

Wedding Handbook

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
The Wedding As Worship.....	3
Pre-marital Preparation.....	4
Sexual Activity.....	4
Living Together	5
Who can be married at Our Savior?.....	5
Which Pastor?.....	5
Wedding Date.....	6
Decorations.....	6
Wedding Bulletins.....	6
Photographs and Videos.....	7
Order of Service	7
Wedding Music.....	7
Why not “Ave Maria”?.....	8
Why not “Bridal Chorus”?.....	8
Open/Close of Church.....	9
Wedding Rehearsal.....	9
Rehearsal Dinner/Wedding Reception.....	9
Alcoholic Beverages.....	9
Kissing.....	9
Receptions at Our Savior.....	10
Rice/Confetti/Birdseed.....	10
License.....	10
Various Fees.....	10
Request for Wedding at Our Savior.....	11
Wedding Information Sheet.....	12
Couple’s Check-List.....	13

Introduction

Dear Engaged Couple:

Congratulations on your forthcoming marriage! This holy union for which you seek the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is one of the most important relationships in the life of a Christian who chooses to marry.

We at Our Savior Lutheran Church consider it a privilege to serve you and our Lord, Jesus Christ, as you prepare to come into His sanctuary and publicly make your vows, seeking guidance and blessings from Holy Scripture.

As you no doubt realize, this next step in your life will be a big one- something which should not be taken lightly, yet one that comes with many joys and blessings.

We are concerned about you and your future life together in holy wedlock. That is why we strive to do our best to prepare couples seeking marriage build a strong foundation for their marriage. That foundation, of course, is Jesus Christ and him crucified.

May the Lord bless your preparation time, as you seek to do his will in all aspects of your life.

Please take the time to carefully read through and understand this entire handbook. It will help guide us in the preparation and planning of this special wedding ceremony where the Lord will declare you to be husband and wife.

In Christ,
The Pastors and Elders of Our Savior Lutheran Church

The Wedding As Worship

Even though God has established the marriage relationship, there can be marriages and wedding services apart from the church that are in accordance with the will of God. This is because God has provided this relationship as something for the human race as a whole which is not limited to the church. Therefore, the regulation and recording of marriages is the responsibility of the State and not a sacrament or exclusive right of the Church.

Nevertheless, a Christian will want to have both a Christian service and marriage because of his/her relationship with Jesus Christ. As the Christian desires to follow God's will and to give glory to God in all that he/she does (2 Corinthians 5:15-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31), so also he/she will want to have God's blessing on the marriage, begin that marriage in Christ, and give witness to Christ in the wedding ceremony. **The wedding ceremony is a worship service** (much like Sunday worship!) in which the bride and groom make their commitment to live in the marriage relationship as He established it and invite their fellow Christians to join them in worship and pray with them and for them as they begin their marriage.

The object of our worship is the Triune God, **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**. He alone is worthy of our worship and adoration.

All elements of any service of worship will praise, honor, and glorify God. What this means for Christians is that the wedding service is never theirs alone. It is a public act (even though it may be performed privately) which belongs to the worship life of the church. As such, you will want your wedding service to reflect a **distinctively Christian content** so that not only you but everyone present will be enriched and edified. This document represents our heartfelt desire to aid you in planning a worshipful, joyful wedding service.

Pre-marital Preparation

The pastor and the couple will meet to help the couple identify the strengths on which they will build and the weaknesses (“growth areas”) on which they will need to work. The pastor will also provide information to the couple regarding other aspects of married life and the marriage relationship as needed or desired. This will also be a time for the pastor to help the couple prepare the wedding ceremony.

We believe that beginning a marriage is not something to be taken lightly. **God has established marriage for the good of society, but also for the good of man and woman who plan to enter that relationship.** Part of that good of marriage also includes specific directions as to how husband and wife are to act toward each other and toward people outside the relationship.

Sexual Activity

God has given the gift of **the sexual relationship to people to be used in marriage** for the purpose of bringing new children into the world and for the expression of affection and pleasure between husband and wife. He forbids the misuse of this gift by using it outside the marriage relationship, often called fornication and adultery (Genesis 39:9, Exodus 20:14). He has also encouraged all to **honor the marriage relationship and keep it pure** (Hebrews 13:4).

This marriage relationship begins when the man and woman make their public vows to commit themselves to each other as husband and wife until death parts them. In the case of a church wedding, this is done in the presence of the congregation attending the ceremony and **in the presence of the Lord**.

