

Wedding Planning Guide

Bethany Lutheran Church

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Planning the Wedding Service

Blessings to you as you prepare for your marriage! As you gather at the church to meet with the pastor, you will have numerous questions and thoughts regarding your wedding ceremony. There are many choices to make. It is hoped that you will find much helpful information in this folder. Some of it will assist as you plan. Some will make you think.

First let's take a moment to reflect on what a Christian wedding means. A Christian wedding is, first and foremost, a service of worship. It includes prayer, proclamation of God's living word through readings from the Bible and a message by the pastor, Christian vows, and a blessing asking God to be present on your wedding day and in your life together as husband and wife. All of the other parts of the service, decorations and special effects are interpreted by the Christian ideal itself. It would be improper to have parts of the service inconsistent with that theme.

A Christian wedding is a time to give thanks and praise to God for the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ to all and for the love God has kindled in your lives. It is a time to ask God to bless your lifelong commitment to one another as husband and wife. Because the Triune God is the focus of the service, everything in the service should direct our attention to God and what God is doing in your lives as you begin your marriage.

As you plan your wedding service, there will be plenty of options and opportunities for you to make the service "your own." Each wedding should uniquely reflect the couple being married, their relationship with one another, and their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Bethany Lutheran Church, in conjunction with the Pastor and Congregation Council, has adopted the following policies so that the integrity of the wedding service as Christian worship and the purposes of Christian marriage might be maintained. It is our prayer that your wedding day will be a blessed event for the two of you, your families and friends who share the joy of this day, and the church as a whole who gathers with you to celebrate the gift of love, life, and relationship. Take time to reflect on what a Christian wedding will mean for you as you prepare for the wedding service with the Pastor. May God bless you in this exciting time of your lives!

Pastor

The pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church has final authority for the wedding ceremony and all events connected with it that occur on church property. In the case the wedding ceremony takes place at another location the pastor will preside over the ceremony and all other religious observances and expressions. Bethany Lutheran's pastor will preside at all weddings which occur at Bethany Lutheran Church unless he or she agrees to other arrangements. These arrangements will be discussed with and relayed to the church council of Bethany Lutheran Church and the wedding coordinator (a member of Bethany) that will be assigned to your event. All dates and times for the ceremony, rehearsal, and other related events held at Bethany Lutheran Church are to be scheduled with the pastor. An honorarium is recommended for the pastor. For *non-member* weddings that will be a minimum of \$300.

Scripture

There will be at least one, if not more, readings from the Bible. We believe the Bible is God's written and living word. The pastor will assist you in selecting appropriate biblical readings for your ceremony and for your convenience a list of selected passage is found at the end of this document. If you would like other readings during the ceremony they will be discussed and reviewed with the pastor prior to the ceremony. The pastor has final authority over which non-biblical readings may be used.

Vows

In keeping with the Lutheran understanding that marriage is a partnership of equals, both the bride and groom must speak identical vows to one another. The *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) hymnal provides different options for the couple to use. These are included at the end of this document. Additionally, a couple may choose to write their own vows. Careful attention should be taken to reflect the love, compassion, and mutual support of Christian marriage. All vows other than those listed in this document will be approved by the pastor of Bethany Lutheran Church.

Music

All music will reflect the sacred nature of the marriage ceremony. As stated earlier, a Christian marriage is first and foremost a service of worship to and before God. Music, therefore, should praise God, celebrate God's gifts in marriage, and proclaim God's faithful love and commitment to God's people as revealed most fully in Jesus Christ. The *ELW* has many appropriate hymns that may be used for a Christian wedding. A list is provided at the end of this document. Certainly, there is good and meaningful secular wedding music. However, it finds its appropriate place outside the context of worship such as during the prelude or at the reception. As a Christian wedding is a gathering of God's people it is permissible and suggested that those gathered are invited to sing at least one or more hymns. The pastor has final authority over what music can or cannot be used during the service.

Parental Involvement

Because our culture and church no longer understand a woman to be the property of either her father or her husband, certain traditional practices are no longer a part of the wedding ceremony. While brides are still welcome to be escorted down the aisle by their fathers and/or mothers, there is no longer any formal "giving of the bride." There are, however, a number of ways parents of the bride and groom can be involved in the blessing of the marriage, which is provided in the ELW. Additionally, parents or other relatives could participate in offering prayers for the couple. Other suggestions will be discussed with the pastor.

Holy Communion

It is appropriate to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion as part of the marriage service. This sacrament reminds the couple of the sacrificial love of Christ that binds them to one another and to those who have come to celebrate with them. Everyone should be invited to share in the Lord's Supper.

