



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT BELVOIR
9820 FLAGLER ROAD, SUITE 213
FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060-5928

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

IMBV-CH

26 June 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR US Army Fort Belvoir Personnel

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

1. REFERENCE:

- a. AR 165-1 (Army Chaplain Corps Activities), 3 December 2009
- b. AR 600-20 (Army Command Policy), 18 March 2008
- c. Code of Virginia – Title 20, Domestic Relations

2. PURPOSE. To establish policy and procedures for weddings on Fort Belvoir

3. APPLICABILITY. This policy statement outlines procedures and applies to all active duty service members, military retirees, and qualified dependents desiring to have a wedding on Fort Belvoir.

4. POLICY. Any wedding celebrated in a military chapel or temporary chapel facility on Fort Belvoir is a sacred event. Proper decorum and behavior should be observed at all times. Weddings must be scheduled with the Fort Belvoir Wedding Administrator upon meeting the requirements stated in this policy memorandum. It should be noted that military clubs and chapel weddings are not officially affiliated.

5. GENERAL.

a. Fairfax Chapel is the only authorized location for weddings on Fort Belvoir. Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a case by case basis and must be approved by the Garrison Command Chaplain. Fort Belvoir worship services take precedence over all events, thus weddings can be moved to accommodate the religious support mission. If this occurs, every effort will be made to coordinate an alternate venue for the wedding. _____ (Initial)

b. All Catholic weddings on Fort Belvoir will be approved by the Senior Catholic Priest prior to scheduling by the Wedding Administrator. Additionally, Catholic weddings for members of parishes other than the Fort Belvoir Catholic Community must obtain written permission from their proper Catholic pastor in order to celebrate the wedding on Fort Belvoir. All other requirements of the Archdiocese for the Military Services will be satisfied.

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IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

c. Fort Belvoir Staff Chaplain Directorate (SCD) provides 180 time slots each year for weddings. Chapel weddings will NOT be scheduled to accommodate reception plans made prior to scheduling a chapel facility. Receiving lines and wedding receptions are not permitted in/on the chapel facilities or grounds.

d. The prospective bride and groom must obtain a valid marriage license from the Commonwealth of Virginia and present it to the officiating clergy at or before the wedding rehearsal. Under no circumstances will a wedding be performed without the actual license.

e. Absolutely no alcoholic beverages are permitted in the chapel, except for sacramental purposes. Anyone drinking alcohol on the premises will be asked to leave and the event terminated immediately. Incidents will be reported to the Garrison Command Chaplain and appropriate command channels.

f. Absolutely no smoking permitted inside or within 50 feet of the chapel.

6. COUNSELING REQUIREMENTS.

a. A minimum of seven hours pre-marital counseling is required prior to all weddings on Fort Belvoir. Additional counseling may be required in order to fulfill faith group, denomination or sponsoring clergy requirements. A Certificate of Completion from a licensed minister, chaplain or the FLC must be provided no later than 60 days prior to the wedding date. Failure to complete this requirement will result in cancellation of the wedding reservation (unless exception granted by the Garrison Command Chaplain). _____ (Initial)

b. Counseling may be received from a licensed minister, chaplain or the Fort Belvoir Family Life Center (FLC). The FLC offers a one day workshop every month (except December) for couples wishing to celebrate their wedding on Fort Belvoir. For information regarding the FLC Marriage 101 Workshop, call (703) 805-2742.

7. ECCLESIASTICAL/DENOMINATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

a. Denominational requirements are honored in a military chapel. Couples should be aware that clergy may not be able to officiate at the wedding of a couple who does not meet the marriage requirements established by the minister, denomination or religion. Some clergy may have personal requirements for the prospective bride and groom, such as an active faith life. It is important that the couple talk with the officiating clergy as soon as possible.

IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

b. All weddings are tentatively scheduled until a licensed clergy has agreed to conduct the ceremony. It is the couple's responsibility to locate and coordinate clergy.

8. SCHEDULING PROCESS.

a. All weddings will be scheduled on Saturday only. Exceptions due to religious requirements may be submitted in writing to the Garrison Command Chaplain for consideration and approval. Exceptions will not be granted in order to accommodate reception availability.

b. Weddings will be scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

c. Weddings will be during one of four available time slots (0800-1100, 1100-1400, 1500-1800, 1800-2100). The combined setup, wedding, photo session and cleanup will not exceed 2 hours and 55 minutes. No exceptions. Weddings must begin and end on time. _____ (Initial)

d. No weddings will be scheduled on holidays, holiday weekends or during Holy Week to allow proper observance and due to minimal staffing. This includes the entire Christmas/New Year timeframe of 16 December – 5 January.

e. The following may schedule weddings up to twelve months in advance:

(1) Active Duty Service Members

(2) Dependents of Active Duty Service Members (defined as those who still possess a valid military ID Card).

