

ELLSWORTH AFB CHAPEL WEDDING ACCOMMODATION GUIDE

**Ellsworth Air Force Base,
South Dakota**

This guide offers general guidance for your wedding at the Ellsworth Chapel (EC): Freedom Chapel or Black Hills Chapel.

Please read carefully and then complete the Wedding Application and Facility Request.

Reservations for chapel facilities are made on a first come first served basis so please return the application as soon as possible.

~ The Ellsworth Chapel Staff

Use of the Chapel

Eligibility: Services of the United States Air Force Chaplain Corps are provided for “military members and their families” (AFPD 52-1).

Therefore, either *the bride or the groom* **must** be an active duty, reserve, National Guard, military retired or military dependent ID card-holder on the date of the wedding. Also—for Catholic weddings, consult additional Archdiocese for Military Service requirements.

-Dependents must have a valid military ID card on the day of their wedding.

-The bride or the groom with a valid military ID card must initiate contact with the chapel. Our phone is DSN 385-1598. Our commercial phone is 605-385-1598.

-The bride or groom with the valid military ID card must fill out the wedding application. This can be accomplished electronically if the bride and groom are away from the immediate area.

-Provide a photo copy of the front side only of your military ID card, with expiration date, at the time of application.

Since only religious services are authorized in military chapels, civil authorities (such as a Justice of Peace) may **not** preside at chapel weddings.

Times for Services

Chapel weddings are normally held on Saturdays. Weddings are not normally held on weekday evenings, Sundays, federal holidays, or during holidays. Some special time requests may be approved by the wing chaplain if the facilities are available and mission demands allow.

Invitations should not be processed until you receive final written approval of a permanent reservation.

Chaplains/Civilian Clergy

Active duty military chaplains are available to officiate at weddings for active duty military members if it meets their denominational, ecclesiastical and ethical standards.

The decision on whether a particular chaplain will perform a wedding ceremony rests solely with that chaplain.

Therefore, there may be some situations in which chaplains may decline to perform a wedding. Civilian and auxiliary clergy are welcome to perform your wedding, but they must be approved by the wing chaplain or his designate. It is your responsibility to insure that a civilian clergy is licensed and ordained to legally perform your ceremony.

Catholic Weddings

Those seeking a Roman Catholic wedding must consult with a Catholic chaplain concerning the current Archdiocese for Military Service guidelines. Roman Catholic weddings require a minimum of six (6) months preparation and must be approved by the Catholic chaplain.

Meet with the Catholic chaplain before you make any arrangements. Couples who have their own priest or deacon to witness their marriage *MUST* still meet with the Catholic chaplain first before a facility request can be filled out. When you meet with the chaplain he will explain to you Catholic wedding requirements in full.

General Catholic wedding requirements are to follow this order:

1. Bride or groom with authorized military ID card must initiate contact with the chapel
2. Contact the Catholic chaplain (or deacon) six months prior to the expected wedding date
3. Complete the Wedding Application and Facility Request Form.
4. Complete premarital preparation requirements as requested by your chaplain or civilian clergy
5. Must attend the FOCCUS sessions (after it has been scored) with the priest/deacon
6. Meet with the priest/deacon to confirm completion of all requirements and plan the ceremony

Protestant Weddings

Protestant weddings vary according to tradition or denomination. Your officiating chaplain or civilian clergy will advise on the appropriate ceremony.

Chaplains are responsible for upholding their own ecclesiastical requirements and personal convictions. The wedding ceremony is a religious rite. Therefore, the chaplain or minister performing the wedding has final authority on any element in the wedding ceremony.

All chaplains require pre-marital counseling. The length, scope and type of counseling are determined by the chaplain (Typically 7 sessions).

General Protestant wedding requirements are to follow this order:

1. Bride or groom with authorized military ID card, must initiate contact with the chapel
2. Secure a chaplain or civilian clergy
3. Complete the *Wedding Application and Facility Request Form*
4. Complete premarital preparation requirements as requested by your chaplain or civilian clergy
5. Meet with your chaplain or civilian clergy to plan the ceremony

Receptions

Chapel facilities are not available for wedding or anniversary receptions. Receptions may be scheduled at other locations in the local area. However, all arrangements are your responsibility. Please be careful in your planning to not make any binding agreements until you receive final written approval of your wedding date.

Cleanup

The wedding party assumes all responsibility of clean-up. You must ensure that the facilities are clean and all items are removed that you, your guests or those you hire bring to the wedding or rehearsal.

Wedding Guests

It is necessary that you contact the Security Forces Visitor's Center well in advanced of your wedding in order for your non-military guests to enter the base for your wedding and rehearsal. You can reach them at 385-2895. Also, please remember that the bride and groom are responsible for the behavior of wedding guests and the care of chapel facilities. Be especially aware that security personnel may identify, apprehend or turn away those with criminal records and pending legal warrants.

General Chapel Etiquette

A chapel wedding is a service of worship. The rehearsal and ceremony should be planned, conducted, and attended with dignity. In questions of propriety, the chaplain's preference will be observed. The chaplain may choose to cease his/her participation if the dignity of the service is violated.

Please coordinate the selection of music, video and photography with the chaplain or clergy officiating.

General rules for all to follow:

- **No rice, birdseed, confetti or similar items may be thrown inside or outside the chapel grounds. This is a safety issue.**
- **The use of alcoholic beverages (except for sacramental use) is forbidden in the chapel or on the chapel grounds.**

Chaplains will not officiate any wedding where anyone in the wedding party is clearly intoxicated or under the influence of illicit drugs.

- **If a civilian minister is performing the ceremony, the coordinator has full discretion to contact Security Forces and stop the ceremony.**

Smoking is not permitted inside any Air Force facility.

Base Honor Guard

If you desire services of an Honor Guard Team in your wedding, it is your responsibility to make arrangements. Regarding presence of ceremonial sabers, consult clergy presiding at your wedding.

Flowers and Decorations

You may provide whatever flowers, ribbons, and other decorations you like. Check with your wedding coordinator first. No tape or tack may be used on the woodwork in either chapel. Also, no glitter or confetti are allowed in either chapel. Many local florists are familiar with the chapel and will help you in making your selection. Please remove your flowers after the wedding.

No one is permitted, without the supervision of chapel personnel to rearrange or decorate the chapel. You may be held liable for repair, marks or other damage left when the items are removed.

When in doubt, consult your chapel staff. Use of candles outside the altar area is prohibited. The chapel provides white candles for the altar. Unity candles are the responsibility of the wedding party.

Chapel seasonal decorations shall remain in place and not altered, changed or disturbed, for weddings. For example, weddings conducted during Easter or Christmas seasons are accomplished without altering the seasonal or liturgical decorations.

Additional Requests

Your Chaplain Corps provides for free exercise of religion opportunities. If you have additional faith group and religious diversity needs not addressed in this operating instruction, please contact the wing chaplain.

Force Protection Conditions

Increased security measures at Ellsworth AFB could affect your wedding plans. In the unfortunate event that command directed security conditions change, there may be additional restrictions upon access and activities at DoD facilities. It is your responsibility to secure an alternate location off base for your wedding and rehearsal. If you have any questions during heightened security conditions please contact the base chapel at 385-1598.

Marriage License

Please contact the County Clerk's office at (605) 394-2575 well before your wedding so that all requirements are met and a license is issued for the marriage. Bring the **unsigned** license to the rehearsal and wedding.

If you are already legally married, please bring a copy of the completed license to the rehearsal.

Cancellations

If you cancel your wedding plans, call your chapel staff as soon as possible so that the chapel can be made available to others.

Application and Facility Request

The *Wedding Application and Facility Request Form* provided to you by your wedding coordinator is used for all weddings at EAFB as well as any weddings requiring the assistance of a military chaplain. Please complete the form and return it to your chapel staff as soon as possible.

Fees

There are no fees for the use of the chapel or for the services of an active duty chaplain. Wedding coordinators as well as other civilian officiating clergy, singers, musicians and photographers do charge fees which are your responsibility. These arrangements should be made at the beginning of your wedding planning.

Music and Sound

Only our chapel musicians are authorized to play our organ. Others may sing and play the piano. We do however; recommend using our regular chapel musicians:

If you elect to use your own prerecorded music you **must** consult with chapel staff before the rehearsal. Only our chapel staff and wedding coordinators are allowed to operate the chapel sound system.

Compliance to Guidelines

By filling out and signing the Wedding Application you are agreeing to all guidelines set forth in this Operating Instruction. Consult the wing chaplain if you have additional requests or questions. Failure to comply with these rules may result in the cancellation of your wedding.

//SIGNED//

DAVID B. KNIGHT, CH, MAJ, USAF
Wing Chaplain