

Planning Your Wedding at First Lutheran Church

While the rite of marriage within the Lutheran Church is not considered a “sacrament” (that is, a means of God’s Grace), it nonetheless is a sacred and joyful day, and perhaps the most important day of your life! We are happy to provide you with our services as you bind yourselves together as husband and wife, in the hopes that it will be a most memorable day!

The rite of marriage is not something to be undertaken lightly, because of its lifelong, binding commitments and promises that are made in the presence of God and those gathered for that day. It is our hope that the information contained in this pamphlet will assist you in planning a joyous day and a permanent, lifelong marriage. We pray that God’s blessing fill you as you begin a lifelong partnership together in the name of Christ Jesus!

Answers to the most commonly asked questions:

Can we get married here, even if we are not members?

While the rite of marriage is a service normally provided for members of this church, we will consider this service for inactive members and non-members on an individual basis. Membership in this church is defined by those who have made a formal declaration of desiring to be a part of this community of Christ (either through Baptism or through transfer from other congregations), and active membership consists of those who commune and/or contribute to the life and ministry of the congregation within the past two years.

Christian couples should desire their union to be in the presence of and blessed by God. This is the purpose of the rite of marriage in this congregation. Those who merely wish a “formal” or “religious-looking” setting for nostalgic or sentimental value would most likely find that their needs would be better met elsewhere.

It is expected that all couples married in this church need to become active members of this congregation, or a congregation of their choosing, if you are not already so. The reasons for this lie in that a Christian wedding is not only done to ask God’s blessing on the union, but also your promise and pledge that God will be a central part of the marriage and your life together.

We will refuse to perform non-Christian weddings. Those who do not profess Christian beliefs or who will not agree to this will not be allowed to marry in this congregation.

Why get married in a Church?

Because we place extreme value on the Holy Scriptures, we hold firmly to the teachings that the Bible offers regarding marriage. In this day and age where divorce is becoming more and more commonplace, we still believe marriage to be a sacred and lifelong institution. We believe this because Jesus affirms the sacredness and permanent nature in the Gospels of Matthew (chapter 19) and Mark (chapter 10) where he quotes from the account of creation in Genesis and declares “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.” The writer of Hebrews tells us “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure” (13:4a). This and other passages from the Bible instruct us that marriage is indeed a lifelong, binding promise made to one another in the sight of God. We believe, teach, and practice that marriage is ONLY between one man and one woman. Two who marry become a new creation as they become “one flesh.” Therefore, we marry in the church to have the union sanctified and blessed by almighty God, who gives us breath and still sustains us in life.

What will our service be like?

Because we believe marriage to be a binding promise made in the presence of God, the service is a sacred and joyful occasion. A copy of the general service can be made available if requested. All aspects of the service should reflect good taste and Christian values. All parts of the service serve to give Glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They also serve to remind us and instruct us as to God’s Word and his will in our lives. Music, practices, and other such things that do not reflect this will not be permitted. This does not mean that the service itself is rigid and inflexible. Variations in the standard service are permissible, but should be discussed ahead of time with the pastor, and are also subject to the approval of the pastor. There are a number of choices and decisions for you to make regarding the service. Following FAQ’s will address these.

The average length of a wedding service at First Lutheran is approximately one half hour. This will vary, of course, with musical

selections and other added components.

What pre-wedding requirements must we meet?

Before any marriage service, it is expected that the couple go through a period of premarital instruction or counseling. We are committed to maintaining and nurturing strong Christian couples and families, and therefore offer this period of instruction to help the couple strengthen and improve their relationship with one another and their relationship with Christ Jesus our savior. Studies show that couples who actively participate in a period of premarital instruction have a significant advantage over others in maintaining a fulfilling, lifelong marriage. It is in your best interests to go through this process, since it is our desire for your marriage to indeed last a lifetime.

Generally, you can expect between 4 to 6 sessions, most lasting an hour to an hour and a half in length. One additional session will be held approximately 6 months after your wedding. Most people who engage this process find it to be extremely helpful to them in understanding themselves and their partners better.

Individual expectations from the couple may also be decided upon, based upon the conclusions taken from each session.

How many people can the church sanctuary seat?

In general, the regular seating capacity in the sanctuary itself is 225-250 people. Up to 100 people can be seated in the balcony, and an additional 100 can be seated using chairs in the master's chapel area, though this will limit the amount of room for the bridal party as they prepare to enter for the service.

Room for the wedding party to dress and change is available. The basement can be utilized for overflow seating as well. Those who sit there will be able to hear the service via the church sound system.

How do we set our wedding date?

The church secretary can assist you in offering available dates, but all dates are tentative until approved by the pastor. A \$100.00 deposit is required to hold the date for your wedding. This amount is refundable to members. For non-members, this amount can be applied to the church usage fees.

What about alcohol or smoking?

According to our policy, there is no smoking in the church building or the church yard. There is also to be no alcohol of any kind in the church or the church yard. Additionally, the pastor or another church representative may refuse participation in the wedding service of anyone who has been drinking prior to the service.

Can we choose our own music for the service?

Music is often a big part of the service, and therefore all requests for specific selections will be considered. However, in keeping with the definitions of the service outlined previously, such music should conform to good taste, Christian morality and the praise of God. No music is permitted unless first approved by the pastor.

Should you wish, we have members and musicians here who can offer suggestions of appropriate music for your service.

What are appropriate decorations for the church?

Because the rite of marriage is performed within the framework of the congregation and the church year calendar, the altar color will be that which is appropriate to the day and/or season. Summer time weddings, which are popular, will most likely be green, which is the color of the season of Pentecost. Other colors, appropriate to the seasons of the church, are white, red, purple, and blue.

