HOLY UNION CEREMONIES

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe is committed to working toward equal rights and rites for gay, lesbian, and transgender couples, along with heterosexual couples, in the life of the church. We believe that a living, caring, committed relationship is worthy of celebration and offer the use of our church building for Holy Union ceremonies on the same basis as it is offered to heterosexual couples for weddings.

A Holy Union ceremony "does not constitute a marriage ceremony, and is not held out as such."* The Permanent Judicial Commission of our General Assembly has upheld holy union ceremonies as legitimate within the practice of pastoral care as pastors and congregations seek to celebrate important commitments within the lives of church members.

HOW TO RESERVE A SPACE

As with weddings, the procedure to secure space for a Holy Union ceremony is to call the church office to make sure the date and time are available, and then speak to one of the pastors of this congregation to ascertain her or his availability to perform the ceremony.

* Quotation is from "More Light on...Holy Unions and Marriage," an occasional paper of the More Light Network.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND FEES

Pre-Counseling
First Presbyterian Church of Santa Fe requires that arrangements be made with the minister for counseling prior to the ceremony. Normally, three appointments will be made. The first is, for general discussion regarding plans, backgrounds, the meaning of being a Christian, and the review of this booklet. The second is designed to prepare the couple with professionally developed counseling aids. The third is to finalize plans and to discuss the ceremony itself. On occasion, the minister might suggest additional meetings if she/he believes them to be needed. If the couple is living at a distance, suitable arrangements might be made, with the minister's approval, for the counseling to be done closer to the couple's home. With these basic Presbyterian understandings of a Christian Holy Union in mind, the Session has approved the following regulations and policies.

Officiant
One of the ministers on the staff of this church must be consulted before a definite date is set, and, for members, as far ahead as possible. Dates for non-members cannot be confirmed more than one-year in advance.

It is required that one of the ministers on the staff of the church officiate. If other clergy are to be included, proper etiquette calls for the family to ask the pastor to extend the invitation. This arrangement should be made between the minister and the couple as early as possible. The staff pastor will have final approval concerning the elements of the ceremony.

Holy Union Coordinator
Set up an appointment with the Coordinator. Call the church office and the Coordinator will call you back to set a time to begin the detailed planning. At the meeting, the Coordinator will review the basic policies, provide a tour of the church facilities, answer questions, and help you complete the necessary forms. You will also begin the process of selecting appropriate music for the service. The services of the Coordinator are required.
Reserving the Date
Reserve the church for the date of your ceremony. Once your date has been confirmed by one of the ministers of the church, the Coordinator will schedule your ceremony on the church calendar with a non-refundable deposit (see fee schedule). The deposit insures that your date is confirmed.

Normally, four hours are reserved to allow time for dressing, the ceremony, and clean up. Receptions at the church are normally scheduled for two hours, beginning at the conclusion of the ceremony. Rehearsals are usually scheduled for one hour on the evening prior to the ceremony day.

Music
The next step is to meet with the Director of Music to plan the music for your ceremony. Please complete the required form with your music selections and return it to the Director of Music at least three weeks before your service. She will call you to confirm your plans. The Director of Music is responsible for the music of all worship services of the church. Normally, she will play for your ceremony but, even if you make other, or additional, arrangements for music, she must review and approve your plans.

Our Directory for Worship says:
Music suitable for the ceremony directs attention to God and expresses the faith of the church. The congregation may join in hymns and other musical forms of praise and prayer. Our church does not use recorded music.

Photography
Photographs are lasting mementos of a ceremony. Here are some things to keep in mind as the couple plans for picture taking. Once your guests arrive, your primary role is as hosts. It is much more thoughtful to get the picture taking out of the way before guests arrive for the ceremony.

The Session adopted the following policy concerning photography:

The officiating minister and/ or Coordinator requests that the party be dressed, photographed, and out of the sanctuary one-half hour before the ceremony begins. During that half-hour the photographer may take group shots of the couple in the Rendon Room or the Library.

The photographer must discuss locations for picture taking with the ceremony Coordinator prior to the union. Only non-flash photos and video are permitted during the ceremony from the rear of the sanctuary. No artificial lighting is permitted. Two locations for video taping of worship are approved. They are: stationary video taping from a corner of the choir loft and the balcony. No photography is permitted in the choir loft during the service.

Video taping is permitted if the camera operator does not stand more than four pews from the back of the sanctuary. Under no circumstances shall the photographer block the aisle or hold up the processional/recessional.

No camera operator will be permitted in the front of the sanctuary where the ceremony will take place. Please put a simple note in the union bulletin asking guests not to use flash photography during the service. Ushers will explain this policy to guests carrying cameras. An additional copy of this policy will be supplied for you to give to your photographer. Please ask her/him to sign it and return it to the church. Failure to abide by these guidelines may result in the photographer not being allowed to photograph in the church in the future.
Flowers and Decorations
The Directory for Worship for Presbyterian churches governs the following areas.

Flowers, decorations, and other appointments should not be unduly elaborate. In all the activities surrounding the ceremony, excessive expense and ostentation should be avoided. The appointments of worship and decor of the sanctuary have been established by the Session.

