

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
Wedding or  
Celebration of Commitment  
Handbook



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## Table of Contents

YOUR WEDDING AND WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN .....	2
WHEN SHOULD WE SCHEDULE OUR WEDDING? .....	2
WHO CAN GET MARRIED AT WESTMINSTER?.....	2
A MESSAGE TO THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY .....	2
THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY.....	2
WHAT ABOUT THE COST? .....	3
WHERE DO WE DIRECT QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WEDDING CEREMONY PLANS? .....	4
WHEN IS THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULED? .....	4
WHO WILL PERFORM THE CEREMONY?.....	4
WHEN DO WE COUNSEL WITH THE PASTOR?.....	4
HOW DO WE SELECT OUR WEDDING MUSIC?.....	4
WHAT ABOUT DECORATIONS?.....	5
CAN THE WEDDING PARTY DRESS AT THE CHURCH?.....	6
WHAT ARE THE PHOTOGRAPH AND VIDEO POLICIES AT WESTMINSTER?.....	6
MAY OUR WEDDING PARTY CELEBRATE WITH CHAMPAGNE AT THE CHURCH? .....	7
PARKING .....	7
THE REHEARSAL DINNER AND RECEPTION .....	7
VITAL STATISTICS .....	7
CHILDREN .....	8
CHECKLIST FOR WEDDINGS AT WESTMINSTER.....	8
ORDER OF SERVICE.....	9
SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES FOR THE WEDDING SERVICE.....	9
SUGGESTED HYMNS FOR A WEDDING SERVICE .....	11
A FINAL NOTE REGARDING WESTMINSTER’S CELTIC GARDEN.....	11
PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY AGREEMENT.....	12
POLICY FOR SPECIAL SERVICES OF WORSHIP .....	13
GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL SERVICES OF WORSHIP*.....	14
CHECKLIST OF WESTMINSTER FORMS .....	15
CHECKLIST OF WESTMINSTER HONORARIUMS AND FEES.....	15

## WEDDING POLICIES

### YOUR WEDDING AND WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN

We rejoice with you in the prospect of your marriage. We are pleased that you are considering celebrating your wedding at Westminster and assure you that we will do all we can to help make your wedding a happy and memorable event. We have prepared this booklet as an aid to your planning. Please read it carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear. This booklet defines important policies of Westminster. It is important for you to realize that in signing our Church Wedding forms you are agreeing to abide by these policies.

### WHEN SHOULD WE SCHEDULE OUR WEDDING?

As soon as you have selected a date, please call the church office to check for availability. Even 24 months in advance is not too early! Westminster does not schedule weddings on Sundays, during Holy Week, or during the twelve days of Christmas. Couples must contact the Pastor prior to wedding date being secured.

### WHO CAN GET MARRIED AT WESTMINSTER?

It is required that couples have a relationship with Westminster in order to have a wedding at the church or involve the services of our Pastor. Typically, this means membership in the life of the church or at least six months of active participation in the life of the church before making a formal request of our Pastor and our church facilities. The children of members and active participants in the life of the church are also eligible to be married at Westminster. At least one member of the couple should also identify themselves as Christian. If neither partner is a Westminster member, Westminster's Session must also approve the ceremony.

### A MESSAGE TO THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY

Westminster strives to honor all people by acknowledging that all are created in God's image and that all are of equal value in God's sight. To this end, Westminster does not discriminate against members of the LGBTQ community who may wish to join our church fellowship, serve in positions of elected leadership (i.e. Deacons and Elders), or become legally married at our church or by our Pastor.

### THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Weddings are services of worship and should have the reverence, dignity, and integrity of worship. The atmosphere surrounding the service should be sensitive to the religious nature and significance of the occasion.

Communion may be served as part of the wedding service with prior approval from the Westminster Session, provided that it is available to all who wish to partake of the sacrament. Communion is personal, but not private, and may not be served to the wedding couple only. The provisions of this wedding guide are intended to preserve the worshipful nature of the marriage ceremony by avoiding ostentation, self-aggrandizement and the intrusion of elements that would detract from a devotional atmosphere.