Civil Regulations/License

Iowa law requires the couple apply for a marriage license. Per Iowa law, licenses may be applied for from a County Registrar. In Cedar County, that office is located at the Cedar County Courthouse located in Tipton. In Johnson County, that office is located in Iowa City. The pastor is responsible for obtaining the signatures of the bride, groom, and two other witnesses to the marriage ceremony. Per Iowa law these witnesses must be of legal age and competency. The pastor will send the marriage license to the County Registrar within fifteen days from the wedding date. It is recommended the marriage license be applied for as soon as possible to avoid complications.

Pre-Marriage Counseling

A *minimum of three ninety minute* pre-marriage counseling sessions are required for all couples. The pastor will make the determination if additional sessions are needed prior to the wedding and will inform the couple as such. As part of these sessions the pastor uses a service called "Prepare/Enrich" developed by Life Innovations, Inc. This is a questionnaire that can be taken via the Internet. The cost of this service is \$35.00 and is the responsibility of the couple being married.

Worship Attendance

Your desire to have a Christian wedding is proof that God is active in your life. Regular attendance at worship is the primary activity in the life of a community of faith in which the people of God gather around word and sacrament. It is here the good news of Jesus Christ is shared and we are strengthened by the promises God has made to us in our Baptism into Christ. Members are encouraged and expected to be active participants in the life of this congregation and present at worship. If you are a *non-member* of Bethany Lutheran Church wishing to be married in our congregation you are required to worship with us at least three times prior to the wedding ceremony in order to be married. This is in order to develop a better relationship with the pastor, the people of God at Bethany Lutheran, and also to nourish your faith as you move toward your wedding date.

Flowers and Other Decorations

Arrangements for entrance to the church for the florist and others involved in decorating can be made with the church administrative assistant, pastor, or wedding coordinator. There will be no rearrangement of the furnishings of the church unless authorized by the pastor. Flower arrangements can be placed on the upper portion of the altar but not directly on the mensa or lower table.

Photography

Flash photography detracts from the worshipful nature of the wedding service. Therefore, no flash photography is allowed during the service itself. This policy should be included in the bulletin and shared with professional photographers and videographers.

Photographers and videographers who work during the service should be unobtrusive and as invisible as possible.

Rehearsal

There will be a rehearsal prior to the wedding day. Rehearsal times and dates will be arranged with the pastor.

Miscellaneous

The use of *alcohol, tobacco, firearms, fireworks, and/or illegal drugs* is ***strictly prohibited*** in the building or on the grounds. Any use of them will result in removal from the church property and may jeopardize the entire wedding ceremony.

Rice, confetti, bubbles, and helium balloons are prohibited from use at weddings or other festivities anywhere on church property.

Other items of note may be found on the Building Use Policy located in this manual.

Scriptures for the Wedding Service

The following is a list of suggested scripture readings for weddings. However, if you have other scripture readings in mind please share them with the pastor. It is customary to read two or three scripture readings at a wedding service. It is recommended that the couple sit down together to choose what texts are most meaningful to them so that the wedding day will be an expression of their faith. Scripture may be read by family members, members of the wedding party, and others. If the service contains communion the last reading will be from the gospels and read by the pastor. The assembly will stand for this reading.

Old Testament Lessons

Genesis 1:26-28	Song of Solomon 8:6-7
Genesis 2:18-24	Isaiah 63:7-9
Proverbs 3:3-6	Jeremiah 31:31-34
Song of Solomon 2:10-13	

Psalms

Psalms 33:20-22	Psalms 121
Psalms 67	Psalms 127
Psalms 100	Psalms 128
Psalms 117	Psalms 150

New Testament

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39	Philippians 4:4-9
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18	Colossians 3:12-17
1 Corinthians 13:1-13:13	1 John 3:18-24
Ephesians 3:14-19	1 John 4:7-16
Ephesians 5:1-2	

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-10	Matthew 22:35-40
Matthew 5:14-16	Mark 10:6-9
Matthew 7:24-27	John 2:1-11
Matthew 18:19-20	John 15:9-17
Matthew 19:3-6	

Wedding Music

Below is a list of selected hymns that have been used at weddings. Any other suggestions need to be discussed with the pastor and church musician if she/he is requested to play. Presently, Bethany Lutheran has a part-time pianist. Her availability will have to be discussed well in advance if you desire her to play at your wedding. Additionally, a fee for her services will be discussed and agreed to with her ahead of time. You are welcome to borrow a copy of the ELW and review the hymns located within it.

