

A
WEDDING AT
ST. JOHNS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



St. Johns Presbyterian Church
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Revised August 18, 2008
Approved by the Session August 18, 2008

Congratulations! You are taking another step toward the consummation of the second most important step of your life. (The first most important decision in life, of course, is the issue of your personal commitment to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.) Because your wedding service and ensuing marriage are so important, the elders of the St. Johns Presbyterian Church have developed the following policies and procedures to assist you in making your wedding a beautiful and wonderfully memorable occasion.

It is significant that you are asking to be married in the church. In doing so, you are asking for God's blessing on your marriage, and you are also giving expression to your commitment to Jesus Christ. Because a Christian wedding is fundamentally a worship service, it has special components. Because Christian couples are seeking God's blessing, their marriages also have special characteristics.

First, and foremost, a Christian marriage is the loving union of a man and woman who acknowledge God the Father, the Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, but who also desire to grow in relationship to Him as well. Thus, a church wedding should be reserved for those who, in their pre-marital relationship, exhibit both a moral and spiritual demeanor consistent with biblical standards.

Secondly, a Christian wedding is the expression of permanent covenant vows between a man and woman before their family and friends and in the sight of God. Pledges of fidelity and faithfulness "according to the ordinances of God in the holy bond of marriage...as long as you both shall live" require some thought and understanding before they can be given with integrity.

The church, therefore, provides a required pre-marital program by the pastoral staff to assist you in examining yourself and preparing you to take your vows. Couples need to plan ahead sufficiently to allow for at least five pre-marital sessions, each two weeks apart. In addition, a thoughtful and experienced group of laity have developed specific guidelines for the use of the church facilities for this special significant event.

It is the sincere desire of the church family that your wedding be meaningful to you and that it will be honoring to God. Please remember, the church community property must be properly respected for the use of all concerned.

The following pages explain in detail the official wedding policy and procedures of St. Johns Presbyterian Church. Before submitting an official wedding application, each couple should read these policies and procedures with care.

Those serving on the Worship Committee, the church wedding directors, the church support staff, as well as the pastoral staff, appreciate the opportunity to work with you in this regard. We are here to serve you within the guidelines as we are able.

The Session
St. Johns Presbyterian Church

SPECIFIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF THE ST. JOHNS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

GENERAL INFORMATION

ABIDING BY THESE GUIDELINES: It is necessary that the applicants agree, at the time of their application, to abide by the conditions of use set for church weddings promulgated by the St. Johns session. These conditions have been carefully developed by a lay committee, whose members are familiar with the problems which may be involved.

COMMON FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST: In light of the Biblical teaching in 2 Corinthians 6:14ff that Christians should not be joined together with unbelievers, both the bride and groom must acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

SECOND MARRIAGES: Because grief is a natural process that takes time, the pastoral staff shall NOT perform weddings for individuals who have experienced either the death of a spouse or divorce within one year of the death event or the date of the divorce. Even though many people think they are an exception, everyone needs time to heal a loss and research is clear that a year following such a loss is often a minimum span of time for the emotional health that a successful marriage requires. Further, individuals who have been divorced should be prepared to discuss the circumstances surrounding their divorce. While our staff is both caring and compassionate, there are some divorce circumstances which biblically may prohibit them from officiating at certain ceremonies.

MEMBER WEDDINGS: The facilities of the St. Johns Presbyterian Church are available for the weddings of couples of whom at least one is a member of the St. Johns Presbyterian Church.

NON-MEMBER WEDDINGS: Non-member weddings may be permitted only when they are sponsored by a member of St. Johns Presbyterian Church, who may be requested to meet with the Session. In such cases, if the wedding is approved by the Session, certain fees do apply.

Under special conditions, such as a sanctuary renovation of a neighbor church, and with sessional approval, members of other Presbyterian churches may, as a courtesy, use the sanctuary. There are no fees in these cases for the use of the buildings.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR WEDDING

Either the church sanctuary or the chapel may be used for your wedding.

