

*Your
Wedding*
at

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church

Black Mountain, North Carolina



*Love bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.*

I Corinthians 13:7

Congratulations!

The celebration of Christian marriage is an occasion of great joy and excitement as well as great significance and reverence. The Marriage ceremony is a service of worship, centering around the deep and joyful love between two persons, the supporting love of families and friends, and the all-encompassing love of God. For the engaged couple, it is a moment of deepest commitment, each to the other and both to God.

We at Black Mountain Presbyterian Church wish to assist you as you prepare for Christian marriage. This booklet has been approved by the Session (the governing body of the congregation) to help as you plan for a meaningful worship service that marks the beginning of your life together.

We believe it is not necessary that a wedding be elaborate to be beautiful. The true beauty lies in the spirit and the attitude of the participants. However, our experience has shown that even the simplest weddings require forethought and preparation. It is our hope that this booklet will be helpful in outlining the guidelines for your wedding service.

The church is available to members of the congregation and affiliate members. "Member" is interpreted as one who has been an active, contributing, and participating individual for at least three months prior to the request for the wedding, and may be either partner of the couple, or a parent of either. The church is normally not available for rental by those with no spiritual ties to this church. However, there may be exceptions that shall be determined by the Pastor, the Worship and Music Committee, and the Session. If neither partner of the couple is a member of the congregation, the couple must be sponsored by an active, participating, and contributing member of the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church. Any situation deemed an exception to the sponsor rule will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

I. Principles of Christian Marriage

Our view of Christian marriage is reflected in the statement of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA): God has ordained that two persons may enter together in marriage, pledging their love and promising fidelity each to the other as long as they both shall live. Our church has developed its policy based on the Directory for Worship of the Presbyterian Church (USA): (W-4.9000)

A. Definition. “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-4.9001)

B. The Service. Christian marriage should be celebrated in the place where the community gathers for worship. As a service of Christian worship, the marriage service is under the direction of one of the church’s Pastors and the supervision of the Session. (W-1.4004–1.4006) The marriage ordinarily takes place in a special service that focuses upon marriage as a gift of God and as an expression of the Christian life.

If a guest minister is requested to assist in worship leadership, it is the task of the officiating Pastor of the church to make the request of the guest Pastor in writing. The officiating Pastor will also determine with the couple what role the guest Pastor is to play in the service. Even when a guest minister presides at the wedding service, a member of the BMPC clergy staff will be present for the service in most usual circumstances.

C. Service of Recognition. If a couple previously married in a civil ceremony so desire, a service of the recognition of marriage similar to the one described in this booklet may be performed. (W-4.9006)

II. Pastoral Counseling

A. Purpose. As a representative of God and the church, it is the officiating Pastor's duty to see that he/she has met with the couple in a series of meetings to discuss the nature of Christian love and marriage. There is no secret formula for marriage, yet each meeting will tend to lay the foundation to keep the lines of communication open between the couple throughout their married life. Each couple will have a minimum of two sessions with the Pastor before the marriage.

B. First Pastoral Meeting. In preparation for the marriage service, the officiating Pastor shall provide for a discussion with the partners 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 the responsibilities of Christian marriage;
 - the nature and form of the marriage service;
 - the vows 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.
- (W-4.9002) After the first meeting with the Pastor, the wedding date can be finalized and placed on the church calendar. Subsequent meetings will be scheduled at this time.

C. Special Circumstances. If the Pastor is convinced after discussion with the couple that commitment, responsibility, maturity, or Christian understanding are so lacking that the marriage is unwise, the Pastor shall assure the couple of the church's continuing concern for them and not conduct the ceremony. In making this decision, the Pastor may seek the counsel of the Session. (W-4.9002)

III. As You Plan Your Wedding

As soon as you begin your planning, please contact the church office, preferably a minimum of four months in advance. At this time you will be given this booklet and all necessary forms. Please read this booklet thoroughly before your initial meetings.

- A. **Initial Meetings.** It is important to set initial appointments with the officiating Pastor, the Wedding Coordinator, and the Director of Music as soon as possible, preferably three to four months before the wedding.
- B. **Covenant of Agreements.** A “Covenant of Agreement” will be signed upon completion of arrangements with the Pastor. This agreement confirms the fact that this booklet has been read and understood by both the key participants, and that the conditions set forth herein have been agreed upon.
- C. **Forms.** Forms should be filled out and returned prior to the first meeting with the Pastor.
- D. **Wedding Coordinator.** A member of the church’s Wedding Guild will assist with every wedding at BMPC. All members of the Guild are very knowledgeable regarding the guidelines of this church, and one of the Guild’s members will be present at the rehearsal and the wedding. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by the Worship and Music Committee. When the couple wishes to engage a wedding director on their own, it must be clear that this person works under the guidance of the church’s Wedding Coordinator, whose decisions are final.
- E. **Worship Guide.** The church can provide a worship guide, if desired. This should be discussed with the Office Administrator early in your wedding planning. There will be an additional fee for non-members if the church is asked to produce a worship guide/bulletin.

- F. **Rehearsal.** The rehearsal is usually held the day before the wedding. It should begin promptly and should proceed in a quiet, dignified, and reverent manner. One hour and a half is allotted for the rehearsal time.
- G. **Marriage License.** The marriage license must be given to the Pastor at least one day prior to the wedding. It is obtained from the Office of the Register of Deeds in the Buncombe County Courthouse in Asheville.

