

**The First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay**

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**Policy: Use of Church Buildings and Facilities**

Session approved June 19, 2007 (effective 1/1/08)

**Purpose:** The policies contained herein have been developed to protect individuals and groups authorized to use church facilities, and to ensure that the activities of such users conform to moral, ethical, and safety standards needed to preserve the integrity of the church, its facilities, and those authorized to use them.

**Criteria for use:**

The following minimum criteria shall be used to determine allowed uses of facilities.

1. The activities are church related on an activity where a church member is an active member of an outside group.
2. Priority shall be given to church activities. (See Church Responsibilities #7)
3. A church member must sponsor any non-church activity. Also, a church member must be present during the event to monitor and control activity.
4. Exceptions may be made by the Session for special activities, such as voting or Head Start
5. "Certificate of Insurance" required for any non-church activity.

**Procedure:**

**Church Responsibilities**

Ultimate authority to approve or deny requests to use church facilities and/or grounds -- whether or not church related -- lies with the church session. Factors to be considered in reviewing requests include type of activity; dates and times; numbers participating; type of church support needed (cooking facilities, sound system, etc.); availability of facilities; safety measures required; and liability of the church.

Administrative coordination of requests lies with the **Church Office**. Except for requests made directly to the pastor (marriage, funerals, memorial services), all requests should be in writing and directed to the **Church Office** for initial screening.

The following steps will be followed should there be a request to use the facilities at the First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay:

1. The requesting group will complete and submit Part 1 of the Facilities Use Form describing the event or purpose, the facilities required, the specific day (s) and time (s) and provide a name and a telephone number to the **Church Office**. A church member or friend must sponsor the group and be an active member of the group. The **Church Office** will check availability of dates and forward the request to the Buildings and Grounds Committee. The Buildings and Grounds Committee will review the request and make a recommendation to Session for approval or disapproval. ***The recommendation may be based on availability of the Church, the event or purpose for the use of the facilities, or numbers of people projected for the use.***

2. The Session will approve/disapprove the request and Building, and Grounds Committee will notify the requesting group.
3. The Church member sponsor and the representative of the group will, prior to the event or use, complete Part 2 of the Facilities Use Form. ***A key will be obtained from the Church Office, if necessary.*** Signatures of both the representative and the sponsor are required at the end of Part 2.
4. The Church member sponsor will make two (2) copies of the form. One copy will go to the representative and the other copy will go to the Church Secretary. The Church member sponsor will retain the original.
5. Once the event is complete, the representative and the Church member sponsor will complete Part 3 of the Facilities Request Form. This should be done as soon as possible once the event or use of the facilities is complete. The sponsor will make copies of the completed form and give one copy to the representative and one copy to the Building and Grounds Committee. The sponsor will give the original completed form, ***as well as the key,*** to the ***Church Secretary*** for the permanent records.
6. Any problems related to the use of the facility will be noted on the Facilities Use Form and reported to the Buildings and Grounds Committee.
7. **The Session, at its discretion, may, at any time, withdraw permission to use the facilities, even after approval has been given. Emergencies, such as funerals and funeral receptions, take precedence. A 48-hour notice will be given for withdrawal of approval.**

#### Safety, Security, and Supervision

While embracing the Christian tradition of openness, outreach and community service, some caveats and cautions must be observed by the church in the use of its facilities and grounds. For example, the indiscriminate issuance of keys to church buildings without appropriate records and means of retrieval could, in case of personal and injury or loss to property, cause certain provisions of church insurance policies to be voided. Further, liability could well fall to the church in case of sexual assault or abuse where easy access and inadequate supervision are involved. Accordingly, organizations/groups authorized to use church facilities and grounds shall be given copies of, and be required to abide by, **Church Policies** covering safety, security, and supervision, and will be specifically instructed in the following:

- Procedures to follow in case of fire
- Procedures to follow in case of accident involving personal injury or damage to church property
- The requirement for a minimum of two adults to be present at all activities involving under the age of eighteen
- The prohibition of smoking in church buildings
- The prohibition of alcoholic beverages and of the use of drugs in church buildings and on church property

In cases where the use of kitchen facilities, copying machine, or church athletic equipment is authorized, instruction as appropriate will be provided. In addition, all user groups will be instructed regarding the operation of air conditioning/heating equipment during their periods of use, as appropriate.

## User Responsibilities and Fees

1. The church will always be available for weddings and funeral/memorial services subject to space availability. Policies, procedures, and fees for these services are contained in a policy directive for each type of service.
2. The church is available at no cost for meetings, worship, and educational events by the Presbytery and by congregations and governing bodies of our denomination, and by congregations and judicatories of other denominations, which are in fellowship with our denomination.
3. All users are expected to pay the church for any disposable food service products consumed.
4. All users are expected to pay the church for damage to the facilities or equipment. Users should not themselves replace damaged equipment. The user pays the church, and the church makes the actual purchase to replace such equipment.
5. **All users are expected to clean up all spaces they use and to return room arrangements to the way they were upon arrival.**
6. Users are expected to observe these policies of the church:
  - a. No smoking in church buildings.
  - b. No alcoholic beverages and no use of drugs in church buildings or on church grounds.
  - c. Users who damage equipment pay for repair or replacement “at the discretion of the church”.
7. Usage fees shall be charged to cover the costs of utilities, consumables, and miscellaneous wear and tear. The fee schedule shall be recommended by the Buildings and Grounds Committee, approved by Session, and periodically reviewed, as necessary.
8. A security deposit shall be required. The deposit amount shall be recommended by the Buildings and Grounds Committee, approved by Session, and periodically reviewed, as necessary. The deposit shall be returned within 2 weeks if the facility is left clean, in original condition, and the key returned.
9. A “Certificate of Insurance”, showing liability coverage in case of accident, is required from any outside organization using the facilities.