Normally, the order of worship for the wedding service is as follows: Prelude, Processional, Sentences of Scripture, Statement on the Gift of Marriage, Prayer, Declarations of Intent, Affirmation of the Families, Scripture Reading(s), Homily, Exchanging of the Vows, Exchanging of the Rings, Unity Candle (Optional), Prayer, Lord's Prayer, Announcement of Marriage, Benediction, Recessional.

Suggested scriptures and hymns may be found at the conclusion of this document.

## WHAT ABOUT THE COST?

### Minister:

\*An honorarium of \$300.00 is suggested.

### Organist:

\* Fee of \$250.00 for the wedding only. The organist typically does not attend the rehearsal. In the event that the couple would like to have the organist participate in the rehearsal, there is an additional \$100.00 fee.

\*To be paid directly to the minister and organist

### Wedding Coordinators:

No fee

Building Use/Custodial Fee: \$500.00. This fee is required to reserve your wedding rehearsal and wedding dates.

Service in Chapel Rather than Sanctuary with No Custodial Support: \$300.00. In this case, there is no \$500.00 fee for building use and custodial fee. This fee is required to reserve your wedding rehearsal and wedding dates.

The wedding date will be secured once the wedding form and building use/custodial fee (chapel or Celtic Garden fee) are received by the church office.

An additional \$100.00 fee is charged if the Pastor determines that a sound system operator is required.

An additional \$100.00 fee is charged for a rehearsal with soloist or instrumentalists.

An additional \$100.00 fee is charged for a rehearsal with the organist.

## WHERE DO WE DIRECT QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR WEDDING CEREMONY PLANS?

After meeting with the Pastor and reaching a mutual agreement to move forward with the wedding, you will also be asked to fill out a wedding form and pay the building use fee to hold the date of your wedding on the church calendar.

Westminster Church provides a group of wedding coordinators/consultants. One of these coordinators will be assigned to your wedding and will be on hand to assist the Pastor at the rehearsal. She/he will also be present at least 1½ hours before the ceremony to assist with flowers, organization, crises, the processional, and the recessional.

## WHEN IS THE REHEARSAL SCHEDULED?

A wedding rehearsal is usually held in the early evening before the wedding day; it is to begin no later than 6:00 p.m. The rehearsal is not to exceed one hour. All persons in the wedding party, including parents and grandparents, if possible, are requested to be present for the rehearsal since they are escorted down the aisle as part of the processional. Your punctuality at the rehearsal is greatly appreciated by the church staff and wedding coordinators.

## WHO WILL PERFORM THE CEREMONY?

A Pastor on the church staff will perform your wedding. Should there be a family member or a close friend who is an ordained Pastor, you may request that he/she be invited to participate in the wedding service. In such an event, it is appropriate to have the presiding Pastor extend an invitation. The presiding Pastor retains the general oversight of the service. If you wish to include a Pastor from another local church in your wedding, you are encouraged to hold your wedding in the church served by that Pastor.

The presiding Pastor reserves the right to bring in a ministerial colleague at his/her discretion in event of emergency.

## WHEN DO WE COUNSEL WITH THE PASTOR?

It is the policy of Westminster for the presiding Pastor to invite you and your fiancé to counsel with him/her prior to your wedding. During these meetings, you will also discuss the details of the service. Do not hesitate to ask the Pastor questions. He/she will be happy to assist you whenever possible. Your wedding ceremony will be especially meaningful to you when you know the Pastor as a friend and counselor.

## HOW DO WE SELECT OUR WEDDING MUSIC?

The Westminster staff Organist/Music Director ordinarily plans and plays all keyboard music for weddings performed at Westminster. This means that if you plan to use the piano or pipe organ in your service, this position must be offered to the Westminster Organist/Music Director first. If

the Westminster Organist/Music Director is not available to play on your date, he/she will assist you in finding a suitable replacement.

