

Planning Your Wedding



Grace Lutheran Church, ELCA

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INTRODUCTION

As you plan and prepare for your wedding, it is likely that you will experience this time as both exciting and eventful. The wedding day itself is a significant occasion to look forward to, but even more importantly, it is preparing oneself to make a unique and binding promise of faithfulness to another that marks this time as special. There is no doubt that marriage always brings with it big changes and new challenges in life. The temptation to neglect the spiritual dimensions of preparation for marriage is always there as the days quickly pass and things get busy. However, it is up to you to establish this preparation as a priority in these days before your wedding. Taking the time now to lay a solid foundation for married life will go a long way in helping to ensure the health not only of your marriage but also as individuals who are making the choice to step out in faith and love.

A. MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

1. A Christian Rite

The Church affirms that marriage is a gift of God, intended for the joy and strength of those who enter it and for the well-being of the whole human family. In creation God blessed humankind with mutual companionship, the capacity to love, and the care and nurture of children. The biblical understanding of marriage is modeled after God's grace-filled act of choosing to be in relationship with God's people. It is a relationship that is characterized by faithfulness and mutual love.¹

Marriage is a lifelong covenant of faithfulness; a union that embodies God's loving purpose to create and enrich life. By the gift of marriage God "founded human community in a joy that begins now and is brought to perfection in the life to come."² In the intimacy of marriage, spouses can learn to share feelings and fears, to listen deeply, and to respect the differences of the other. Being loved and accepted by God helps them to love and accept one another. Rather than one dominating the other, each spouse seeks to empower and encourage the other.

Yet, all marriages fall short of intentions. Some marriages are not safe spaces, but places where spouses or children are abused, and intimacy is absent. A marriage grows and changes over time through experiences of humor and playfulness, brokenness and healing, failure and accomplishment, forgiveness, and renewal. In the growth, changes, and disappointments of a marriage, the counsel and support of the Church is important.

Premarital instruction can help a couple to prepare for the covenant they are entering. During the first few years of a marriage, the guidance and support of the Christian community can help a couple to adjust and set healthy patterns for their relationship. Those more recently married can learn much from those whose marriages have grown and been tested through the years. The wider community is symbolically present when a couple publicly exchanges vows. Witnesses pledge to support the marriage, and those exchanging vows are reminded that their marriage will affect the wider community. Throughout a marriage, the ministry of the Church should assist the couple to discern and address their shortcomings, and to seek forgiveness, reconciliation, and new life.

2. Worship

While a wedding is a wonderful celebration, it is also a worship service. It begins with an invocation (invoking/inviting God's presence) and ends with a benediction (assurance of God's blessing). Since this is a

¹ Adapted from *Life Passages: Marriage, Healing, Funeral*. Renewing Worship, vol. 4. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

² "Marriage," Lutheran Book of Worship, 203.

time spent in God's presence, seeking God's desires for our lives, the order of service needs to be appropriate for a worship setting. The pastor, acting on behalf of the congregation, has final decision-making authority in these matters.

3. Non-Members

Grace's facility is a beautiful setting for a wedding, and non-members can also arrange to use the facility. Non-members are required to observe all of the same Wedding Guideline and Procedures expectations laid out for Grace Members.

B. FIRST STEPS

The following arrangements should be completed before making detailed plans for the wedding.

1. Reserving the Date Through the Church Office: 507-238-4418 | office@gracelutheranchurch.org

Reserve the date and time for your wedding by contacting the church office as early as possible. Once you have paid the \$100 church usage fee, provided the \$300 refundable damage deposit, confirmed the date and time, and signed the agreement form, it will be entered on the church's calendar and will be reserved for you.

- For purposes of planning and preparation, a period of at least three months is required between setting the date and the wedding. Due to staff, facility and calendar commitments, weddings are not possible on certain dates. Please note that special times and days in the Church year (Holy Week, Easter Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and others) and ALL other nationally recognized holidays are not available for scheduling (New Years Eve or Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day, 4th of July, etc.).
- Reservation of the church as a backup location can only be made within 6 months of the wedding date. A \$100 church usage fee is required, but refundable, if the facility is not used. Please discuss this option thoroughly with one of the pastors.