IV. Facilities

The following is a descriptive list of our facilities that should be helpful to you as you plan your service.

- A. Sanctuary
- B. Sacristy
- C. Narthex
- D. Fellowship Hall. Our Fellowship Hall is an excellent facility for wedding receptions. The kitchen is small, but is fitted with commercial equipment.
- E. Parlor (generally used by female participants)
- F. Classroom 2 (generally used by male participants)
- G. Conference Room 1 is an alternate location.

V. Policies and Procedures

We believe that the Christian wedding is, above all, a worship service. The following guidelines have been developed to ensure the dignity and holiness of this beautiful occasion.

- A. **Sponsor.** Non-members shall have a sponsor to act as their liaison with the church and its staff, to be an advocate and to help interpret the church's procedures. This person may be a friend of the couple who is/are member(s) of the church, or the church and staff may select an individual to act in this role.

- B. Date.** It is not feasible to schedule weddings or receptions on any Sunday, Christmas Day, or certain holidays, such as Thanksgiving or Independence Day (with the exception described below). In certain instances, a wedding may be scheduled on Sunday, perhaps even in the context of the morning worship. It should be placed in the order as a response to the proclamation of the Word, and may then be followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Pastors of this church have final authority concerning the wedding service.
(W-4.9003)
- C. Time.** No wedding may be scheduled after 7:00 p.m. on a Saturday night, or after 3:00 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon prior to a Communion Sunday. All evening receptions *must* conclude by 9:00 p.m. If more than one wedding is scheduled on a given day, there must be a minimum interval of three hours between the end of the first and beginning of the next.
- D. Communion.** Celebration of the Lord's Supper at the marriage service requires the approval of the Session, and care shall be taken that the invitation to the Table is extended to all baptized present.
- E. Music.** The church Director of Music plays for all weddings. If another organist is desired, this must be approved by the church Director of Music. An appointment should be made early in the planning stages to discuss the scope of the music for the service. If desired, the congregation may be invited to join in the singing of hymns. All music selected must be appropriate for an occasion of worship, focusing upon God and reflecting the faith of the Christian community, and songs are subject to approval by the Pastor and the Director of Music. The church office has copies of recommended music for weddings if you would like additional ideas in this area. The church Director of Music can also provide recommendations for vocalists and instrumentalists. Additional fees will be involved. *Please note that the following are not considered appropriate in the sanctuary during service of worship: recorded music; secular music; or additional sound systems.*

F. Photography. Because the wedding is a sacred worship service, all distractions should be avoided. Therefore, no pictures may be taken during the service, which begins at the prelude and ends at the close of the recessional. It is the couple's responsibility to inform the photographer. Pictures in the narthex are permissible before the procession begins, provided the sanctuary doors are closed. Photos may be taken from the narthex during the service without a flash. Photographs of the wedding party may be taken in the sanctuary after the congregation has left. If a video recording is to be made, all equipment, as well as the person operating the equipment, *must be in the back of the sanctuary*. No additional lighting is to be used. It is the couple's responsibility to inform the photographer of the church's policies on photography and videography.

G. Flowers and Decorations. The sanctuary is a place of dignified beauty with carefully planned and furnished symbols consistent with the Christian faith. They are designed for worship services, and weddings are part of the worship services of the church. The bride will be responsible for seeing that the persons supervising the decorations are made aware of the following regulations.

1. There shall be no decorations that might damage floors, carpet, or furniture. Decorations may not be secured with staples, tacaks, pins, glue, tape, or anything else that might cause damage or a permanent mark. Pew clips are highly recommended for securing decorations to the ends of pews. The Director of Music's line-of-sight may not be obstructed.
2. The communion table remains in the chancel area with nothing placed on it. A flower stand is available for flowers.
3. Any special decorations that have been placed by the church as symbols of the Christian year will remain intact.
4. Protective material must be placed under candelabra, and an aisle runner must be used when dropping petals.
5. All decorations must be removed as soon as possible after the service so the Sexton can restore the church for normal use.
6. The baptism font may be moved within the area of the chancel platform but must remain visible.

H. Receptions. The wedding reception is a vital part of the wedding day. To ensure that nothing is overlooked, please plan the reception as far in advance as possible, and keep the Wedding Coordinator informed of your plans.

1. If use of the kitchen is sought, the Wedding Coordinator can assist you in establishing contact with a church representative knowledgeable about the kitchen and its equipment. To avoid conflict with church programs, please clear your plans with the church office through the Office Administrator.
2. All refreshments and decorations are provided by the family or catered by them.
3. There is not a piano permanently located in the fellowship hall. If you desire a piano, notify the Director of Music and one can be moved into position.
4. Clean up of the kitchen and reception area is the responsibility of the family, working under the supervision of the Wedding Coordinator and the person designated to oversee kitchen use as noted in #1 above.
5. The sound system and instruments located in the fellowship hall are not available for wedding use. Care should be taken that guests (especially unsupervised children) do not touch any of this equipment.

I. Security. Unfortunately, the church cannot be responsible should any clothing or personal items belonging to the wedding party be lost, stolen, or damaged. All personal items should be removed immediately following the wedding to permit the building to be locked or prepared for the next service.

J. Smoking. No smoking is allowed in the church building.

K. Alcohol. No alcoholic beverages will be used on the church premises at any time.

L. Confetti. No confetti or other material may be thrown inside the church building. Birdseed may only be used outside the building. The couple should notify their friends and family of this policy.