WEDDING POLICY

Eastbridge Presbyterian Church

Guidelines and Procedures

April 11, 2016

The celebration of Christian marriage is a momentous occasion in the lives of all involved, and a time to give praise and thanks to the God who has given marriage to us for our welfare and happiness. To ensure the joy and the dignity of such an occasion, the Session of Eastbridge Presbyterian Church has adopted certain policies and directives concerning weddings solemnized in the church.

# PARTICIPANTS

Only marriages conforming to biblical standards will be hosted on the property and in the facilities of Eastbridge Presbyterian Church. Also, pastors and staff may only participate in weddings and or solemnize marriages that conform to biblical standards. These standards are set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 24, entitled, “Of Marriage and Divorce.”

By the design of God the Creator, marriage is to be exclusively between one biological man and one biological woman (cf. Genesis 1:26-2:25, and corroborated by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6) where ‘biological man’ and ‘biological woman’ are each defined by different and unique genetic genotypes gained at conception and who thereby possess different and unique sex-linked traits that will always be expressed by the native genome of each gender (Appendix A is a brief scientific treatise on this subject and will be supplied on request). Thus, gender reassignment of any type cannot meet the definition of a ‘biological man’ or a ‘biological woman.’ Any individuals who have undergone any type of gender reassignment therapy must declare this to the pastor at the initial interview, and will not be eligible for marriage at Eastbridge Presbyterian Church.

Only members of Eastbridge Presbyterian Church who are in good standing may use Eastbridge’s facilities for weddings. The adult children of members may be married in the church or by its pastoral staff, provided they meet all other qualifications for marriage as set forth in this policy. Exceptions to this may be approved by the session on a case by case basis.

A wedding may be scheduled only after the pastor has performed an initial interview with the couple. Once it has been determined that the couple is eligible for marriage in the church, the couple may have the wedding and rehearsal dates placed on the church calendar, making allowance for the time required for premarital counseling (see below) to be completed first. Dates may be tentatively reserved prior to this meeting, but plans should not be firmly made until the pastor has confirmed the dates with the couple. **Upon approval of the wedding and confirmation of the date a non-refundable deposit of $150 will reserve the date. (See total fee and purpose of the fees at the end of this document). Eastbridge does not take reservations for weddings more than one year prior to the wedding. Further, Eastbridge limits the number of weddings to two per quarter. Exceptions to this may be approved by the session on a case by case basis.**

The pastor shall have the right and privilege of refusing to officiate at any ceremony deemed to be in conflict with his moral and spiritual convictions.

Ministers other than those of Eastbridge Presbyterian Church are to be approved by the Session, and shall be of a denomination and/or of such personal reputation as are compatible with the Presbyterian and Reformed faith.

Any request for marriage by someone who has been previously divorced must be reviewed by a pastor of Eastbridge Presbyterian Church. If the pastors decision is contested, final approval will rest in the hands of the Session and will be in line with the summary of the Scripture’s teaching on divorce and remarriage as set forth in The Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 24.

If a couple is living together or pregnant at the time a request for marriage is made, the pastor, and the Session where appropriate, will work with the couple to determine the proper course of action. The objective in cases like these is to offer sound counsel on how to be obedient to God under the circumstances. This counsel may involve asking a couple to separate for a time to demonstrate the fruits of repentance.

## COUNSELING

The intended couple will be required to meet with the pastor for at least four 90-minute counseling sessions (or its equivalent) prior to the wedding. Entering into a pre-marital counseling arrangement with the pastor should not be construed to be an agreement by the pastor to perform the ceremony. The decision to perform the wedding may be made by the pastor at any point during the counseling process.

Any costs incurred during pre-marital counseling for materials and books will be borne by the couple. Couples who live out of town and cannot arrange to be in the area for counseling will be required to seek counseling equivalent to that which is provided by Eastbridge. All equivalent-counseling arrangements should be made in consultation with the pastor who would ordinarily conduct the couple’s pre-marital counseling.

## CEREMONY

The marriage ceremony is a time of worship and celebration and, as such, will be conducted in a reverent manner. All participants and accoutrements must reflect this spirit of reverence. Theme weddings (i.e., Western, Medieval, Confederate, etc.) are not permitted.

To this end, the following directions must be observed:

1. All music, both vocal and instrumental, must be God-centered, in keeping with the occasion of worship and with Protestant and Reformed standards. Classical music, traditional hymnody, and contemporary Christian music would all for the most part be considered appropriate for the wedding ceremony.
2. The officiating minister must approve all musical arrangements, including the musical selections and the performers.
3. No flash pictures are to be taken once the ceremony begins. The only exceptions are the bride’s entrance and exit. Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony or during the service without flash or noise if done unobtrusively. At no time should the photographer be on the platform or at the front of the church while the wedding is in progress.
4. Video recording, done discretely and without auxiliary lighting, is permitted. The videographer and his equipment must not impede or detract from the ceremony in any way.
5. Candles may be used during the ceremony, but must be solid, dripless and proven to be safe for such a purpose. They must be extinguished as quickly as possible following the service. Ribbons may be used, but thumbtacks, tape or nails may not be used to attach decorations. (Florist wire (plastic coated) may be used to hold items in place.) **The throwing of rice, confetti or birdseed is not permitted on church property.**
6. It is important that our ladies and men’s restrooms, nursery and classrooms be left as they were found. The nursery should only be used for members of the bridal party. It may not be used for childcare during the rehearsal or wedding.
7. Wedding ritual and the marriage vows shall be consistent with that which is found in the Appendix to the Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in America. Personal compositions of vows are not acceptable.
8. Given that the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is not to be offered privately, but must be made available to the entire congregation of the Church, and that it is to be administered only after the preaching of the Word, it may not be administered during the wedding ceremony.
9. Smokingis not permitted anywhere in the church building.
10. The consumption of alcohol is not allowed on church premises, including the parking lot. If anyone is found drinking, he/she will be asked to leave the premises.
11. We do not marry a couple if either person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the wedding (other than those prescribed by a doctor). Any member of the wedding party who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be permitted to participate in the wedding.

**Fees**

Including the $150 non-refundable deposit, our total fee is $350.

What the fee covers:

* Use of the foyer & sanctuary for a rehearsal on the night before the wedding.
* Use of the sanctuary, foyer, kitchen, ladies room, adjoining nursery for bridal party, double classroom for groomsmen and men’s room facility for the wedding setup, the wedding, and removal of wedding related items.
* Services of our sound technician for the rehearsal and the wedding
* Minor setup assistance of the pulpit area
* Minimal cleanup of sanctuary
* An Eastbridge representative to open the church prior to rehearsal and two hours before wedding and to lock the church after the wedding party has departed.

**Communication & Punctuality**

Since church personnel are involved in the preparation of your wedding, we ask that you communicate with our church coordinator or church secretary regarding visits to the church prior to the wedding and that times, dates and special requests are clearly communicated in advance.

## CONCLUSION

Our desire is for you to have a beautiful, joyful and God-honoring wedding. May God bless you richly at this wonderful time in your life!