

A Wedding Guide



St. Luke Lutheran
CHURCH & SCHOOL

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A Christian Wedding

Weddings are blessed occasions. All the members of St. Luke Lutheran Church rejoice with you over your upcoming marriage. We wish you God's richest blessings in your life together.

We believe marriage is an institution of God, designed by Him for the well-being of His people. It is the lifelong union of one man and one woman into one flesh. This Scriptural truth serves as the basic guide for the total planning of our church's marriage service. The following passages of Scripture serve to illustrate this truth:

“The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 21-24 NIV).

“‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate’” (Matthew 19:4-6 NIV).

Since marriage is an institution ordained by God, ***the marriage ceremony conducted by the church is a religious service.*** The wedding service should witness to Christ in every aspect. It is considered to be a congregational act and, as such, is conducted under the auspices of the congregation.

From the beginning, the Church has recognized marriage as a part of the natural order of creation, and therefore subject to regulation by the laws of the state. The Pastor, in performing the Rites of Marriage, is not just “tying the knot,” but rather it is God who is uniting every couple as husband and wife and in relationship with Himself as they stand before His altar.

When a pastor officiates at a wedding, he functions in a dual role. He functions as an officer of the state when he joins a couple legally in marriage. On the other hand, he also functions as a pastor as he proclaims the Word of God, blesses the couple, and intercedes for them in prayer on such an occasion.

St. Luke wants to invest in the marriage so the pastor will counsel the couple in regard to a Christian's responsibilities in marriage, challenges for the future, and ways to communicate and receive the great gift of love. This is a significant difference between a pastor's role in a wedding and that of a civil authority. A pastor is responsible for more than a wedding. He is concerned about a marriage.

Preparation for the Wedding

❑ Premarital Counseling

The first step in planning a church wedding is for the future bride and groom to make an appointment to meet with the pastor to discuss the matter.

At the initial conference with the pastor, the information necessary for the early stage planning of the wedding service will be given. At that time the bride and groom will receive a Marriage License Bureau Pamphlet, wedding information sheet, and template for the wedding. The couple will also receive a Sanctuary Request Form securing the sanctuary for the dates and times of the wedding service and rehearsal. The date of the service *will not* be secured in the church calendar until the initial meeting with the pastor is completed and this form filled out. We also ask that this process start at least *six months prior* to the wedding date.

The premarital counseling time between couples and the pastor is seen by Saint Luke as a necessary time but even more as an incredible opportunity to prepare for marriage with Christ as the center. Couples can expect to have two or more pre-marital sessions with the pastor.

❑ Legal Details

Weddings conducted in our church are under the auspices of St. Luke and should be performed by a pastor of St. Luke. If it is the wish of the wedding couple to have a guest pastor participate in the service, permission must be granted through the St. Luke pastor(s) and the Board of Elders.

The marriage license can be obtained at the Butler County Register of Wills and Orphans Court (724 284-5348). Check the handout that is given at the initial conference for further details or at the Butler County Government online site.

The pastor cannot perform a marriage unless he has a valid marriage license in his possession prior to the service. ***Bring your marriage license to the church office at least one week prior to the rehearsal.***

❑ **Costs:** The fee for a wedding at St. Luke Lutheran Church is \$450.00. This includes the organist (\$200), wedding coordinator (\$75), janitor (\$75), and use of the facility (\$50) plus counseling materials (\$50). **The first half of this fee is due upon booking the sanctuary with the balance due one month prior to the wedding date. All costs are to be paid to St. Luke.** Destination Wedding expenses (pastors' airfare, lodging, parking, mileage, meals etc.) are to be paid by the couple.

Any monetary gift given to the Pastor is up to your discretion.-

❑ Bulletins

If you are having the church office print your bulletins, the completed wedding information sheet and personally purchased bulletin covers need to be in the office *at least 3 weeks prior* to the wedding. The bulletins will be printed in black ink. (Very heavy stock is difficult to print on; for a rough draft, please include your email address on the Wedding Information sheet.)

If the church office is not going to print up your bulletin, final draft of the bulletin needs to be approved by the pastor before going to print.