All music must be chosen in consultation with our Director of Music, or with a substitute Organist and the Pastor if the Director of Music is not available to serve. You will receive his/her name and number at the conclusion of your first meeting with the Pastor. You and your fiancé may select your wedding music from appropriate musical literature. As you consider music for your wedding, remember that the wedding ceremony is a service of Christian worship signifying the union between Christ and the Church, and the music should highlight this bond established by God.

Secular love songs and music from movies and shows are best saved for the reception and/or parties after the ceremony. The Director of Music and the Pastor will offer guidance in music selection if such assistance is necessary, and can also suggest instrumentalists and vocalists for you to contact if they are to be a part of the musical plan for the service, a magnificent celebration of your union, a gift from God. When there is to be any special vocal or instrumental music, the Director of Music reserves the right of final approval of the music and the soloists.

The Director of Music/Organist does not typically attend the wedding rehearsal. There is an additional \$100.00 fee for the organist's presence at the rehearsal. Substitute organists are encouraged to attend the rehearsal. There is no additional charge for this service. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to see that any guest soloist contacts the Director of Music in order to arrange a rehearsal. There is an additional charge of \$100.00 for this rehearsal. Please contact the Director of Music to make an appointment to select your music.

## WHAT ABOUT DECORATIONS?

The simplest way to decorate the sanctuary is by placing one large or two smaller floral arrangements below the chancel hanging. Many brides make use of ferns and palms for additional decoration.

Some couples have their florist mark the family pews with simple bows. Some choose to have every fourth row of pews decorated with sprays of greens and bows. Please ask your florist to use NO TAPE on the pews and/or to protect the pews if metal clips are to be used.

When considering leaving your flowers for the church, please make this decision one month before your wedding, and notify the church office. The flowers would be coordinated with any memorial flowers arranged through the church. If they are not suitable for use in the sanctuary on Sunday, our Deacons will take them to a shut-in, hospital patient, or to a nursing home, where they can be enjoyed and appreciated. Your florist should be instructed to remove any containers that he/she has provided no later than Monday following a Saturday wedding. The florist following the wedding ceremony should remove any very large specially prepared florist arrangements.

Any flowers that are present for holy or seasonal occasions in the life of the church will remain in place for weddings and will not be removed.

Westminster furnishes the brass candelabra for evening weddings, if requested. The candles can only be lit or extinguished by the Westminster custodian or wedding coordinator. The wedding couple is required to pay the replacement cost of the candles. Nothing is to be attached to the candelabra, although freestanding arrangements may be placed in front of them.

The use of Westminster's lighted wall sconces for the purpose of the service is available for \$75. Westminster is also able to provide a unity candle for use during the service for \$75.

In choosing a color scheme for your wedding, you will want to consider the color of the chancel hangings that will be in use at the time of your wedding. These hangings symbolize the seasons of the Christian year and cannot be changed. Contact the church to obtain the color at the time of your wedding.

The church has a cloth aisle runner, which may be rented for \$125. Disposable aisle runners are not acceptable. At Westminster, we ask that the runner be put in place before the ceremony and the center aisle blocked with ribbon. Guests are seated from the side aisles.

Westminster does not allow rice, birdseed, or confetti to be thrown. If you wish to have something thrown at you, we suggest flower petals, bubbles with bubble blowers, or balloons. Be sure to clear your plans with the wedding coordinator to be certain that all is acceptable with the policies of the church.

Please ask your florist to have the sanctuary completely decorated no less than two hours before the ceremony. The building will be open three hours before the scheduled wedding time unless other arrangements have been made with the secretary scheduling the wedding.

#### **CAN THE WEDDING PARTY DRESS AT THE CHURCH?**

One changing room is located under the narthex and is a comfortable place for one partner to dress and/or wait alongside the attending wedding party before the ceremony. The room is equipped with a dressing table, three-way mirror, several outlets, and a box of items to help us deal with any emergency.

The other changing room is the Chapel located behind the front of the sanctuary. A full-length mirror is also provided there, and it is an appropriate place for the other partner to dress and/or wait alongside the attending wedding party prior to the ceremony.

