

Wedding Planning Guide



Bethany Lutheran Church, ELCA
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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your engagement!

We hope this handbook will help you plan a wedding that will be a joyous act of worship. As you move through these materials, do so thoughtfully and prayerfully. Remember that marriage is a rite of the church, “intended for the joy and mutual strength of those who enter it and for the well-being of the whole human family” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, ELW*). The most important thing about your wedding day is not the flowers, the clothes, the pictures, or the party. The most important thing is worshipping God, who makes the party possible!

This booklet will provide you an overview of what is involved in planning a wedding at Bethany Lutheran Church. If you have other questions, please feel free to contact the church office at (815)459-2690.

THE BASICS

APPLICATION

Before a wedding is added to the church calendar, the application for marriage must be completed and submitted to the church (see the back page of this handbook) and you must have a meeting with the pastor. The application may be sent via email or dropped at the church office.

SCHEDULING

When you schedule your wedding with the pastor, please have at least 2 dates in mind. **Your desired date may already be booked, or may not be available due to other activities in the church.** You may schedule a wedding up to one year in advance. No weddings will be scheduled during the church year seasons of Advent and Lent. Please check with the church for more information on these dates, as they change from year to year.

FEES

Members of Bethany: \$650 Non-members: \$850

A deposit* of \$100 for members and \$300 for non-members is due upon scheduling your wedding with the pastor. (A refund is given up to 30 days prior to the wedding date, less a \$50 service charge.) The deposit check should be made payable to Bethany Lutheran Church.

BREAKDOWN OF FEES

*Included in deposit:

Use of building: Free for members; \$200 for non-members

Wedding Coordinator/Host: \$100

Payments to be made at the time of rehearsal:

Pastor honorarium: \$300

Worship Director Honorarium: \$200 (+\$50 if coordinating other musicians)

Worship Director Bench Fee (if not using Worship Director): \$150

Communications Director Honorarium (if you wish to live stream the service): \$100

WORSHIP BULLETINS

Sample worship bulletins will be provided for your use in preparing your own. The pastor can assist you in editing your bulletin before you print. Simple worship bulletins are also available, provided by the church. **If the church is printing your bulletins, an extra \$25 fee should be added to your check.**

ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

Bethany Lutheran Church's sanctuary, bathrooms, and fellowship hall are all accessible to the disabled.

ROOMS AVAILABLE

The library serves as the bride's dressing room. Rooms for other wedding attendants are in the basement. The building will be opened two hours prior to the wedding. Your wedding coordinator will arrange with you a suitable opening time.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

The use of alcohol or any illegal drugs anywhere on the church property is prohibited. The Bethany Lutheran Church staff reserves the right to postpone or cancel the service if drug or alcohol use by any guest or member of the wedding party is discovered. Smoking is also prohibited in the church building.

LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS

Please secure your belongings carefully! Bethany Lutheran Church cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

You are responsible for bringing a valid marriage license to the ceremony (preferably to the rehearsal the night before).

PASTOR

Bethany's pastors are assigned to weddings on a rotating basis based on their schedule and availability. We will try to honor specific requests for pastors, except in cases where the requested pastor is unavailable on the chosen date. Other clergy may be invited to participate in the service, at the discretion of the presiding Pastor. If you intend to undergo counseling with another pastor or another independent agency, please let the church office know this as well.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

A minimum of three 1-hour premarital counseling sessions with the senior pastor is the standard expectation. These sessions will involve discussion of Christian marriage, finding resources to ensure a successful marriage, and planning your wedding ceremony. It is best to begin scheduling these sessions about 4 months before your wedding date.

REHEARSAL

Rehearsals normally take place the day before the wedding and will be facilitated by the wedding coordinator. It is essential that all members of your wedding party be present and on time.

DECORATIONS

Bethany's worship space holds approximately 300 people on the main floor. Often during the church year the sanctuary is decorated with seasonal banners and other items used to enhance worship. **These items will not be moved or altered for wedding services.** There is a wedding banner which may also be used, if desired.

Please note the following colors of the various seasons of the church year. Linens are changed at specific times of the year and will not be changed for wedding services.

Advent: blue (no weddings scheduled during this season)

Christmas: white

Epiphany: white

Time after Epiphany: green

Transfiguration: white

Lent: purple (no weddings scheduled during this season)

Easter: white

Pentecost: red

Holy Trinity: white

Time after Pentecost: green

Reformation: red

All Saints: white

Christ the King: white

CANDLES

There is a large candelabra available, but you must provide your own candles. The large Paschal candle is not lit for weddings. If you wish to use a Unity Candle, you must bring your own. Please speak with your wedding coordinator for more details on use of candles.