2. Rehearsal

In most cases a wedding rehearsal is necessary to walk through the basic order of the service and to ensure that everyone understands their role. Most rehearsals take place the evening prior to the wedding, although an alternate time may be arranged with the pastor. The rehearsal usually takes 45-60 minutes. All musicians are recommended to be present. It is your responsibility to make sure that the wedding party and all those involved are on time for the rehearsal.

Often it is not possible for the pastor to attend either your rehearsal dinner or your wedding reception. If you would like the pastor, or the pastor and their family, to attend such events, please invite them well in advance (at the same time you send your other invitations is customary). This will give the pastor time to respond to your invitation and avoid surprises.

Rehearsal Check List

- ☐ Rings
- ☐ Bulletins
- ☐ Decorations
- ☐ License
- ☐ NOTE: Checks to pay the Musician, Tech, Custodian, Pastor, and other church fees are due one week in advance to the church office. (See Appendix B: Fee Schedule.)

3. Pastors

The currently called pastors serving at Grace Lutheran Church are responsible for all rites that take place in connection with this congregation. Normally, this means that a current pastor at Grace will serve as the officiant at your wedding. If you wish to have a different pastor officiate or assist at your wedding, it is important that you first explain your reasons to the Senior Pastor and receive his or her permission. When another pastor officiates a wedding at Grace, they will agree to abide by the policies of Grace governing weddings. As a courtesy, it is also asked that an order of service be submitted to the Senior Pastor at Grace at least two weeks prior to the wedding. Any non-ELCA Lutheran pastor officiating or assisting needs approval by the church council, which requires time to approve.

4. Musicians and Music

The regular church organists and pianists at Grace are often available to play at weddings where organ or piano music is desired. It is then your responsibility to contact the musician and plan for the service. Please contact the musician 2-3 months prior to the wedding so schedules can be accommodated. Please contact Grace Lutheran's office to get an updated list of musicians. There is a fee for the services of these musicians which considers rehearsal time and the wedding day (see Appendix B: Fee Schedule). If you wish to have another musician play at your wedding, please notify the pastor.

Hymns from our worship books are recommended. If recorded music or other special music is preferred, it must be approved by the pastor. Please understand that it is impossible to make recorded music perfectly timed in the service.

When choosing the various pieces of music that will be played or sung during your wedding, it is important to give some thought to the ways in which these selections will or will not enhance the occasion. The Minister's Desk Edition of the Lutheran Book of Worship has this recommendation: "Music selected should embody high standards of quality and, in general, reflect the praise of God, God's steadfast love in Christ as the foundation of and model for marriage, and the asking of God's presence and blessing."³

Numerous styles of music from traditional to contemporary are appropriate and can enhance the focus of the day. Weddings at Grace are held as a worship service. There are countless ways to uplift the goodness of God's love and faithfulness in worship. In evaluating whether music is appropriate, focusing on the celebration of love and faithfulness is of primary importance. This emphasis is not simply on the couple but on the ways that God's love and faithfulness are present in this covenant between two persons.

Some thought should go into the selection of all musical pieces: hymns, solos, processional, and recessional. The pastor and the church musicians are available to help you should you have any questions or concerns. The church requests that you submit your musical selections to the pastor at least one month prior to the wedding service and the pastor will have final say on music.

5. Sound System

Grace has a very effective, but very complex sound system. Because it is intended primarily for worship purposes, the system is to be operated by Grace-trained personnel only. They will very gladly work with you to provide the sound and music that you desire.

³ Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Desk Edition. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978.

6. PREPARE AND ENRICH

Because you are preparing not only for the wedding ceremony but for married life together, the church requires participation in a series of marriage preparation sessions prior to the wedding day. These three sessions will encourage you to reflect and talk about some important aspects of married life with the pastor. This is not a time of testing or indoctrination. Rather, it is a time to engage in an open and honest conversation and to pray for the guidance of God's Spirit, as you anticipate the beginning of married life together. These sessions will also be tailored to the circumstances of your lives. For more information on the specifics of the preparation sessions, please contact the pastor. You can also visit the website associated with the resources we will use. The program is Prepare/Enrich and the web site address is [<https://www.prepare-enrich.com>].