Christian couples are to exercise self-control during the courting and engagement period. This time should be considered a special time of anticipation- getting to know each other's interests, going to church and receiving God's gifts of forgiveness together, attending social events, spending time with each other's families and friends, and also self preparation and prayer for your future life together.

Couples who are struggling, like all sin, should repent, seek forgiveness from God and one another and by God's grace, amend their life into conformity of God's will. Rejoicing in the

forgiveness of sins and with a clean heart, couples should then look forward to their wedding day and their future together as husband and wife.

Living Together

Our Savior does not condone couples “living together” before marriage. In cases in which couples have been living together, **special living arrangements must be made to resolve this situation before wedding plans proceed.**

Normally these arrangements would include the following:

Recognition of this type of pre-marital cohabitation as sin, repentance shown for that sin by the couple, forgiveness from God for this sin, living arrangements changed and the wedding plans continue with a pure heart.

Another option would be for the couple to be separate for a short period and get married immediately (within a month) in a small, simple ceremony. A Blessing of Marriage Ceremony (which is very similar to a wedding ceremony) may then take place on a future date chosen by the couple that could include all of the festivities of a traditional wedding ceremony. This would allow couples that had already made arrangements for a specific date to follow through with pre-planned festivities.

Another option would be to seek a wedding from a State Official.

A University of Wisconsin study of 12,000 couples shows that couples living together have an 85% relationship failure rate and their divorce rate doubles to 75%. Our first and ultimate responsibility as a church is to hold true to what Scriptures tell us (mentioned above). We also want to help you build a strong and fulfilling marriage with the greatest chance of success possible.

Who can be married at Our Savior?

A wedding at Our Savior is normally a privilege reserved for members of the congregation, or for those seeking to commit to a regular and active membership in the congregation. In this regard, ultimately, it is at the discretion of Our Savior's pastoral staff whether a wedding will take place in our church. Holy Scriptures speak only of heterosexual marriage unions; therefore, our pastors will not solemnize, officiate, recognize, or bless same sex partnerships or unions (marriages).

Which Pastor?

Since Our Savior has two called pastors, both pastors share wedding responsibilities. The pastor who will work with pre-marital preparation and officiate your wedding will depend on “whose turn it is.” Please speak with one of the pastors for guidance.

Wedding Date

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please call the church office before you make reservations for a reception, etc. The dates of your wedding service and rehearsal must be approved by the pastor. In most cases an appointment with the officiating pastor is necessary before the date will be reserved on the church calendar. The date and time available for a wedding will depend on what other activities the congregation has previously scheduled.

No weddings may be scheduled

- December 23 – 25
- Palm Sunday
- During Holy Week
- Easter Sunday

Decorations

To maintain proper reverence for the Lord's house, the decorations may be as simple or elaborate as the couple chooses as long as they conform to the policies given in this document.

No decorations (including flowers) may be placed on or attached to the altar, communion rails, or baptismal font. The color of the altar cloths (Paraments) will depend on the season of the church year. All Paraments remain in place during wedding ceremonies. The church has stands for flowers that may be placed on either side of the altar. Other stands for floral arrangements must be secured from a florist or other sources. If it is the desire of the couple that the flowers be used for worship services following the wedding, notice should be given in writing to the church office so that appropriate acknowledgment can be made in the church bulletin.

Marriage/unity candles are the responsibility of the couple. They can be purchased locally at a Christian bookstore or from a florist. Plastic sheets must be placed under the candles to prevent wax from dripping on the altar cloth.

White center aisle runners may be rented from outside sources. If bows, ropes, or ribbons are to be attached to pews, wire/metal fasteners and tape are not to be used (they damage the pews). Please ask your florist for special plastic pew clips designed for this purpose.

All decorations should be removed from the church the day of the wedding so that the custodian may clean the church for any upcoming worship services.

Wedding Bulletins

It is helpful, but not necessary to have printed bulletins to inform guests of the order of service and the names of the participants in the wedding. If desired, the church may print a standard wedding bulletin. If desired, special bulletin covers may also be purchased through the church office and the bulletin can be printed on the special cover.

Photographs and Videos

We recognize the value pictures and videotapes hold for a couple. Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary or on the church grounds with flash/special lighting equipment either before or after the service and during the processional and recessional.

