



WEDDING HANDBOOK

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Welcome!

To the Bride and Groom,

Congratulations on the decision you have made to enter into the covenant of marriage. We believe marriage is a gift from the Lord, given to us in order to put His greatness on display for the world to see (James 1:17, Matthew 5:14-16). Our desire at First West (First Baptist Church of West Monroe), First West Calhoun and other entities is to help you as you prepare for your special day. More importantly, while we desire couples to have a wonderful wedding day, our greatest passion is for your marriage to bring God the glory He deserves.

Whether we are providing you a location to get married or a pastor to officiate your ceremony, as the body of Christ, we are primarily concerned with God being honored in the process. Since marriage is one of the most important decisions you will ever make, we feel it is our responsibility to help prepare you for marriage. To that end, this wedding policy guide will assist you in the process.

In the following pages you will find all the information you need regarding our definition of marriage as well as our policies and procedures for use of our facilities, pricing, requirements, recommended timelines and much more. We hope that this guide will be a great help to you.

The first step in the process will be for you to become familiar with this information. The second step will be for you to contact our Operations Manager who will help you get the process started.

May God bless you as you prepare for an incredible wedding day!

Your Ministerial Team @ First West



First West's Definition of Marriage

The vision of First West is to see people changed by the Gospel and living out their Christ-centered purpose. We believe that a man and woman seeking marriage should do so with the biblical understanding of marriage, which is clearly stated in Genesis 2:24. **First West further defines marriage as the union of one (biological) man and one (biological) woman freely and totally committed to one another as companions for life.** We believe that because God our Creator established marriage as a sacred institution between one man and one woman, an immutable precept that marriage is a covenant only between one man and one woman has been the traditional and Biblical definition of marriage for all of human history ("Biblical Definition of Marriage"). The Church, through its Lead Pastor and ministerial staff, considers the Biblical Definition of Marriage to be a central tenet of the Christian Church and hereby creates this policy, which shall be known as the "Marriage Policy."

Scripture teaches that cohabitating couples fall short of God's standard for pre-married couples.

Despite growing popularity and practice of cohabitation within both the church and culture, First West's desire is to submit to Scripture in all things, including cohabitation, prior to marriage. The finding of secular research notwithstanding, it is First West's conviction that cohabitation is a biblically sinful decision for couples. Therefore, if a couple decides to continue cohabitating, First West reserves the right to refuse to host or officiate at a couple's wedding as participating in such a wedding, through use of the Church's facilities or the officiating of such wedding by a First West pastor, would contradict the Church's beliefs.

In accordance with the Church's religious beliefs, the Church specifically prohibits acts or omissions including, but not limited to, permitting any Church assets or property, whether real property, personal property, intangible property, or any property or asset of any kind that is subject to the direction or control of the Church, to be used in any manner that would be or could be perceived by any person to be inconsistent with this Church's Marriage Policy, including but not limited to permitting any Church facilities to be used by any person, organization, corporation, or group that would or might use such facilities to convey, intentionally or by implication, what might be perceived as a favorable impression about any definition of marriage other than the Biblical Definition of Marriage. The pastors and staff of First West shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages that fit the above biblical definition of marriage. Finally, the facilities, campuses, property, and entities related to First West shall only host weddings and all related activities that align with the Biblical Definition of Marriage.

Covenant Marriage

Further, we believe biblical marriage is a service of worship in which the bride-elect and groom-elect, in the company of their loved ones and friends, publicly covenant with each for life under the blessing of God. As an extended effort to champion the life-long nature of this covenant between one man and one woman in a culture where divorce is rampant, First West requires that biblical wedding ceremonies which are performed on any campus or facility of First West to be a covenant marriage as defined by the Covenant Marriage Act (HB 1631). (Further information with regards to the extra requirements for Covenant Marriage and its stipulations can be found online at

<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/695.>



Covenant marriage requires premarital counseling with accompanying signed affidavits and attestations that this counseling has been done in accordance with the Covenant Marriage Act. As a result, all weddings performed on any campus or in any facility of First West will require premarital counseling done in partnership with First West's Counseling Center. All accompanying paperwork will be filled out by the individual counselor, the bride-elect, and the groom-elect. The above paperwork will be submitted to the Clerk of Court's office to be filed with the state of Louisiana per the requirements of the marriage license.