(3) Reservists on Active Duty

f. The following may schedule weddings up to six months in advance:

(1) Retired Service Members

(2) Dependents of Retired Service Members

g. The bride and/or groom will contact the Wedding Administrator to arrange the initial interview. The interview consists of the following:

IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

- (1) Complete the Fort Belvoir Wedding Application
 - (2) Sign the rules and regulation sheet
 - (3) Establish tentative wedding and rehearsal dates/times. Rehearsals are mandatory. Dates/times are subject to change based on military operational requirements. Priority and final determination is at the discretion of the Garrison Command Chaplain.
 - (4) Couples are not required to have a civilian wedding coordinator. If so desired, they are responsible for coordinating such services for planning and the rehearsal. The Fort Belvoir Wedding Administrator serves as and/or has direct oversight and authority the day of the ceremony.
- h. The Wedding Administrator and officiating clergy must be notified immediately if the wedding is cancelled or if there is a need to change the date, time or location.

9. CLERGY SELECTION.

- a. Any licensed member of the clergy, provided they meet registration requirements established by the Commonwealth of Virginia, are in good standing with their church and comply with this policy, may perform weddings at Fairfax Chapel.
- b. A Justice of the Peace is not allowed to perform wedding ceremonies at any Fort Belvoir Chapel facility.
- c. Clergy selection and coordination is the responsibility of the bride/groom. The Wedding Administrator will provide a potential roster of clergy upon request. The couple should be aware that some civilian clergy may charge a fee for their services. Once coordination has been made for clergy to conduct the wedding, the bride/groom must provide the full name and phone number of clergy to the Wedding Administrator:

10. WEDDING MUSIC.

- a. The wedding party is responsible for coordinating all music played during the wedding, to include payment for any musical services.
- b. Chapel pianos are available for use; however, the chapel organ is only authorized to be used by Fort Belvoir Chapel contracted organists.

IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

c. A list of available organists and soloists may be requested from the Fort Belvoir Wedding Administrator.

d. Chapel weddings are religious services. All music associated with chapel weddings must be religious in tone and composition.

11. DECORATING AND CLEAN UP.

a. Two candles and the unity candle stand are available for use from the Wedding Administrator. The wedding party will provide the unity candles and any decorations.

b. Preference is for candles to be the non-drip type. If drip type candles are used, a drip plate is required to catch the wax.

c. The only authorized open flames are the altar and unity candles. At NO TIME will any open flame be used behind the Chancel (altar area) unless approved in writing by the Garrison Command Chaplain or Deputy Garrison Command Chaplain.

d. Flowers are not available from the chapel. Flowers are, however, usually positioned around the Chancel in preparation for Sunday worship services. These flowers may be moved temporarily, but are not to be removed from the premises. No flowers are to be placed on the altar at any time. Any flowers brought into the chapel must be removed at the conclusion of the wedding.

e. If flowers or decorations are attached to pews or chapel furnishings, they must be tied or attached with a plastic hook that fits over the pew. NOTHING will be tacked, taped or pinned to the pews, furnishings or carpet.

f. No rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals or other materials are to be thrown or scattered in or around the chapel grounds. The wedding party must emphasize this to their guests.

g. The wedding party must provide a setup and cleanup team. There are numerous religious services that take place in the facility. Therefore, it must always remain in a clean condition between services.

h. Aisle runners are not allowed in the chapel, nor are any decorations which could pose a safety hazard.

IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

12. DRESSING AREAS.

- a. Only the bride will be provided a dressing room.
- b. Groom, ushers, bridesmaids, etc. (remainder of wedding party) will arrive dressed and ready by the beginning of the allotted time.
- c. The dressing and waiting areas will remain free of all trash, boxes and debris.

13. PHOTOGRAPHY.

- a. Weddings are considered religious services or rites. Therefore, discretion must be used when taking any photos during the wedding.
- b. Flash photography is acceptable prior to the ceremony and during the processional and recessional, but is discouraged during the actual wedding ceremony. The officiating chaplain/clergy will make the final decision regarding photography during the ceremony.
- c. All videotaping must be done discreetly, causing no distraction to the ceremony. There should be no unnecessary movement by the cameraman. Photo equipment must remain stationary in an inconspicuous place.
- d. Absolutely NO photographers, videographers or photo/video equipment will be allowed in the Chancel. Violators WILL be asked to leave the chapel grounds immediately.

14. WEDDING SABERS.

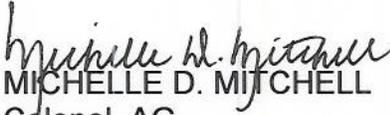
- a. Sabers are available for use during weddings in Fairfax Chapel.
- b. Saber arches will take place in the Narthex (entry to chapel) or outside the front doors of the chapel. At NO TIME will sabers be brought into the Sanctuary.
- c. The Garrison Chapel NCOIC will maintain accountability and control of the sabers. The Wedding Administrator will coordinate for their use during the rehearsal and wedding, but must ensure they are returned immediately so they can be available for the next wedding.

IMBV-CH

SUBJECT: Fort Belvoir Policy Memorandum #53, Weddings

d. At no time will sabers be removed from the chapel grounds, or provided for weddings taking place off Fort Belvoir, or at any facility not under the direct control of the SCD. Exceptions may be granted by the Garrison Command Chaplain or Deputy Garrison Command Chaplain.

15. PROPONENT. The proponent for this policy is the Staff Chaplain Directorate. The point of contact is the Deputy Garrison Command Chaplain at 703-806-3312.


MICHELLE D. MITCHELL
Colonel, AG
Commanding