Hymns (From *ELW*)

- 308 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!
- 312 Jesus Come! For We Invite You
- 436 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying
- 460 Now the Silence
- 488 (489) Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness
- 585 Hear Us Now, Our God and Father
- 586 This Is a Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited
- 631 Love Divine, All Love Excelling
- 642 Ubi caritas et amor
- 644 Although I Speak with Angel's Tongue
- 648 Beloved, God's Chosen
- 816 Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life
- 836 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- 839 (840) Now Thank We All Our God
- 879 For the Beauty of the Earth
- 881 Let All Things Now Living

Marriage Vows

The following vows are from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) hymnal (pg. 288).

I take you, name, to be my *wife/husband* from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.

OR

I, name, take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*; to have and to hold from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

Additional Marriage Vows

I take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*, and these things I promise you. I will be faithful to you and honest with you. I will respect, trust, help, and care for you. I will share my life with you. I will forgive you as we have been forgiven and I will try with you to better understand ourselves, the world, and God, through the best and worst of what is to come until death parts us.

I take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*. I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful wife/husband, to share with you in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to forgive and strengthen you, and to join with you so that together we may serve God and others as long as we both shall live.

Name, I take you to be my *wife/husband* from this time onward, to join with you and to share all that is to come, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, and in all circumstances of our life together to be loyal to you with all my being until death parts us.

I name, take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*. I promise before God and these friends to be your loving and faithful *wife/husband*, to share with you in wealth and in poverty, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

I name, take you, name, to be my lawfully wedded *wife/husband*, to have and to hold from this day forward. For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. To love, honor, and cherish, as long as we both shall live.

Wedding Information Form

Wedding Date: _____

Time: _____

Rehearsal Date: _____

Time: _____

Bride

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: Home: _____

Cell: _____

Birth date: _____

Church Member: _____

Parents Names: _____

Baptismal Date and Location: _____

Employer / Occupation: _____

Name of child(ren) & age(s): _____

Groom

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail: _____

Phone: Home: _____

Cell: _____

Birth date: _____

Church Member: _____

Parents Names: _____

Baptismal Date and Location: _____

Employer / Occupation: _____

Name of child(ren) & age(s): _____

Building Use Policy Bethany Lutheran Church West Branch, Iowa

Bethany Lutheran Church welcomes the use of its facilities by members and community organizations. All building use must be approved by the Administrative Assistant or the Pastor. Applications are available at the church office, or by contacting the Administrative Assistant. (643-5998 or blcsecretary@lcom.net). If you have any questions or concerns about the building use policy or fee schedule please contact the Administrative Assistant.

1. **Certain church functions may arise (funerals, etc.) which will supersede your group's use of the facility. We advise finding an alternate facility which would be available in the event this happens. You will be notified of this by the Administrative Assistant.**
2. The use of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, fireworks, and/or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited in the building or on the grounds. Additionally, any activities that could be construed as gambling (e.g. raffles) are not permitted.
3. Your group will not conduct any meeting or discussion on church property which may be perceived as opposed to any other person or group of people based on their sex, sexual orientation, race, religion, age, mental and/or physical disabilities, political affiliation, and/or beliefs.
4. The responsibility and liability for injury to persons or damage to property must be assumed by the organization or individual making the application for use.
5. All groups are required to clean up after using any area of the facility. Tables, chairs and equipment are to be returned to their original locations. **All food, trash and recyclables must be removed from the church property upon completion of the event.**
6. Any equipment damaged or missing will be replaced by Bethany and the cost will be subtracted from your damage deposit.
7. Aisle runners, rice, confetti, bubbles, and helium balloons are prohibited from use at weddings or other festivities anywhere on church property.
8. No food or beverages allowed in the Sanctuary.
9. The Administrative Assistant will meet with you and explain the policies. The Closing Check List provided at that meeting should be completed and placed in the box in the office upon the completion of your use.
10. We, Bethany Lutheran Church, reserve the right to seek your removal from church premises if it is found you are in violation of these policies.
11. Applications should be made 30 days, or as soon as possible, before the event. Fees and damage deposits are due in the church office with the application.

12. Non-profit public service events and profit making events must be approved by the council.

13. All activities will be concluded by 11:00 p.m. (including clean-up)

FEE SCHEDULE

For members of Bethany there will be no fee for the use of the building for weddings. *An honorarium for the pastor is customary for a wedding, whether held at Bethany Lutheran Church or at an off-site location.* If Bethany's pianist is requested to play and available, a separate fee will be arranged directly with her.

For non-member weddings there will be a facility usage fee of \$250.00 to have the wedding ceremony at Bethany. Another \$250 will be charged if the reception is also held at Bethany. Also, as stated previously, a minimum honorarium of \$300.00 will be paid to the pastor, whether held at Bethany Lutheran Church or at an off-site location. If Bethany's pianist is requested to play and available, a separate fee will be arranged directly with her.

