



Wedding Guidelines For Olivet Lutheran Church

La Crosse, Wisconsin

MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

We are pleased that you want to have your wedding in this congregation. The pastor and wedding coordinator will work with you to make your wedding meaningful and to help you prepare for a fulfilling marriage.

Marriage does not belong exclusively to the church. While marriage is ordained by God and supported by the church, it is a social contract, governed and regulated by the state for the purpose of protecting individuals and providing stability to the social order. But to the Christian it is more:

We believe God ordained marriage to enrich the lives of husband and wife, and to provide a sound basis for family life.

We believe God's intention for marriage is that it be a life-long relationship based on the commitment by the man to the woman and the woman to the man.

We believe God's self-giving love and faithfulness toward us is the foundation of a committed relationship between wife and husband. In the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians church, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

We believe God, along with the church, desires marriage to be a source of faith, joy, love and fulfillment. Marriages rooted in God's steadfast love will be the most likely to experience these qualities.

We believe that the relationship between Christ and his church is the model for a Christian marriage. Therefore, those who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and profess him as Lord may be married in this congregation.

The pastor officiates at your wedding, representing both church and state. But it is you who bind yourselves to each other as husband and wife, by your promise before God and in the presence of the gathered community. You make your promise in the presence of God, trusting that God will bless and support you as you work together to fulfill them. Thus, to be married in the church is to recognize God's intentions for marriage and to affirm them as your own.

Olivet's Sanctity of Marriage Policy

We affirm that God created us male and female, and that it is God's will and intention that human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman. (Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:2-9)

We recognize that all sexual acts outside of a heterosexual marriage between one man and one woman are contrary to God's Word. We believe in the saving power of Christ to forgive, heal and liberate us from our sinful practices. (1Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

All Christians are called to live a chaste life, and pastors and church leaders are expected to encourage and exemplify a chaste and pure life. (1Timothy 3:1-10, 1 Timothy 4:9-16, 1 Timothy 5:17-22: 2 Timothy 2:22-26. Ephesians 5:3-7)

We affirm Luther's explanation of the sixth commandment in the Small Catechism which states: "We should fear and love God, and so we should lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, each one loving and honoring his wife or her husband." (The Book of Concord, Tappert Edition, p. 343)

FIRST STEPS in Planning Your Wedding

1. Read These Guidelines - Jot down questions raised in your mind as you read.

2. Confirm the Date of Your Wedding

The date and time of your wedding and rehearsal must be confirmed by the pastor and reserved by the wedding coordinator. In the event that two parties want the same wedding date and time, the party first to request the date and time will have priority over the second. Please note: Because we have a Saturday evening worship service, the wedding ceremony must begin by 2:30 p.m. or earlier.

3. Initial Planning Session with the Pastor and/or Wedding Coordinator.

The pastor and wedding coordinator will consult with you in planning your wedding and in helping you prepare for your marriage together. The minimum time required to complete arrangements and counseling is two months.

Normally the pastor of this congregation will officiate at your wedding. If it is your intention to have an ordained clergy-person from outside the congregation participate or officiate, you should first consult the pastor about such arrangements.

4. Arrange for Pre-marital Counseling.

All couples being married in this congregation are required to participate in pre-marital counseling with the pastor. We offer a number of choices for a couple: Financial Peace University, Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts or Prepare/Enrich.

5. Arrange for an Initial Planning Session with the Musician

The musician for your wedding can be a musician of the congregation (we have a list available). It is your responsibility to consult with the musician at least two months prior to the wedding. If you request another musician, please advise the wedding coordinator. Any fees should be negotiated directly with the musician(s).

Before you make arrangements with singers or instrumentalists who will participate in your wedding, please read the section Selecting Music, and discuss your plans with the wedding coordinator and musician(s).

6. Secure a Wedding License

Wisconsin law requires couples to secure a license to marry. The Bride and Groom must apply together at the office of County Clerk in the county where you reside. If BOTH of you reside out of state, you should apply in the county where the marriage will take place. You must apply a minimum of six days before the wedding but no more than 30 days; we recommend you apply earlier, rather than later. You will need a current photo ID, along with your *CERTIFIED BIRTH CERTIFICATE. The fee in La Crosse County is currently \$90 and must be paid in CASH (no checks or credit cards accepted). The license should be given to the pastor two days prior

to your wedding. (Fees and requirements are subject to change per County Clerk.) See separate document for more details on applying for a marriage license.

Planning the Ceremony

The Christian wedding is an act of worship. Everything done during the service is for the praise and glory of God alone, and must be done with reverence and in good taste. What this means for the bride and groom is that the wedding service is never solely theirs alone. It is a public act, which belongs to the worship life of the entire congregation.

As you meet with the wedding coordinator to plan your ceremony, you are encouraged to bring ideas about ways to personalize your wedding. Of course, what is done in the service should be appropriate to a service of worship and consistent with the Christian understanding of marriage as expressed in the Order for Marriage, pages 202-206 of the Lutheran Book of Worship.

