

FORT SAM HOUSTON CHAPEL WEDDING GUIDELINES

1 May 2011

The purpose of this packet is to establish guidance and policy for couples desiring to be married at a Fort Sam Houston Chapel. Please contact the appropriate chapel staff for any further questions. Although there is no charge for the use of the chapel facilities, the wedding coordinators and organists/musicians charge separate fees for their services. The guidelines set forth in this packet must be followed by all wedding parties.

WEDDING COUPLE ELIGIBILITY

One member of the wedding couple must be a valid ID cardholder as defined below:

1. Active Duty military
2. Active Guard-Reserve (AGR), Reserve, National Guard, Coast Guard
3. Retired military, AGR, Reserve, Guard, or Coast Guard
4. Dependents of criteria 1-3 with DoD family member ID card.

RESERVATIONS

The Chapels on Fort Sam Houston may be reserved up to 12 months in advance. Once you have a wedding date and desired Chapel, please contact that Chapel's Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC). The NCOIC will assist you in your reservation (Main Post Chapel is the preferred wedding worship center). Reservations cannot be made until all required documents have been received by the appropriate Chapel Staff.

For Roman Catholic parties who have had a previous bond of marriage, no chapel will be reserved unless a Church annulment (formal or informal) has been granted. Contact the Active Duty priest for further information.

SCHEDULING

Regularly scheduled chapel sponsored programs have priority over requested wedding dates and times. A wedding coordinator will be used by all couples desiring to utilize any chapel unless the Mission Support Group (MSG) Chaplain or Deputy authorize otherwise.

Weddings and rehearsals will not be scheduled on the following days:

1. First Saturday of the month (reserved for Roman Catholic baptisms).
2. Weekends falling on or concurrent with Federal holidays (Independence Day, Thanksgiving Eve or Day, Christmas Eve and Day, New Year's Eve and Day, Labor and Memorial Days, etc.)
3. Ash Wednesday and Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday)
4. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (September)

Wedding parties will follow the below schedule for all wedding ceremonies and rehearsals:

Rehearsal (Friday)	Wedding (Saturday)
1500 – 1600	1200 – 1330
1600 – 1700	1500 – 1630

Chapels are available to the wedding party 1 hour prior to the scheduled service and 1 hour and 30 minutes for the service to include post-wedding photography, totaling 2 ½ hours.

Rehearsals that have not started by 1515 and 1615, respectively, and weddings by 1230 and 1530, respectively, are subject to cancellation by the MSG or Deputy MSG chaplain (the presiding pastor/chaplain, sponsoring chaplain, wedding coordinator, or other appropriate personnel will notify the aforementioned).

Protestant couples are required to attend pre-marital counseling by their presiding clergy, sponsoring Chaplain, or attendance at a monthly pre-marriage training class with the Family Life Chaplain at Dodd Field Chapel (verification required). Roman Catholic couples are required to attend the San Antonio Archdiocese Primary Marriage Preparation program. The marriage party must request information from the Priest at least 4 months prior to the planned wedding date.

The Installation Chaplain permits civilian clergy and chaplains from other military services and installations to conduct wedding ceremonies at Fort Sam Houston chapels. Wedding couples who are members of civilian congregations are encouraged to use their own pastor/priest/rabbi.

All weddings not performed by a Fort Sam Houston chaplain require a sponsoring Unit Ministry Team (UMT). Fort Sam Houston chaplains (Garrison and Tenant) will provide their own UMT support. Keys are issued by chapel NCOICs.

FAITH GROUP AND USE OF CHAPELS

JEWISH

Rabbis have specific requirements when conducting weddings for Jewish personnel. Whenever there is no Jewish Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston, the chapel staff will aid you in contacting the Jewish Lay Leader for assistance.

PROTESTANT

Protestant Chaplains assigned to Fort Sam Houston conduct Christian weddings only. Those who desire an assigned chaplain to conduct their wedding should be committed to the Church and active in one of the Chapel's worshipping communities. If you worship elsewhere, we expect your Pastor to officiate.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Contact a Roman Catholic Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston before making a chapel reservation for a specific date. The Dioceses of Texas have adopted common guidelines for Roman Catholics in preparation for Christian marriage. Non-active duty military priests are required delegation from the active duty military priest.

1. All couples will contact a priest 4 to 6 months prior to a wedding date
2. Attend an initial interview
3. Conduct primary preparation
4. Attend pastoral follow-up interviews

Marriage outside of the Church does not constitute cause to omit or waive the normal preparation process, except in the case of stable, long-standing unions. For validations following annulments or dissolutions, proper pastoral care must be given. In no case shall the validation occur until the 6 months have passed from the date of the marriage outside the

Church. Any previous marriage (Roman Catholic or non- Roman Catholic) is an obstacle to marriage in the Roman Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the Priest the fact of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution.

