



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON, FORT SILL  
463 HAMILTON ROAD  
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73503-9013

IMSI-RS

8 August 2017

**MEMORANDUM FOR FORT SILL UNIT MINISTRY TEAMS AND QUALIFIED BRIDGES & GROOMS**

**SUBJECT:** Installation Chaplains Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Chapel use for weddings

1. **REFERNCE.** AR 165-1, Chaplain Activities in the United States Army, 23 June 2015

2. **GENERAL:**

a. The use of Fort Sill Chapels for Weddings are limited to:

- Military personnel (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve of any branch)
- Retirees
- Family members with identification cards
- DOD personnel (government employees)

NOTE: Contractors do not qualify this

b. Military chapels are appropriated funded and supported by personnel with appropriated funds. Only an ID card holders can receive this direct benefit. Either the bride or the groom must be an ID card holders. A Fort Sill Chaplain may extend this to include an active member of his/her Chapel congregation (indicated by regular and consistent attendance) if he/she is not an ID card holder.

c. A Fort Sill Chaplain will/must officiate or sponsor any wedding ceremony that takes place in a Fort Sill Chapel. The Chaplains training, experience, and counsel can significantly reduce potential problem areas and assist in making a wedding a memorable and meaningful occasion. The entitlement of a chaplain as a military benefit does not mean that a chaplain can be required to perform a specific wedding. Chaplains will not perform wedding ceremonies that violate their conscience, denominational chaplain who is willing to perform or sponsor the ceremony. If a couple desires to make use of military Chaplain from another

- installation or branch of service, the couple must coordinate their request through the office of the Installation chaplain and receive approval.
- d. Persons desiring to use a Fort Sill Chapel are required to consult with the Chaplain in sufficient time to complete any pre-marital programs required by that chaplain or civilian clergy. It is the responsibility of the Chaplain to determine if a couple has satisfied the Chaplain's pre-marital requirements. Letters from clergy stipulating the man and woman have received some or the entire pre-marital program in another location will be accepted, providing they meet the officiating/sponsoring Chaplains' guidelines concerning the pre-marital program. This documentation must explain who is conducting the pre-marital program, the length of the program and the content of the program.
- e. Personnel assigned to a unit without a Chaplain should contact their next higher command in order to determine Chaplain Coverage. The Chaplain from the next higher command will assist the couple as they seek to locate a Chaplain to officiate/sponsor the wedding.
- f. Reservations for wedding at Fort Sill Chapels will be made by the couple desiring to be married. A copy of the ID card of either the bride or the groom will accompany the chapel reservation form. The reservation of a chapel is done in conjunction with the officiating/sponsoring chaplain and in coordination with the couple being married. The couple is responsible for filling out the Chapel reservation form and obtaining all necessary signatures. A Chapel reservation form is available from the office of the chapel OIC /Chapel NCOIC of the chapel of choice, or the installation Chaplain's Office. Only when a form is completely filled out, with all the required signatures, will the Chapel Staff reserve the specific date and time for the wedding. All weddings will be scheduled on a time available basis. Priority for Chapel reservations is as follows:
- Active Duty soldiers – up to 12 months prior to wedding date
  - Active duty dependent sons/daughters – 6 months prior to wedding date
  - Retiree and dependents with ID Cards – 4 months prior to wedding date
  - Those who regularly attend worship services on Fort Sill and have a Fort Sill Chaplain as their Pastor- 3 months prior to wedding date
  - Civilian employees/other with DOD ID cards – 3 months prior to wedding date
- g. The use of flowers and floral armaments is traditional and welcome in Fort Sill Chapels. The responsibility for flowers and their placements is that of the wedding party and their florist, in coordination with the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain. Flowers and other decoration must be in place at least one hour prior to be wedding. Aisle runners must be supplied by the wedding party. Candelabra are not available from the chapel facilities. A florist can assist the wedding planning with these items, should the couple desire to use them. The

candles must be the drip-less variety, equipped with wax savers. A covering will also be used under each candle to protect altar linens and carpets. No tacks or nails may be used to affix decorations on pews, walls, floor, ceilings, or any part of the Chapel building. If tape is used, it must be masking tape that will not mar the finish, or any surface, in any way.

h. The officiating/sponsoring Chaplain will provide his/her own Chaplain Assistant coverage for the wedding rehearsal, wedding and supervision of the clean –up. The Chaplain Assistant is absolutely essential. If a Chaplain does not have an assigned Chaplain Assistant, the chaplain will not request support from his/her next higher technical headquarters UMT. Garrison Chaplains will use Chaplain Assistants assigned to their Chapels for coverage of wedding they perform. It is responsibility of the officiating/sponsoring Unit Ministry Team (UMT) to:

- Sign for Chapel keys and/or organ keys.
  - Open the chapel for the rehearsal and wedding.
  - Set up the altar.
  - Supervise the clean-up after the ceremony.
  - Ensure that everyone complies with any additional guidelines established by each Chapel.
  - Turn in the Chapel keys not later than (NLT) the next duty day.
  - A wedding is a sacred, religious rite/sacrament and photographers must exercise discretion in picture taking.
  - The officiating/sponsoring chaplain, civilian minister makes the final determination as to whether or not pictures may be taken during the ceremony and whether they can be flash or not.
  - Please discuss and coordinate the use of video cameras with the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain/civilian minister
- i. If there are specific requests, please check with the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain/ civilian minister. The couples must meet all state and local civil requirements. They must obtain an official marriage license before a wedding ceremony is conducted. The couple to present their marriage license to the Chaplain before the ceremony commences. All marriages will comply with the laws of Oklahoma, the denominational requirements and pastoral practices of the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain. Individuals unable to meet the Fort Sill policy requirements may be referred to the justice of the Peace or similar civil authority.
- j. Each marriage couple planning on using a Chapel facility on Fort Sill for their wedding should attend the ‘Marriage 101” class. The family life chaplain will conduct this class from 0900-1600. Couples may make reservations for this foundational class by calling 442-5003. Once the course is complete, they will receive a certificate, and a marriage license will cost \$5 instead of \$60. This

class is in addition to any pre-marital session(s) the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain may require.