The Order of Service

The Order for Marriage in the Lutheran Book of Worship allows a variety of options. You may wish to modify the service or even construct your own. As the Manual on Liturgy - The Lutheran Book of Worship puts it, "The marriage service in the Lutheran Book of Worship should be regarded as a kind of workbook out of which a marriage service appropriate to the particular occasion might be constructed." Changes will need to be approved by the pastor. (LBW page 347)

The order for marriage in the Lutheran Book of Worship, pages 202-205, is as follows:

- Procession
- Greeting
- Prayer
- Hymn/Solo
- Scripture
- Homily
- Hymn/Solo
- Vows
- Exchange of Rings
- Declaration of Marriage
- Blessing
- Hymn/Solo
- Prayers/Lord's Prayer
- Holy Communion (optional)
- Benediction
- Recession

It is helpful, but not necessary to have a service folder to inform guests of the order of service and the names of participants in the wedding party. You should discuss the layout of the service with the wedding coordinator. She will prepare them on the paper that you provide or you may prepare your own. See sample service program layout included in this packet.

Selecting Wedding Vows

The following vows, each expressing the promises of a couple's life-long commitment to each other, are examples of appropriate vows for your wedding.

1. From Lutheran Book of Worship, Page 203

“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. From Service Book and Hymnal, Page 271

“I, _____, take you, _____, 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 ordinances, and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.”

3. Other examples, Cf. Manual of Liturgy -LBW, page 352

a. “_____ I take you to be my wife/husband from this time onward, to join myself to you, 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 faithful to you with my whole life and being, as long as we both shall live.”

b. “I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband, and 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 along with you; I will try to better understand ourselves, the world, and God through the best and worst of what may come as long as we both shall live.”

Selecting Scripture Readings

You are encouraged to select scripture which will be consonant with themes you want to emphasize. One or more readings are appropriate. You may choose a psalm to be sung by a soloist or the congregation.

Genesis 1:26-31; Male and female created by God
Genesis 2:18-24; God's purpose in creating man and woman
Song of Solomon 2:10-13; Love in the spring
Song of Solomon 8:6a-7; Unquenchable love
Jeremiah 33:11; The joy of bride and groom
Psalm 33:1-9; The steadfast love of God
Psalm 95:1-7; The greatness of God
Psalm 117; The faithfulness of God
Psalm 127; God and family
Psalm 128 God and family
Psalm 145; The grace of God
Psalm 147; The providence of God
Mark 10:6-9; God's intention for marriage

John 2:1-11 The wedding at Cana
Romans 15:5-6; Harmonious living
I Corinthians 13; The way of love
Ephesians 5:21-33; Marriage and the church
Colossians 3:12-17; Life in Christ

Members of your family or wedding party may serve as readers of the scripture you select.

Selecting Music

The musicians and the wedding coordinator will assist you in selecting music appropriate to your wedding ceremony and will offer suggestions regarding vocalist and instrumentalist. Vocalists should know the pieces they will be singing. They should not expect the accompanist to teach them the songs. We do require a sound tech from Olivet to operate our equipment; the wedding coordinator will arrange for a sound tech to be present at the ceremony and at the rehearsal, if needed.

The Manual on the Liturgy - Lutheran Book of Worship, "The Marriage Service is a service of worship, and the music therefore must be carefully chosen. It should embody high standards of quality and the texts should reflect the praise of God, the steadfast love of Christ for his church as the foundation and model for love and fidelity in marriage, the invocation of God's presence and blessing..." In every case, music selected "...should be of high quality and not cloud the mood of the service with triteness or sentimentality." (Pages 347-348)

These guidelines lead to the conclusion that "popular" music is not normally suitable for a worship service. Such music may be lovely melodies filled with nostalgic sentiments, but are not focused on our relationship with God. Like the vocal music, other music used in your wedding should be carefully selected so it enhances worship. Selections, which are considered traditional by some, are not appropriate because they originate from musical works that are contrary to Christian worship. Music which does not fit a service of worship, is better used at the wedding reception.

In summary, if you can answer "yes" to all of the following questions, the music you propose is probably appropriate:

1. Does this music and its texts reflect praise of God?
2. Is it based on or does it reflect a scriptural theme?
3. Is it appropriate for use in a regular worship service?
4. Is the music within the ability of the musicians to play or sing with assurance?

Selecting Congregational Hymns

A wedding is a service of worship in which the guests are invited to be participants, not mere spectators. Therefore, you are encouraged to incorporate hymn singing in your wedding, and you may use certain hymns as a processional or a recessional. The following hymns are among the many which are appropriate for weddings:

- #241 *We Praise You, O God*
- #253 *Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now*
- #287 *O Perfect Love*
- #288 *Hear Us Now, Our God and Father*
- #289 *Heavenly Father, Hear Our Prayer*
- #315 *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*
- #409 *Praise and Thanksgiving*
- #456 *The King Of Love My Shepherd Is*
- #518 *Beautiful Savior*
- #534 *Now Thank We All Our God*
- #535 *Holy God We Praise Your Name*
- #543 *Praise To The Lord, The Almighty*
- #549 *Praise My Soul The King Of Heaven*
- #551 *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*
- #557 *Let All Things Now Living*