We believe this Church's Marriage Policy is based upon God's will for human life as conveyed to us through the Holy Scriptures, upon which this Church has been founded and anchored, and this Marriage Policy shall not be subject to change through popular vote; referendum; prevailing opinion of members or the general public; influence of or interpretation of any government authority, agency or official action; or legal developments on the local, state, or federal level. The Biblical Definition of Marriage is the only definition of marriage that will be recognized or accepted. No officer, employee, servant, agent, volunteer or any person, corporation, organization, or entity under the direction or control of this Church shall commit any act or omission, or make any decision whatever, that would be inconsistent with, or that could be perceived by any person to be inconsistent with, full support of this Church's Marriage Policy and strict adherence to the Biblical Definition of Marriage rather than any alternative to the Biblical Definition of Marriage.

Living Together

We ask couples who are living together to move into separate homes. Scripture tells us to "flee sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18) and to place yourself in a living situation that you have the best chance for purity and separation from temptation (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Ephesians 5:3; Hebrews 13:4). It is our observation that couples that honor the Lord in every aspect of their relationship experience greater oneness, peace, and joy in marriage.

If you are currently cohabitating or have questions about cohabitation, we would like to have the opportunity to discuss this further with you.

Premarital Counseling

Each pastor of First West conducts the service of marriage only after pre-marital conferences have been completed. First West's Counseling Center Pastor will meet with you immediately following your request for either use of First West facilities and/or your request for a member of the ministerial staff to perform your wedding ceremony. He will discuss the Church's requirements for covenant marriage and will also discuss the recommended schedule for premarital counseling. It is your responsibility to make arrangements for these sessions through the First West Counseling Center (318-322-1427). The final conference with the pastor performing your ceremony should be scheduled one or two weeks prior to the wedding. At that time, any special requests for the ceremony should be discussed.



What We Believe

God

God is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He eternally exists as one essence in three co-equal distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Ephesians 4:6; John 14:16-17; John 1:1-18]

Creation & Care

God created the universe and guides history for His purposes. [Genesis 1:1; Romans 8:28]

Christ

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is co-equal with the Father. Jesus lived a sinless human life and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all people by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and will return again someday to Earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. [John 1:1, 14; 20:30-31]

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He is the one who inspired men to write the Scriptures. He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. [Genesis 1:2; Psalm 139:7; Matthew 28:19; Luke 11:13; John 4:24; 2 Timothy 1:14; Revelation 22:17]

Humanity

People are made in the spiritual image of God, to be like Him in character. People are the supreme object of God's creation. Although every person has tremendous potential for good, all of us are marred by an attitude of disobedience toward God called sin. [Genesis 1:26-30; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; Colossians 1:21-22]



Marriage

Marriage is the union of one (biological) man and one (biological) woman freely and totally committed to one another as companions for life. We believe that because God our Creator established marriage as a sacred institution between one man and one woman, an immutable precept that marriage is a covenant only between one man and one woman has been the traditional and Biblical definition of marriage for all of human history. [Genesis 2:24]

Salvation

Salvation is God's free gift to us, but we must accept it. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works. Only by trusting in Jesus Christ as God's offer of forgiveness can anyone be saved from sin's penalty. When we turn from our self-ruled life and turn to Jesus in faith, we are saved. Eternal life begins the moment one receives Jesus Christ into his life by faith. [Ephesians 2:8-9]

Bible

The Bible is God's Word to us, written by human authors under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the supreme source of truth for Christian beliefs and living. [2 Timothy 3:16-17]

Church

The Church is Christ's body through which He accomplishes His purposes on Earth. [Ephesians 4:12-16]

Baptism

A person demonstrates his acceptance of Christ and joins the local church via believer's baptism. [Acts 2:38, 41-42; 1 Corinthians 12:13]

Lord's Supper

A believer remembers Christ's death and encourages Christian unity through partaking of the Lord's Supper. [1 Corinthians 11:23-26, 33]



Eternity

People were created to exist forever, either eternally separated from God by sin, or eternally with God through forgiveness and salvation. To be eternally separated from God is death. To be eternally in union with Him is eternal life. Heaven and Hell are real places of eternal existence. [Matthew 25:31-41, 45-46]

The Christian & Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. [Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; Romans 12-14; 1Corinthians 5:9-10; Colossians 3:12-17; James 1:27]

Officiants

Since weddings are a holy act and sacrament of the church, First West requires a member of the pastoral or ministerial team to officiate all weddings in church venues. Feel free to speak directly with any pastor about your wedding ceremony. If you aren't sure who should officiate your wedding, contact the Lead Pastor's Office at 318-322-5656.