- k. Each wedding party is allowed one (1) hour block of time on a date prior to the wedding for the rehearsal. Couples may reserve a 3- hour block on the day of the wedding. This 3 hour block allows time for preparation, the ceremony, pictures, and clean-up. Weddings may be celebrated Mondays through Saturday as long as they do not conflict with scheduled worship services. There will be no weddings on Sunday because of the already heavy time constraint on Chapels, Chaplains, and Chaplain Assistants.
  - l. There are no “fees” for ceremonies or services performed by Chaplains assigned to Fort Sill, nor are there any fees for the use of chapel facilities by authorized persons. A civilian minister may be required and may receive a fee.
  - m. Musicians are not provided by the Army for weddings. Only a qualified organist/pianist may play the organ and/or piano at Fort Sill Chapels. Each Chapel OIC/Chapel NCOIC has a list of approved musicians whom the wedding party may contact to provide services for weddings. The couple is responsible for securing the services of an organist, if one is desired. Fees must be negotiated between the couple and the musicians. If a couple wishes to have their own organist/pianist play, the particular Chapel OIC/chapel NCOIC must approve the person prior to the rehearsal date. In all weddings, final determination for music will rest with the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain of the wedding ceremony, or civilian minister.
  - n. Soloists (if desired) will be contracted and remunerated by the Wedding party.
  - o. In the rare event that the wedding officiate is NOT a chaplain stationed at fort Sill, that clergy person must apply to the Installation Chaplain for permission to perform a wedding in a Fort Sill Chapel. The letter of application will include will include a copy of the clergy persons license or ordination certificate and this statement: **My credentials of authority are recorded in ministers’ credentials Book \_\_\_\_ at page \_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ county, Oklahoma.** The officiate will need to provide the same “credentials of authority” information on the Oklahoma Certificate of marriage (the bottom section of the same marriage License).
3. Chapel OIC’s/chapel NCOIC’s will assume responsibility for the following:
- a. Manage the reservations for wedding at their chapel. The chapel staff will make a reservation when the wedding party completes a reservation form and submits it with all required signatures and documentation, i.e. wedding agreement (paragraphs 2c & 6).

- b. Determine the availability or non-availability of reception facilities at their respective Chapel and establish guidelines for the reservation and use of such facilities. Chaplain Assistants will not be used to Chapels facilities. The only exception is the use for sacraments in 0a communion service.

4. There is no use of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, paper, etc., which are difficult to clean up and create a safety hazard. In view of this, there will be no use of these items in chapels, entrances to Chapels, or outside the chapels. The wedding party will strictly enforce this requirement.

5. Ceremonial sabers are available for use from the installation Chaplains office. They may be requested for use in ceremonies on the installation when either the bride or the groom is an active duty military officer. The sabers will be allowed only for ceremonies on the installation and will not be taken off Fort Sill. The officiating/sponsoring chaplain will sign for the sabers. Sabers will remain at the chapel facility for rehearsals and the actual saber ceremony. They are not available for use at the wedding receptions or follow- on socials.

6. The wedding agreement. Each couple requesting a wedding ceremony will read and abide by the Installation Chaplain's Wedding SOP. They will provide the information necessary to complete the Wedding agreement and the reservation form. They will sign and date the forms. Only when all the forms are completed and turned into the chapel OIC/Chapel NCOIC will the Chapel Staff reserve the date and time selected for the wedding. A reservation is not firm until the wedding couple returns all the necessary paperwork.

7. When inviting guests, wedding parties must be careful not to exceed the Chapel seating capacity. Installation fire and safety regulations prohibit overcrowding of buildings. Please provide specific directions to wedding guests concerning the chapel and its location. The available chapel facilities on Fort Sill and their approximate seating capacity are as follows:

- Old post chapel- 60. This chapel does not have a fellowship area.
- New Post Chapel – 200.
- Frontier Chapel – 260
- Grierson Hill chapel – 250
- Quarry hill Chapel – 200

8. If the wedding party desires to have a pictorial record of the wedding day, please bear in mind the following:

- Cleaning checklist Please Initial
- Vacuum carpet in sanctuary
- Remove programs from the pews
- Remove all wedding decorations

- Remove all hangers, bags, etc. from latrines and dressing rooms
- Place all furniture and flowers back in original settings

### **Name and contact information of cleaning personnel responsible**

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9. Chapels are not equipped with the privacy necessary for dressing. Last minute adjustments to cloths, hair, and flowers may be made at the Chapel.

10. The wedding party must notify the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain, as well as the Chapel OIC/Chapel NCOIC, immediately if the wedding is cancelled or if there is a need to change the date, time, or place.

11. Weddings performed by Chaplains on Fort Sill are religious services of worship. Everything about the service should witness that this is a religious service and not a secular ceremony.

12. The Point of contact for the memorandum is SFC Damon Baker at (580) 442-3302.

JIMMY D. NICHOLS  
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Installation Command Chaplain