



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON  
4551 LLEWELLYN AVENUE, Suite 5000  
FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND 20755-5000

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

IMNE-RS

28 September 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL CONCERNED

SUBJECT: Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Fort George G. Meade Chapel Weddings

1. General Information: A wedding ceremony at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland is a sacred event and should be understood as a religious service of the worshipping community. The Historic Main Post Chapel is one of the finest chapels in the United States Army and the Argonne Hills Chapel Center is spacious for large crowds. It should be understood that military club systems and chapel weddings have no denominational affiliations. Weddings at Fort Meade chapels will not be scheduled to accommodate reception plans. Our goal is to make the chapels easily accessible to as many authorized users as possible. The procedures set out in this document must be followed fully, so please read them carefully. If you have any questions about scheduling your wedding, call (301) 677-6035.

a. Persons Authorized to use the Chapel\*:

- Active Duty military personnel and their dependents with valid ID card
- Retired military personnel and dependents with valid ID card
- Reserve components personnel on Active Duty

**\* EITHER THE BRIDE OR THE GROOM MUST BE A DOD ID CARD HOLDER**

b. Weddings are scheduled on a "first come, first served" basis. Weddings will not be scheduled on weekends of Federal Holidays, nor major religious days and observances including: the Saturday before Easter, the Saturday after Thanksgiving, and the last two Saturdays in December. Your requested date and time will be confirmed or denied shortly after the Fort George G. Meade (FGGM) Chapel Scheduler receives your completed wedding application. (**See Wedding Application –Enclosure 1**). You may contact the Chapel Scheduler at (Commercial): (301) 677-6035; (DSN): 622-6035/3785; FAX: (301) 677-3686.

c. Reservations for Weddings will not be accepted until the couple has provided the following supporting documents:

1. A Chapel Reservation Form signed by the Sponsoring Chaplain. (**See the Wedding Application and other SOPs and enclosures** located on the Fort Meade website <http://www.ftmeade.army.mil/staff/chapel/chapel.html>).
2. A copy of a certificate (or memo) validating that pre-marital counseling has been conducted by the Sponsoring Chaplain or the Clergy member conducting the ceremony.

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3. A copy of the ordination certificate of the Clergy conducting the wedding ceremony when Clergy other than Chaplains are serving in that role.

NOTE: A Sponsoring Chaplain a requirement and must be present even when non-Chaplain Clergy are conducting the wedding ceremony.

#### 2. Conducting a Wedding at a Fort George G. Meade Chapel:

a. Wedding Ceremonies are conducted on Saturdays. You may choose from the following time slots: Main Post Chapel: 0900-1200, 1200-1500, or 1500-1800; Argonne Hills Chapel Center: 0900-1200, 1200-1500, or 1500-1800; Cavalry Chapel: 0900-1200 or 1200-1500. You have a three hour limit for set up, ceremony, and clean up.

b. Rehearsals are held on Friday evening at the following chapels: Main Post Chapel, Argonne Hills Chapel Center, and Cavalry Chapel before the wedding during the following time slots: 1700-1800, 1800-1900, and 1900-2000. The purpose of the rehearsal is to practice the sequence of the ceremony only; there is no music rehearsal. Rehearsal times are strictly enforced. If you are late, you will lose that portion of your rehearsal time.

c. Due to time constraints and commitments to other building functions, it is imperative that rehearsals and ceremonies begin and end on time. On the day of the wedding, the ceremony must begin no later than (NLT) 1 ½ hours into the reserved block of time, and must conclude NLT 1 hour before the reserved block of time. The Chaplain Assistant on duty is authorized to contact the Military Police in order to assure cooperation. The chain(s) of command of all parties involved will be notified in cases of non-compliance.

d. Although there is no charge for the use of the chapel and no fee for the Chaplain performing the ceremony, you may make a donation to the Fort Meade Chapel Tithes and Offering Fund. These funds are used for the various chapel programs that benefit military members and their families.

e. The wedding couple is responsible for ensuring that the chapel facility is cleaned and organized in the same manner in which they found it. This is not the responsibility of the Chaplain Assistant on duty. You must contract with the cleaning team (**See Enclosure 2**). The cleaning team contact name and phone number must be included on the application. The cost of a cleaning team is negotiated between the wedding couple and the cleaning team. The chapel staff will check after the wedding to ensure proper clean-up has been completed. The use of flower petals, birdseed, rice, or other confetti is strictly prohibited. Cleaning Checklist: Vacuum carpet in Sanctuary. Empty trash cans. Remove programs from pews. Remove all wedding decorations. Remove all hangers, bags, etc. from latrines and dressing rooms. Place all furniture and flowers back in original setting.