SANCTUARY: The sanctuary seats approximately 500 people and the chapel seats 50. There are church

furnishings available, free of charge, upon request. They are: a double prie dieu (kneeling bench), brass urns, brass candelabra, and hurricane globes. There are to be white paraments (vestments) in the church for the wedding. They will be placed on the pulpit and lectern by the church sexton.

CHAPEL: If the chapel is used, there is a special dossal (an ornamental cloth hung on the wall behind the communion table) to hang behind the table. Any of these are available for your use and will be arranged by the wedding director.

SANCTUARY FURNITURE: The following chancel furniture may NOT be removed for a wedding: baptismal font, communion table, lectern, pulpit, chancel chairs and flags.

FELLOWSHIP HALL: The Peterson Fellowship Hall is available for the wedding reception. The wedding director will be happy to consult with you about its use. When a wedding reception is held at the church, no alcoholic beverages may be served. (See Appendix for detailed regulations for caterers.)

CHANGING ROOMS: When requested, rooms for dressing prior to the wedding will be made available. These should be left as found, and no belongings may be left at the church but should be taken away when the wedding party leaves.

APPLICATION PROCESS

RESERVING THE DATE: There are several steps involved in the wedding application approval process before the Session will consider and act on your application.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: The first person you will need to contact is the Pastor's Administrative Assistant. The Pastor's Administrative Assistant will discuss with you the availability of the day and time you request as well as the availability of the member of the St. Johns Pastoral Staff you request to be the officiant.

THE CHURCH WEDDING COORDINATOR: The second person you will want to schedule an appointment with is the Church Wedding Coordinator. The Church Wedding Coordinator will designate one of the St. Johns wedding directors to assist and direct your wedding.

THE ASSOCIATE FOR WORSHIP: Next you will need to contact the Associate for Worship. The Associate for Worship either will confirm the availability of the church organist or in consultation with the organist, secure an appropriate and approved substitute.

THE ORGANIST: Further, you will need to schedule a later date with the organist to discuss and plan your music selections.

You will need to complete the initial meetings with the church Wedding Coordinator and the Associate for Worship and have them sign your application prior to meeting with the Pastor officiating your wedding.

THE ST. JOHNS OFFICIATING PASTOR: Once you have been assigned a church wedding director, and the music associate has cleared the church organist's schedule, you will want to schedule an initial meeting with the St. Johns Pastor who will be officiating your wedding.

APPROVAL OF APPLICATION: When your application is completed, you should return it to the Pastor's Administrative Assistant. She will coordinate and submit it to the Worship Committee Chair for Session action.

APPROVED APPLICATION COPY SENT TO APPLICANT: Once the completed form has been approved by the Session, your wedding date will be placed on the church calendar and the bride, or applicant, will be informed of the Session's action. The Pastor's Administrative Assistant will make you a copy of the approved application.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS: No formal announcements of any plans should be made until the Session gives approval. Session meetings are normally held on the third Monday evening of the month.

MEETING WITH CHURCH STAFF

MEETING WITH YOUR SJPC CHURCH WEDDING DIRECTOR: Once you have received approval from the Session, you should schedule a meeting within thirty days with the St. Johns Presbyterian Church Wedding Director assigned to you by the Wedding Coordinator.

The Wedding Director is a very important and helpful person in the wedding process. Because of her knowledge of this church and its customs as well as familiarity with its staff, her services are deemed essential by the elders. The Director will:

- (1) Assist you in planning the details of your wedding service using materials developed by the Pastoral staff;
- (2) Inform and assist you in understanding the church guidelines concerning the services of caterers, (*if you use church facilities for your reception*), florists, photographers. She will coordinate with you in sending each a copy of these regulations to each appropriate vendor;

- (3) Review and explain other services rendered by the staff;
- (4) Finalize the fees with you;
- (5) Officiate the rehearsal;
- (6) Direct the wedding service.