7. Marriage License

Minnesota law requires a Minnesota License to marry in Minnesota. You can apply for your license from the County Recorder's office in any county in Minnesota. Please bring the wedding license to the rehearsal.

C. **PLANNING THE WEDDING**

1. Grace Host

To help ensure that your wedding is as worry-free as possible, a Grace Host will be assigned to you. This representative from Grace ensures that you are assisted with details concerning such things as flowers, candles, seating of guests, receiving line, rehearsal, photographer's guidelines, and answering any questions you may have. They are available for six hours on the day of your wedding. For example, if your wedding is at 4pm, they can be available from 11AM to 5PM. After you contact the church office to reserve your wedding date, pay the \$100 church use fee and \$300 refundable damage deposit, we can ask our host to contact you.

2. Custodian

The custodian will clean the church before your wedding day and do 'normal use' clean-up afterward. Please take care of the areas you use, to avoid any fees for damage or extra cleaning.

3. Physical Arrangements

Grace's building is first and foremost a place of worship. Seasonal decorations and signs of the congregation's ongoing life will not ordinarily be moved or removed for a wedding. Our pastors are also open to working with weddings in outdoor sites or other settings.

D. **THE CEREMONY**

1. Order of Service

This outline lays out the sequence of events in the wedding service in a detailed way. The Pastor will work with you in your pre-marital counseling sessions offering guidance and answering questions you might have. The items listed in bold type are essential parts of the service. Other items are optional. Appendix A provides options and suggestions for various parts of the service.

GATHERING

Prelude

Ring of the Bell

Processional

Pastoral Greeting

Introduction

Declaration of Intention (Appendix A)

Prayer of the Day

WORD

Readings (Appendix A)

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

MARRIAGE

Vows (Appendix A)

Giving of Rings (Appendix A)

Acclamation

Nuptial Blessing

Unity Candle

Intercessions

Communion

The Lord's Prayer

SENDING

Blessing

Dismissal

Departure

2. Holy Communion

The celebration of Holy Communion is an appropriate part of a marriage service. In the sacrament of Holy Communion, we gather around the table that Christ sets before us. This is an act that draws all people together and unites us in our calling to go out to love and serve the world around us. In the same way, marriage draws two people together and is intended to challenge them to grow in love and service not only toward each other but to the world they live in. Whenever Holy Communion is celebrated at Grace, all people in attendance must be invited to participate. If you plan to have Holy Communion as a part of your wedding service, please let the pastor know so that arrangements can be made.

3. Unity Candle

The Unity Candle is not a traditional part of the Christian marriage service but is a recent innovation that is frequently used. You may choose to have the lighting of a unity candle, as a part of your wedding service. This lighting is understood to be a sign of two lives joining together in marriage. Note: You are responsible for providing your own unity candle along with two tapers.

4. Scripture Readings

There are many appropriate and possible scripture readings for a wedding, as well as a variety of Bible translations. The pastor will be happy to help you with your choices. Some possibilities can be found in Appendix A.

5. Decorations

The paraments (altar cloth, pulpit cloth, etc.) are used in accordance with the seasons of the Church year. These cannot be changed to coordinate with the colors of a particular wedding. For more information on the colors used each season or on special days, contact either the pastor or office manager. However, Grace does have a beautiful set of white wedding paraments that can be hung over the seasonal paraments. The flags and banners may be changed for an additional fee. Please let the pastor know your preference.

Floral decorations may be used and are encouraged particularly for use in the chancel area and on the altar. You are free to make floral arrangements with whomever you choose. We ask that you do not attach anything to any furnishings without permission. Following the wedding service, the flowers may be taken by the couple or may be left for Sunday morning worship.

Aisle runners are not allowed at Grace because of potential liability issues. However, pew bows are often used to decorate the main aisle. Grace has 12 brass liquid-wax aisle candles that are available at no cost. GLITTER is not permitted in the sanctuary as it is very difficult to remove. Placement of other decorations prior to the wedding and their removal after the service are the responsibility of the wedding party. Decorations should not be attached with tacks, nails, or tape. All seasonal church decorations will remain in place.