Guest Minister

An ordained minister may be invited to assist if he is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and is supportive of our Church's adherence to the SBC's guiding principles as outlined in *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*. This pastor must complete and submit the *Application to Serve as Assisting Pastor* (located in the forms section of this packet). All ministers must be registered with the State of Louisiana in order to assist with a wedding or sign the marriage certificate. To register, the minister should call the Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court's office.

Pastor's Honorarium

While your pastor does not charge a fee for officiating at your wedding, it is customary to present an honorarium. It is suggested that no less than \$300 be presented to your Wedding Director to give to the pastor either at the rehearsal or when you present the marriage license. It is also suggested that no less than \$150 be presented to the assisting pastor.



Wedding Director

First West requires a Wedding Director to make your special day everything you want it to be! If you are acquainted with one of our Wedding Directors, you are welcome to use the director known to you. If you aren't sure, we can provide a list of Wedding Directors or choose one for you. Be sure to consult with your Wedding Director well in advance of the wedding.

The Wedding Director serves as the liaison between the wedding party and the Church. If the bride also chooses to secure the services of an outside wedding planner, First West's assigned director will work in cooperation with that person. First West's Wedding Director is entrusted with the good stewardship of church facilities and property.

Function of Your Wedding Director

The Wedding Director provides the bridal party approximately 10 hours of her time. This includes meeting with the bride or bridal party to discuss arrangements, coordination with vendors, preparation of the wedding program, and direction of the rehearsal (assisting the pastor who will conduct the ceremony and directing the entrance of the bridal party for the ceremony).

The Wedding Director:

- Notifies the bridal party and vendors about the times and entrances available to them.
- Manages and safeguards church policies and guidelines.
- Is present any time the wedding party is present in the Church facility.
- Is charged with leading the rehearsal.
- Assist the pastor as requested.
- Handles the marriage license and honorariums. The marriage license and honorariums for the pastor and the musicians should be given to the Wedding Director at the rehearsal.
- The wedding license should be delivered to the Wedding Director at rehearsal (The Ouachita Parish Clerk of Court will provide information on securing your wedding license).



Scheduling

The Church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of Church members. It is our desire that facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Facility usage will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the Church's faith or moral teachings. The Church has in place an approved process for the review of all requests for use of Church facilities.

Weddings must be scheduled a minimum of ninety (90) days in advance in order to be in compliance with First West's premarital counseling requirements. Application shall be made through the Operations Manager who will help coordinate an initial meeting with the Counseling Pastor. Following this meeting, upon recommendation of the Counseling Pastor, the date, time, and facilities for both the rehearsal and wedding can be scheduled.

Because of ministry events on our Church calendar, weddings cannot be scheduled on Sundays, Wednesdays, or during general Church meetings or events. Neither weddings nor rehearsals are scheduled during the week of the following holidays: New Year's, Thanksgiving, or federal / state holiday weekends. Weddings are not scheduled the week prior to, during, or following the Church's annual Vacation Bible School.

In order to help protect your special day, First West will not schedule two weddings during the same weekend unless one is a private exchange of vows requiring no rehearsal, no reception, and no decorations.

Typically, Saturday evening weddings will not be booked later than 6 pm in West Monroe's Feazel Chapel or 4 pm in the Worship Center (all campuses). Wedding invitations should not be ordered, announcements or detailed arrangements made until this agreement has been confirmed.

All applications require a \$200 refundable security deposit for both Feazel Chapel and the Worship Center. Dates will be confirmed and security deposits accepted following the initial meeting with and based upon the recommendation of the Counseling Center Pastor. At that time, the wedding application should be completed and submitted to the Operations Manager.

Non-Member Weddings

Since weddings are a holy act and sacrament of the church, weddings at First West venues are reserved for church members in good standing. For more information about becoming a member of First West, sign up for our next Lunch with the Pastor event at: firstwest.cc/membership.



Fees & Venues

Significant utility and custodial expenses are involved with use of the Church properties. At the initial meeting to reserve the Church, you will be given the fees for your wedding, exclusive of fees for musicians, soloists, videographers, or other persons you enlist to work for your wedding.

Your wedding fee includes the following:

- Building Services / Housekeeping personnel
- Sound and Lighting Technician(s)
- Reception supplies (as applicable)
- Cost of linen cleaning
- Wedding Director

Any fees necessitated by additional sound and/or lighting personnel, moving of equipment, or personnel hours beyond what is normally established shall be assessed and charged to the wedding party at the rate of \$100 per hour. Checks shall be made payable to First Baptist Church.