FLOWERS

Your florist may set up two to three hours before the wedding service. Flowers may not be placed on the altar, but you may place them on the reredos (the brick wall behind the altar). Runners for the church aisle (30 feet) would need to be provided by your florist.

PHOTOGRAPHY

You may take photos before and after the service. Normally photos before the service should be completed at least 30 minutes before the wedding. Photos during the wedding ceremony should be non-flash photos. A videographer may also record the ceremony from the balcony. **At no time will photographers be allowed to stand on pews, the altar, or other worship furnishings.**

MISCELLANEOUS

Live animals are not allowed inside the building. Rice, birdseed, or other materials may not be thrown inside the church. If you want to have a "send-off" outside the church, bubbles are encouraged!

MUSIC GUIDANCE

Bethany's Worship Director will be assigned to your wedding, unless otherwise arranged with the attending pastor. If the music director is not available, other suggestions for musicians will be given to

you. Guest organists/pianists may play, however, if you opt out of using the Worship Director, a 'bench fee' (\$150) will be applied. Bethany's organist will meet with you for a planning session. We do not use "Here Comes the Bride." Soloists or instrumentalists are available, for an additional fee, and must be paid in full prior to the rehearsal.

Since the wedding ceremony is a service of worship, selections must be appropriate for use at any church service. **In other words, it should be sacred in nature.** Save secular favorites for the reception, please! The singing of hymns can be a welcome addition to the wedding service. Please see the HYMNS section on the following pages for suggestions.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How long will the service be?

A: About 30 minutes, perhaps a bit longer if you desire communion as part of the service.

Q: Can we have communion?

A: Yes! It is encouraged. All baptized Christians, regardless of church background, are welcome to receive communion at Bethany Lutheran Church. If you do have communion, the whole assembly will be invited to the table. It is not appropriate to give communion only to the bride and groom. You may choose to assist in distributing communion if you wish.

Q: Can my children be part of the service?

A: Yes! Please talk with the pastor about how to include your children in a meaningful way. If you are forming a blended family, there may be ways to incorporate this new reality into your ceremony.

Q: Can I include other readings besides the ones from the Bible?

A: Yes, at the discretion of the pastor. Please bring your desired readings/poems to a pre-marital session.

Q: Can my uncle/brother/sister/friend who is a pastor be a part of the service?

A: Yes! Please mention these requests to the pastor at a pre-marital session.

Q: I am engaged to a non-Christian. Can we be married at Bethany?

A: Yes, in most cases. This is a topic that will be discussed during pre-marital counseling.

Q: Can our pets be in the wedding?

A: No, live animals are not allowed inside the church, except for trained service animals.

Q: Does Bethany Lutheran Church allow same-gender weddings?

A: Our denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, does permit pastors to preside at civil unions/blessings. Please arrange a meeting with the Senior Pastor to discuss this option.

Q: Can we have a non-religious ceremony at Bethany?

A: No. If you wish to have a civil ceremony, a pastor is not needed to preside at your wedding. Please consider calling a judge if a non-religious ceremony is your need or desire.

THE MARRIAGE LITURGY

(You will go over this information with the pastor.)

ORDER OF SERVICE

Below is a template of the order of service for Marriage, taken from the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW), p. 286-291. **Adjustments and choices will be made via conversation with the pastor.**

Prelude

GATHERING

Procession/Entrance

The assembly stands as the ministers and wedding group enter. Music—hymn, song, psalm, instrumental music—may accompany the entrance.

Greeting

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other using these or similar words.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

The assembly is seated.

Declaration of Intention

The minister addresses the couple in these or similar words, asking each person in turn:

_____, will you have _____ to be your wife/husband, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live? **I will.**

The minister may address the assembly in these or similar words.

Will all of you, by God's grace, uphold and care for _____ and _____ in their life together? **We will.**

Prayer of the Day

The presiding minister leads the following or another prayer of the day.

Let us pray: Gracious God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ into the world to reveal your love to all people. Enrich _____ and _____ with every good gift, that their life together may show forth your love; and grant that at the last we may all celebrate with Christ the marriage feast that has no end; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

Readings *(See the Scripture section for options.)*

*The assembly is seated. Two or three scripture readings are proclaimed. **If the service includes Holy Communion, the last is a reading from the gospels.***

Sermon

Hymn of the Day (See the Hymns section for options.)

MARRIAGE

Vows (See the Vows section for options)

The couple may join hands. Each promises faithfulness to the other in these or similar words.

I take you, _____ 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.

Giving of Rings (See the Ring Texts section for other options)

The couple may exchange rings with these or similar words.

