

## **Westminster Policy On Sanctuary and Chapel Use By Outside Groups**

### Purpose of this policy

This policy is intended to govern requests by outside groups to use the Sanctuary or Chapel for non-church purposes. This policy complements other existing policies of the church, including:

- The Guidelines for the Use of the Building, Facilities and Grounds by Outside Groups (the “Building Guidelines”) adopted by the Building and Grounds Committee
- The Westminster Policy on Gifts and Fundraising Activities (“Fundraising Policy”) adopted by the Administration and Finance Committee

This policy applies in addition to those policies when outside groups seek to use the worship spaces of the church. Outside groups must agree to abide by the guidelines as a condition for using the Sanctuary and/or chapel.

This policy does not cover worship services. The church pastoral staff may authorize the use of the Sanctuary by outside groups for worship services, including funerals and weddings.

### Requesting use of the Sanctuary

Groups desiring to use the Sanctuary or Chapel for non-church purposes must be approved by the Worship and Music Committee. Requests should be made to the Business Administrator, who will ask the group to fill out and sign the “Outside Group Information Form.” Requests are referred to the Worship and Music Committee, and will usually be acted upon within six weeks.

### Criteria for approval of requests

No outside group has a right to use the Sanctuary or Chapel without the permission of the Committee, which has full discretion to consider any requests. WPC is not obligated to approve any request for use of the Sanctuary or Chapel by an outside group. The Committee will strive to apply this policy consistently but must take account of the unique circumstances of each request.

Sanctuary and Chapel use will not be approved for private parties, any activity related to a profit-making venture, partisan political purposes or for groups or activities inconsistent with the church’s purposes. In addition, the planned use must be consistent with the purpose of both the Sanctuary and the Chapel as sacred gathering spaces. Religious or arts uses will most commonly be consistent with this policy, but it may apply to other uses.

Approval will be based primarily on the degree to which the event will assist in furthering the mission and purposes of WPC, including: reaching out to potential new members, building relationships with our neighbors in Alexandria, and celebrating the divine gifts of music and creativity.

In considering requests, the Committee will take into account the whole WPC calendar of events, including the advice of the church staff, and consider the impact that the request would have on staff time or on other church activities. Events in the Sanctuary or Chapel will not be approved if they have the potential to disrupt the regular worship life of the church. In particular, this means that the Committee will carefully scrutinize requests to hold events in the Sanctuary or Chapel during Lent and Advent and on Saturday evenings, as these events have the greatest potential to cause disruptions. The Committee will also take into account the frequency with

which outside groups have held events in the Sanctuary or Chapel to ensure that, in any given period of time, demands on the staff and facilities do not exceed what is reasonable. The Worship and Music Committee may limit overall use of the Sanctuary or Chapel by non-member groups as may be appropriate.

The Worship and Music Committee's approval of an event is based upon the information provided on the "Outside Group Information Form." Material changes to the parameters of the request after the Committee approves an event may be grounds for cancellation of the event.

The church Business Administrator is responsible for approving requests for uses of non-Sanctuary spaces under the Building Guidelines, and also supervises the church sextons. For that reason, the Worship and Music Committee will consult with the Business Administrator before approving any Sanctuary or Chapel use by outside groups.<sup>1</sup>

### Receptions

Outside groups with an approved event for the Sanctuary or Chapel may also use the Fellowship Hall for a reception after an event in the Sanctuary, with the payment of a fee as described in this policy. The outside group is responsible for any catering. Kitchen use is not ordinarily permitted. Where the Fellowship Hall or the Kitchen is used, the Building Guidelines apply.

### Westminster Representative

A sexton and another representative of the Church must be present during the event in the Sanctuary. The additional representative may be a member of the Worship and Music Committee, another member of the church staff, or a responsible church member at the Committee's discretion. At the time that the Committee approves use of the Sanctuary, it will also determine who is available to be present. The representative of the Church will be responsible for making sure that the outside group adheres to the terms of its Sanctuary use approval and leaves the Sanctuary clean and set for the next service, and for opening the church before the event and closing the church after the event is over (if necessary).

### Director of Music Ministries

The Director of Music Ministries may participate in non-church musical events in the Sanctuary, but subject to his or her own availability and interest and not in an official capacity. Outside groups seeking the participation of the Director of Music Ministries may request his or her services separately and on such terms as he or she may agree.

### Use of Recording Equipment

Outside groups may use their own recording equipment. Use of audio-video equipment owned by the church (VCRs, televisions, stereos, etc.) is generally not permitted by outside groups. Under special circumstances and by prior arrangement with the church Business Administrator and the appropriate church staff member, audio/visual equipment may be loaned to non-church groups for use only within the church building.

---

<sup>1</sup> If the appropriate committees of the church make changes to the other church policies described in this document, the Worship and Music Committee should continue to consider requests on a case-by-case basis and consult with the Business Administrator to ensure that its decisions are consistent with those policies.

### Admission Charges and Offerings

Any charge for tickets to an event in the Sanctuary, and the sale of any items at the event, must be approved by the Session. This may increase the time necessary for approval, but the Worship and Music Committee will attempt to ensure that a decision is made in a timely manner.

If a freewill offering is consistent with the purpose of the Sanctuary use (for example, a concert by a religious arts group), and if it is consistent with the Fundraising Policy, the group may request to collect a freewill offering outside the entrances and exits before and after the event. The outside group may keep 100% of the freewill offering (net of the fee specified in this policy). A group that charges admission for an event in the Sanctuary may not also collect a freewill offering. Offerings taken up during a service or performance by passing plates within the Sanctuary or Chapel require Session approval and are not appropriate except in unusual circumstances.

The sale of items is prohibited in the Sanctuary and Chapel. The sale of items in other parts of the church property must be approved by the Session and is governed by the Gifts and Fundraising Policy.

### Fees

Westminster charges a service fee for the use of the facilities by outside groups that is sufficient to defray operating and personnel costs. The Business Administrator will determine an appropriate fee under the Building Guidelines and Fundraising Policy, taking into account the recommendation of the Worship and Music Committee. At the time it approves the use of the Sanctuary or Chapel by an outside group, the Worship and Music Committee will make a recommendation on an appropriate service fee considering the following guidelines:

For groups that do not charge admission: Up to \$150 for an event in the Sanctuary or Chapel up to two hours; up to \$150 for a reception in the Fellowship Hall up to an hour after the end of the event; \$50 for a rehearsal in the Sanctuary or Chapel other than immediately before the event.

For groups that charge admission: Up to \$300 for an event in the Sanctuary or Chapel up to two hours; up to \$200 for a reception in the Fellowship Hall up to an hour after the end of the event; \$50 for a rehearsal in the Sanctuary or Chapel other than immediately before the event.

The Worship and Music Committee may recommend that all or part of these service fees may be waived in appropriate circumstances. (Pursuant to the version of the Fundraising Policy in effect in October 2014, the complete waiver of a service fee must be approved by the Administration and Finance Committee). Alternatively, higher fees may be appropriate if, for example, an outside group requests an unusually long event, requires movement of chancel furniture, or requires the space at times when church staff are not normally present. Circumstances that the Worship and Music Committee may take into account include the size of the group, the relationship of the group to Westminster Presbyterian Church, and the group's ability to pay.