Because flash photography is disruptive in the worship service, **no flash photography is permitted during the service itself.** Photographs may be taken during the ceremony without a flash if taken discretely from the back or side of the sanctuary or the balcony (not in the front or chancel area). Video cameras may be operated quietly from the back of the sanctuary or the balcony. A stationary video camera may also be placed on a tripod towards the front, right hand side of the sanctuary. No photographer (professional, friend, or family) is allowed to disrupt the worship ceremony. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform their guests of Our Savior's policy.

Order of Service

All wedding ceremonies at Our Savior and by Our Savior's pastors are to follow the order of service found in our Hymnal (i.e. p. 275 of Lutheran Service Book) and/or Agenda. This includes weddings done at another location.

Only LCMS pastors may preach and officiate.

The wedding vows are not alterable for the wedding ceremony. Special vows, poems, “our song”, etc. are to be done elsewhere, such as in private or the wedding reception.

Wedding Music

The couple should consult the pastor regarding arrangements for an organist, accompanist, soloist, or other desired musicians. All use of musicians from outside the congregation and music to be included in the ceremony must be cleared through the Pastor.

The Pastor uses the following criteria regarding the approval of submitted music:

1. The text should be Christ-centered.
2. The theology of the text shall be in concert with the theology of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.
3. The music should not be associated with any secular, social, political, or cultural event or function which will detract from the sacredness of Christian worship in a wedding service.
4. The timbre, structure, and general “sound” of the proposed music should be appropriate for a Christian church wedding.

The Pastor will be happy to provide the couple with files of appropriate vocal solos, instrumental solos, processional and recessional choices, and the like. The musicians playing for your wedding may also be willing to meet with you to give you samples of appropriate choices.

Why not “Ave Maria”?

“Ave Maria” was Charles Gounod’s most famous song. It was originally titled, “Meditation sur le premier Prelude de Piano de J.S. Bach” and was first published for violin and piano in 1853. Gounod added the Latin words in 1859. “Ave Maria” is an arrangement of the “C Major Prelude” from J.S. Bach’s “Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I” (1722), in which Gounod’s original melody is cleverly superimposed over Bach’s prelude. The text for “Ave Maria” is based on the well-known “Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin.”

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus
Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nuc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.
Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Few would disagree that the music to “Ave Maria” is very beautiful. However, the lyrics are not in line with what we believe as Lutheran Christians. Our Lord tells us that “No man comes to the Father but by Me.” As God incarnate, Jesus Christ is the only way that we approach God. There are several other beautiful musical options from the same time period that may be used in place of “Ave Maria.”

Why not “Bridal Chorus”?

The “Bridal Chorus” march, sometimes requested by bridal couples as a wedding processional, is from an opera by Richard Wagner. The opera takes place in the court of King Henry I (10th Century). The lead soprano, Elsa, is accused of murdering her brother, Gottfried. She is defended from this accusation in a victorious combat by a knight who arrives for the combat in a boat drawn by a swan. This knight is Lohengrin, who successfully defends Elsa’s innocence.

Elsa and Lohengrin make plans to marry. At the beginning of the wedding, (where the “Bridal Chorus” march appears in the opera), an evil heathen magician appears, and tells Elsa that Lohengrin is also a magician, and is concealing his true identity from her for evil reasons.

Elsa and Lohengrin marry anyway, even though Lohengrin tells Elsa she is not to inquire about his true identity. The marriage is consummated. Curiosity leads Elsa to ask Lohengrin his true identity, and he reveals to her that he is her brother who had been transformed by the evil magician who had appeared at the beginning of the wedding scene. Evil prevails, Lohengrin is taken away in the boat drawn by the swan, and Elsa is left to die in despair.

It is generally wise to avoid the use of any opera music in connection with Christian worship. Many operas, while containing music which is beautiful, certainly virtuosic, and often

extraordinarily demanding on the skills of the musician, are built on plots which contain murder, suicide, illicit sex, and often have heathen influences as well. There are exceptions, but caution must be practiced in the selection of music from operas for use in worship.

An additional note of interest regarding the use of “Bridal Chorus” march for wedding processions: many people, regardless of church affiliation or cultural viewpoints regard the use of this music as boorish and in poor taste.

It is the responsibility of the couple to make sure all musicians have the sheet music needed for the wedding or to place the order and purchase music that is not on hand. Sheet music should be in the hands of the musicians at least one month in advance to assure they have ample time to practice and prepare for your wedding.