❑ Music for the Wedding

Arrangements to have an organist play at the wedding must be made by the bride and groom. Please contact our organist: Vince Ritzert at vritzert@stlukecabot.org. In that meeting, he will guide you through planning the music. The fee for the organist is included in the total cost described on page 8. *If a guest organist is desired, this arrangement needs to be made in consultation with our organist.*

When it comes to the selection of music intended for use in a church wedding service, this must be governed by the same general principles that govern the selection of music used in any other worship service of the church.

First of all, this means that the music is to **glorify God** and not man. Secondly, it is to **edify man**.

“What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church” (I Corinthians 14:26 NIV).

Since a wedding is a Rite of the Church, it is natural to turn first to *The Lutheran Service Book* for suitable music, especially vocal music. There are literally dozens of suitable hymns for weddings to be found there. However, suitable vocal music is not limited to the hymnal.

Being a Christian service, the choice of music should turn the thoughts to the spiritual, to God, and to Christ. You may suggest hymns and solos for the service, but the final approval belongs to the pastor and organist. Please consult the organist *before* you ask a soloist to begin practicing a particular selection.

There are several suggested places for appropriate solos and music. There are some secular music which many couples might like to have, but which is inappropriate during the service itself. These special solos should be discussed with the organist prior to their use.

❑ **Flowers and Crash/Runner**

Flowers for the wedding are arranged by the bride and groom with their florist. The church can be opened earlier on the day of the wedding, and the florist should have this work completed at least an hour prior to the wedding. The size for the flower arrangements to be placed on the altar ledge is 12” wide and 18” high (one for each side of the cross), or 12” wide and 12” high for a single arrangement at the base of the altar cross. Flowers should *never* block or cover the cross. There are no size requirements for other flower arrangements, such as on the floor. While we discourage the use of a crash/runner for safety reasons, it is not forbidden. The church aisle is *77 feet* long from altar to the rear doors. Some couples choose to leave their flower arrangements in the church for Sunday services.

❑ **Pictures**

Pictures may be taken during the processional and recessional. Flash pictures taken during the service disturb the worship. Therefore, we ask that, flash pictures *not* be taken *during* the wedding ceremony. The actual ceremony is considered to be from the Invocation through the Benediction.

The pastor and the bridal party will be available to pose for pictures immediately following the service.

The professional photographer is to receive a special set of instructions from the bride and groom. These instructions are printed on an insert page in this manual, please give these instructions to your photographer at your earliest convenience. You should urge the photographer to read this, and to call the pastor at least a week prior to the wedding if there are any questions about our procedures.

❑ **Audio and/or Video Taping the Ceremony**

Video may be done during the ceremony as long as the videographer remains inconspicuous and does not disturb the other worshippers. Please make arrangements with the pastor prior to the rehearsal.

❑ **Throwing of Rice and Bird Seed**

We ask that rice and/or bird seed not be thrown while here at the church for safety and custodial reasons.

☐ Holy Communion

At times, the request comes to offer Holy Communion as a part of the wedding service. Although this request contains a fine spiritual thought, the custom of our congregation leads us to deny this request. It does not keep with historic Lutheran tradition to offer private Communion in a congregational service. If Communion is offered to the congregation also at the wedding service, problems of misunderstanding could develop with guests and non-member visitors. If the couple desires Communion, the pastor will be happy to make arrangements to celebrate the Sacrament privately sometime before or after the wedding service.

☐ Bridal Party

We encourage the bride and groom to select their wedding party carefully. We suggest selecting only those who can honestly worship Jesus with them at the altar “in spirit and in truth.” You will invite them, not only to witness your wedding, but also to have them pray with you and for you. This can be done only in Christian fellowship and community.

Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted; however, we prefer that they be **at least four years old**. Experience has shown that children under this age can cause tension and anxiety at a wedding because they find it difficult to concentrate on what is happening. The wedding could easily be disrupted by younger children in this way.