Decorating can often be done as early as Thursday on the week of the wedding, depending on the Church's schedule of activities. Of course, funerals are not planned far in advance, so that might create the possibility of last-minute changes in decorating plans. All decorations must be removed from the sanctuary immediately following the wedding so that the sanctuary can be cleaned for worship the following day. If decorations are not removed within two hours of the ceremony, following pictures, the damage deposit will not be returned.

6. Printed Programs

Many couples decide to have the order of service and participants listed in a printed program. As you work on this, please refer to the outline of the wedding service in preparing the program and consult often with the pastor. It is your responsibility to create and print these programs.

7. Photography

Photographs may be arranged before or after the service. Photographs may also be taken during the processional and recessional but are discouraged during the marriage service itself. Non-flash pictures and videos may be taken during the service if prior arrangements are made with the pastor. The balcony and the pews on the side aisles are most suitable for taking photos and videos during the service.

8. Seating Capacity

The sanctuary can seat approximately 470 guests comfortably and can accommodate up to 600 (with folding chairs) when necessary.

E. GENERAL POLICIES

BUILDING USE The wedding party will receive an access code to the building the night of the rehearsal. All decorations must be removed from the sanctuary within two hours following the conclusion of the ceremony. All belongings must also be removed from the Lounge, Lounge Kitchen, and Youth Room (rooms for getting ready) within two hours of the completion of the ceremony. Failure to remove all decorations and belongings will result in the loss of the security deposit.

A building use policy will be reviewed with our office manager, and a detailed tour given, on a scheduled date before the evening of the rehearsal. Grace Lutheran Church is not responsible for the loss of any valuables or other personal belongings. The wedding party is reserving ONLY the use of the sanctuary for the service, the upstairs youth room and Lounge for getting ready, the attached kitchenette for use of the refrigerator, microwave, and Keurig coffee maker, and the main floor gathering space and restrooms. All other areas of the church are not available unless pre-arranged with the pastor.

NO RICE/BIRDSEED/SILLY STRING/CONFETTI in or outside the church. All decorations are your responsibility to clean up immediately after the ceremony.

ALCOHOL and SMOKING. No alcoholic beverages are permitted in the church building or parking lot for any reason other than Communion wine. No exceptions will be made. Smoking is not permitted in the church or adjacent to doors and windows. If you smoke outside of the building, please do so at a respectable distance.

APPENDIX A: Options and Suggestions for the Service⁴

Declaration of Intention

A Name, will you have name to be your *wife/husband*,
To live together in a holy 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?

Response: I will.

B Name, will you receive name as your *wife/husband*
and bind yourself to *her/him* in the covenant of marriage?
Will you promise to love and honor *her/him* in true devotion,
to rejoice with *her/him* in times of gladness,
to grieve with *her/him* in times of sorrow,
and to be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?

Response: I will, with the help of God.

C Name, living in the promise of God,
joined to Christ in your baptism,
will you give yourself to name in love and faithfulness?
Will you share your life with *her/him*,
in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness,
for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse,
and will you be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?

Response: I will, with the help of God.

Vows

A In the presence of God and this community,
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.

B 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.

C I, name, give myself to you, name.
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.

D 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 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.

⁴ *Life Passages: Marriage, Healing, Funeral*. Renewing Worship, vol. 4. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002.

Giving of Rings

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

B Name, 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.

Suggested Scripture Readings

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28 *Woman and man created in the image of God*

Genesis 2:18-24 *Companionship rather than loneliness*

Proverbs 3:3-6 *Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart*

Song of Solomon 2:10-13 *The voice of the beloved*

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*

Psalm

Psalm 67 *May God be merciful to us and bless us*

Psalm 100 *We are the sheep of God's pasture*

Psalm 117 *The steadfast love of the Lord*

Psalm 121 *The Lord keeps watch over you*

Psalm 127 *Unless the Lord builds the house*

Psalm 128 *Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's way*

Psalm 150 *Let everything that breathes praise the Lord*

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-10 *The beatitudes*

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 19:3-6 *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 2:1-11 *The wedding at Cana*

John 15:9-17 *Love one another as I have loved you*

New Testament

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 *If God is for us, who is against us*

