



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

26 SEPTEMBER 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR FORT SILL UNIT MINISTRY TEAMS AND QUALIFIED BRIDES & GROOMS

SUBJECT: Installation Chaplain's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Chapels Hosting Weddings

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

2. **GENERAL:**

a. The use of New Post Chapel for Weddings are limited to:

- (1) Military personnel (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve of any branch)
- (2) Retirees
- (3) Family members with identification cards
- (4) DOD personnel (government employees)
- (5) NOTE: Contractors do not qualify for this

b. Military chapels are funded with appropriated funds and supported by personnel with appropriated funds. Only ID card holders can receive this direct benefit. Either the bride or the groom must be an ID card holder. 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 chaplain's training, experience, and counsel can significantly reduce potential problems 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. If a chaplain cannot personally perform a wedding they will assist the couple in finding a chaplain who can perform or sponsor the ceremony. If a couple desires to make use of a military chaplain

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from another installation or branch of service, the couple must receive approval from the Religious Support Office.

d. Persons desiring to use a chapel are required to consult with the sponsoring 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 that the couple have received some or the entire pre-marital program in another location will be accepted, provided they meet the officiating/sponsoring chaplain's 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 of a chapel will be made by the couple desiring to be married. 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. Chapel reservation form are available at the Religious Support Office. The chapel staff will reserve the specific date and time for the wedding. Only when a form is completely filled out with all the required signatures. All weddings will be scheduled based on availability. No wedding will be scheduled prior to six months before the date of the wedding.

g. The use of floral armaments is traditional and welcomed in Fort Sill Chapels. The responsibility for flowers and their placement is that of the wedding party and their florist, in coordination with the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain/NCOIC. Flowers and other decorations must be in place at least one hour prior to the wedding. Aisle runners must be supplied by the wedding party. Candelabra will not be provided by the chapel. A florist can assist the wedding planning with these items should the couple desire to use them. Candles MUST be of the drip-less variety and 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. Only masking tape that will not mar the finish or any surface may be used.

h. The officiating/sponsoring chaplain will provide their own chaplain assistant to support 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 request support from their next higher technical headquarters

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Unit Ministry Team (UMT). Garrison chaplains will use chaplain assistants assigned to their unit for coverage of weddings they perform. It is responsibility of the officiating/ sponsoring UMT to:

- (1) Sign for chapel keys and/or organ keys (CA)
- (2) Open chapel for the rehearsal and wedding (CA)
- (3) Set up altar (CA/CH)
- (4) Supervise clean-up following ceremony (CA)
- (5) Ensure that everyone complies with any additional guidelines established by each Chapel (CH/CA).
- (6) Turn in the chapel keys not later than (NLT) the next duty day (CA)
- (7) A wedding is a sacred, religious rite/sacrament and photographers must exercise discretion in picture taking
- (8) Officiating/sponsoring chaplain, or civilian minister, makes the final determination as to whether or not pictures may be taken during the ceremony and whether they can flash or not
- (9) 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. Couples must meet all state and local civil requirements. They must obtain an official marriage license before a wedding ceremony is conducted. The couple must present their marriage license to the chaplain before the ceremony commences. All marriages will comply with the laws of Oklahoma and the denominational requirements and pastoral practices of the officiating/sponsoring chaplain. Individuals unable to meet the Fort Sill wedding policy requirements may be referred to the justice of the peace or similar civil authority.
 - j. Each couple planning on using a chapel for their wedding is requested, but not mandated, to attend the 'Marriage 101" class, (held the first Friday of each month at the religious Support Office (RSO) at Frontier Chapel). 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, the couple will receive a certificate of completion. This certificate will reduce the cost of the marriage

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license to \$5.00. This class is in addition to any pre-marital session(s) the officiating/sponsoring chaplain may require.

k. Rehearsals: Each wedding party is allowed one (1-2) hour block of time on a date prior to the wedding for the rehearsal.

l. Wedding Ceremony: 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.

m. Cost: 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 require and may receive a fee.

n. Music: Musicians are not provided by the Army for weddings. Only a qualified organist/pianist may play the organ and/or piano in Fort Sill chapels. The RSO 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.

o. Soloists (if desired) will be contracted and compensated by the wedding party.

p. In the event that the person conducting the wedding 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 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 officiant 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:

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a. Manage reservations for weddings 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. Reception Facilities: Chapels on Fort Sill do not have any facilities that can be used for receptions. However, Fort Sill MWR has a lists of facilities that can be used for receptions.

4. The use of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, paper, etc. is not allowed in any chapel. These items are difficult to clean up and create a safety hazard. In view of this, there will be no use of these items in or outside the chapels. The wedding party will strictly enforce this requirement. Indoor use of fake flowers is allowed.

5. Ceremonial sabers are available for use from the Religious Support 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 remain at Fort Sill. The officiating/sponsoring chaplain/ chaplain assistant 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 wedding receptions or follow-on socials.

6. The wedding agreement. Each couple requesting a wedding ceremony will read and abide by the Fort Sill 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 forms are completed and turned into the Religious Support Office will the chapel staff reserve the date and time selected for the wedding. A reservation is not firm until the wedding couple returns all 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:

- a. Old Post Chapel-60. This chapel does not have a fellowship area.
- b. New Post Chapel-200
- c. Frontier Chapel-260
- d. Grierson Hill Chapel-250
- e. Quarry hill Chapel-200

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8. Pictures: You are allowed to have pictures taken before, during and after the wedding. However, the party only has 3 hours for use the building to include set-up, pictures, ceremony, clean-up and pictures after the ceremony.

9. Cleaning: The wedding party is responsible to return the chapel to the condition it was found in. A chaplain assistant is there only to oversee the process and ensure that the building is ready for the following day. The following is a check list the wedding party is responsible for when cleaning the chapel:

- a. Cleaning checklist. Please Initial
- b. Vacuum carpet in sanctuary
- c. Remove programs from pews
- d. Remove all wedding decorations
- e. Remove all hangers, bags, etc. from latrines and dressing rooms
- f. Place all furniture and flowers back in original settings

10. Dressing Rooms: Chapels are not equipped with the privacy necessary for dressing. Last minute adjustments to clothes, hair, and flowers may be made at the chapel.

11. The wedding party will immediately notify the officiating/sponsoring Chaplain, as well as the Chapel OIC/Chapel NCOIC, and the RSO should the wedding be cancelled or there is a need to change the date, time, or place of the wedding.

12. 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.

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13. The Point of Contact for the memorandum is CH (LTC) Clark E. Rabe at (580) 442-3319.

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