



**Mount Pleasant
Presbyterian Church**

**MOUNT PLEASANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WEDDING POLICY
2025**

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(Please read in entirety prior to calling church)

We welcome everyone, and are excited to help you take the next step in your commitment to one another and wish to have God sanctify your marriage. The officers, staff and congregation of Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church are delighted that you are considering the use of the church and its staff for your wedding service. This booklet should answer many of your questions about getting married at MPPC, but please contact our office if you have concerns that are not addressed here, or which need further explanation.

Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church (MPPC) takes marriage seriously, especially the worship that marks marriage. The Session (governing body) of the church is responsible for weddings, but since they cannot review plans for every wedding at MPPC, oversight is assigned to the Worship Ministry Team, which is solely responsible for the worship service, and to the church's Administrative and Finance departments, which handle the use of church facilities and the billing and receipt of all wedding-related fees. This booklet provides information from each of those areas. You will see several references in this booklet to The Book of Order, which is the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It governs all we do as Presbyterian Christians or tells us who is responsible for answering questions it does not address.

Let us begin with The Book of Order's opening statement on marriage:

In Baptism, each Christian is claimed in the covenant of God's faithful love. 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. (W-4.06 – Book of Order 2019/2021)

PLANNING AHEAD

Couples should reserve the church facilities and staff for their wedding at the earliest possible time. Our church is a popular venue for weddings, so avoid disappointment and contact the office soon after your engagement. The Senior Pastor must approve all dates.

We suggest a maximum of 16 persons in the wedding party (in addition to the couple and any small children). More than 16 may block the view of those seated in the pews, especially parents and grandparents.

The church has the right to cancel any events due to natural disaster or crisis. In the

event of a natural disaster or crisis (i.e., hurricane, earthquake, fire, etc.), please check the church website for details and cancelations – <http://www.mppc.net>. It is the responsibility of

the bride and groom to contact guests and vendors (i.e., florist, caterer) to notify them of any changes.

In the event that a wedding must be cancelled, every effort will be made to reschedule, but no refunds will be made. 

RESERVING THE CHURCH AND STAFF

The church office will begin the process of reserving the sanctuary once your completed application form has been approved. Try to be as specific as possible in your answers. We realize that being both early and exact is not easy but do the best you can. Sunday weddings are discouraged unless there are extenuating circumstances.

We can have two weddings on the same day, provided they are scheduled a minimum of four hours apart. **The church is available two hours before and two hours after the start of the wedding.** This is required to allow florists to clean up after the first wedding and set up for the second one. There may only be one non-member wedding per day.

If there is more than one wedding scheduled for a given day, the Wedding Coordinator will gladly provide you with the name and address of those being married on the same day in the event you would like to share flowers and/or other items.

Please note that reserving church facilities will not automatically reserve certain church staff. The pastor, organist, and sexton must be reserved separately and cannot be committed without consulting them first. The church Wedding Coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and the wedding. 

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Marriage is not only a covenant relationship between a couple that is recognized by the church, but a contract recognized by the state. Therefore, you are required to have a license issued by the appropriate officer of the court. In South Carolina, you may obtain a marriage license in any county seat in the state. South Carolina does not require a blood test but does have a 24-hour waiting period between the time you apply for a license and the time the license is issued.

ONE WORD OF CAUTION: The marriage license bureau considers the twenty-four-hour period as the full day between the day you apply for the license and the day you pick it up. In other words, if you apply for the license on Monday, the 24-hour waiting period is Tuesday and you can pick up the license on Wednesday.

The license will be issued in three copies, each of which must be signed. One copy will be given to you on the day of the wedding, or it can be mailed to you the following week. That copy is considered a certified copy. The church office will send the other two copies to the court to be recorded. You are responsible for obtaining the marriage license. The marriage license should be delivered to the church office at least one week prior to the rehearsal. 

COUNSELING SERVICES

1. Meetings with Officiating Pastor

In preparation for the marriage service, the pastor asked to lead the service shall provide for a discussion with the couple concerning:

- The nature of their Christian commitment, assuring that at least one is a professing Christian;
- The legal requirements of the state;
- The privileges and responsibilities of Christian marriage;
- The nature and form of the marriage service;
- The vow and commitments they will be asked to make;
- The relationship of these commitments to their lives of discipleship;
- The resources of the faith and the Christian community to assist them in fulfilling their marriage commitments.