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 *A living sacrifice and genuine love*

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13 *The greatest gift is love*

Ephesians 3:14-19 *Breadth, length, height, depth of Christ's love*

Philippians 4:4-9 *Rejoice in the Lord always*

Colossians 3:12-17 *Clothed in compassion, kindness, patience...*

1 John 3:18-24 *Let us love in truth and action*

1 John 4:7-16 *Let us love one another for love is of God*

Recommended organ music for processions:

Canon in D Pachelbel
 Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring Bach
 March (from Occasional Oratorio) Handel
 Prince of Denmark's March (Trumpet Voluntary) Clarke/Purcell
 Processional in C Hopson
 Processional (from Water Music Suite) Handel
 Trumpet March Lully-Wolff
 Trumpet Tune in C Lau
 Solemn Processional (from Water Music) Handel
 Wedding Processional and Air Bach-Leupold

Recommended organ music for recessionals:

Allegro (from Symphony #4)	Boyce
Allegro Maestoso (Walter Music)	Handel
God of Grace	arr. Manz
Hornpipe (from Water Music)	Handel
Psalm 19	Marcello
Prelude in Classic Style	Young
Now Thank We All Our God	Post
Rigaudon	Campra
Rondeau ("Theme from Masterpiece Theater")	Mouret
Trumpet Tune	Clarke/Purcell
Trumpet Finale	Manfredini-Wolff

Recommended Congregational Hymns:**Beginning of Service** (Can also be used as a processional.)

Holy God, We Praise Your Name	ELW #414
Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now	ELW #527
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	ELW #858
We Praise You, O God	ELW #870

During Service (Following the sermon, during Unity Candle, etc.)

The King of Love My Shepherd Is	ELW #502
Hear Us Now, Our God and Father	ELW #585
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	ELW #631
Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus	ELW #802

End of Service (Can also be used as a recessional.)

On What Has Now Been Sown	ELW #550
Earth and All Stars	ELW #731
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee	ELW #836
Now Thank We All Our God	ELW #839
Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven	ELW #865
Let All Things Now Living	ELW #881

Please note this music is suggested music and many other appropriate pieces and hymns may be used.

APPENDIX B: Schedule of Fees for Members & Non-members

Note: Items in bold type are required. Other items are optional if services are not used.

Church Use Fee	\$100 (\$500 non-member)
Refundable Damage Deposit	\$300
Prepare/ Enrich Counseling Inventory	\$35 (online)
Pastor	\$250
Grace Host	\$150
Sound Tech	\$50
Custodian	\$100
Musician	\$100
Church Reception (Fellowship Hall Use)	\$100 (\$300 non-member)
Changing Side Banners and Flags	\$50

APPENDIX C: WEDDING CONTRACT-GRACE COPY

WEDDING DATE: _____

COUPLE: Bride _____ Ph # _____

 Groom _____ Ph # _____

NAME/ADDRESS FOR RETURN OF DEPOSIT: _____

We have received, read and understood the Wedding Guidelines and Procedures Booklet. We agree to plan our wedding according to Grace Lutheran Church's policies, philosophies, and fees as stated in the booklet.

Bride's Signature _____ Date _____

Groom's Signature _____ Date _____

FINANCES:

Church Use Fee and Refundable Damage Deposit are due when booking the church. All other payments are due on or before the Monday prior to the wedding.

Reception of Fees Paid to Grace	PAYMENT	PMT DATE
Church Use	\$100 (\$500 non-member)	
Refundable Damage Deposit	\$300	
Prepare/ Enrich Counseling Inventory	\$35 (online)	
Pastor	\$250	
Grace Host	\$150	
Sound Tech	\$50	
Custodian	\$100	
Musician	\$100	
Church Reception (Fellowship Hall Use)	\$100 (\$300 non-member)	
Changing Side Banners and Flags	\$50	

DEPOSIT REFUND

Date Refunded: _____

GLC ck # _____

Amount: \$ _____ (*less deduction, if any)

*Deduction? Y / N Amt: \$ _____

Reason: _____

(*Deductions may occur for damage to facility,
excessive custodial work, etc.)