

FORT SAM HOUSTON WEDDING POLICY

14 September 2004

This policy provides guidance and assistance in wedding planning and preparation at Fort Sam Houston. For more information, contact the Installation Chaplain's Office @210-221-5005/5007/5535 or one of the Chapel Centers listed below.

AMMED Regimental Chapel
Bldg 1398
315 Garden Avenue FSH
Tel: 210-221-3390; DSN 471-3390

DODD Field Chapel
Bldg 1721
3600 Dodd Boulevard FSH
Tel: 210-5010/5423; DSN 471-5010

Main Post (Gift) Chapel
Bldg 2200
1605 Wilson Road FSH
Tel: 210-221-2754; DSN 471-2754

Brooke Army Medical Center
BAMC Chapel
Bldg 3600
3851 Roger Brooke Drive
Tel: 210-916-1105; DSN 429-1105

There are no fees for Chapel usage, but donations are accepted to the Fort Sam Houston Consolidated Chaplains' Fund. Army Chaplains are not obligated to perform a marriage ceremony that is not in compliance with ecclesiastical requirements, dictates of conscience, and/or professional judgment. Chapel civil weddings are not authorized (Judge, Justice of the Peace, etc)

ELIGIBILITY

The bride or groom must meet the following eligibility requirements to reserve a chapel at Fort Sam Houston. Either the bride or the groom are required a valid military ID Card.

- 1. Active Duty Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard personnel and their family members with a valid ID card.*
- 2. Active Duty Reserve Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard component personnel and their family members with a valid ID card.*
- 3. Non-active Duty Reserve Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard component personnel and their family members with a valid ID card.*
- 4. Retired Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard personnel and their family members with a valid ID card.*

Examples:

- a. Ineligible: An active duty general officer requests a wedding for his daughter to a civilian. She no longer holds a military ID Card.*
- b. Eligible: Retired command sergeant major from another State wishes to remarry at FSH Main Post Chapel.*
- c. Eligible: A widow of a retired active duty sailor requests a chapel for the wedding of her 21 year-old daughter attending UTSA.*

RESERVATIONS

The Chapels on Fort Sam Houston may be reserved up to eight (8) months in advance. Make reservations at the facility the wedding party is planning to use. Whether one requests a Chaplain, as officiant, or providing other clergy, a member of the wedding party will meet with the Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) at the requested Chapel prior to securing a reservation. In all cases, present proof of eligibility (valid ID card) at the time of the request for use of the chapel. The staff will schedule weddings on a first come first serve basis.

SCHEDULING

Regularly scheduled chapel sponsored programs have priority over requested wedding dates and times. Weddings and rehearsals will not be scheduled on the following days:

- 1. Friday evenings at Main Post Chapel*
- 2. Any Federal Holiday (i.e.: Independence Day, Thanksgiving Eve or Day, Labor and Memorial Days, etc.)*
- 3. Christmas Eve and Day*
- 4. New Year's Eve and Day*

5. *Ash Wednesday and Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday)*
6. *Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur (September)*

Wedding parties will conduct rehearsals on Fridays (1500-1600 and 1600-1700), weddings on Saturdays (morning/afternoon). One may request additional time slots subject to chapel staff availability. Chapels are available to the wedding party one hour prior to the scheduled service and one hour and thirty minutes for the service to include post-wedding photography.

*All couples married by Protestant Chaplains at Fort Sam Houston are required to attend pre-marital counseling either by their clergy, sponsoring-Chaplain, or by attendance to monthly pre-marriage training classes by the Family Life Chaplain at the Dodd Field Chapel (we recommend participation in the latter at least 3 months prior to the wedding date). Roman Catholic Chaplains require couples to attend the San Antonio Archdiocese Primary Marriage Preparation program. The marriage party must request information from the Priest **at least four months prior to the planned wedding date.***

CIVILIAN CLERGY/CHAPLAINS NOT ASSIGNED TO FORT SAM HOUSTON

The Fort Sam Houston Installation Chaplain or his/her delegate has the authority to permit civilian clergy and chaplains from other military services and installations to conduct wedding ceremonies at Fort Sam Houston chapels. The wedding party is required to have a sponsoring Unit Ministry Team (UMT) from Fort Sam Houston. Prior to the reservation the wedding party will send a letter of intent to the Installation Chaplain identifying the officiating clergy and his/her faith-group affiliation with sanctioning credentials. Chapel keys will be issued to the sponsoring UMT and wedding coordinators only; they will be present throughout the rehearsal/wedding.

FAITH GROUP AND USE OF CHAPELS

JEWISH

Rabbis have specific requirements when conducting weddings for Jewish personnel. Whenever there is no Jewish Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston, the chapel staff will aid you contacting the Jewish Lay Leader for assistance.