OUTSIDE WEDDING DIRECTORS ARE NOT PERMITTED.

If you change caterer, florist, or photographer, you must notify your church wedding director immediately.

MEETING WITH THE ASSOCIATE FOR WORSHIP: The applicant should make an appointment with the Associate for Worship to discuss wedding music. While you are encouraged to do this much earlier, you must meet with the Worship Associate at least four weeks prior to the wedding to finalize your music selections.

THE ORGANIST: Only the St. Johns Presbyterian Church organist normally will play for weddings conducted in the St. Johns Presbyterian Church. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the organist, the Worship Committee, and the senior pastor. Exceptions are normally only granted if the church organist is unavailable for your wedding service. If deemed necessary by the church organist, an approved substitute should be prepared to play an audition on the St. Johns' organ.

The use of SOLOISTS and INSTRUMENTALISTS and their music selections must be cleared well in advance with the organist.

MUSIC: Wedding music must reflect our basic understanding that the marriage ceremony is a Christian worship experience and is sacred in character. The music should be chosen by its worthiness to be offered to the glory of God. It is strongly suggested that no secular love songs be used, and some are forbidden. There is ample musical literature available, which is based upon our hymnal and the Holy Scriptures.

All music selections must be approved by the Associate for Worship who operates within a parameter which has been directed by the session.

MEETING WITH THE OFFICIATING PASTOR: One of the pastors on the pastoral staff of the St. Johns Presbyterian Church will perform the ceremony of all weddings conducted in the church unless an extraordinary exception is made by the Session. If it is desired to have another pastor participate in the wedding, it is also required that the Session first grant approval. If another pastor is approved, it must be clearly understood that the St. Johns

pastor is the officiant and that other invited clergy are assisting him/her in conducting the service. Further, invitations to other assisting clergy are to be extended through the officiating St. Johns pastor. The officiating pastor from the St. Johns pastoral staff has the final decision concerning the wedding procedures.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING: A series of pre-marital conferences are required in all circumstances. Normally, there are five pre-marital counseling sessions, each generally one hour in length, normally scheduled at least two weeks apart, and with required reading and work assignments in between. In the event that the officiating pastor deems it necessary, additional sessions may be required.

It is the couple's responsibility to phone the Pastor's Administrative Assistant well in advance (at least three months, and preferably six months) of your wedding to schedule the first appointment with the officiating pastor. Due to the heavy demand on their schedules, these sessions must be scheduled before 3:00 p. m. Monday through Friday or on Saturday before noon as their schedules permit. The closer you get to your wedding day, the more that event seems to take on a life of its own. You will profit more by beginning and completing your pre-marital sessions as early as possible.

Also please be advised that successful completion of the premarital program is absolutely necessary for your wedding to proceed at St. Johns.

THE SEXTON

The sexton is a very important person who sees that the sanctuary or chapel is orderly, clean, and ready for a wedding. He also makes the grounds and hallways, which the guests may use, tidy and welcoming. The sexton has keys to rooms you may be using. He will be present two hours before the ceremony. If he is needed earlier, there will be an additional charge. The Sexton works under the direction of the wedding director.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Since this is a worship service, flash pictures by either a professional photographer or guest during the wedding ceremony are strictly prohibited. Time exposures from the balcony or rear of the church may be arranged in consultation with the officiating minister. (See Appendix for detailed regulations in photography.)

VIDEO TAPING

Video taping, again without flash or artificial light, is permitted from the balcony or rear of the church. If there is sufficient greenery to *completely* hide a second camera man, limited video taping from the chancel may be approved prior to the service by the wedding director and the officiating pastor. Approval of a video camera in the chancel is contingent upon whether or not it is clearly

demonstrated that taping will be totally unobtrusive and done in good taste. (See Appendix for further details.)

