



# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

One West Harker Road | Fort Oglethorpe, GA | 706.866.2521 | [www.FPFO.org](http://www.FPFO.org)

## Facility Use Policy

adopted by Session April 2019

### I. Preliminary Principles

All Church Property exists for the glory of God and is under the stewardship of the Session of First Presbyterian Church. The Session is ultimately responsible before God for all that takes place on Church Property; the Session must authorize *any* use of church facilities by outside groups, church organizations (e.g. Bible Studies, WIC/Women's Ministry events, etc.), as well as special services such as weddings and funerals. This policy seeks to outline the principles by which the Session governs the use of the church facility as well as regulate the use of the facility for a wide variety of events.

### II. Definitions

- A. **Church Property** for the purpose of this policy is defined as the physical plant located at 1 Harker Road as well as the associated furniture and equipment.
- B. **Church Facility** is defined the same as "Church Property."
- C. **The Session** is the court of ordained overseers responsible for the spiritual government of the church. The Session is comprised of the ruling and teaching elders elected by the congregation.
- D. **The Diaconate:** the board consisting of elected, ordained, and active deacons who are responsible for ministry to physical needs and secular concerns of the church. The deacons are entrusted with the care of Church Property as well as members who have particular physical and secular needs.
- E. **Church Member(s)**, for the purpose of this policy, are persons received by the Session into the membership of First Presbyterian Church (Fort Oglethorpe) on a credible profession of faith in Christ confirmed by a lifestyle of repentance and good works before men (Cf. BCO 6-2).

### III. Use of Church Facilities

#### A. Normal Use of Church Facilities

Use of church facilities is normally restricted to church-wide events (e.g. Worship, Bible Studies), meetings of Church courts and boards (e.g. Presbytery, Session, Diaconate), ministries of the Church (e.g. WIC/Women's Ministry, Scouts BSA), and fellowship meals. Church-wide events must be approved and scheduled with the Session directly. Ordinarily requests for facility use must be made at least 14 days in advance through the church office.

#### B. Special Church Celebratory Events

It is customary and fitting that church members organize receptions to celebrate significant life events with other church members and their children. Special events such as baby showers and wedding showers may be held at the church facility. In order to promote faithful observance of the Christian Sabbath and to

allow people to rest and worship on the Lord's Day, these events may not take place on the Lord's Day (see Section VIII below for further explanation).

### **C. Use of Church Facilities by Members for Non-Ministry Events**

Members in good and regular standing may make a request to host events at the church facilities. These events may include community receptions, civic events, birthday parties, marriage anniversary celebrations, etc. In any case, these events must be non-political in nature and promote the welfare of the city and community God has called this congregation to serve (Jer. 29). Please utilize the Facility Use Request Form at the end of this document to make a request to the Session if you wish to host an event. Before submitting a request to the Session, please review the request with the Chairman of the Diaconate.

All Facility Use Request Forms must be submitted to the church office no later than 14 days before the event is proposed to take place. The Session shall have sole discretion to approve or deny this request. If the event is approved, the event organizer is responsible for coordinating with the custodian regarding any special facility needs.

A member hosting an event at the church is responsible for set-up, cleanup, take-down, and return to normal arrangement of the event space (including but not limited to: cleaning the kitchen and setting up tables and chairs).

While church facilities may be opened to host non-ministry events, all events must be in conformity to and consistent with the principles of biblical ethics and must in no way damage the reputation of the congregation or the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Urgent church events (e.g. funeral) will take precedence should a conflict arise between that event and a previously schedule non-ministry event.

### **D. Use of Church Facilities by Non-Members**

Non-members desiring to use the facility should fill out the form at the end of this document and submit it to the church office. However, please note: non-members are not ordinarily permitted to use or reserve the church facility for events. The Session reserves the right to make exceptions to this policy without giving any reason or justification.

## **IV. Liability**

First Presbyterian Church accepts no liability for injury or death that may occur at events held at its facilities whether through accident or negligence. All persons entering, hosting, or sponsoring events held at the church facility do so at their own risk. Members or non-members hosting non-ministry events at the Church Property agree to assume all liability for injury or death to guests and/or damage to Church Property.

## **V. Alcohol and Drug Use on Church Property**

While there is nothing morally or spiritual wrong with the drinking of alcohol and indeed the Lord Jesus Christ is the premier Winemaker (cf. John 2), the serving of alcohol on the Church Property shall be limited only to that which is for sacramental use. This restriction is out of deference to the civil magistrate's authority to license the dispensing of alcohol and a concern to avoid even the appearance of evil (I Thes. 5:22).

Cigarettes, cigars, and other smoked products may not be used on Church Property including outdoor spaces. Persons wishing to smoke must leave Church Property entirely to do so.