Church Facilities

Facilities for wedding service include the following:

- Feazel Chapel (capacity 275)
- Worship Center (capacity 1,834 including balcony)
- Driskell Chapel (capacity 20)

Reception areas:

- Tennison Hall, including Atrium
- Tennison Hall
- Reception Rooms A100-102 (located in the Adult Education Building)



Wedding Weekend

Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals typically occur the evening prior to the wedding (usually around 6:00 PM). Your Wedding Director will ensure an efficient rehearsal of an hour or less! Consult with your Wedding Director for any exceptions to this general rule. Both sets of parents and all ushers should be present.

Promptness in beginning the rehearsal is a must. It is very important that the bride and groom ensure that all members of the wedding party be on time for the rehearsal as well as the wedding. Neither the rehearsal nor the wedding ceremony will be delayed for any reason.

The Worship Service/Ceremony

Special requests should be made through the pastor at the time of your conference with him. Vows will be in keeping with biblical principles and traditional ideals. The wedding ceremony will start promptly at the appointed time.

Dressing Areas

Bridal rooms are available to the bride and her attendants for use in dressing for the wedding. Rooms are also available to the groom and his groomsmen. Immediately following the wedding, all personal belongings are to be removed from the dressing areas. It is suggested that one or more persons be assigned to this task. The Church shall not be responsible for any items left in these areas after the wedding.

Food and/or beverages other than water are not permitted inside West Monroe's Feazel Chapel or Driskell Chapel or the Worship Center (all campuses). An area may be set aside for a sandwich tray outside these areas on the day of the wedding. Arrangements must be made through your Wedding Director ahead of time for this privilege.



Receptions

The Operations Manager will be happy to assist you in planning your reception. For planning purposes, the following dances are permitted for the reception:

- Bride & Groom
- Bride & Father
- Groom & Mother

Reception areas are Tennison Hall, the Atrium, or A100–102 (located in the Adult Education Building). For your convenience, a chart of table layouts for the reception is included in this packet.

- The appropriate forms must be properly completed and submitted to the Operations Manager at least 60 days prior to the ceremony.
- It is required that the Church's Food Services team members supervise the kitchen and equipment use, even when your event is catered.
- Reception supplies are available for use only on Church property. The wedding party is responsible for any breakage and/or loss and will be so charged.
- Receptions must end and all decorations be removed no later than 9 pm for Friday weddings and 6 pm for Saturday weddings. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to remove all decorations immediately following the reception. It is advisable to have a coordinator assist with your reception.
- If you have rented items such as chairs, columns, arches, etc., please arrange for someone in the wedding party to take down and remove all rental items from the Church. The Church staff members are not responsible for removing rented items, nor can the Church store rented items.
- A charge of \$150 will be billed to the bride and groom if rented items are left to be removed by our Building Services personnel.

Building Services

The Building Specialist will take direction for your wedding needs from the Operations Manager.

Please ensure the Operations Manager has advance notice of any special needs that your wedding may require. Our Building Specialists do not assist with any wedding needs other than those described herein.

- A Building Specialist will be present one hour prior to your rehearsal.
- For safety purposes, our Building Services personnel will advise which door is to be used on the day the Church is decorated. Only the door designated will be unlocked for decorating purposes.



- With Feazel Chapel usage, you will be advised to keep the door locked while decorating. Under no circumstances are any doors to be unlocked or propped open by any member of the wedding party, decorators, or caterers. This policy is for your safety and for the security of our facilities and will be enforced by our Building Services team members.
- On the day of your wedding, if there is a reception, you will have a total of no more than six (6) hours that the Church will be available to you or four (4) hours without a reception. This includes time for dressing, photographs, ceremony, reception, and clean up. Our Building Services personnel will remain present when the wedding is scheduled to begin. Your Wedding Director should make immediate contact with the Building Specialist upon arrival at the Church.
- Our Building Services team members are responsible for restoring the building(s) for Sunday services following a wedding. Therefore, it is imperative that all decorations be removed from the Worship Center / Feazel Chapel immediately following the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the bride to make certain that a team has been appointed to remove decorations and to clean up.
- Cleanup of dishes, etc., is the responsibility of the person in charge of the reception. The Building Specialist's responsibility shall be limited to the placement and removal of furniture and the cleaning of the floors. If our Building Services personnel must clean up, there will be an additional charge of \$100 per hour. A Building Specialist is available should there be a mechanical problem but shall have no responsibility for bringing in flower arrangements, decorations, or stacking and storing rental items.

Wedding Dress & Personal Valuables

When selecting your wedding gown and attendant(s) dresses, please remember to maintain dignity along with grace and style.