_____, I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

Acclamation

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

_____ and _____, by their promises before God and in the presence of this assembly, have joined themselves to one another as husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together let no one separate.

Other symbols of marriage may be given or used at this time (i.e. unity candle lighting or floral presentation to parents). Special music may also be offered here.

Marriage Blessing

The couple may kneel. The pastor extends a hand over the couple while praying for God's blessing in the following or similar words.

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to endure the cross for our sake, that we may have abundance of life. By the power of your Holy Spirit pour out the abundance of your blessing on _____ and _____. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let your love be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle above their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads. Bless them so that their lives together may bear witness to your love. Bless them in their works and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death. Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table here your saints feast forever in your heavenly home, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession (Optional)

A service without communion continues as follows:

Lord's Prayer

OR

If the service includes communion, the pastor will offer the Great Thanksgiving, followed by the assembly praying the Lord's Prayer together. Communion distribution occurs. After all have communed the dismissal blessing is pronounced.

SENDING

Benediction

The pastor proclaims God's blessing in these or similar words:

The blessed and holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace, now and forever. **Amen.**

The couple may seal their vows with a kiss.

Introduction of the Couple using their Married Names

A hymn may be sung or instrumental music played as the wedding group and the ministers depart.

Recessional

Postlude

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SCRIPTURE

Below are suggested scripture readings:

Old Testament

Genesis 1.26-31 Humankind is created by God
Genesis 2.18-24 Created for relationship
Proverbs 3.3-6 Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart
Ecclesiastes 4.9-12 The value of two together
Song of Solomon 2.10-13 The voice of the beloved; Song of two lovers
Song of Solomon 8.6-7 Many waters cannot quench love
Isaiah 63.7-9 God's steadfast love lifts up the people
Jeremiah 31.31-34 The new covenant of the people of God

Psalms

Psalms 33 The Lord is our help and our shield (33.20), Let your lovingkindness be upon us, as we have put our trust in you (33.22)
Psalm 67 May God be merciful to us and bless us
Psalm 100 We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture (100.2), Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving (100.3)
Psalm 117 The steadfast love of the Lord
Psalm 121 The Lord keeps watch over you
Psalm 127 Unless the Lord builds the house, Children are a heritage from the LORD (127.4)
Psalm 128 Happy are they who follow in the ways of the LORD (128.1)
Psalm 136 God's mercy endures forever (136.1b)
Psalm 150 Let everything that has breath praise the LORD (150.6)

New Testament Letters

Romans 12.1-2, 9-18	A living sacrifice and genuine love
I Corinthians 12.31 - 13.13	The greatest gift is love
Ephesians 3.14-19	The breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love
Ephesians 5.21-33	Walk in love, as Christ loved us
Philippians 4.4-9	Rejoice in the Lord always
Colossians 3.12-17	Clothed in compassion, kindness, meekness and patience
1 John 3.18-23	Let us love in truth and action
1 John 4.7-12	Let us love one another for love is of God

New Testament Gospels (*One Gospel reading **must** be chosen if you are having communion*)

Matthew 5.14-16	You are the light, let your light shine
Matthew 7.21, 24-29	A wise person builds upon the rock
Matthew 19.4-6	What God has united must not be divided
Matthew 22.35-40	Love, the greatest commandment
Mark 10.6-9	They are no longer two but one
John 2.1-10	The wedding at Cana
John 15.9-12	Love one another as I have loved you

VOWS

(1) I take you, _____, 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.

(2) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful husband/wife, 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.

(3) _____, 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 my whole life and with all my being until death parts us.

(4) I, _____, give you my hand this day. I open my mouth to declare before God, our ancestors, and this congregation, that I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband. I love you. In bitter days and in days of sweetness, in darkness and in light, in life and until death, I will walk in step with you. Your concerns will be my concerns. Your joys will be my joys. We will share our struggles, and we will share our triumphs. I will be with you all the days of my life. This is my vow. I have spoken.

(5) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life.

(6) I, _____, take you, _____, for my lawful wife/husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

(7) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband; and I promise, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful husband/wife; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

(8) Before God and these witnesses, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, and I promise to love you, and to be faithful to you, as long as we both shall live.

(9) In the presence of God and this community, I, _____, take you, _____, 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.

(10) In the Name of God, I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better and for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

(11) *Or most traditionally, the source of most all English language vows:*

I, _____, take thee, _____, to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I (plight) (give) thee my troth.

(12) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband. I promise to love you, comfort you, honor and keep you, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, to be faithful to you as long as we both shall live.