OTHER FAITH GROUPS

Coordinate with the Installation/Unit/Sponsoring Chaplain and your faith group to meet appropriate requirements

MARRIAGE LICENSE PROCEDURES

A valid TEXAS marriage license is required for weddings on Fort Sam Houston. The license is available at any State of Texas County Clerk's Office. In Bexar County call 335-2221 for information on obtaining the license. Bring the license to the officiating clergy at least 1 day prior to the ceremony. The authorized State of Texas officiating clergy will sign, date, and return the license to the bride/groom at the conclusion of the service. It is the wedding party's responsibility to return the completed license to the applicable County Clerk's Office.

MUSIC/MUSICIANS/ORGANIST

The wedding party is responsible to contract the organist/musician. It is appropriate that any music one uses in the Chapel wedding be of a spiritual nature, supporting the focus of worship and prayer. A chapel wedding, in contrast to a civil ceremony, is an occasion of corporate worship. Officiating clergy and/or chapel organist make final music decisions in consultation with the sponsoring UMT.

Only those organists familiar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ and who have approval from the Main Post Chapel Protestant Chaplain will use the system. Pianos are available for use by outside musicians unfamiliar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ.

WEDDING COORDINATORS

Wedding coordinators assist in the preparation and conduct of your wedding service. If you intend to use a Fort Sam Houston chapel facility, you are required to secure the services of a chapel wedding coordinator.

Use of an outside coordinator or no coordinator will be by exception only. If an exception is granted, you must make other arrangements to perform the services outlined below:

1. Review wedding guidelines with the wedding party.
2. Familiarize the wedding party with the chapel facility and equipment.
3. Prepare and open the chapel for rehearsal and the wedding.
4. Set up the altar, candlesticks, candles, sound system, kneelers, and lights.
5. Coordinate with the clergy.
6. Assist with proper protocol for the ceremony (placement of attendants, ushering, and seating arrangements).
7. Ensure that the rehearsal and wedding begin and end at the scheduled times.
8. Return chapel to condition appropriate for the next worship service.
9. Close and secure the chapel.

To secure the services of a chapel wedding coordinator, contact the NCOIC at the requested chapel. The NCOIC will provide names of the wedding coordinators available for contracting. The chapel will not be responsible for establishing a contract. The wedding party will contact a

coordinator to secure the services and arrange the required payment. The chapel staff is responsible only to provide the wedding party a list of possible resources.

CHAPEL USAGE

THE FOLLOWING IS PROHIBITED:

- Candles placed on the end of the pews at any time (by order of the FSH Fire Chief)
- Removing Chapel Center sabers from premises for any reason
- Alcoholic beverages except for sacramental purposes
- Food or other beverages in the sanctuary at any time
- Tobacco usage including but not limited to Cigarettes, Cigars, Pipes, and Chew/Chaw
- Firearms of any kind, however, ceremonial swords may be used for a saber arch
- Removal of banners, seasonal decorations, and alterations to sound equipment
- Use of thumbtacks, pins, nails, tape (without approval), or glue on any of the chapel furnishings and walls/pillars.
- Flower arrangements or wax candles without plastic placemats
- The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals on Chapel grounds to include the center aisle
- Displacement of any Chapel flags (US, State, Army, etc), in particular, rotunda flags of Main Post Chapel
- Movement of chapel furnishings (altar, pulpit, lectern, and/or items used for weekly worship without permission of the Chaplain Officer in Charge (OIC) or NCOIC
- Use of Main Post Chapel Roman Catholic and Jewish denominational-specific worship areas without authorization from the Installation Chaplain, Garrison Chaplain Priest, or the Jewish Lay Leader
- Use of Dodd Field Chapel WatchCare Room as a changing room (for safety reasons, there are no exceptions)

Guidelines for photography are determined by officiating clergy/chaplain. Officiating clergy and the sponsoring UMT are responsible to ensure that the sanctity of the chapel is not violated. Both are the approving authority in matters of chapel etiquette, wedding music, photography, electrical recordings, etc.

RECEPTIONS

There are currently no chapel facilities adequate for receptions. For nearby facilities, please check with the Sam Houston Club at 210-224-2721 or with the Fort Sam Houston Golf Club at 210-221-5863 for availability.

CIVILIAN GUESTS

For the current requirements for admission of civilian guests please contact the Security Forces Squadron (formerly PMO) at 210-221-2222.