A damage deposit will be required at the day of signing this form in the amount of \$250 for non-member weddings.

Please note: If a cleaning service is required, you may be billed for the charges.

The Cleaning check list must be completed after every event. Please leave completed check list on the kitchen island.

I have read the above information and agree to follow the building policy rules and pay the appropriate fees.

Signed _____

BUILDING USE APPLICATION
BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH
WEST BRANCH, IOWA

Bethany's Mission Statement:

*"To grow so deep in Christ through worship, education,
And fellowship that we celebrate by reaching out to others in service".*

Bethany Lutheran welcomes the use of its facilities by members
And other groups who support the mission of the congregation.

The building, equipment, furnishings and supplies are the property of the Congregation and shall not be used by anyone member or non-member *without prior approval*.

To request use of facilities, please fill out the application below and return it to the Administrative Assistant at least 30 days prior to the event.

EVERYONE that uses the church, (members, and non-members) needs to fill out a form.

If you will be using the building on a regular basis, (as for Scout meetings) one initial application with all the dates on it will do.

Please be specific about the building area you are requesting, the equipment you wish to use.

All church functions, both scheduled and unscheduled, take precedence. In the event of conflict, you will be notified immediately by the Administrative Assistant. You are encouraged to have an alternate site available.

Name (Contact Person) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Type of Event _____

Date(s) and Time(s) requested (Include all, i.e. wedding rehearsal, wedding date, preparation time, clean-up, etc.)

BUILDING USE

Area requested (Sanctuary, Large Fellowship Hall, Kitchen, Classroom.)

EQUIPMENT USE

Equipment needed: _____

Person responsible: _____

Wedding Details

Prelude Music: _____

Seating of Grandparents: _____ Usher: _____ Groom: _____ Other (Name) _____

Seating of Groom's Parents: _____ Usher _____ Groom _____ Other (Name) _____

Seating of Bride's Parents: _____

Processional Music: _____

Ring bearer / Flower girl: _____

Bridesmaids / Groomsmen

Groomsmen Enter with Groom: _____ Escort Bridesmaids: _____

Bride escorted by: _____

Scriptures: 1) _____ Reader: _____

2) _____ Reader: _____

3) _____ Reader: _____

Vows: _____

Giving of Rings: _____

Communion: (Yes or No) _____

If yes, then name of communion assistants: _____

Postlude Music: _____

Reception line: _____ Bride and Groom dismiss guests row by row

_____ In the entry way _____ No Reception line

Special Music: _____

Number of Persons invited: _____ Time of Pictures: _____

Special Décor or Floral: _____

Reception: (Yes or No): _____ Fellowship hall : _____ Other (Specify): _____

What time is the church to be opened on the day of the wedding: _____?

Wedding Checklist

- _____ Facilities reserved.
- _____ Met with the pastor for pre-marriage counseling.
- _____ Visited with the organist regarding music for the service.
- _____ Double-checked all musical arrangements with the pastor early on.
- _____ Checked floral arrangements/decorations with the pastor.
- _____ Ordered bulletins (optional) and provided copy to pastor.
- _____ Selected scripture passages for wedding and gave to pastor.
- _____ Arranged for musicians to have special time for practice.
- _____ Spoke with the photographer/videographer regarding church policy.
- _____ Chose vows to be used during ceremony.
- _____ Spoke with all wedding party, ushers, etc. regarding the rehearsal time.
- _____ Secured marriage license at least 72 hours prior to the wedding.
- _____ Informed all parties involved of the church policy regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, other substances, and firearms.
- _____ Informed wedding party, ushers, etc. of the time pictures will be taken.

Sample Order of Service for Weddings

(This sample mirrors the order of marriage in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal)

Prelude

Lighting of Candles*

Seating of Grandparents*

Seating of Parents (Special music may be listed here)

Entrance (Processional)

Greeting (p. 286)

Declaration of Intention (p. 287)

Prayer of the Day (p. 287)

(Special music/Hymn)*

Scripture Readings (List them line by line)

Sermon

(Special music/Hymn)*

Vows (p. 288) (Note: if other vows used do not list page #)

Giving of Rings (p. 288)

Acclamation (p. 288)

Lighting of the Unity Candle (If so desired would be appropriately placed here along with special music to accompany)*

Marriage Blessing (p. 289)

Prayers of Intercession (p. 289)

(Peace – if communion)

(Meal – Great Thanksgiving from another setting)

*(Communion)**

The Lord's Prayer (p. 290)

Peace

Blessing and Dismissal

Introduction of the Couple

Recessional*

Postlude

*Appropriate times for hymns or special music