

Bethlehem Lutheran

CHURCH & SCHOOL



Guidelines for Weddings at Bethlehem Lutheran Church

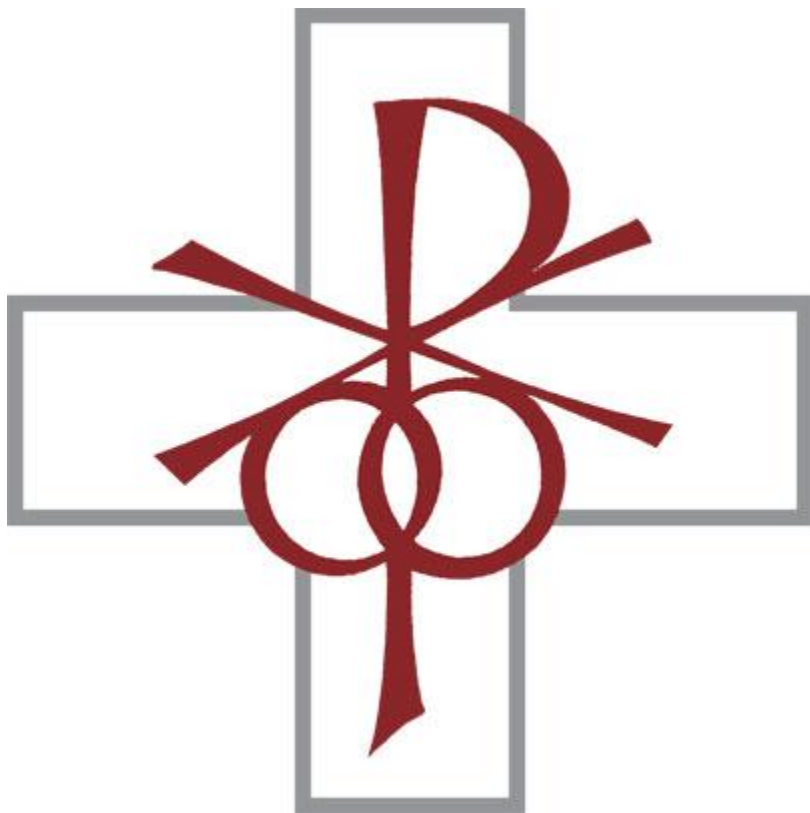
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A Prayer For The Engaged Couple

Your marriage, like all Christian matters, should begin with prayer. The success of your marriage depends upon the Lord; therefore, Christian couples desire His blessings and seek them in prayer. The following prayer is intended for this purpose and can be used both before and after your wedding day.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for creating man and woman to live together to Your glory and their welfare. We thank You for having brought us together; and we pray that our love toward each other may always be rooted in that greater love which You have bestowed upon us by giving Your Son Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord. We also pray for a rich measure of Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes from above, that we may always think, say and act according to Your good will.

Give us also the physical, mental and spiritual health for a useful and happy life. When trials or temptations come, sustain us with Your love and teach us to forgive as You daily forgive us. Help us always to correct misunderstandings so that we may always walk together as heirs of the grace of life.

Make us always mindful of the commitments we have made to each other and so guide us by Your Spirit that we may ever keep the vows which we make (made) before Your altar. O Triune God, bless us always with Your Divine Presence, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Why a Christian Wedding?

A Christian wedding is more than a simple ceremony for the benefit of the couple and their families and friends. A Christian wedding is a service of public worship designed with God as its object and Jesus Christ as its center. Your wedding, then, is a sacred occasion. It has been instituted by God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, and should be honored by all people. It will be most meaningful for both families and friends when there is careful concern shown for the sanctity of Christ's Church and its worship, as well as for the dignity and beauty of Christian marriage.

What are the Responsibilities of the Pastor?

As an Evangelical Lutheran congregation, we expect our pastor to function in conformity with the solemn vows, which he made at his ordination to conduct his ministry in conformity to the sacred scriptures and the Book of Concord, in preparing couples for marriage and in the conduction of the marriage service.

Church weddings are church services under the direct supervision and control of the pastors whose responsibility it is to see that in every aspect God is glorified and Christian interests are served.

It is therefore important that before any plans are finalized, one of the pastors should be consulted. This should be done as early as possible in order to avoid conflicts in scheduling and other possibly embarrassing situations. If at all possible, such arrangements should be made several months in advance. With our Saturday evening 5:30 p.m. services, weddings can be scheduled no later than 3:00 p.m.

Your pastors will be glad to help you in planning the wedding service; the organist will be glad to discuss music for the service with you.

Who Will Be Married?

Those who wish to make God a part of their on-going marriage, not only on their wedding day. This ordinarily means that at least one of the marriage couple will be a member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

What Do We Need to Know About the Marriage License?

Since there is a waiting period of five days after applying for the license, it is important that the license be secured well in advance. It should be brought to the church office at least a week before the wedding. (Witnesses on the Marriage License must be 16 years of age or older.)

What Wedding Service is Used?

Only liturgical forms, which are faithful to scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, are to be used in weddings conducted at Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

- a) The marriage liturgy contained in the Lutheran Service Book Agenda is the official wedding liturgy of this congregation.
- b) Our pastor is not at liberty to make changes to the wedding liturgy, however, additional prayers and liturgical forms may be included, if they are in conformity with God's Word.

Can Other Clergy Participate?

As the pastor is the rightly called and ordained servant of the word in this congregation, he is responsible for all weddings conducted at Bethlehem. With the consent of the pastor, other clergymen of congregations of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod may be invited to conduct or assist during the marriage service. Guest pastors will abide by the practices set forth in these guidelines.