DECORATIONS AND FLOWERS We encourage the simplicity of decorations. Use of flowers, palms, and candles should contribute to the spiritual ceremony and not be a distraction. (See Appendix for detailed regulations regarding decorations/flowers.)

REHEARSALS A period of one hour is reserved for your wedding rehearsal, beginning at the appointed time. Tardiness in beginning will necessitate forfeiture of that portion of time for the rehearsal and will jeopardize smoothness of detail in the wedding itself.

RICE, ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, INEBRIATES, AND SMOKING All members of the wedding party are reminded that this is a worship service and that it takes place in a sanctuary dedicated to Christian worship and glory of God. No rehearsal or wedding will be conducted when any member of the wedding party is inebriated. The use of alcoholic beverages or rice (or bird seed) is prohibited on the church facilities. There is to be no smoking in any part of the church facilities.

Individuals in a wedding party deemed to have been drinking alcoholic beverages will not be allowed to participate in the wedding service.

MARRIAGE LICENSE The groom is requested to deliver the license to the officiating pastor no later than the rehearsal, and preferably several business days before the rehearsal so that the staff may properly complete it prior to the wedding.

FEES AND HONORARIA All fees are to be paid to the church office two weeks before the wedding.

---MEMBERS ONLY---

Sanctuary	No charge
Chapel	No charge
Peterson Fellowship Hall	No charge
Wedding Director	No Charge

Sexton

1. Wedding in sanctuary with 1 rehearsal \$125

(The church will be open for 2 hours before the wedding and will close one-half hour following the recessional.)

2. Wedding in chapel \$25

3. Additional charge when Peterson Fellowship Hall is used for reception

a. up to 100 guests	\$100
b. over 100 guests	\$200

4. If sexton is required to be present earlier than 2 hours prior to wedding, there will be an additional charge of \$30 per hour.

If there is a reception in a church facility, there will be a \$30 an hour charge for the Sexton, who must be present for the entire time of the reception, as well as for the complete clean-up and room set-up following the reception.

Organist

(Generally, the organist’s fee will be in line with the current standards established by the American Guild of Organists.)

- 1. Wedding in sanctuary
with or without rehearsal \$200
- 2. Wedding in chapel
with or without rehearsal \$200

Sound Technician – if desired \$100

Pastor

There is no set fee for the pastor. If an honorarium is provided, it is customarily given by the best man after the wedding.

If, however, you have another pastor from out of town who assists with the service, you are reminded that all of his/her expenses for travel, housing, and meals is your responsibility. Further, an honorarium is always provided.

Premarital Counseling \$200*
*(Includes 5 one-hour sessions)

---NON-MEMBERS---

In addition to the fees stated above for members, non-members will incur the following fees:

Sanctuary	\$750
Chapel	\$100
Peterson Fellowship Hall	\$500

TYPICAL ORDER OF WORSHIP

The Wedding Service

The Pre-Service Music

The Chiming of Hour (optional)

The Preparation for Marriage

The Processional

(Such as “Prince of Denmark” for wedding party)

(Such as “Bridal March” for bride)

The Call to Worship

The Congregational Hymn (optional)

The Statement on the Gift of Marriage

The Charge to the Congregation

The Charge to the Couple

The Prayer of Thanksgiving
The Declarations of Intent
The Presentation of the Bride (optional)
and/or
The Affirmation of the Families (optional)
The Affirmation of the Congregation (optional)
The Hymn or Psalm or Solo (optional)
The Scripture
The Homily
The Hymn or Psalm or Solo (optional)

The Commitment of Marriage

The Vows
The Exchange of ring(s)
The Candle Service (optional)
The Prayer of Blessing and Lord's Prayer
The Special Music (optional)
The Scriptural Charge (optional)
The Declaration of Marriage
The Hymn (optional)
The Benediction
 Kiss
 Introduction (optional)
The Recessional

Your Wedding Director will have (1) detailed traditional and contemporary options for each of the above elements, (2) suggested scripture and (3) suggested hymns. She will serve as a further resource to you in your selections.