To meet this requirement and because the Session believes it is important, the couple is asked to meet with the officiating MPPC pastor or his/her designee (if the couple reside out of town) several times before the ceremony. The pastor may suggest or require further meetings. It is also the prerogative of the pastor to decline to perform the wedding if, after consultation with the couple, it is judged that the marriage is unwise.

2. If You Have Been Divorced

Couples planning to be married in a religious ceremony often ask whether a given church will perform weddings for those whose previous marriages ended in divorce. In brief, most times we do.

In the Presbyterian Church (USA), the matter of remarrying divorced persons is left to each pastor's discretion. Under most circumstances, our pastors have agreed to perform the ceremony for divorced people and to make the facilities of the church available for that purpose. This does not mean that the pastors of MPPC take marriage vows less seriously than other pastors. It does mean that our pastors take the matter of forgiveness very seriously indeed.

For those who are divorced, please do not be surprised or offended if the pastor is quite

pointed in questioning you. The simple fact is that people change ever so slowly, if at all, and it is easy for well-intentioned people to repeat mistakes in more than one marriage.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY AND PARTICIPANTS

1. Music for Weddings as Worship

In keeping with the requirement that weddings at MPPC are conducted as an act of worship, the expectation is that all wedding music, both instrumental and vocal, will be sacred music.

Responsibility for selection of music for worship and weddings at MPPC is assigned by the Session, through its Worship Ministry Team, to the MPPC Director of Music Ministries or Associate Director of Music.

The Worship Ministry Team, in turn, has secured the services of professional church musicians who will work with couples to select the music they would like at their wedding, and to suggest appropriate music and/or to advise them on the appropriateness of their requests. In all events, every effort will be made to assure that you are pleased with the final selections.

While MPPC does not have staff soloists, there are a number of solo voices in the choirs. The church musician will tell you how you may contact them, if you wish. The church musician also will be happy to work with a soloist of your choice for an additional fee. Additional fees will apply if you request the harpsichord or have several soloists (see page 11).

2. Liturgy for Weddings as Worship

The only requirement of the Presbyterian Church (USA) regarding liturgy for weddings is that weddings be conducted as acts of worship. In other words, the denomination does not have a prescribed ceremony that must be used. MPPC agrees with that requirement and celebrates the freedom it provides.

As is true of all worship services, the focal point of the wedding ceremony will always be the God who has called us to worship and on whom the community of faith is calling to bless your marriage.

The pastor who will lead worship will provide you with suggested liturgies and other liturgical resources, ranging from traditional to contemporary. If desired, the pastor will also assist you in creating a worship service that is uniquely your own.

We understand and acknowledge that our wedding ceremony shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to the forms of Reformed worship and under the direction of the minister of Word and Sacrament and the supervision of the session. _____ 

3. Wedding Coordinator

MPPC has a Wedding Coordinator trained in the logistics of the wedding service. With the pastor, s/he will assist at both the rehearsal and the wedding service whether or not you have your own contracted wedding coordinator.

The Wedding Coordinator is not involved with flowers, photography, decorations, invitations, or the reception. The Wedding Coordinator will not be assigned to a wedding when there is no wedding party beyond the couple or no formal rehearsal.

4. Guest Pastors

The Session, through its Worship Ministry Team, has assigned responsibility for worship at weddings to the pastors of this church. One of them will be responsible for conducting the wedding ceremony. If there is a pastor from the Reformed Tradition who is a friend or relative of the couple, under certain circumstances the MPPC pastor who is officiating at your wedding may ask the Session to invite the friend to participate in the worship service. The MPPC officiant will do the majority of the service, including the vows, and will sign the marriage license. The guest pastor will be assigned appropriate parts of the service.

5. Guest Musicians

If the couple wishes someone other than the church organist to accompany worship at the wedding, the church organist is often willing to invite the guest musician to do so. Guest soloists (see #1 above) and other instrumentalists may also be invited to participate in leading worship. In all events, however, the MPPC Director of Music Ministries is the person assigned responsibility for final approval of all music selections.

6. Rehearsal

If there is to be more than one attendant each for the couple, it is advisable to have a rehearsal for the wedding ceremony. Most often the rehearsal is scheduled for 5:00 p.m. the evening before the wedding. All those in the wedding party plus as many of the honored guests as practical should attend the rehearsal.