If the bridal couple desires an organist other than one of the regular staff organists, this should be cleared with the pastor.

Can Holy Communion Be Included?

At the request of the couple, Holy Communion may be celebrated, with the approval of the pastor.

What Kind of Music Can Be Played?

Music should reflect a worshipful, God-centered attitude.

- a) If you wish to have a musician from outside of Bethlehem, please contact the church office to discuss, prior to committing to another musician.
- b) Bethlehem Lutheran Church has directed that all music used in the wedding service be approved. Please contact our organist to discuss various musical options, including processional,

recessional, soloists and instrumentalists. We will attempt to incorporate your ideas in a way that best honors the Savior and helps your guests to worship.

Will There Be Pre-Marital Counseling?

Couples desiring to be married at Bethlehem Lutheran Church will arrange for pre-marital counseling with the pastor. The purpose of these meetings will be to look at the Bible's teachings about marriage, discuss various areas of the couple's relationship, and plan the wedding service. Approximately 6 hours of counseling will be expected. The sessions will be arranged for the benefit and convenience of all.

How is the Rehearsal Conducted?

The rehearsal usually takes place in the evening, one or two days before the wedding. It gives everyone the opportunity to become acquainted with their part in the service. The wedding party, ushers, and anyone taking a part in the service should be present. We ask that all behavior be respectful while in God's house. Please schedule your rehearsal at a time convenient for everyone. With pre-planning and everyone's cooperation, the rehearsal should last approximately 30-45 minutes.

What Rooms Will We Have Access To?

On the day of your wedding, rooms will be available for both the bride and her attendants and the groom and his attendants.

We ask that the rooms be returned to the way they were found, ensuring that garbage is taken care of and that all personal property items are taken with you.

What About Bulletins?

Service bulletins may be arranged through the church office or done by the couple. All bulletins must be approved by the pastor prior to printing. We ask that all bulletins include the following statement: “*We request that no flash photography be taken during the wedding service.*”

Can We Decorate the Sanctuary?

All decorations should be discussed with the pastor and/or the church office. Normally the church is available in the morning, the day of the wedding, for decorating. Please note that all decorations will need to be taken down immediately after the wedding service to prepare for our regularly scheduled church services. Decorations may include flowers, candles and bows.

Can Photos/Video Recording be Taken?

Please refrain from flash photography during the wedding service, both from the photographer and the guests (the photographer may take photos during the processional and the recessional). A video of the ceremony can be made from the

church balcony. If there is a request to record the service from another vantage point, it must first be approved by the pastor.

Are There Other Things to Consider?

We appreciate your cooperation in regard to the following:

- a) Scattering of fresh flower petals is not allowed.
- b) Throwing of rice, confetti or bird seed is not allowed.
- c) Consumption of alcoholic beverages on church property is not allowed.
- d) Smoking in the church facilities is not allowed.
- e) Leave the dressing rooms, sanctuary, and any other church facilities clean and back to the order in which they were found.

Are There Any Expected Expenses & Honoraria?

Organist Fee: \$150.00

Includes all rehearsals and the service.

Please make check payable to the organist directly.

Pastor Honorarium: Determined by the couple, as there is no required fee for the Pastor's service.

Custodian Fee: \$50.00

Please make check payable to Bethlehem Church.

Building Usage Fee: \$150.00

For non-members only.

Please make check payable to *Bethlehem Lutheran Church*.

QUICK CHECKLIST

First Things First ...

- _____ Pastor or church office contacted (before any plans are finalized)
- _____ Premarital counseling arranged with the pastor
- _____ Read through this booklet completely; call church office or the pastor with any questions you may have and to set up initial meeting
- _____ Call or email church office with your rehearsal & wedding dates/times and your contact information (bride & groom's names, address, phone, email) as soon as possible after plans are finalized with the pastor
- _____ Secure Marriage License at the courthouse (waiting period of five days; secure well in advance)

The month prior to your wedding ...

- _____ Bulletin information and furnished bulletin covers or paper given to church secretary (at least two weeks in advance, if printing at church)
- _____ Wedding bulletin proof approved by Pastor (must include wording from page 8 of "Guidelines for Weddings" booklet)
- _____ Marriage license brought to church secretary's office (at least one week prior to wedding)

Other items (list here: photographer, invitations, flowers, musicians, etc.)

Day of the Wedding ...

- _____ Ensure the Marriage License is signed by the pastor and witnesses
- _____ Turn payments into the church office for the Organist, Custodian, and Building Fee as outlined on page 9 of the "Guidelines for Weddings" booklet.

Wedding Information Sheet

To be filled out by the couple and return to the Pastor ASAP

Groom: _____ Bride: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ (Home) Phone: _____ (Home)

_____ (Cell) _____ (Work) _____ (Cell) _____ (Work)

Previously married: Yes ___ No ___ Previously married: Yes ___ No ___

Age _____ Age _____

Address after marriage (if known): _____

Wedding: Date _____ Hour _____

Rehearsal: Date: _____ Hour _____

Reception: Yes ___ No ___ Place: _____

Approximate number of guests: _____

Best Man: _____ Maid/Matron of Honor _____

Groomsmen _____

Bridesmaids _____

Ushers _____

Ringbearer? _____ Flower Girl? _____

Important guests: (grandparents, parents, baptismal sponsors, etc.)

Soloists? _____

Scripture Readers? _____