APPENDICES

For your complete information the full text of Regulations for Caterers, Florists and Photographers are included.

REGULATIONS FOR CATERER

St. Johns Presbyterian Church
4275 Herschel Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32210
384-4501

1. No alcoholic beverages may be served on the premises.
2. The use of the Peterson Fellowship Hall and kitchen for weddings does not include the use of the stove, furnishings, etc; only the church's round tables and chairs may be used, if desired. The caterer is to furnish all linens, punch bowls, cups, china, utensils, serving pieces, etc. The refrigerator may be used for cooling.
3. The caterer (dressed appropriately) is to be on duty during the reception and supervise the kitchen and serving.
4. For safety reasons, throwing of rice or bird seed is not allowed on any portion of church property (interior or exterior).
5. The applicant is financially responsible for any damage the caterer or his workers do to the equipment, furnishings, floors, or walls of the fellowship hall or kitchen.
6. The fellowship hall will be available for setup two hours prior to the wedding. If additional time is needed, arrangements must be made in advance through the Wedding Director.
7. A copy of these regulations shall be sent to the caterer by the wedding director upon approval of the wedding application.

NOTE: In addition to financial responsibility for any damage, any violation of these regulations will result in the caterer being prohibited from catering future events at the church.

REGULATIONS FOR FLORISTS

St. Johns Presbyterian Church
4275 Herschel Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32210
384-4501

The Book of Order, PCUSA, dictates that:

"Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should not be unduly elaborate."

*Book of Order
Presbyterian Church, USA*

1. Florists furnishing flowers and decorations will work under the direction of the church wedding director. We encourage simplicity in decorations. Use of flowers, palms and candles should contribute to the spiritual ceremony and not be a distraction.
2. The florist will not be permitted to use nails, tacks, scotch tape or any other items on walls, pews or other varnished surfaces in the sanctuary.
3. Hymnals, Bibles, and church furnishings are not to be used by the florist for any purpose.
4. Marriage is a worship service, and the symbols of the church should be accentuated rather than hidden. The chancel furniture is to remain in its place as witness to God revealed in Jesus Christ. A bride's double prie dieu (kneeling bench) is available from the church upon request of the bride. No floral arrangements are to be placed on the prie dieu, communion table, lectern, baptismal font or pulpit chairs.
5. The wedding party is encouraged to use only the two flower stands and brass urns. The brass urns use six-inch liners. This will be standard procedure unless otherwise requested, by separate application, and approved by the Worship Committee. Additional decorations are discouraged. No arrangements are to be placed in or on the chancel furniture (communion table, lectern, baptismal font, pulpit or chairs).
6. If candles are desired, the candelabra may be furnished by the florist or you may use the two brass, seven candle ones owned by the church. Only driplless, constant candles (chase candles) are to be used and must be provided by the church. These will be provided to you at the church's cost (generally, \$1 per candle). Flowers and greenery may be used on the candelabras.
7. If candles are to be used at the windows, the church has nine 18 inch glass globes available. The candles for them must be provided by the church. Only driplless, constant candles (chase candles) may be used. These will be provided to you at the church's cost.
8. If pew markers are used, they must be attached with ribbons or by some other means that will not mark the pews. Scotch tape or florist clay may not be used.
9. Runners may be used. They must be provided by the florist.