#### **WHAT ARE THE PHOTOGRAPH AND VIDEO POLICIES AT WESTMINSTER?**

Careful consideration should be given to the wedding guests if pictures are to be taken. Your guests will appreciate your thoughtfulness on this point.

The most important photograph policy of Westminster Church is that there is to be no flash photography in sanctuary during the ceremony. This policy applies to the guests as well as the



professional photographer. Photographers are permitted in the row behind the last seated guest to take pictures during the service and during the processional and recessional.

Videotaping may be done from the balcony. Any videotaping equipment must have the audio disabled to avoid interference with our sound system. The couple and the wedding photographer and/or videographer are required to sign the separate photography/videography policy at least two weeks prior to the ceremony.

## **MAY OUR WEDDING PARTY CELEBRATE WITH CHAMPAGNE AT THE CHURCH?**

Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on Westminster Presbyterian Church property. Likewise, smoking is not allowed anywhere inside or near the church entrances.

Westminster is a no smoking and no alcohol facility. Any evidence that alcohol or tobacco was used or consumed in the building or alcohol on the grounds can result in the suspension of the wedding and/or the forfeiture of all deposits.

## **PARKING**

Parking is available in limited numbers immediately behind the church and in greater numbers across the street in the parking lot owned by the church (adjacent to Ohio Living-Rockynol). On the day of the ceremony, the custodian will put out signs directing guests to park in the lot across the street.

## **THE REHEARSAL DINNER AND RECEPTION**

Westminster does not make accommodations for either the rehearsal dinner or the reception on church grounds.

## **VITAL STATISTICS**

Aisle length: 85 feet

Rows of pews: 24 rows of pews on each side of middle aisle

Number of sconces: 5 double sconces on each side wall; 2 single sconces on the back wall

## CHILDREN

If children are part of the expected attendance, they will remain in the areas reserved and will not be allowed to roam throughout the building.

If the Nursery is used, it must be staffed by at least two attendants. This is to protect all involved from increased liability that can come from having only one adult and is required by church insurance. At least one attendant must be from the Westminster pool of trained and screened nursery workers. Nursery staffers will be paid at their current rate of compensation.

## CHECKLIST FOR WEDDINGS AT WESTMINSTER

- \_\_\_\_\_ Read the Westminster wedding policy. Do you understand that your reservation may be cancelled or your deposit withheld if the policy is not followed?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm your wedding date with the Westminster Pastor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Reserve your wedding date with the main office and pay any building use fees
- \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule your counseling appointments with the Westminster Pastor
- \_\_\_\_\_ Meet with the Westminster Wedding Coordinator
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact the Westminster Organist/Music Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have music for your service approved by the Organist/Music Director and Pastor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you have a guest musician, have that person contact the Westminster Organist/Music Director
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you intend to have paid or volunteer photographers and/or videographers at the service, complete and sign the photography/videography policy along with your service provider at least two weeks prior to the wedding
- \_\_\_\_\_ If you plan to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion during your service, contact the Pastor for approval by the Westminster Session
- \_\_\_\_\_ Have any suggested changes to the Order of Worship reviewed and approved by the Westminster Pastor

## ORDER OF SERVICE

Musical Prelude

Seating of Mothers (optional)

Solo (optional) – a solo may be sung at this time

The Processional

Statement on the Gift of Marriage

Prayer of Blessing

Declarations of Intent

Affirmations of the Families

Scripture Reading(s)

(Other readings, approved by the minister, may be read in addition to scripture.)

(A hymn or solo may be sung at this time)

Pastoral Homily

The Vows

The Exchange of Rings

(A unity candle may be lit at this point in the service, if desired.)

Prayer for God's Favor

(The Lord's Prayer)

(A solo or hymn may be sung at this time.)