Flowers and other adornments may be of any color or style you choose. Flowers are not normally permitted on the altar, except as a part of the unity candle base, if so used. It is preferable to use an insert, which would fit into the permanent vases in the chancel area. Most local florists have access to these. If you would like the flowers to be left and used for the following Sunday's worship, it is preferable that you notify the church office of this in advance. Mention of it will then be made in the bulletin. Decorations along the aisle are permitted, and are subject to the pastor's approval, but may not be taped or otherwise permanently fastened to the pews.

Candles appropriate to the day can also be lit. This would include a "unity" candle (which you must provide), the altar candles, and the optional candelabra, which hold seven candles each, one candelabra on each side of the altar. There is fee for this one, to cover the cost of the candles.

The "Paschal" or Christ candle is not lit during the service, unless your wedding were to occur within the season of Easter. This candle is only lit during Easter, baptisms, and funerals.

All of the chancel furnishings are a dedicated part of this church and

its worship life, and are therefore not to be removed, shifted, or otherwise concealed.

All such decorations that you provide should be removed at the conclusion of the service.

Is photography allowed in the service?

The most appropriate time for your photographer to take pictures is either before or after the service. However, during the service, the photographer may not use flash photography nor are they allowed to be up and moving about in the sanctuary. The chancel area is off limits to photographers entirely during the service. This is to help preserve a reverent and worshipful atmosphere during this sacred rite. Videography is also allowed, but video cameras must be in an inconspicuous location.

Is it permissible to throw rice as the couple leaves the service?

The origins of this custom actually derive from ancient pagan and fertility religions which make it inappropriate for a church wedding. Since it is a custom that does not carry any such meanings today, it is permitted. However, rice, bird seed, or balloons may not be used. Bubbles, ringing bells, petals, candy favors, or other things that are easily biodegradable are permitted.

How do we put together our bulletin?

Obtaining the actual bulletin cover is the responsibility of the bride and groom. Many examples can be purchased from any Christian bookstore (there are two major stores in Champaign/Urbana), and the church has numerous catalogs through which they can also be ordered. The church office will be happy to provide at no additional cost, the service of printing the bulletins. However the order of service and content must be approved by the pastor and proofread by the couple before they will be run. If you choose to design your own cover, keep in mind that it should be in good taste and within the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do we rehearse the service ahead of time?

Generally, the wedding would be rehearsed the evening before the actual service. It is a good idea to run through it ahead of time so that the service itself can run smoothly. Expect the rehearsal to take approximately one hour.

Can other pastors participate?

At the request of the bride and groom, and at the pastor's discretion, additional pastors may participate in the service. However, it is important to note that it is customary for the pastor of this church to be the presiding minister at all weddings, by virtue of his calling to this congregation. The potential inclusion of other pastors does not indicate an endorsement of another denomination's practices, but is considered out of our common bond through Jesus Christ our savior.

What do we need to set up for the service?

Our church sexton is available for the major part of set up, namely for additional seating and general clean up. We ask that you give us at least one week's notice of such requests in order that he can plan his time accordingly.

Can we use the sound system at the church?

The system currently in use was installed in December of 2003. It is a highly elaborate system and we require that only those who know the system operate it. Therefore, one of our sound techs must be present to run the system if it is used. They will also attend the rehearsal so that they know in advance of what needs there are for the service.

Who will play the music for our service?

This is entirely up to you. Our musicians, pianists and organists are available. In addition, there are a number of people here who also sing for weddings. Another option is pre-recorded music, with the pastor's approval, that can be played through the sound system. Such music can either be on CD or on cassette tape.

Can we use a wedding planner?

Many couples are now relieving some of the stress and burden of wedding planning and coordination by using a wedding planner. We have a wedding coordinator available for your use, or you can provide your own if you choose. However, all matters pertaining to the worship service are subject to final approval by the pastor, as this is his area of responsibility and leadership.

What fees are associated with our wedding at First Lutheran?

A list of fees for the use of the facility is included. It is customary to pay for additional services that are not included in the church fees. Many of these services and fees are arranged ahead of time between the provider of the service and the couple. Here are some universal recommendations for some of these services:

Organist/Accompanist:	\$75.00-\$100.00
Soloist/Special Music:	\$50.00, or \$30.00 per song
Pastoral gratuity:	\$100.00
Church Wedding Planner:	\$100.00

May God bless your Wedding day!

We hope this pamphlet will assist you, should you desire to marry here at First Lutheran Church. If you have any questions that you find are not answered here, we will be happy to answer them for you. May God bless your union and life together!

*Rev. Jeff Cottingham
Pastor, First Lutheran Church*

The First Lutheran Music and Worship Committee

Fees for Active Members of First Lutheran

Securing the date -	\$100.00 deposit required (refundable)
Use of the Sanctuary -	No charge. (It is customary to provide a gratuity for the pastor.)
Use of the Basement - (for reception)	No Charge
Sexton- (setup and cleanup)	\$75.00 for Sanctuary. \$100.00 if basement/reception is included.
Organist - (if provided by church)	\$100.00
Sound System Tech - (must be provided by church if used)	\$50.00
Use of Candelabras -	\$50.00 (this covers the cost of the candles used)

Fees for Non-members/Inactive Members

Securing the date -	\$100.00 deposit required (applied to fees, non-refundable if wedding is canceled)
Use of the Sanctuary -	\$400.00 (This includes pastoral gratuity and premarital counseling sessions.)
Use of the Basement - (for reception)	\$200.00
Sexton- (setup and cleanup)	\$75.00 for Sanctuary. \$100.00 if basement/reception is included.
Organist - (if provided by church)	\$100.00
Sound System Tech - (must be provided by church if used)	\$50.00
Use of Candelabras -	\$50.00 (this covers the cost of the candles used)