

Your Wedding at Forreston Grove Church

Congratulations on your engagement! We are happy that you've come to Forreston Grove Church for your wedding. It's a privilege for us to work with you and we hope to make this a time of joy and Christian love. We hope that preparing for your marriage and planning the wedding itself will enrich and bless your lives and give you the strength and knowledge of God's love upon which to form a firm foundation for many years together. This guide is designed to assist you as you plan your wedding at the church. Questions that remain after you review this document can be directed to the pastor or secretary at (815) 938-3605.

Marriage According to the Bible

We believe that marriage is the exclusive, covenantal union of one man and one woman, which union was designed by God (*Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6*). In keeping with our religious convictions and the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in America (*Westminster Confession of Faith 24.1; PCA Book of Church Order 59-3*), we will faithfully follow this scriptural definition of marriage in the teachings and practices of this church. Therefore, this church will not officiate, solemnize, perform, or host a marriage or marriage-like ceremony involving anything other than the union of one man with one woman as instituted by God.

Although marriage is for the enjoyment of people of all faiths (including those who don't claim any belief at all), Christians should only marry other Christians (*2 Corinthians 6:14-15; Westminster Confession of Faith 24.3*).

Special considerations for those who are remarrying or currently living together are addressed on page five of this policy.

Initial Arrangements

A wedding at Forreston Grove Church is arranged by first contacting the pastor and arranging for an initial conference where counseling information and general arrangements are shared. After the initial appointment, the dates of the wedding and rehearsal should be cleared through the session and finalized with the pastor at least three months in advance.

Ordinarily, the pastor of Forreston Grove will officiate at your wedding. However, arrangements may be made in special circumstances for other Christian ministers to assist in the ceremony with the session's approval. The bride and groom are invited to participate with the minister in planning the service to reflect both the Christian understanding of marriage and individual preferences.

A premarital counseling program is required for all couples marrying at Forreston Grove. The pastor will discuss this with you at your initial conference.

Fees

No fee is charged for the use of the church property for your wedding. Permission for use is granted on a limited basis, and this permission extends to friends of the church who will respect

the use of its properties and policies. A \$100 security deposit is required, which will be fully refunded within one week of the wedding if the facility has been cleaned and left undamaged.

Suggested honoraria are as follows:

Minister \$150

Musicians \$100

Sound Technician \$50

The Wedding Service

A wedding at Forreton Grove is a Christian ceremony of worship and celebration in which two people are joined together as one. Because of this, all aspects of the service should be of an appropriate, sacred character. The music selected should embody the same high standards applied to the music generally chosen for church worship. Wedding music should focus on God and emphasize the faith of the Christian community rather than solely romantic love and sentimentality.

An organist and/or pianist may be available for your wedding, and should be contacted as soon as the wedding date is set. Please contact the church pastor for the accompanists' contact information. Guest musicians are also permissible with the approval of the pastor.

The Lord's Supper (communion) will not be administered at Forreton Grove Church during wedding services. In accordance with the PCA Book of Church Order, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are not to be administered privately (*BCO 56-2*). Since weddings are private services (by invitation only), the sacraments cannot be administered.

Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use

In keeping with fire regulations, state and local ordinances, and church policies, tobacco products (including electronic cigarettes) and the serving or consumption of alcoholic beverages are prohibited in the church building or on the church grounds. Additionally, any member of the wedding party who, in the judgment of the pastor, is under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the day of the wedding will not be permitted to participate in the service.

Seating

The sanctuary seats a maximum of 250 people. There are 14 pews on each side. It is generally safe to figure 7-8 people per pew. Additional, shorter pews in the overflow seat 5-6 people per pew. If additional seating is needed, you may want to consider setting up chairs in the balcony.

The church is handicap accessible, including an elevator that services the basement (fellowship hall) and ground level (entryway and sanctuary).

Programs

If wedding bulletins are desired, the couple is responsible for purchasing them. If you would like the church secretary to format and print the bulletins, all information should be submitted to her a minimum of two weeks prior to the wedding.

Sound system

The sanctuary sound system shall only be operated by one of Forreston Grove's sound technicians. If you would like an audio recording of your wedding service, we are happy to provide you a copy at no cost.

Decorations

Decorations should be in good taste and express proper dignity for the church setting. The flowers, candles, unity candle, etc. are the bride and groom's responsibility.

Two adjustable candelabra are available for your use at the church. They can be found in the closet behind the sanctuary grand piano. Each candelabra holds 7 candles. If you wish to use the candelabra, you should purchase fourteen, 12-15-inch candles. We recommend no-drip candles. If using regular candles, there are two plastic sheets that should be placed under the candelabra so wax doesn't drip onto the carpet.

