



GUIDELINES FOR MARRIAGE CEREMONIES
at THE AMERICAN PROTESTANT CHURCH OF THE HAGUE
(APCH)

At the American Protestant Church of The Hague we believe the wedding ceremony to be one of the most sacred rites of the church. It is an act of worship and consecration and all preparations should be made with this in mind. It is assumed that when a couple comes to this church for marriage they are affirming love for God, commitment to Jesus Christ, and support for the work of the church in the world.

The American Protestant Church of The Hague (APCH) is happy to offer the services of our Pastor(s) to officiate at weddings, as well as the use of our building facilities for Christian blessing of weddings.

We hope your day will be filled with great joy. In order to help this happen, it will be helpful for you to review the following marriage guidelines.

I. Scheduling Dates and Use of Facilities

Scheduling with the Church Office: As soon as you know your wedding date and time, please contact our Church office at 070 324-4490, on weekday mornings during office hours (9:00 and 1:00 pm) to verify and to have your date entered on the Church Calendar. Please contact the church as early as possible to ensure availability for your wedding date and to allow adequate time to complete the pre-marital counseling process.

Reservation Fee: Your dates for use of the Sanctuary for your wedding will be pencilled in only tentatively until your non-refundable down payment reservation fee (see the Fee Schedule) has been transferred into the APCH bank account earmarked "Wedding Down Payment" with your name and wedding date noted. This down payment then gives you first priority for that date and time, in both the Church and Pastor's calendars.

Please allow at least six months between the time of initial contact and the actual wedding.

II. Scheduling with the Pastor

After you have contacted the church office and informed them of your wedding date, a Pastor will contact you to set up an initial meeting with you.

Generally, the Pastor and the church council will not be able to confirm with certainty that they will perform the wedding until there has been an initial meeting with the couple.

An initial interview is required with the Pastor to discuss the forthcoming marriage. At that meeting a firm verbal contract for conducting the wedding will be decided upon, general information regarding the service will be discussed along with the church's policies for weddings.

III. Pre-marital Counseling

Depending on the couple's level of readiness, a Pastor may provide three to six counseling sessions with the couple. The Pastor's primary aim during these hours together will be to assist the couple in becoming ready to take their vows meaningfully and with a real sense of commitment to each other and to God.

Sometimes the pre-marital process will include a diagnostic tool or survey to supplement the counseling, which may entail additional cost. If further counseling is required, the Pastor may suggest the couple pursue additional counseling. The pre-marital sessions will also include planning for your wedding ceremony.

IV. Other Clergy Participants

It is customary for the Pastor of the American Protestant Church to preside at all weddings. If for any reason there is a desire to have a guest clergy person present for all or part of the service, this should be made known to the Pastor before any invitation is given to the guest.

If clergy other than an APCH Pastor are to be included, approval and invitation by our Pastor and/or church council may be necessary. In addition to the APCH Pastor's honoraria, the couple should arrange separate honorarium to any other clergy invited to participate.

V. Wedding Outside of APCH

You must contact the Pastor to see if he is available. Please note that you should plan to pay for any necessary travel expenses and accommodations and provide directions and the address of the wedding facility.

VI. Cost

The honorarium for the Pastor performing your ceremony is noted in the Fee Schedule. If there is a financial hardship involved, please discuss this with the Pastor. It is noted that other church staff will need to be paid for, as well. For example, security at the door, sound technician for sound system, kitchen assistance if the kitchen is used and any musicians, such as an organist.

VII. Wedding Rehearsal and Reception

The Pastor will help determine the need for a wedding rehearsal. If a rehearsal is deemed necessary, it is usually held on the evening prior to the wedding. It is imperative that all of the wedding party be on time for the rehearsal. If you have chosen to contract with a wedding "consultant," he/she must arrange for an appointment with the Pastor prior to the rehearsal.

- The Pastor will conduct the wedding rehearsal.
- The rehearsal will begin within minutes of the appointed time even if all members of the wedding party are not present.
- No rehearsal shall be conducted while any member of the wedding party is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is in any way disrespectful of the occasion.

Regretfully, the Pastor is not always able to attend rehearsal dinners or receptions. It is our sincere hope that such inability is not taken as an offense.

VIII. Wedding Licenses

APCH Pastors are not responsible for the processing of wedding licenses. You are responsible for ensuring the proper processing of necessary marriage documents. Dutch law states that couples must already be legally married by the *gemeente* or other authority before your church wedding-blessing ceremony can occur. Please assure that your civil ceremony is complete before your church ceremony takes place.

IX. Music

Wedding music must be meaningful as well as sacred. Unusual musical requests will need to meet both of these standards.

The Pastor will notify the Director of Traditional Music if an organist is required for the ceremony. If the APCH praise band is required for the wedding, the Pastor will notify one of the praise band leaders.

At least one month prior to the wedding date a meeting should be planned with the Director of Traditional Music or the Director of Contemporary Worship. (Name and telephone number may be obtained through the church office, or you can meet either Music Director after the worship services on a Sunday to schedule an appointment.)

The Music Director will make suggestions to you about processional and recessional music as well as other appropriate pieces for the wedding. Special vocalists are the responsibility of the couple. However, the music must be approved by the Music Director and if it is desired to have a solo during the ceremony itself, this must be discussed with the Pastor.