## **VI. Facility Use Fees and Deposits**

Members wishing to use the facility are not subject to a fee for use or security deposit, however if the event requires special cleanup by the custodian, it is the responsibility of the event host/organizer to arrange compensation for the custodian subject to approval by the chairman of the diaconate.

## **VII. Access to the Building**

It is the responsibility of the event organizer to ensure the building is accessible during the time of the event and that the security system is reengaged after the event. For recurring events, a door key and alarm passcode may be issued. For non-members, a key deposit of \$100 is required.

## **VIII. Use of Church Facilities on Sunday**

Presbyterianism seeks to be continually re-forming after the pattern of the apostolic church and, as such, the Reformed and Presbyterian Church has long held Sunday to be the Christian Sabbath. In keeping with apostolic practice, the New Covenant Church worships on the First Day of the week, which the apostles called "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10) in commemoration of Christ's victory over the grave (Luke 24) and the pouring out of His Holy Spirit in abundance (Acts 2) on the First Day of the week.

At Creation, God Himself established the principle and practice of six days of labor and one day of rest. While this pattern of rest and worship was incorporated into the old Jewish Law and Mosaic covenant, it is not unique or limited to the Old Covenant, but continues under the New Covenant as a "positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages" (WCF 21.7). Although works of necessity, mercy, and piety are lawful to be done on the Sabbath day, the regular practice established by God for mankind is of six days of labor and one day of rest and worship (Mark 2 cf. WCF 21.8).

As Jesus Christ continues to reign as the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12), it is fitting that His covenant people continue to observe a weekly Sabbath rest by abstaining as much as possible from their worldly concerns and spending the

Lord's Day in public and private worship. This day is not only for *our* rest and worship, but to *give rest* to others as well (WSC 60). Thus "there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" so that God's people may anticipate the heavenly rest and eternal Sabbath Christ has won for us by His holy, gracious, and righteous work on our behalf (Heb. 4).

Events such as simple covered-dish meals or receptions giving thanks for significant events in the life of the church as a whole at times follow Lord's Day worship are ways we can enjoy this rest together. These fellowship meals and thanksgivings allow God's people to keep the Sabbath day as a community of faith and strengthen the bond we share by serving one another rather than hiring others to serve us. Moreover, the Lord of the Sabbath has made clear eating is a work of necessity and not a violation of the Sabbath (Mark 2).

Guided by the principal of resting, worshiping, and providing rest to others on the Christian Sabbath, some events (though lawful on the other six days) are not permissible to take place at the church facilities on the Lord's Day. Events such as bridal or baby showers, decorating, and similar activities may distract from the worship of God on the Sabbath day or even require vendors and/or members to do unnecessary work and travel on that day. For that reason, *some* good and noble events must be scheduled on one of the other six days so that we as a congregation may rest and provide rest to others in testimony to the blessings we enjoy in Christ and in obedience to His commands.

As the Sabbath is a gift to man from God, we rejoice that we are able - even in our sin - to rest from our works and worship our God with His people on one day in seven (Mark 2) looking forward to the great rest of the New Creation when the dwelling place of God will be with man forevermore (Rev. 21).

The Session seeks to apply the aforementioned principles faithfully and in obedience to the teaching of Christ in His Scripture, which is summarized in the Westminster Standards as adopted by the Presbyterian Church in America and to which all officers of this congregation have subscribed and are held accountable.

# Facility Use Request

This form is for **individuals** desiring to use the church facilities for a **non-church sponsored event/non-ministry event**.  
Ministry/events sponsored by the congregation (e.g. Bible Study, WIC) should make the request directly to the pastor/Session.

Event Organizer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organizer Contact Information:

email: \_\_\_\_\_ cell phone \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Time of Event: \_\_\_\_\_

Recurring Event? ( ) yes ( ) no; If yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_  
*please attach a proposed schedule as needed.*

Name, Location, Description of Event:

_____ _____ _____
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Please coordinate this event with the Chairman of the Diaconate and obtain his consent (on behalf of the diaconate) for this event to take place.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of Diaconate

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

I have read and understand the facility use guidelines established by the Session of First Presbyterian Church and I agree to abide by them. I agree to assume full legal and civil liability for any injury or death that may occur before, during, or immediately after the event. I assume financial responsibility for any damage to the Church Property either resulting from the event or the condition of the Church Property at the time of the event. I further understand this form is a request to the Session and not a reservation.

signed,

\_\_\_\_\_  
event organizer

### Official Use Only:

Approval Granted: ( ) yes ( ) no

Date Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Contact information of Church

liaison: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

**After conferring with the chairman of the diaconate, submit this form to the church office.  
If facility use request is granted by Session, a photocopy will be returned to you.**