

Church Facility Use Policy

Purpose Statment

The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice. But facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the church's constitution and bylaws. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the church's faith or moral teachings. The pastor, or his official designee, is the final decision-maker concerning the use of church facilities.

This restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:22). Second, it is very important that the church present a consistent message to the community, and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Allowing facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe, negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also cause confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing the use of our facilities, the church agrees with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using its facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all of its property as holy and set apart to worship God (Col. 3:17.)

Approved Users and Priority of Use

The pastor or official designee must approve all uses of church facilities. Persons or groups desiring to schedule facilities at First Free Will Baptist Church, “The Beaufort Church” must complete the “Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement” form located on the church website at beaufortchurch.org/facilityrequest no later than three weeks before the event. Priority shall be given to church members, their immediate families, and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church.

Church facilities and equipment will be made available to non-members or outside groups meeting the following qualifications:

1. Groups or persons requesting facility use must affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are consistent with the church’s faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a “Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement” form.
3. The group or person seeking facility use must be willing to take responsibility for the facilities and equipment used and must agree to abide by the church’s rules of conduct for facility use, as stated below and as described in any additional instructions by church staff.

Scheduling Events

Facility use requests shall be made to the Pastor by submitting the “Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement” form. The event will be reserved and placed on the church calendar only when the pastor or official designee approves the use.

Facility Use Guidelines

1. Alcohol Policy: No alcohol may be served in church facilities and is not permitted on Church property.
2. Smoking Policy: Smoking is not permitted in any of the church buildings.
3. Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
4. Food and beverages are not allowed in the church sanctuary.
5. Church equipment, such as tables and chairs, must be returned to original placement unless arranged otherwise prior to the event. Church equipment must remain on church property unless used for an official church event.
6. All lights must be turned off and doors locked upon departure.
7. The user is responsible to pay for property damage caused by inappropriate use of the facilities and cleaning costs incurred by the activity in excess of our normal janitorial services.
8. Abusive or foul language, violent behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited on church premises. Any person exhibiting such behavior will be required to leave the premises.

9. Any person or group must sign the “Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement” form prior to reservation of church facilities.
10. Walls: Nothing can be placed on the walls or hung from the ceiling without prior approval of the Pastor and/or Deacons. Items are prohibited from being taped to a wall.
11. Only those applicants whose marriage is in accord with the Biblical view of marriage expressed in this policy and the First Free Will Baptist Church Constitution and Bylaws will be approved for weddings in our church facilities. In making use of our facilities they shall conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy.
12. Only ordained or duly licensed clergy approved by this church and conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this policy shall officiate at marriage ceremonies conducted on our church property.
13. The church may decline any application for use of the church facilities when there are significant concerns that one or both of the applicants may not be qualified to enter into the sacred bond of marriage for theological, doctrinal, moral, or legal reasons.