All use of microphones (including mics for Pastors or possibly soloists) or music equipment (not including the grand piano or organ) will require the services of a sound technician. The couple may contract with an approved APCH sound technician (based on availability. Outside sound technicians must meet with the Director of Contemporary Music at least one month before the wedding and be approved to work with APCH sound equipment. Scheduling and approval of outside sound technicians is the sole responsibility of the couple and payments should be made directly to them on the wedding day. Any damages to sound equipment made by the wedding party is the responsibility of the wedding party.

X. The Wedding Day

On the day of the wedding, plan to have the entire party at the church at least one hour before the wedding. Weddings held at The American Protestant Church are held at the hour originally planned. "Politely late" is not polite to your guests, especially to those who have come from a distance to share the celebration with you. Please be courteous to them, as well as to the Pastor, Organist, and Custodian, and be on time for your wedding! After one-hour delay, the Pastoral Staff and musicians and Wedding Assistant will be entitled to leave the premises and there will be no refunds.

XI. Photographs and Video

Photographs are a cherished part of most weddings. They may be taken before or after the ceremony and during the reception. If you wish to have live photography or have your wedding filmed, please advise your photographer of the following guidelines:

Still Photographs may be taken under the following conditions:

- Flash pictures may not be taken during the ceremony. The ceremony begins at the last note of the Processional and continues to the first note of the Recessional. In other words, flash pictures may be taken during the Processional and Recessional, but at no time in between.
- It is permitted to have time exposures, but from the balcony only.
- The photographer must not be in evidence at any time during the ceremony, since flash pictures and photographers detract from the purpose and reverence of the occasion.
- Ushers that are selected by the couple will be expected to tell guests who arrive with cameras about the above ruling.
- It is the bride's responsibility to inform the photographer that pictures taken prior to the service must be scheduled to allow her to arrive at the church on time for the wedding.

Video photography is allowed within the following conditions:

- Any bright lights must be stationary and must remain turned on throughout the service.
- Lights must not shine brightly into the eyes of the bride, groom, wedding party, Pastor, or wedding guests.
- The camera must remain stationary throughout the service.
- The video photographer must make an appointment with the Pastor to discuss plans for photographing the service prior to the rehearsal.

XII. Facilities Use**

Please let us know exactly which building facilities are needed, for example, Sanctuary (worship area), old hall area for congratulations, if reception is elsewhere or the Fellowship Hall and Kitchen (for the reception), bridal party reception room upstairs, etc. You are encouraged to come and view our facilities ahead of time.

Our Church may be used for up to 4 hours. Further use will be billed to you on a rental scale per hour, up to 2 hours more. Because there are security alarms in place, we cannot extend any use of property beyond 10:45 pm. The number of hours should be designated on the form. Due to the limited facilities, only small receptions (50-60 people seated or up to 100 standing with buffet) are possible in the Fellowship Hall.

The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- The couple is responsible for arranging the set-up and clean-up of all decoration of tables, refreshments, table service ware, etc.
- An outside caterer may be used.
- No alcoholic beverages may be served on Church property. We recommend sparkling juice in goblets for the toast. (The exception for this is use of wine for communion during the wedding ceremony, or during the exchange of dry/sweet wine ceremony between the bride and groom.)

- Smoking is not permitted in the sanctuary or any other part of the church buildings.

XIII. Other arrangements

Flowers and Candles: The couple are to make all their own arrangements for flowers. These should be placed only on proper flower stands and may be removed after the wedding unless arrangements have been made with our Church Office Manager ahead of time to leave them in the Sanctuary for Sunday services. We will be glad to note in the Sunday worship bulletin that the flowers have been given in honour of the couples' wedding.

If you plan to attach flowers to the ends of rows of seats, please use ribbon or extra-large rubber bands, not sticky tape, to attach them to the seat back or bottom of the seat. No plants, palms, or tape may be placed on the pews or chancel furniture. No tape, tacks or adhesive may be used for pew markers. White "post-it" putty may be used for lightweight bows. Our walls have a special paint which will come off with tape, destroying the finish, so please refrain from taping anything to the walls or windows.

Candles: Please provide your own candles (including the Unity Candle if desired), using non-drip candles in secure holders; even so, please provide plastic or other floor protection under them since even "non-drip" candles sometimes drip.

In case of damage, the florist or person decorating will be held responsible. The church will have damages repaired and bill the person responsible.

Goblets/Glasses with Sweet & Dry Wine: If, as part of the Ceremony, you would like to exchange goblets of sweet and dry wine (or juice), symbolizing your willingness to share both the sweet and barren moments of life together, please bring 2 goblets/glasses, as well as a small bottle of red and a small bottle of white or rose wine, which will be poured into each goblet before, or as part of, the ceremony.

XIV. Payment of Fees and Fee Schedule

All fees must be paid into the Church account. The non-refundable down payment should be made as soon as the Pastor has agreed to perform your wedding ceremony. The remainder of the fee should be paid 2 weeks before your wedding. Please include the name and date of the wedding on the bank transaction. The Church will distribute the payments.

All payments to be made through the APCH bank account number: ING Bank, IBAN: NL72INGB0002637900. Account name: The American Protestant Church of The Hague.

For additional information please contact the Church office (see above for contact details).

Please fill in the "Wedding Application" form indicating which services you are paying for and return it to the Church Office Manager no later than 3 weeks before the wedding.

XV. Contact Details

APCH Office: Tel.: (070)324-4490, E-mail: office@apch.nl; website: www.apch.nl

Address: American Protestant Church of The Hague
Esther de Boer-van Rijklaan 20
2597 TJ The Hague, The Netherlands

The Pastor can be reached at the APCH church office or by email at seniorpastor@apch.nl.