the Sanctuary a place of worship, simple decorations that enhance the atmosphere of worship but do not intrude upon it are most appropriate. The church furniture may not be removed from the worship space. In the Sanctuary, the communion table, a symbol of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, shall have nothing placed upon it except the three pieces of communion silver (a chalice, plate, and pitcher) that are used on Sunday mornings.

Candelabra, which must be provided by a florist if desired, are permitted in the chancel area. If potted plants are used, vinyl covering must protect the flooring from moisture and staining. Flower arrangements should be placed on the flower stands provided. No flower petals or aisle cloths are permitted. No nails, tacks, pins, tape, screws, or wire may be used in any part of the building or fixtures. Any decorations placed by Massanutten in the Sanctuary for a certain liturgical season, should ordinarily remain in its place. The throwing of rice, flower petals, birdseed, or confetti is prohibited anywhere in the vicinity of the church. It is the couple's responsibility to inform the florist of these policies. Any questions regarding decorations should be directed to the Wedding Coordinator.

### **Photography and Videotaping**

Because the wedding is a worship service, no flash photographs are to be taken during the ceremony itself. The ceremony begins with the first note of the organ or instrumental voluntary and ends with the last note of the organ or instrumental voluntary. Non-flash photos by a designated wedding photographer may be taken from the rear of the Sanctuary. Stationary videotaping is permitted at locations approved by the Wedding Coordinator or Pastor. It is the couple's responsibility to inform the photographer/videographer of these policies.

### **Dressing Facilities**

Massanutten provides space for the couple and their attendants to prepare for the wedding. The Wedding Coordinator will direct the wedding party to the appropriate locations and will be available to assist as needed. All rooms used must be cleared of all belongings immediately after the wedding or reception (if held at the church). The church assumes no responsibility for returning garments and belongings left by the wedding party.

### **Sound System**

Use of the sound system for a wedding or reception taking place at Massanutten must be pre-arranged with the Wedding Coordinator and will require the use of an operator trained and compensated by the church.

### **Receptions**

The Fellowship Hall may be used for a reception. It should be reserved when your wedding date is placed on the church calendar. No alcoholic beverages may be served. No rice, confetti, or birdseed may be thrown on church property.

All food and drink must be consumed in the area reserved for the reception—that is, the kitchen, fellowship hall, or outside. The kitchen and reception area must be cleaned and cleared of unused food, drinks, etc. immediately following the reception. The families of the wedding couple shall be responsible to assure that the kitchen is clean before departing.

The Wedding Coordinator will consult with you about the time available before the reception that the Fellowship Hall will be available to you for decorating purposes.

Immediately following the reception, all decorations must be removed and all furnishings returned to the order in which they were found. Light custodial assistance will be provided and compensated by the church to ensure that the building is ready for use by the congregation on Sunday morning.

### **Security**

Massanutten will not be responsible for the security of automobiles or any other personal property of the wedding party or guests.

**License**

A marriage license from a circuit court within Virginia is required for marriage at Massanutten Presbyterian Church. Ordinarily couples desiring to be married here obtain their license from the Rockingham County Courthouse. Information regarding hours, fees, and proper means of identification needed may be obtained by calling (540) 564-3126. A wedding at Massanutten cannot take place without a license. Please give the license to the officiating clergy at the time of the rehearsal. The officiating clergy is the only person who signs the license following the wedding service. Massanutten will be responsible for returning the signed license to the appropriate court office. You may wish to record the license number in your personal records and take note of how you may acquire a duplicate copy.

**Fees**

Massanutten Presbyterian Church has determined the following fees for weddings on the church property. Each fee covers all associated expenses, including utilities costs, and stipends for cleaning services, sound coordinator, wedding coordinator, and organist.

Sanctuary Only	\$800.00
Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall	\$1000.00
Outdoor Chapel	\$150.00

We also require an additional security deposit in the amount of \$500. (This will be returned to you following the wedding if no damage is found.)

Payment to any additional musicians hired will be the responsibility of the couple and should be made directly to those hired.

Weddings are a part of the normal responsibility of the pastor and no fee is charged to Massanutten Presbyterian Church members for the pastors' services. Families wishing to offer an honorarium as a token of appreciation are free to do so, but it is not a requirement.

Checks payable to Massanutten Presbyterian Church are due two weeks prior to the wedding date. (Reminder: The Security Deposit will have been submitted with your completed forms.)

**Conclusion**

If you have additional questions or concerns, please contact the Wedding Coordinator. If you live in the area, we hope that Massanutten Presbyterian Church will become or continue to be your church home after your wedding—a place to seek God's Spirit and truth through worship, education, friendship, and service to God. We wish you every joy and blessing.