☐ The Rehearsal

Please have every member of the wedding part at the church **on time!** The wedding party is to include not only the bride and groom and their attendants, but also the organist, any soloists, ushers, and the parents of the couple. Remind those who attend the rehearsal that the church is the house of God and they are to conduct themselves accordingly at all times.

Rehearsal normally takes **45 minutes to one hour** to complete. Please keep this in mind as you plan the rehearsal dinner.

☐ Unity Candle

If you choose to use a Unity Candle, you will need to purchase this, along with the two companion candles. Please purchase the smokeless/dripless type. Please make arrangements to have someone take your Unity Candle with them after the service or it will be discarded.

☐ Church Receptions

If you desire to use the church facilities for your wedding reception, you will need to make reservations. Please contact the church office.

The Wedding Service

❑ Before the Service

1. The ushers should arrive at the church at least **45 minutes before** the service and station themselves in the narthex (the back of the church) until the guests arrive.
2. The guests are to be ushered to their seats - friends of the bride on the left (as you face the altar) and friends of the groom on the right. The guests may also be seated in a mixed fashion without regard to right or left side, if the bride and groom desire it that way.
3. The organist generally begins to play appropriate music **15 to 30 minutes** before the service begins.
4. The groom's parents are **the next to the last people seated before the service begins**. They are seated in the **second pew on the right side** next to the center aisle.
5. The **last person seated is the bride's mother**. She is seated in the **second pew to the left of the center aisle**.
6. After the bride's mother is seated, the ushers lay the runner or crash, if one is used.

❑ Processional

The processional should neither be brisk nor very slow. **Walk naturally**. (The so-called "hesitation step" was copied from Queen Victoria. There was, however, good reason for her doing so. She was lame!) There are many different ways for the bridal party to reach their intended positions in the front of the church. These ways will be shared with you during your last visit with the pastor prior to the wedding.

❑ Order of Service

The Lutheran Agenda provides the order of service for weddings. If the couple feels like changes need to be made that is to be communicated in consultation with the pastor at one of the premarital sessions.

❑ **Recessional**

After the pastor has pronounced the Benediction, the recessional may take the following order:

- a. The bride and groom
- b. Ring bearer and flower girl (if used)
- c. Maid/Matron of honor and best man
- d. The bridesmaids escorted by the ushers,
P A U S E
- e. The ushers return, and the bride's parents are ushered out
- f. The groom's parents are ushered out
- g. The congregation is dismissed row by row by the ushers

❑ **Receiving Line**

Discuss options with the pastor.

Miscellaneous Notes

- ❑ General Saint Luke building policies: St. Luke is a ***non-smoking campus***. Alcoholic beverages ***are not permitted*** anywhere on church property. Saint Luke Lutheran Church and School is not responsible for valuables, purses, wedding dresses, formal wear, cameras, etc, left in the building or on the property. We encourage the appointment of a family member or friend to make sure all articles and valuables are taken care of before and after the service.
- ❑ ***Altar Paraments***: In accordance with the practice of our church, altar paraments are changed in keeping with the calendar of the church year. They are ***not*** changed for weddings. Also, any decorations are to enhance the service. Decorations are not to be attached using nails, tacks, or other methods that might cause damage. All decorations need to be discussed with the pastor and removed by the wedding party immediately after the service.
- ❑ A ***Wedding Coordinator*** will be present at the rehearsal and the day of the wedding to help with details surrounding the service.

Conclusion

Your wedding day is one of the most important days in your lives. The wedding service is an opportunity before family and friends then to ask for God's blessings on this occasion and His consecration of your union by the Word of God and prayer. Beautiful flowers, dresses, and decorations have their place on this joyous occasion. Yet, tremendously more important than these is the blessing of the One who instituted marriage and gave Himself to be our Savior. For these reasons we endeavor with you to have a Christian wedding that celebrates the couple, but even more we pray, that this time be in the true sense of the Word, a service in which Jesus remains central and the Word of God and prayer receive their rightful place. God's blessings!

Wedding Texts

Choose one or more of the following texts as a passage that the two of you would like to base and center your married life upon. In addition, you may choose two others that you would like to have read as lessons in your service.