Sanctuary furniture and paraments (pulpit, lectern and table hangings) shall not be changed. Due to space limitations, a maximum of 12 persons, including the couple may be in the ceremony.

A white linen cloth may be used to cover the table. No flowers may be placed on the communion table. Arrangements in the side nichos or on candelabra, or free standing are allowed. Garlands on outside banisters are permitted. The Coordinator will inform you what is possible and what equipment is available.

Delivery of flowers should be arranged with the Union Coordinator or through the church office.
Brass candelabra are available for your use. They require fourteen 12" dripless candles to be supplied by the couple. A unity candle requires one large center candle and two tapers to be supplied by the couple. It is permissible to use a small ring of flowers or greens around the unity candle. Aisle candleholders are available at an additional cost. (See fee schedule) These require ten 6" candles and are to be supplied by the couple.

If farolitos are used, the couple is responsible for supplying, placing, lighting, and removing them after the service. These may be used outside only. The couple must arrange for the removal of the flowers. Flowers left in the sanctuary will be used for Sunday morning services or taken by our Deacons to shut-ins.

There are 18 pews on each side of the sanctuary. The use of tacks, tape or other stick material, or pins cannot be used on the pews to secure flowers, bows, etc. Wrapped wire hooks or ribbons that will not mar the pews or leave a residue are permitted. Several pews on the center aisle have been modified to allow for wheel chairs.

The length of the sanctuary aisle is 55 feet and 8 feet to the table. An aisle runner is not permitted for reasons of safety. The sanctuary seats approximately 200 people. The chapel seats approximately 100 people.

Building Policies
Dressing rooms are provided for the use of the party. All personal items must be removed immediately after the ceremony.

The church is not responsible for losses that might be incurred due to items left in dressing rooms and/or other places in the church building. Please secure valuable items either with family, friends or off site.

Throwing of rice, birdseed or confetti is not allowed inside or outside of the church.

Smoking is not permitted on church property.

The use of ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES is NOT permitted in the church building or grounds. Food and beverages are not permitted in the sanctuary or chapel. Light refreshments may be served in dressing rooms.
NOTE: A Holy Union is a solemn religious service during which vows are taken before God. First Presbyterian Church reserves the right to postpone any service for which either of the couple arrives under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The presiding pastor is authorized to make such a determination.

THE FEE SCHEDULE
The Session has approved the following schedule of fees:

FOR OUR MEMBERS
We define “members” (for this purpose only) to include the children and grandchildren of members.

Holy Unions in the Church Fees - No charge
Use of Sanctuary - No Charge
Use of Chapel - No Charge
Pastor Gift at your discretion
Holy Union Coordinator
(Up to 4 hours) $150
(Over 4 hours, per hour - $40)
Director of Music
(including rehearsal) $200
(extra rehearsals, per hour) $50
Soloist (when available) $100
Custodian (Up to 4 hours) $80
(over 4 hours, per hour) $20
Child Care (per attendant per hour) $15
(1 attendant required for each 4 children)
Aisle Candle-holders $50
Dining Room for Receptions - No Charge

All fees are due in the church office one week before the rehearsal.

Members are not required to pay a deposit at time of scheduling.

Checks should be made out individually to the Director of Music, Coordinator, custodian, childcare attendants, soloist and Pastor, not to the church office. These fees are to be paid to individuals one week prior to the rehearsal.

FOR LEGAL RESIDENTS OF SANTA FE AND ACTIVE MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES
Fees are as follows:

Sanctuary $500
Chapel $200
Pastor (includes pre-union counseling, $250 preparation of service and bulletin, rehearsal, service, etc.
Union Coordinator $150
Director of Music $200
(including rehearsal)
(extra rehearsals, per hour) $50
Soloist (when available) $100
Custodian $80
(for work over 4 hours, per hour) $20
Aisle Candle-holders $50
Child Care (per attendant per hour) $15
(1 attendant required for each 4 children)
Dining Room (reception) $200
Use of Kitchen $150

A NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT OF $250 WILL HOLD YOUR DATE
All Fees are payable and due in the church office one week prior to the rehearsal.
The Pastor fee for an off-site ceremony is $250.
FOR NON-PRESBYTERIAN, OUT-OF-TOWN RESIDENTS

There is a flat fee for Non-Presbyterian, out-of-town residents of $2,500.

Included in the flat fee of $2,500 are the following services:
  Use of Sanctuary or
  Use of Chapel
  Pastor (including pre-union counseling, preparation of service, preparation of bulletin, rehearsal, service, etc.)
  Holy Union Coordinator
  Director of Music
  Custodian
  Childcare attendant (if needed)
  Aisle Candleholders (if desired)

If additional personnel are to be included in your union, they may be added, and paid by you, with the approval of the Pastor.

HOLY UNION DATES MAY BE CONFIRMED WITH A NON REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT OF $1,000, WITH THE REMAINING $1500 TO BE PAID TO THE CHURCH OFFICE THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE REHEARSAL (or the ceremony).

After the costs to the church are deducted, a portion of the fees is given to feed the hungry and house the homeless of Santa Fe.

Approved by the Session: July 19, 2006