(13) I, _____, with love and joy and an honest and open spirit, make with you, _____, this covenant of marriage before God and this community of friends and family. I promise to love and trust you, as we share hopes and failures, and to support and encourage you so that we might grow individually and as a couple. I promise also to nurture you with faith and tenderness in the name of Christ. I shall always try to speak the truth to you and to listen with utmost concern for your desires and needs. I promise to be faithful to you and this pledge throughout our lives.

(14) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband; to be faithful to you in tender love and honor, offering you encouragement and companionship; and I will live with you, and cherish you, as love and respect lead me, in the bond of marriage.

(15) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, and these things I promise you: I will be faithful to you and honest with you; I will [obey,] 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 better to understand ourselves, the world, and God; through the best and worst of what is to come until death parts us.

(16) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful husband/wife, 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.

(17) _____, 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 my whole life and with all my being until death parts us.

(18) _____, I promise to share with you the sweet things of life as well as the bitter, to love you and enjoy you, to respect and encourage you, to listen to you and promise to strive for a life of courage, faithfulness, and dignity, and to seek understanding among all people, for as long as we both shall live. In all this, I ask God to help and guide us.

(19) _____, I want to live with you just as you are. I will be honest with you and forgive you... I love you for what you are to me and for what you are to others...I choose you above all others, and promise to be faithful to you as long as life endures.

(20) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wife/husband from this day forward; to be with you forever in times of joy and suffering, wealth and poverty; I pledge you my honor, patience and faithfulness, and by the grace of God offer you my unending love.

(21) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband. I promise before God and before this community to be faithful to you and to share all that is to come. In times of happiness I will share your joy and laughter. In times of sorrow, I will share your tears and pain. I will forgive as I have been forgiven. I will love as I have been loved. I will join with you so that together we may serve God and others as long as we both shall live.

(22) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and this is my solemn vow.

(23) I, _____, having full confidence that our abiding faith in each other will last our lifetimes, take you, _____, to be my wedded wife/husband; I promise to be your loving and faithful husband/wife; in prosperity and in need, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, and to respect your privileges as an individual as long as we both shall live.

(24) I, _____, give myself to you, _____. By the grace of God, I promise to support and care for you. In the love of Christ, I promise to love and cherish you. With the Spirit's help, I promise to be faithful to you, as long as we both shall live.

(25) I take you, _____, 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 forgive you as we have been forgiven; and I will share my life with you, through the best and worst of all that is to come, until death parts us.

RING TEXTS

Below are suggested ring texts:

- (1) I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.
- (2) _____, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity.

- (3) I give/take this ring as a sign of our covenant.
 (4) This ring I give you, as a sign of our constant faith and abiding love.
 (5) _____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow, and with all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you.
 (6) _____, I give you this ring, as a sign of the covenant we have made today.
 (7) As this ring has no end, my love for you has no end.
 (8) I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage. With my body I honor you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you, within the love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 (9) _____, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow. With all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Hymn numbers are from Evangelical Lutheran Worship.

Abide with Us, Our Savior	539
All People that on Earth Do Dwell.....	883
Beautiful Savior	838
Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life.....	816
For the Beauty of the Earth.....	879
For the Fruit of All Creation	679
Give to Our God Immortal Praise!.....	848
Hear Us Now, Our God and Father	585
In Thee Is Gladness	867
Jesus, Come! For We Invite You	312
Joy to the World oo)	267
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	836
Let All Things Now Living	881
Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus	802
Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me	767
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.....	631
Now Thank We All Our God	839, 840
O God, Our Help in Ages Past	632
Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices	833
Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty	533
Our Father, By Whose Name	640
Praise, God, from Whom All Blessings	884, 885
Praise the Lord! O Heavens.....	823
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	858, 859
Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good.....	871
Songs of Thankfulness and Praise.....	310
Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness.....	488, 489
Ubi Caritas et Amor	642
What Feast of Love	487

MARRIAGE APPLICATION: BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

GROOM _____ Date of Birth _____ Member? Yes / No

BRIDE _____ Date of Birth _____ Member? Yes / No

CURRENT PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS:

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

MAILING ADDRESS AFTER THE WEDDING (if different):

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Preferred phone number: _____ (Circle: home/work/cell)

Alternate phone number: _____ (Circle: home/work/cell)

BEST MAN _____ MAID/MATRON OF HONOR _____

PREFERRED WEDDING DATE AND TIME: _____

ARE YOU PLANNING TO HAVE COMMUNION? Yes / No

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

APPROVED BY PASTOR? _____ TOTAL FEE: _____

DEPOSIT RECEIVED: _____ CHECK # _____ or CASH _____

BALANCE RECEIVED: _____ CHECK # _____ or CASH _____

WEDDING DATE/TIME _____ REHEARSAL DATE/TIME _____

PASTOR: _____ COORDINATOR _____