Open/Close of Church

The opening and closing of the church will depend on the schedule of church events around the time of your wedding and needs to be coordinated with the Pastor.

Wedding Rehearsal

The purpose of a wedding rehearsal is to acquaint the wedding party with the flow and movement of the service. Rehearsals can accomplish that goal in approximately one hour or less if all members of the wedding party are punctual and cooperative.

The church is the House of God also at the time of the wedding rehearsal and should be treated with reverence and respect.

Rehearsal Dinner/Wedding Reception

If the officiating pastor (and his wife/family) is expected at the rehearsal dinner and/or reception, a written invitation should be given in advance. Pastors do not automatically assume they are invited to these functions.

Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the building, parking lot, or on the church grounds. If members of the wedding party show up under the influence of intoxicants at the rehearsal or wedding ceremony, the pastor may call off the ceremony because the members of the wedding party are not in a state of preparedness for worship.

Kissing

Extended kissing at the altar is not in good taste. Some couples wish to seal their marriage at the close of the service with a kiss. If this is desired, it should be remembered that this kiss is

symbolic of the sacred union which has just taken place. It should be light and brief (G rated). It is never to be a display of intense affection (save it for the honeymoon!) placed on public display.

Receptions at Our Savior

Please speak with the Pastor for information on receptions in Our Savior's fellowship hall.

Rice/Confetti/Birdseed

The use of rice/confetti/birdseed following the wedding is not permitted.

License

Wyoming state law requires couples to secure a license to marry. The bride and groom must go to the County Clerk's office together and bring photo identification. Other information needed includes: parents names, mothers maiden names, states parents were born in, and states bride and groom were born in. At the time of this printing, there is a \$25 fee to secure a marriage license.

Various Fees

All fees are payable in separate checks to each individual and should be paid the day of the wedding, if not before. **Fees listed are guidelines and are considered minimum amounts.** You may consider additional tips if extra time or effort was given towards your wedding.

Custodian (required fee) – Facilities (sanctuary, fellowship hall, kitchen, bathroom) are to be cleaned immediately following the wedding ceremony. Fees are based off of use. Please contact church office to schedule to make arrangements with our custodians.

Organist/Pianist

\$100 (prep, rehearsal, and ceremony)

Vocal/Instrumental Soloists

\$50-\$100 depending on number of pieces, prep and involvement

Pastor - As an ordained minister, the pastor serves his members by conducting wedding ceremonies and no gratuity is required or expected. Those wishing to give an honorarium are welcomed to do so.

Request for Wedding at Our Savior

Name of Groom: _____ Name of Bride: _____

Requested Date of Ceremony: _____ Time: _____

Write at least a couple of sentences or short phrases that complete the following statement and that reflect YOUR feelings:

“We want to be married in the Church because....”

We hereby acknowledge that we have read the Wedding Handbook in its entirety and agree to abide by it in any subsequent planning of our wedding at Our Savior.

(Signature of Groom)

(Signature of Bride)

If your desire is to be married at Our Savior, please return this form to the church office in person or by mail as soon as possible.

A session with the pastor to confirm your request cannot be scheduled without it.

Wedding Information Sheet

(to be filled out by the couple and returned to the pastor ASAP)

Groom: _____ Bride: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

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

_____ (Work) _____ (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 _____

Ring bearer? _____ Flower Girl? _____

Acolyte _____

Important Guests: _____

(Grandparents, Baptismal sponsors, etc.)

Unity Candle: Yes ___ No ___

Couple's Check-List

- _____ Read through the entire Wedding Handbook
- _____ Fill out the “Wedding Information Sheet” and “Request for Wedding” sheet and return to the church office. At the same time, make an appointment to meet with the pastor.
- _____ After meeting with the pastor, call the church office to finalize your request for the wedding/rehearsal dates.
- _____ Meet with the Pastor about music for your wedding. Request musicians (organist/pianist/soloist) from Our Savior, if desired.
- _____ Purchase sheet music, if necessary.
- _____ Share Our Savior’s decorating guidelines with your florist.
- _____ Share Our Savior’s photography guidelines with your photographer.
- _____ Secure a marriage license.
- _____ Purchase unity candle, if desired.
- _____ Coordinate open/close of church with pastor.
- _____ Pay any fees by wedding date.

May God richly bless your planning, wedding day, and married lives together!