Expect the rehearsal to last approximately one hour. Please arrive promptly at the appointed time since more than one rehearsal may be scheduled in a single evening. Couples will be alerted if another wedding rehearsal at another time will take place.

7. Photographers

MPPC understands the significance of photographing what will surely be one of the most important days of your life. At the same time, we believe it is important to protect the dignity and reverence of worship at MPPC.

To strike a balance between those sometimes conflicting concerns, and on recommendation of the Worship Ministry Team and approval by the Session, MPPC allows still photographs to be taken before the worship service begins and after the worship service ends. Worship begins when the presiding pastor enters the sanctuary and ends when the presiding pastor leaves the sanctuary. During the worship service, pictures may only be taken in the narthex of the church through the windows in the doors or in the rear balcony if no guests are seated in the balcony.

Videotaping is allowed ONLY from the BALCONY over the narthex where there is a space for a noiseless video camera. Due to copyright laws, no live streaming videos are allowed. No additional lighting is allowed. No flash pictures are permitted in the sanctuary during the ceremony. The wedding party can assemble for photos before or after the ceremony. This regulation includes professional photographers, non-professional photographers and guests.

Photographers should plan to speak with the Wedding Coordinator prior to worship so there will be no misunderstanding of this regulation.

8. Childcare

Any childcare provided by MPPC is for MPPC ministry use only and shall be governed by the MPPC Childcare Policy. Otherwise, no childcare will be provided by MPPC or allowed on the premises. When minors are present on MPPC's campus, it is required that they be under responsible adult supervision and adhere to MPPC's Child protection policy.

9. Programs

If a program is to be distributed to the worshippers, the pastor must view this before it is printed. The church does not print programs.

10. Notes for Ushers

1. Be present at least one hour before the service begins.
2. Be assured dress is proper and have boutonnieres pinned on. Designated ushers should light the candles (dripless, mechanical) 30 minutes before the service.
3. Reserve the correct number of pews for the couple's families.
4. Traditionally usher women on your right arm. If two women are together, use two ushers to seat them.
5. Traditionally an usher does not offer his arm to a man unless he is feeble and needs help. The usher does walk in front of a male guest as he shows him to his seat.
6. If several couples arrive together and there is a shortage of ushers at the time, an usher offers his right arm to the eldest woman and the other couples follow, women walking first. The usher then seats the couples together.
7. Usher teenage girls but not small children, who should walk behind their parents.
8. Line up on the left in the narthex so that you can offer your right arm to each female guest as she arrives.
9. Ushers should speak to guests in hushed voices.
10. Make sure you know your assignment in seating the mothers. Traditionally the mother of the bride is the last seated and the first escorted out. No other person is escorted to a seat after the mothers are seated. Late arrivals should take their seats in the balcony.

CHURCH FACILITIES

The Sanctuary

The MPPC sanctuary seats 500 guests comfortably in pews, with 300 persons on the main level and 200 more in each of the two balcony galleries. There is limited, additional space for folding chairs. A small balcony over the narthex can seat 15.

The sanctuary is equipped with a thirteen-rank tracker pipe organ as well as a German two-manual harpsichord by D. Jacques Way and a Yamaha concert grand piano.

Decorations

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should be appropriate to the place of worship, enhance the worshiper's consciousness of the reality of God, and reflect the integrity and simplicity of Christian life.

Reputable florists will respect the regulations meant to protect our sanctuary and its furnishings from fire or marring. Proper precautions must be taken (no use of thumb tacks, duct tape, staples, etc.) to protect the furniture and floor when candles, potted plants, and flowers are used. The florist will confirm with the church office as to the best time to set up and remove decorations to avoid conflict with church programs.

It is the florist's responsibility to remove all decorations from the church immediately after the ceremony. Any person or firm disregarding these rules may be deprived of future access.

Florists need to know several things:

1. Only dripless, mechanical candles may be used.
 2. The church owns candle lighters but not candelabra.
 3. The window ledges are too narrow for candles or other decorations.
 4. To decorate the windows, stands are required.
 5. The communion table, baptismal font, pulpit chairs and pulpit may be moved.
 6. The use of a "unity candle" is not allowed.
 8. If flowers are used as pew markers it is best to have them affixed by a bow or ribbon. If by any other method, please be sure to measure the pews beforehand.
 9. Christmas/Easter season weddings have special considerations.
- The church is decorated and may not be altered. Flowers should remain in place as much as possible.