Processional and Recessional Music

The following are suggested compositions for Processionals or Recessionals:

<i>Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee</i>	Beethoven
<i>Tallis Canon</i>	Tallis
<i>Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring</i>	Bach
<i>Trumpet Voluntary in D Major</i>	
<i>Trumpet Tune in D Major</i>	Purcell
<i>Solemn Processional</i>	
<i>Air from Water Music Suite</i>	Handel
<i>Processional</i>	
<i>March in C</i>	Purcell
<i>Prelude in C (quiet)</i>	Bach
<i>St. Anthony Chorale (quiet)</i>	Haydn
<i>O Perfect Love (quiet)</i>	Barnby
<i>Gavotte (light hearted)</i>	Arne
<i>Trumpet Tune in C (recessional)</i>	Purcell
<i>Psalm XIX (recessional)</i>	Marcello

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are usually held the evening before the day of the ceremony, preferably prior to the rehearsal dinner, and must be scheduled with the pastor and the wedding coordinator. All members of the wedding party—bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ringbearers, ushers and parents of the bride and groom should be present at the time scheduled for the rehearsal. The pastor will walk the wedding party through the ceremony from beginning to end. If everyone arrives on time, the rehearsal should not take longer than forty-five minutes.

Ushers

A minimum of two ushers is necessary to seat guests and family members. Additional ushers will be needed if you expect more than 150 guests. Groomsmen or bridesmaids may serve as ushers.

Decorations and Sanctuary Layout

Floral decorations and an aisle runner are not necessary, but if desired, must be provided by you. Flowers will be placed in appropriate vases - on the flower stands. Flowers will not be placed on the altar itself.

Musicians' equipment will NOT be removed from the altar area for the ceremony. Any chairs and music stands not needed for the wedding will be removed. The keyboard may be moved to the side, but not unhooked. Under no circumstances should any member of the wedding party, family or guests unhook or move any of the music equipment.

The color of the paraments on the altar, pulpit and lectern are determined by the season of the church year. The candles on the altar will be lighted for the wedding ceremony. The church candelabra may be used, with the candles being provided by you. Aisle candles are discouraged, because of fire hazard and potential damage to the pews. A unity candle may be used, and must be supplied by you. Candelabra and unity candles must have protection to prevent wax from dripping on the carpet or linens.

Absolutely no rice, confetti, or bird seed are allowed in the church buildings. Bird seed, but not rice or confetti may be used outside the buildings. Bubbles may also be used outside.

Conduct of Guests

As the wedding is set within the context of worship, participants and guests are expected to conduct themselves accordingly. The use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted on the church premises (building or parking areas). Persons under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances will not be permitted to participate in the wedding.

The pastor reserves the right to halt the ceremony if a member of the wedding party or a guest is behaving in an inappropriate manner. Food and beverages of any kind are not allowed in the sanctuary. Allowances will be made for necessary food and drink for pre-school age children.

Photographs and Videos

Most people contract with a professional photographer to photograph or videotape their wedding. Floodlights or flash are not permitted during the ceremony. Any pictures taken during the ceremony must be done from the back of the church.

As a matter of courtesy to your reception guests, you may want to consider taking your wedding pictures prior to the service.

The Wedding Showers and Reception

The Fellowship Hall is usually available for wedding showers and receptions. If you desire to use this space, please reserve it at the time you reserve the sanctuary for your wedding. Please contact the wedding coordinator or the church office.

As you make your plans, remember that alcoholic beverages may not be served on church premises, and that smoking is prohibited within the church buildings.

Invitation to Pastor and Family

To request the services of the pastor to preside at your wedding ceremony is not to assume that members of the pastor's family will attend the rehearsal dinner, wedding, or reception. Invitations to the wedding, rehearsal dinner and reception are purely personal decisions, and no offense is taken if they are not extended to the pastor or members of the family.

To avoid embarrassment of showing up where the pastor is not wanted, the pastor or members of the family will not attend the functions unless an invitation is specifically extended. If you desire the pastor and members of the pastor's family to attend the rehearsal dinner or the reception, be sure to extend an invitation far enough in advance so plans can be made to attend.

Suggested Fees

There is no charge for the use of the church facilities for members of the congregation. Other suggested fees are listed in the schedule, which follows. All such fees should be paid two weeks in advance and no later than when you bring the license to the church office two days prior to the wedding.

I. Use of Facilities

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| A. Sanctuary | None Expected |
| B. Fellowship Hall | None Expected |

II. Professional Fees:

A. Pastor (includes premarital counseling, rehearsal & ceremony)	None Expected
B. Wedding Coordinator	\$150.00
C. Musicians (includes consultation, practice, rehearsal & ceremony)	Negotiate directly with musicians
D. Soloist\Instrumental	Negotiate directly with soloist, etc.
E. Sound Tech	\$25.00
F. Custodian	\$35.00

NOTES & QUESTIONS: