



## SAMPLE CHURCH FACILITY USE POLICY

*[The following policy is provided as a sample. Please feel free to adapt this policy for the unique circumstances of your church, or to modify the language to put it in your own words. This sample policy is simply a template that your church can use to begin the process of adopting a facilities usage policy, or to use in amending its own policy to better protect itself from potential legal threats]*

### Statement of Purpose

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 always to God's glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-member persons and groups 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.

However, facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs, or advancing, advocating, or engaging in 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 facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed by the pastor as inconsistent with, or contrary to the church's faith or moral teachings. The pastor, or his official designee, is the final decision-maker on whether a person or group is allowed to use 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. See 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

Second, it is very important to the church that it presents a consistent message to the community, which the church staff and members conscientiously maintain as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To allow 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 be a source of confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonably perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church is in agreement with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using church 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 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. See Colossians 3:17.



## Approved Users and Priority of Use

The pastor or official designee must approve all uses of church facilities. Priority shall generally be given to members of the church, 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 in harmony with the church's faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a signed "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.

## Facility Use Hours

Facilities are available between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ a.m. and \_\_\_\_\_ p.m. Use outside these hours may be approved by the pastor or official designee.

## Scheduling Events

Requests for facility use may be made to \_\_\_\_\_ [e.g., pastor, secretary, facilities use coordinator, etc.], 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.

## Fees

Use of church facilities is subject to a use and maintenance fee of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to pay for the upkeep of church facilities. Church members shall not be required to pay a fee for usage because maintenance of the facilities will be derived from member tithes and offerings.

***[Whether a church charges a fee for facility use is up to its discretion. But not charging a fee or charging below-market rates helps churches avoid being considered a public accommodation under local or state law. Public accommodations are generally subject to a variety of laws, including laws regarding non-discrimination. Because there is more risk of being considered a public accommodation when a church charges market rates for facility use, we advise either charging no fee (except for perhaps a cleaning or other incidental fee) or charging a below-market fee. In any event, the church may also wish to require a refundable security deposit to pay for any damages to the facilities].***



**Facility Use Guidelines** [THESE AND OTHER OPTIONAL POLICIES TO BE DETERMINED BY THE CHURCH]

1. Alcohol Policy: No alcohol may be served in church facilities. *[Note: If a church allows alcohol, it should be aware that it is opening itself to additional liability, especially involving claims that could arise on the premises or from intoxicated drivers afterward. Banning alcohol is also more consistent with the limited-use policy of the church. But if alcohol is allowed in a banquet hall or other facilities, the church should note that serving alcohol to minors is prohibited, and that the group using the facilities must not allow open and unsupervised serving of alcohol at events in which minors are present.]*
2. Smoking Policy: [e.g., smoking in any indoor church facilities is prohibited.]
3. Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
4. Food and beverages in classrooms, worship space.... [e.g., not allowed, not allowed without lid, restricted to certain areas, etc.]
5. Church equipment, such as tables and chairs, must be returned to original placement, unless arranged otherwise prior to the event.
6. All lights must be turned off and doors locked upon departure.
7. Clean-up [address whether it is the responsibility of the group using the facility, and if so, what constitutes satisfactory clean-up. The church may also wish to include a clean-up fee].
8. Abusive or foul language, violent behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited while using church facilities. Any person exhibiting such behavior will be required to leave the premise.
9. Any person or group must sign the "Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form prior to reservation of church facilities.

**Insurance**

For all non-church-sponsored events, the group or person using the facilities must obtain liability insurance coverage in the amount of at least \$ \_\_\_\_\_. The user must also sign a "Facility Use and an Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement."



## Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement

Name of person or organization requesting use of facilities:

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Please state whether you are a:  Church Member  Church-Sponsored Ministry  Non-Member  
 Non-Member Group/Organization

Contact Information:

Address:

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Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If the requested use is by an organization not affiliated with the church, please briefly state the organization's purpose and mission:

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Please list the organization's website, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the names of the organization's office-holders and leaders:

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Regardless of type of user, please describe which church facilities you are requesting use of and the purpose for which you intend to use the facilities:

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What date(s) and time(s) are you requesting to use the facilities:

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If you are requesting use of the church's facilities for a wedding and/or wedding reception, please list the names and contact information of the bride and groom:

Bride:

Groom:

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Please list the name, contact information, and religious affiliation of the person officiating the wedding:

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Please describe the marriage preparation counseling or training undertaken by the bride and groom:

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I affirm that:

1. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be used in a way that contradicts its faith or by persons or groups holding beliefs that contradict the church's faith.
2. To the best of my knowledge the purpose for which I am requesting use of church facilities will not contradict the church's faith, and I commit to promptly disclose any potential conflict for which I am aware or become aware to church staff.
3. I am not aware of any beliefs that are professed by me or the organization I represent and which is requesting use of the church's facilities that contradict the beliefs of the church. I agree to promptly disclose any potential conflicts in belief to church staff.
4. I understand that upon approval of my facilities use request, I will need to provide a security deposit in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_, a certificate of insurance for at least \$ \_\_\_\_\_ of coverage, and any other fees required by the church.
5. I understand that the church does not allow its facilities to be generally available to the public, and that my use of these facilities is subject to the pastor's approval, which is conditioned in part on my agreement to the requirements in the "Church Facility Use Policy," a copy of which I have read and understood.
6. I understand that I will be responsible for any damages to the church facilities resulting from this proposed use of facilities.
7. The church believes disputes are to be worked out between parties without recourse to the courts. See, generally, Matthew Chapter 18 and 1 Corinthians Chapter 6. Accordingly, users of the facility agree to attempt resolution through Christian mediation, and failing that to submit to binding arbitration through a mutually acceptable arbitration service.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date