PROTESTANT

Protestant Chaplains assigned to Fort Sam Houston conduct Christian weddings only. Those who desire an assigned chaplain to conduct their wedding should be committed to the Church and active in one of the Chapel's worshipping communities. If you worship elsewhere, we expect you to utilize your Pastor to officiate.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Contact a Roman Catholic Chaplain assigned to Fort Sam Houston before making a chapel reservation for a specific date. The Dioceses of Texas have adopted common guidelines for Roman Catholics in preparation for Christian marriage. Non-active duty military priests are required delegation from the active duty military priest.

1. *All couples will contact a Priest 4 to 6 months prior to a wedding date*
2. *Attend an initial interview*
3. *Conduct primary preparation*
4. *Attend Pastoral follow-up interviews*

Marriage outside of the Church does not constitute cause to omit or waive the normal preparation process, except in the case of stable, long-standing unions. For validations following annulments or dissolutions, proper pastoral care must be given. In no case shall the validation occur until the 6 months have passed from the date of the marriage outside the Church. Any previous marriage (Roman Catholic or non-Roman Catholic) is an obstacle to marriage in the Roman Catholic Church. The parties must disclose to the Priest the fact of the previous marriage(s) in an effort to seek resolution.

OTHER FAITH GROUPS

Coordinate with the Installation/Unit/Sponsoring Chaplain and your faith group to meet appropriate requirements.

MARRIAGE LICENSE PROCEDURES

A valid TEXAS marriage license is required for weddings on Fort Sam Houston. The license is available at any State of Texas County Clerk's Office. In Bexar County call 335-2221 for information on obtaining the license. Bring the license

to the officiating clergy at least one day prior to the ceremony. The authorized State of Texas officiating clergy will sign, date, and return the license to the bride/groom at the conclusion of the service. It is the wedding party's responsibility to return the completed license to applicable County Clerk's Office.

MUSIC/MUSICIANS/ORGANIST

The wedding party is responsible to contract the organist/pianist. It is appropriate that any music one uses in the Chapel wedding be of a spiritual nature, supporting the focus of worship and prayer. A chapel wedding, in contrast to a civil ceremony, is an occasion of corporate worship. Officiating clergy and chapel organist make music final decisions in consultation with the sponsoring chaplain. Only those organists familiar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ and who have approval from the Main Post Chapel Protestant Chaplain will use the system. Pianos are available for use by outside musicians unfamiliar with the Main Post Chapel pipe organ. A digital piano/organ and upright/ grand pianos are available at AMEDDC&S, Dodd Field, and Main Post chapels.

WEDDING COORDINATORS

Wedding coordinators assist in the preparation and conduct of one's wedding service. If one intends to use a Fort Sam Houston chapel facility, we encourage one to secure the services of a wedding coordinator however it is not a requirement. If one chooses not to contract services of a wedding coordinator, one must make other arrangements to perform the services outlined.

1. Review this Marriage Policy with the wedding party.
2. Familiarize the wedding party with the chapel facility and equipment.
3. Prepare and open the chapel for rehearsal and the wedding.
4. Set up the Altar, candlesticks, candles, sound system, kneelers and lights.
5. Coordinate with the clergy.
6. Assist with proper protocol for the ceremony (placement of attendants, ushering, and seating arrangements).
7. Ensure that the rehearsal and wedding begin and end at the scheduled times.
8. Return Chapel to condition appropriate for the next worship service.
9. Close and secure the chapel.

To secure the services of a wedding coordinator, contact the NCOIC at the chapel in which one are marrying. The NCOIC will provide names of the wedding coordinators available for contracting. The chapel will not be responsible for establishing a contract. The wedding party will contact a coordinator to secure the services and arrange the required payment. The chapel is responsible only to provide to the wedding party a list of possible resources.

CHAPEL USAGE GUIDELINES

The following are prohibited:

- Alcoholic beverages except for Sacramental purposes
- Tobacco use
- Firearms, however, ceremonial swords may be used for a saber arch
- Removal of banners, seasonal decorations, and alterations to sound equipment
- Use of thumbtacks, pins, nails, tape (without approval), or glue on any of the chapel furnishings and walls/pillars.
- Flower arrangements without plastic placemats
- The throwing of rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals on Chapel grounds
- No displacement of Chapel flags (US, State, Army, etc), in particular, rotunda flags of Main Post Chapel
- Movement chancel furnishings (altar, pulpit, lectern, and/or items used for weekly worship without permission of the Chaplain Officer in Charge
- Main Post Chapel Roman Catholic and Jewish denominational-specific worship areas without authorization from the Installation Chaplain, Garrison Chaplain Priest, and the Jewish Lay Leader
- The use of Dodd Field Chapel Watchcare Room as a changing room (for safety reasons, there are no exceptions)

Guidelines for photography are determined by officiating clergy/chaplain.

Officiating clergy and the sponsoring UMT are responsible to insure that the sanctity of the chapel is not violated. Both are the approving authority in matters of chapel etiquette, wedding music, photography, electrical recordings, etc.