There are also two candle lighters with adjustable wicks available for your use. It's your responsibility to bring a pocket lighter or matches to light them during the wedding.

Altar vases, flower vases and stands are also available for your use. Flowers should be placed on stands and protective material should be placed beneath the arrangements. Flowers may also be placed on the organ and altar as long as protective material is used underneath.

A wedding banner is also available for display in the sanctuary. It's stored at the bottom of the stairs behind the grand piano, and is typically hung on the wall by the organ.

It is your responsibility to obtain ribbons for pews or an aisle runner if you desire these items. These can typically be obtained from a florist. The aisle runner generally starts at the bottom step at the front of the sanctuary and runs to the last pew (52 feet) or to the wall in the overflow (80 feet). It's a good idea to bring pins to attach the runner to the step at the front of the sanctuary.

A kneeling bench is also available for your use.

For all decorations, please only use tape that contains rubber-based adhesive to attach items to walls, pews, candelabra, etc. No nails, thumbtacks or wire should be used.

If you'd like to leave some of your flowers at the front of the sanctuary for the Sunday morning service following your wedding, you're welcome to do so. Please contact the church secretary to inform her of your plans.

Dressing rooms

Several rooms are available for the use of the bride and her attendants as well as the groom and his attendants. The rooms typically used for this purpose are the Sunday School room next to the library in the southwest corner of the church, and the Sunday School rooms in the basement at the bottom of the stairs.

Reception

If you choose to have your wedding reception at the church, you may do so downstairs in fellowship hall. Approximately twenty, 8-foot banquet tables and plenty of chairs are available for your use. You're responsible for setting these up in an arrangement that fits your needs.

Rehearsal

A wedding rehearsal is generally held on the evening preceding the wedding. All members of the wedding party — including ushers, musicians, and parents of both the bride and groom — should plan to be present for the rehearsal.

Cleaning

It is your responsibility to see that the building is cleaned after your wedding and that all equipment is left in the place and condition in which it was found. (Flowers or decorations that have been pre-approved by the pastor or secretary to be used for the Sunday service may be left up until Monday.) If necessary, use a hot blow dryer to remove all wax from the candelabra before putting them away. All garbage should be disposed of in the dumpster behind the church.

If you prefer to hire the church janitor to clean up after the wedding, there is a \$100 cleaning fee. If you would like to take this option, please inform us at least 60 days out from your wedding to ensure availability. Unless you have made prior arrangements for the church janitor to clean afterwards, a failure to clean the property will result in forfeiture of the \$100 security deposit.

Special considerations for those who have experienced a past divorce:

Divorce is a painful and unfortunate reality for many couples. While a past divorce does not automatically disqualify you from remarriage, this is an area that will be addressed in depth during both the initial appointment with the pastor and your premarital counseling.

In the case of remarriage after divorce, only Scripturally-sanctioned grounds for remarriage can be considered. God allows for remarriage according to these conditions, as set forth in His Word:

- a. You may remarry if your former spouse is deceased (*Romans 7:3; 1 Corinthians 7:39*).
- b. If your former spouse has remarried. Regardless of the reasons for the divorce or who was the offending party, if remarriage has occurred, the marital union is permanently broken. Marriage could never occur between the parties (*Deuteronomy 24:1-4*). Reconciliation is therefore impossible and the remaining former partner is eligible to remarry.
- c. If it is determined by the session of Forreston Grove that you were the offended party in a biblical divorce. The Bible provides two grounds for divorce:
 1. Your former spouse was unfaithful (*Matthew 19:9*). Marital unfaithfulness means sexual immorality that breaks the one-flesh union, such as adultery.
 2. Your former spouse was an unbeliever and deserted the marriage (*1 Corinthians 7:10-16*). Desertion means physical abandonment or sins that are tantamount in extremity and consequence to actual desertion. The Bible does not permit divorce on merely inward, emotional, and subjective reasons (i.e. irreconcilable differences).

In most cases, we ask that a divorce decree be final for at least one year before seeking remarriage.

Special considerations for couples living together:

Living together prior to marriage is increasingly common in our society. The Bible, however, reserves and celebrates the joys of sex and daily life together for marriage (*Genesis 2:24-25; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 13:4*). Living together or engaging in sex prior to marriage is contrary to God's will and ultimately harmful to establishing a home that desires to honor the Lord in all things.

If a couple is living together and wishes to get married at Forreston Grove, there are two available options:

1. The couple can decide to live separately and refrain from sex until marriage.
2. If this is not agreeable or is impractical, you may choose to marry immediately in a simple, private ceremony. This can be officiated by our pastor or a civil official. A large, public service blessing the marriage can be held at Forreston Grove at a later date.

Our pastor is happy to answer any questions you may have during your initial appointment.