10. When the sanctuary has been decorated for a church holiday (i.e. Advent through Epiphany and Easter), these decorations must be left in place except for the flowers in the brass urns. If there are flower arrangements on steps of the chancel that impede the natural movement of the wedding party, they may be removed for the wedding, but must be replaced immediately after the ceremony. The responsibility for removing and replacing the church flowers, which may be on the chancel platform or steps during special seasons, belongs to the florist under the supervision of the SJPC Wedding Director. This is to be done immediately following the service, and the bride is to make these arrangements with the florist in advance.
11. Wedding flowers supplied by the bride's own florist belong to the bride and may be used after the ceremony as she wishes. However, should the bride wish the flowers to remain for Sunday's service, she should notify the administrative assistant and state her desire on her wedding application. The Administrative Assistant will, in turn, notify the Flower Chairman, so that proper scheduling of flowers can be made. If a memorial is previously scheduled for the bride's Sunday, the bride's flowers may be placed in the narthex on pedestals supplied by the church or her florist.
12. The florist must contact the Wedding Director with regard to the time of delivery of the wedding flowers. The wedding director will assist in the placement of decorations.
13. Property, such as palms, etc., belonging to the florist must be removed from the church immediately after the ceremony and the church left clean and in good order. The florist needs to be careful not to remove the palms, candelabra and other furnishings which belong to the church.
14. The florist is financially responsible for any property damage or cleaning expense caused by him or his workers or failure to comply with the rules of the church. The florist will be billed directly for any such damages or expenses.
15. There will be no smoking and no beverages allowed in the church sanctuary or chapel while preparing for a wedding.
16. The florist will normally be given four hours to work in the church sanctuary or chapel on the day of the wedding. (In the event two weddings are scheduled on the same day, this time may be reduced to one hour as weddings may be scheduled two hours apart.) Any additional time (beyond the four hours) will require a \$30 per hour fee paid to the sexton by the florist. The florist will be billed directly by the church.
17. The officiating pastor from the St. Johns staff has the final decision about the use of flowers and plants in the sanctuary.
18. A copy of these regulations shall be sent to the florist by the wedding director upon approval of the wedding application.

NOTE: In addition to financial responsibility for any damage, any violation of these regulations will result in the florist being prohibited from providing future floral services.

REGULATIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHER

St. Johns Presbyterian Church
4275 Herschel Street, Jacksonville, Florida 32210
384-4501

1. The photographer is to preserve the sanctity of the church at all times.
2. No flash photographs may be taken during any part of the ceremony. Time exposures are permitted from the balcony or rear of the church. Photographers may *not* process down the aisle to take a photograph of either the bride and groom or other members of the wedding party. Flash pictures may be made during the recessional provided the photographer remains completely in the narthex.
3. The photographer is not to stand on pews or move florist decorations and church furnishings.
4. *After* the wedding the photographer may take pictures in the sanctuary and may then use flashes.
5. The applicant is financially responsible for any damage the photographer or his workers do to the church property.
6. Video taping, again without flash or artificial light, is permitted from the balcony or rear of the church. If there is sufficient greenery to completely hide a second camera man, limited video taping from the chancel may be approved in advance prior to the wedding day by the wedding director and the officiating pastor. Approval of a video camera in the chancel is contingent upon whether or not it is clearly demonstrated that both the camera and video taping will be totally unobtrusive and done in good taste.
7. A copy of these regulations shall be sent to the photographer by the wedding director upon approval of the wedding application.

NOTE: Failure on the part of a photographer to abide by these guidelines will constitute his being restricted from photographing any future weddings at the St. Johns Presbyterian Church.

MARRIAGE LICENSE APPLICATIONS THREE DAY WAITING PERIOD

Chapter 741, Florida Statutes, has been amended with new sections effective January 1, 1999, referred to as the Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act of 1998, which provides for a marriage license fee reduction for couples who complete a certified Premarital Preparation Course, and a three-day waiting period for those who do not complete such course.

There is a **THREE DAY WAITING PERIOD** (not counting the first day the couple applies for a license or the day the license is issued) for couples to get married unless they file a valid certificate of completion of the **PREMARITAL PREPARATION COURSE** offered by a licensed course provider registered with the Clerk of Court. Such valid Certificates entitle couples to have the three day waiting period waived and receive a \$32.50 discount on the Marriage License (\$88.50 to \$56.00).

St. Johns pastors have been certified by the Clerk of Courts office as licensed course providers. After you have completed the premarital program, ask the Administrative Assistant to provide you with documentation to present in the Clerk's office when purchasing your marriage license.