The bride is responsible for determining the hour her wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses will be delivered to the Church. All deliveries should be made as near the time of the wedding as possible. The bride should give this information to her Wedding Director who will communicate this to the Church.

The Church's responsibility is limited to providing a dressing area for the bridal party. The Church is NOT responsible for any personal items such as wedding dresses, jewelry, etc., brought to the Church for use at the wedding and/or reception. Every reasonable precaution will be made to protect such property, but a friend or member of the family should be designated to be responsible for valuables during the service and/or reception.

Childcare

The church is not responsible for providing childcare for the children of the bridal party or the wedding guests.



Decorating

Interior finishes of our chapels and Worship Centers are ready for your wedding day!

The following policies help preserve the spiritual atmosphere and safeguard the furnishings:

- Decorating in West Monroe's Feazel Chapel or the Worship Center may begin at 8:00 AM the day prior to the wedding and should be completed prior to the rehearsal.
- Decorating after the rehearsal is not permitted.
- Fresh flowers must be brought on the day of the wedding to avoid wilting. Due to health policies, we cannot store flowers in our food refrigerator.
- Flower arrangements must be prepared outside the Worship Center or West Monroe's Chapel. The kitchen is not available for this purpose. Suitable containers other than paper mache are to be used.
- Only dripless or flameless candles are permitted. If dripless candles are used, the flame must be extinguished immediately following the ceremony. Candelabras, unity candles, and columns are not available from the Church.
- Candles may not be used in Tennison Hall.
- Candles are not to be placed on the shelf under the stained glass in Feazel Chapel.
- Balloons, confetti and glitter are not allowed in any part of the Church or Church properties as part of the decorations.
- All decorations shall be removed by the wedding party immediately following the wedding ceremony. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom and/or their families to see that all rental items are removed promptly after the wedding. Our Building Services personnel will not remove rented items and/or store them until the next business day. The Operations Manager must be given the name and telephone number of a contact person who is not in the wedding party but who will be responsible for seeing that these items are removed from the Church. This person will also be responsible for any lost and found items to be picked up at the Church.



Wedding Day Timeline

12 Weeks Prior to Wedding

- Use of Facilities Policy and Wedding Handbook read and appropriate forms returned to Operations Manager
- Reserve the Church
- After confirmation, order invitations
- Make first appointment with First West Counseling Center
- Enlist Musician(s)
- Enlist Florist
- Enlist Caterer

8 Weeks Prior to Wedding

- Enlist musicians
- Enlist florist
- Enlist caterer
- Enlist photographer/videographer
- Finalize music selections
- Consultations and schedules for wedding day set

6 Weeks Prior to Wedding

- Submit Music Form to Church for approval
- Complete Reception Form and submit
- Mail your invitations



4 Weeks Prior to Wedding

- Pay balance of fees to the Church
- Get your marriage license
- Submit bridal photo to newspapers
- Purchase attendants' gifts
- Enlist person to remove property brought to worship & reception areas
- Contact Food Service Director if you are having your reception at the Church
- Contact Wedding Coordinator / Food Service Director regarding layout for reception

2 Weeks Prior to Wedding

- Pick up rings
- Pick up wedding gown
- Confirm plans with caterer as to delivery and call the Church to report
- Prepare and submit announcement to newspapers
- Confirm delivery from florist; notify Operations Manager

1 Week Prior to Wedding

- Pack for honeymoon
- Make certain those in wedding party have their attire
- Prepare minister's honorarium and give to your Wedding Director for presentation
- Prepare fees for musician(s)
- Enlist someone to be responsible for checking bride's room, etc., as soon as bridal party departs for reception
- Make certain all in your wedding party are aware of Church regulations regarding use of church property (no alcoholic beverages, no smoking, etc.)



Contact Information

Lead Pastor's Ministry Assistant Primary Contact for Wedding

Hope Edwards..... 318-322-5656

Wedding Director names and contact information will be provided by the Lead Pastor's Office.

First West Counseling Center..... 318-322-1427

Todd Sherwin, Director

Taylor Lollis, Office Manager

Pre-marital counseling should be scheduled immediately following receipt of confirmation from the Church.

Building Services

Bill Smith, Building Services Director..... 318-680-7735

A Building Specialist will be on site to assist with temperature control, mechanical or electrical problems.

Food Services (including supplies for receptions)

Pattie Diaz, Operations Manager 318-322-5199

Pianists/Musicians

Casey Harold, Worship Pastor 318-322-5206

First West members are always preferred. Our Worship Ministry team can provide recommendations. Remember that each musician sets his/her own fees.