Genesis 1:26-27	“Creation of Man”
Genesis 2:18, 21-24	“Creation of Woman”
Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67	“Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah”
Exodus 23:25	“You shall serve the Lord”
Numbers 6:24-26	“The Lord Bless You”
Ruth 1:16-17	“Entrust Me not to Leave Thee”
Psalm 29:1-2	“Give unto the Lord Glory”
Psalm 34:3	“O Magnify the Lord with Me”
Psalm 63:1-4	“O God, Thou art my God”

Psalm 95:1-6	“O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord”
Psalm 100	“Make a Joyful Noise unto the Lord”
Psalm 127	“Except the Lord Build the House”
Proverbs 3:15-19	“Drink Waters out of Thine Own Cistern”
Psalm 128	“Blessed is Every One that Fears the Lord”
Psalm 150	“A Psalm of Praise”
Psalm 37:5, 39	“Commit Your Way to the Lord”
Psalm 67:1	“May God be Gracious to Us”
Psalm 121:8	“The Lord will Keep You”
Proverbs 18:22	“He Who Finds a Wife”
Proverbs 23:3-4	“Foundation of a Home”
Proverbs 31:10-31	“Who Can Find a Virtuous Woman?”
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	“Two Are Better than One”
Song of Songs 2:11-13	“For, lo, the Winter is Past”
Song of Songs 5:16	“This is My Beloved, and This is My Friend”
Song of Songs 6:3	“I am My Beloved’s”
Song of Songs 8:6-7	“Set Me as a Seal”
Isaiah 61:1-10	“I Will Greatly Rejoice in the Lord”
Isaiah 62:5	“For as a Young Man Marries a Virgin”
Jeremiah 33:11	“The Voice of Joy, and the Voice of Gladness”
Hosea 2:19-20	“And I will Betroth Thee unto Me Forever”
Matthew 7:24-27	“Ask and it Will be Given”
Matthew 5:3-11	“The Beatitudes”
Matthew 19:4-6	“Christ’s Statement on Marriage”
Luke 10:5	“Whatever House You Enter”
John 14:27	“Peace I Leave with You”
John 2:1-11	“Christ at the Marriage of Cana
John 15:9-17	“Christ’s Command to Love
Romans 12:16	“Live in Harmony”
I Corinthians 7:1-7	“Marital Duty of Husband and Wife”
I Corinthians 13	“Great Love Chapter”
Galatians 6:2	“Bear One Another’s Burdens”
Ephesians 5:21-33	“Roles of husband and Wife”
Philippians 2:5-11	“Attitudes to Build a Marriage”
Colossians 3:17-19	“And Whatever You Do”
Hebrews 13:4	“Sex in Marriages”
Hebrews 13:5	“Keep Your Life Free”
I Peter 3:1-7	“Teaching for Wives and Husbands
I John 3:16; 4:7-19	“Teachings on Love”

Instructions to Wedding Photographers

Please be sure to give copies of the inserted "Instructions to Wedding Photographers" sheet to your photographers.

We believe that the wedding ceremony is **first and foremost a worship service**, and that worship decorum is most appropriate during the service. In order to maintain this, we ask the photographer not to take flash pictures from the moment the pastor says: "We make our beginning in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" until after the Benediction.

Time exposures may be taken all through the wedding ceremony, as long as the photographer remains inconspicuous and does not disturb the other worshippers. Our balcony provides a good place for this purpose. The Pastor(s) and bridal party will pose for as many pictures as necessary immediately following the ceremony.

We urge the photographer not to block the center aisle during the processional/recessional, but to try to remain as much as possible within a pew. We expect the photographer not to interfere with the processional/recessional or cause the bridal party to walk around the photographer during the processional/recessional.

During the worship time, we expect the photographer to either be seated in a pew or inconspicuously taking pictures.

We ask that the photographer read these instructions carefully, and then if there are any questions to please contact the Pastor(s) of St. Luke Lutheran Church by calling (724) 352-2777 at least a week prior to the wedding.

Thank you.

Bride/Groom Names:

Wedding Date:

Special Notes:

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