Constitutionally, our Book of Order gives some specific structure to pastors, sessions, congregations and individuals regarding both the wedding event and marriage. These directives, written in the most elastic language possible, also give important, concrete perimeters for wedding services and for the pastors who perform them. As such, you should understand the framework in which our pastors and session operate.

The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (PCUSA) Book of Order provides as follows:

The Christian Service of Marriage God has ordained that a man and a woman may enter together into marriage, pledging their love and promising fidelity each to the other, as long as both shall live.

As Jesus Christ has blessed this relationship, and it has been declared holy throughout the life of the church, those who pledge themselves each to the other in the sight of God are promised God's help as they enter into the joys and duties of life together.

Humanly speaking, marriage is a civil contract among a man, a woman, and the state. When a marriage is performed in the context of Christian worship, the proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation in Jesus Christ is a promise of blessing to the marriage. As the man and woman respond affirmatively to this proclamation, their marriage is in the Lord. This applies equally to first marriage, to marriage after the death of a spouse, and to marriage after being divorced.

Instruction

Any minister asked to marry a man and a woman shall participate with them in instruction and discussion of the privileges and obligations they will assume in Christian marriage. The church bears responsibility for providing education and counsel in preparation for marriage.

It is fitting that the minister remind the couple of the meaning of Christian Baptism, for themselves and their families, and that ordinarily both of them will share a common faith. The minister may take this opportunity to instruct the man and the woman on the relationship between Christian faith and marriage.

The state has the authority to dissolve marriage. Recognizing the action of the state as an accomplished fact, the church's responsibility for education and counsel before marriage also extends to any special problems involved in marriage after divorce. Such problems include the competence of persons to enter into and sustain a new marital or familial relationship and to meet obligations to persons involved in a former marriage.

Minister Must Decide

If the minister is convinced that Christian commitment and responsibility are lacking, and the marriage is not one which offers promise of being blessed by God, the minister shall not perform the ceremony. In order to fulfill the corporate responsibilities of the church to divorced persons

seeking marriage, a pastor asked to officiate may seek, for advice only, the review and counsel of presbytery or its designated representative in determining the readiness of the man and woman for marriage.

In addition, before any man and woman are joined in marriage, they shall fulfill all the lawful requirements of the state in which the marriage is to be performed. They shall be in such health of body and soundness of mind as in the judgment of the minister will enable them to live responsibly within the bonds of marriage. They shall give indication of being prepared to enter upon life together with maturity and wisdom. When, after this discussion, the pastor finds it necessary to refuse to officiate at a marriage ceremony, the pastor shall inform the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and of additional steps they may take if they desire a marriage service in the church.

A Service of Worship

The Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship before God, normally conducted within the house of God. Reverence shall be expected on the part of all present, and the service shall be under the sole direction of the minister.

Such music as accompanies the ceremony should direct attention to God, who sanctifies marriage, and special care should be taken to assure that it is suitable and reverent. If desired, the congregation may be invited to join in the singing of hymns at the beginning and conclusion of the service.

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should not be unduly elaborate. In all the activities surrounding the ceremony, excessive expense and ostentation should be avoided.

Elements of the Service

The marriage service shall begin with a brief statement of the meaning of Christian marriage. At appropriate times during the ceremony there shall be prayers for the couple as they enter their new estate. There shall be an exchange of vows between the man and the woman; and if so desired, a ring or rings may be given. Scripture appropriate for the occasion should be read and the minister should deliver a charge to the couple, laying before them the privileges and obligations which they are about to receive and undertake. Before the conclusion of the service, the minister shall declare publicly that this man and woman are now joined in marriage according to the ordinance of God and the law of the state. The service shall conclude with a benediction.

Recognition of a Civil Ceremony

If a husband and wife previously married in a civil ceremony so desire, a service for the recognition of a marriage similar to that already specified for a Christian ceremony may be performed.