The Announcement of Marriage

The Benediction

The Recessional

Releasing of the Pews – *(In place of solos, hymns may be sung in the service.)*

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES FOR THE WEDDING SERVICE

### Old Testament Readings

Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24

Genesis 2:18-24

Ruth 1:16-17

Proverbs 3:3-6

Ecclesiastes 26:1-4

Song of Solomon 2:10-13

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Isaiah 63:7-9

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Hosea 2:16-23

### Selections from the Psalms

Psalm 8  
Psalm 22:25-31  
Psalm 23  
Psalm 33  
Psalm 34  
Psalm 37:3-7  
Psalm 67  
Psalm 95:1-7  
Psalm 100  
Psalm 103:1-5, 15-18  
Psalm 112  
Psalm 117  
Psalm 121  
Psalm 127  
Psalm 128  
Psalm 136  
Psalm 136:1-9, 26  
Psalm 145  
Psalm 148  
Psalm 150

### New Testament Readings

Matthew 5:1-10  
Mathew 5:13-16  
Mathew 7:21, 24-29  
Matthew 9:3-6  
Matthew 22:35-40  
Mark 10:6-9  
Luke 6:36-38  
John 2:1-11  
John 15:1-17  
Romans 8:31-39  
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18  
1 Corinthians 6:15-20  
1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33  
Colossians 3:12-17  
1 Peter 3:1-9  
1 John 4:7-16  
Revelation 19:1, 5-9

SUGGESTED HYMNS FOR A WEDDING SERVICE  
(FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN HYMNAL)

Wedding Specific:

533 O Perfect Love

534 The Grace of Life Is Theirs

438 Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Celebratory Hymns:

455 All Creatures of Our God and King

461 God Is Here

464 Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

467 How Great Thou Art

469 Morning Has Broken

470 O Day of Radiant Gladness

476 O Worship the King, All Glorious Above

477 Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim

478 Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

482 Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty

483 Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above

485 To God Be the Glory

A FINAL NOTE REGARDING WESTMINSTER'S CELTIC GARDEN

Westminster's property boasts a beautiful Celtic Garden. If you wish to hold your wedding in that space, as opposed to the sanctuary or chapel, an additional charge of \$1,000.00 will apply. No use of Westminster chairs or audio-visual equipment will be permitted. The couple will need to rent any furniture, such as chairs, canopies, and audio/visual equipment, ensuring that this equipment is not placed on top of sprinkler heads. The same photography and/or videography rules will apply, as will other rules regarding the tone and nature of the service. A member of the Celtic Garden committee with decision-making authority regarding the service will be present for the set up.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEOGRAPHY AGREEMENT

**This Photography and/or Videography Policy Must Be Signed by the Couple in Addition to the Contracted or Volunteer Service Provider at Least Two Weeks Prior to the Service**

What are the photography and/or videography policies at Westminster?

Careful consideration should be given to the wedding guests if pictures are to be taken. Your guests will appreciate your thoughtfulness on this point.

There is to be no flash photography in sanctuary during the ceremony. This policy applies to the guests as well as the professional photographer. Photographers and/or videographers are permitted in the row behind the last seated guest to take pictures during the service and during the processional and recessional.

Videotaping may be done from the balcony. Any videotaping equipment must have the audio disabled to avoid interference with our sound system. The couple and the wedding photographer and/or videographer are required to sign the separate photography/videography policy at least two weeks prior to the ceremony.

Partner #1 to be married: \_\_\_\_\_

Partner #2 to be married: \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer (volunteer or contracted): \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name and phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Videographer (volunteer or contracted): \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name and phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## POLICY FOR SPECIAL SERVICES OF WORSHIP

“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” ~ Galatians 3:28

Whereas,

Westminster Presbyterian Church already welcomes all people to come, encounter, grow, and serve (per vision statement), and;

Westminster has committed to being an adaptive and inclusive congregation (per values statement) and;

Westminster has a long-standing mission and practice of allowing the use of our building for a wide variety of services and programs, as long as they are consistent with our vision/values, and;

The Presbyterian Book of Order has ample support for establishing occasions of worship for member nurturance or in support of life transitions, which could include services of worship for:

1. same-sex adults who wish to make a commitment of mutual support/faithfulness;<sup>1</sup>
2. adults for whom becoming legally married would be a hardship;
3. recommitment or renewal of vows;
4. life transitions such as retirements, career shifts, or graduations.