#### 3. Regulations for Facility Use and Care:

a. Nothing will be attached to chapel pews, furniture, or walls with pins, nails, tape, wire, or tacks in order to prevent damage to the property. Pew decorations are not allowed except as stated in paragraph 4a.

b. Candelabras are not allowed. All activities must comply with fire and safety regulations. Only provided altar candles are to be lit. Main Post Chapel Seating Capacity – 220; Argonne Hills Chapel Center – 600; Cavalry Chapel 200.

c. The throwing of any items is strictly prohibited inside the chapel and on the chapel grounds. The wedding party is responsible for the behavior of their guests.

d. Receiving lines and wedding receptions will not be held in the chapel facility.

e. With the exception of communion, the use of alcohol in the chapel or on the chapel grounds before, during, and after the ceremony is strictly prohibited.

f. Sponsoring Chaplain/Officiating Clergy – You do not have to have a Military Chaplain officiate. However, **your wedding must be sponsored by your Unit Chaplain.** The role of the Sponsoring Chaplain is one of accountability and the avoidance of confusion. The Sponsoring Chaplain shall be the point of contact between the chapel staff and the matrimonial couple, is required to attend the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony, and must also brief the Fort Meade Deputy Garrison Chaplain regarding wedding planning before the actual event. If you are having a civilian clergy person officiate at your ceremony, he/she must be an ordained minister and you must provide this office with his/her credentials. For all Roman Catholic weddings, regardless of the officiant, the Installation Roman Catholic Priest must be contacted for further details.

#### 4. Additional Information:

a. Items Available from the Chapel: Altar furnishings, two altar candleholders and unity candle stands are available. The wedding party must provide candles, flowers, and other decorations. All candles must be drip-less. Flowers for Sunday worship services are usually placed in the chapel on Friday and must remain in the chapel. With prior permission from the Chaplain Assistant on duty, you may move the chapel flowers during your ceremony. However, all flowers brought into the chapel for the wedding must be removed immediately after the wedding. You must also return the chapel flowers to their original location. Flowers and ribbons may be tied to the pews. Do not use tacks or tape on the pews.

#### b. Items Not Available from the Chapel:

- Dressing area for bride, groom, and others
- Fresh flowers
- Photographer
- Baby-sitting service or nursery area
- Facilities or supplies for reception
- Printing Services

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c. Post Access: Post Access is controlled and managed directly by the Visitor Control Center (VCC) and not Fort Meade Chapel Staff. This is a separate but required process and it requires a great deal of time, effort, and planning. All VCC guidance must be strictly followed for a wedding to be held at a Fort Meade Chapel. Moreover, all VCC requirements must be met for BOTH the wedding rehearsal and the actual wedding ceremony. An example VCC Event Request Form and Instructions are available on our website. A courtesy copy of these lists must also be delivered to the Chapel Scheduler. The VCC can be contacted at:

Demps Visitor Control Center  
902 Reece Road  
7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday to Friday  
(301) 677-1064 or (301) 677-1065  
<http://www.ftmeade.army.mil/directorates/des/vcc/vcc.html>

d. Garrison Reduced Operations: As with any military facility, the chapel (and the entire Post) may be subject to closure on short notice for reasons of health, safety, unforeseen facility upgrade, maintenance, inclement weather, or military necessity. If the chapel is required to be closed on the scheduled date of your ceremony you will be notified. The status of the post (and its access) can be identified by viewing the Fort Meade website or facebook page.

e. Marriage License. You must present a valid marriage license from the State of Maryland to the chaplain prior to the ceremony. There is a 48-hour waiting period between the time the application is made and the time the license is issued. The license may be used anytime up to six months from the issue date, but may only be used in Ann Arundel County. You may get your license from the County Court House, Room 106, Church Circle, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, (410) 222-1434/1435. Call for the licensing fees and further information.

***Note: Any waivers or exceptions to policies or procedures established by these Standard Operating procedures (SOP) must be requested in writing. The approval authority is the Fort George G. Meade Garrison Chaplain.***

WARREN E. KIRBY  
Chaplain (COL) U.S. Army  
Senior Garrison Chaplain

Enclosures:

1. Wedding Application Form
2. Music and Cleaning Requirements
3. Example VCC Event Request Form and Instructions