Dressing Rooms

MPPC does not have a designated dressing room for the wedding party. However, the church Parlor and the restrooms in the Fellowship Hall are available for use.

After the wedding party is dressed, the Parlor will be available solely for the purpose of waiting for the ceremony to begin.

Cleaning the Church

The Wedding Party is responsible for leaving the church facilities clean, orderly and arranged for the next function. Since most weddings are on Saturday, this requirement can be readily understood and appreciated. It is mandatory to employ the church sexton, who is scheduled separately by the church office, to provide cleaning services. If you reserve the Fellowship Hall, the sexton will empty garbage and trash containers only; the kitchen itself is not available for use by outside caterers.

Rice is not to be used inside or outside the buildings. Rice can cause a guest to slip, and if it becomes wet, is difficult to clean up. Many couples elect to use birdseed instead since birds are glad to help with the cleanup. All other novelties such as bubbles, candles, etc. must be used outside on the sidewalk beyond the front porch.

Alcohol and Tobacco

No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church premises. All MPPC buildings have been designated as smoke free.

Smoke free & alcohol-free 

FEES

MPPC Members

MPPC members who choose to have their wedding service at the church do not pay a fee for the use of the Sanctuary. Members of MPPC are those who meet the following criteria:

- Are on the membership roll of our church for at least a year*; or
- Are the child or grandchild of an active church member;
- All other relationships/circumstances/considerations must be approved by Worship Ministries and the Senior Pastor

*For newer members, additional wedding fees may apply for one year after joining MPPC. The Senior Pastor has the discretion to consider worship participation of new members prior to their joining day in determining any additional fees, which will be confirmed in writing when the wedding request is approved. (See FEES section below)

Fee Notes

As of January 1, 2017, the following fees are in effect (breakdown on page 11):

- Honorarium to the officiating pastor (for premarital counseling, the rehearsal, and the wedding service)
- Sexton (for Sanctuary and Parlor preparation and cleaning)
- MPPC Organist (see Guest Musicians)
- Wedding Coordinator (to assist in the rehearsal and wedding)
- Additional fees will be assessed for harpsichord, extra musical rehearsal for soloists

Note that there are additional costs to use our Fellowship Hall for a rehearsal dinner or reception. To reserve this space, contact the church offices to determine its availability and costs.

A non-refundable deposit of \$500 will be required after your wedding application is approved but before the date can be reserved on our church calendar. This deposit will go toward the cost of the wedding. For non-members, an additional non-refundable \$500 will be required. (Both may be subject to refund if cancelation is made 6 months before the reserved date.)



Please contact Jill Chapin in the church office (843) 884-4612 or jchapin@mpppc.net with any questions, to check available dates or to request an application.

SIGN/ INITIAL AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO MPPC

Summary Agreement Signatures

(please initial the summaries from pages 3, 4, 5, 9 & 10 at each arrow ←)

From Page 3: In the event that a wedding must be cancelled, every effort will be made to reschedule, but no refunds will be made. _____ ←

Please note that reserving church facilities will not automatically reserve certain church staff. The pastor, organist, and sexton must be reserved separately and cannot be committed without consulting them first. The church Wedding Coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and the wedding. _____ ←

The license will be issued in three copies, each of which must be signed. One copy will be given to you on the day of the wedding, or it can be mailed to you the following week. That copy is considered a certified copy. The church office will send the other two copies to the court to be recorded. You are responsible for obtaining the marriage license. The marriage license should be delivered to the church office at least one week prior to the rehearsal. _____ ←

From Page 4: You are responsible for obtaining the marriage license. The marriage license should be delivered to the church office at least one week prior to the rehearsal. _____ ←

From Page 5: We understand and acknowledge that our wedding ceremony shall be conducted in a manner appropriate to the forms of Reformed worship and under the direction of the minister of Word and Sacrament and the supervision of the session. _____ ←

From Page 9: No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church premises. All MPPC buildings have been designated as smoke free. **Smoke free & alcohol-free** _____ ←

From Page 10: A non-refundable deposit of \$500 will be required after your wedding application is approved but before the date can be reserved on our church calendar. This deposit will go toward the cost of the wedding. For non-members, an additional non-refundable \$500 will be required. (Both may be subject to refund if cancelation is made 6 months before the reserved date.) _____ ←

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