Therefore,

We, as the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church, authorize the use of our building for “Celebrations of Commitment” or “Services of Blessing” when such services:

1. celebrate faithful relationships,
2. have the support of the pastor(s),
3. are designed and conducted with sensitivity to the values of the congregation, and
4. acknowledge the sacred nature of commitments made in this religious context.

Session gives responsibility for meeting these requirements to our pastors (in consultation with the Worship Committee) as is true for other services of worship. We take this action in our belief that, as part of its ministry, the church is called to support covenants that celebrate love, affirm commitment, or encourage fidelity.

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<sup>1</sup> Ministers and sessions are permitted to provide pastoral care in the form of worship services that "celebrate a loving, caring, and committed relationship" such as civil unions for same sex couples, but they must also advise such couples that such a service does not constitute a marriage and may not be held out as such. To read more about this advisory opinion regarding ceremonies blessing same-sex relationships in the Presbyterian Church (USA) visit: <http://oga.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/ad-op/note07.htm>

## GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL SERVICES OF WORSHIP\*

### A. Naming the Ceremony

1. Such services shall be named a “Celebration of Commitment” or a “Service of Blessing.”
2. Couples shall use either the name "Celebration of Commitment or "Service of Blessing” when describing the worship service in their invitations, public announcements, and all other printed material related to the service of worship.

### B. Religious Affiliation of Participants

1. It is required that participants have a relationship with Westminster Presbyterian Church in order to have a “Celebration of Commitment” or “Service of Blessing” at the church.
2. While the actual ceremony will occur in a Christian setting, an interfaith service may be planned, if appropriate.

### C. The Service as Worship

1. “Celebrations of Commitment” and “Services of Blessing” are services of worship and should have the dignity and integrity of worship. Therefore, “the press” and other media shall not be invited to cover the occasion.
2. The atmosphere surrounding the service should be sensitive to the religious nature and significance of the occasion.

### D. Scheduling

1. The date and time of the service shall be set in consultation with the pastor(s) performing the service.
2. It is expected that pastors on the staff of Westminster Presbyterian Church shall perform all “Celebrations of Commitment” and “Services of Blessing.”
3. While the participation of other clergy is welcome, their participation must be cleared with the pastoral staff prior to an invitation being extended.
4. Because “Celebrations of Commitment” and “Services of Blessing” are services of worship performed by the church, our facilities are not to be rented for services to non-members.

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Partner #1

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Partner #2

*\*All participants must sign to indicate they have read and understood this policy.*



## CHECKLIST OF WESTMINSTER FORMS

Wedding form from office signed by couple acknowledging and agreeing to church policies prior to the confirmation of specific dates for the rehearsal and wedding. The building use fee is also required to reserve a couple's dates for the rehearsal and wedding.

With Pastor's approval, add rehearsal and wedding dates to church calendar.

Schedule custodial service if the service is in the sanctuary.

Receive signed Photography/Videography form at least two weeks prior to the service.

## CHECKLIST OF WESTMINSTER HONORARIUMS AND FEES

An honorarium of \$300.00 is suggested for the Pastor to be paid directly to the Pastor.

A fee of \$250.00 is required for the organist for the wedding only. The organist typically does not attend the rehearsal. In the event that the couple would like to have the organist participate in the rehearsal, there is an additional \$100.00 fee. This fee is paid directly to the organist.

If the service will be held in the sanctuary, there is a building use/custodial fee of \$500.00 to be paid to Westminster Presbyterian Church.

If the service will be held in the chapel, there is a building use fee of \$300.00 to be paid to Westminster Presbyterian Church. No custodial support will be present.

If the service will be held in the Celtic Garden, there is a properties use fee of \$1,000.00 to be paid to Westminster Presbyterian Church. No custodial support will be present.

An additional \$100.00 fee is charged if the Pastor determines that a sound system operator is required. This fee is paid directly to Westminster Presbyterian Church.

An additional \$100.00 fee is charged for a rehearsal with soloist or instrumentalists. This fee is paid directly to Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Approved by Session April 25, 2017  
Amended March 26, 2019

