

*Wedding Policies
and Guidelines*



St. John's Lutheran Church

40 SECOND STREET
SLATINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA
18080

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is Christian Marriage?	Page 3
Congregation's Requirement for Marriage	Page 3
Setting the Date	Page 3
Planning the Wedding	Page 4
Outdoor Weddings	Page 4
Holy Communion.....	Page 4
Scripture Readings	Page 5
Wedding Vows.....	Page 5
Wedding Music	Page 6
Congregational Hymns	Page 6
Wedding Bulletins	Page 7
Rehearsal.....	Page 7
Fees and Honoraria	Page 7
Marriage License	Page 8
Photography and Videography.....	Page 8
Décor and Use of Space.....	Page 8
Flower Girls and Ringbearers	Page 9
Alcohol Policy	Page 9
Pastor at reception or rehearsal dinner?	Page 9
Conclusion	Page 9

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING CEREMONIES

What is Christian Marriage?

Marriage is a gift of God by which two partners are established in community with one another for their own nourishment, and for the nourishment of their families. It is God's will that the relationship of marriage reflects the depth of love which Christ has for the Church.

The marriage liturgy is an act of worship, in which two Christians come together to offer special thanks and praise to God and to ask for God's blessing upon their life together. Because the marriage liturgy is a worship service first, and a wedding ceremony second, it is important that everything be done in the context of a worship service.

The marriage liturgy is also a service in which guests are not just spectators but participants in the service. They are not there only to watch, but are called on to be active participants in their prayers and praise, promising their support of this new union being created in the presence of God.

In the Lutheran tradition, the marriage liturgy belongs to the whole Church. Congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are bound by certain guidelines for the conduct of worship which have been formulated through centuries of Christian tradition and teaching. These are not arbitrary rulings, but are the collective teachings of the Church on the matter of the true meaning of worship.

The following information is offered to you as guidance in preparing for your wedding. The pastor will discuss these things with you. It is a privilege to help you plan your ceremony, and we are honored to witness your pledge to each other and God's blessing on your marriage!

I. Congregation's Requirement for Marriage

Both persons must be baptized. At least one of the persons to be married must be a member or associate member of Saint John's, or either parent must be a member. If neither one is a member, they should become members prior to the wedding. (Saint John's Policy #2)

2. Setting the Date

Those who plan to be married at Saint John's Lutheran Church should first contact Sharon Stehly, Administrative Assistant at (610) 767-6361. Before the date and time for the wedding can be confirmed and set on the church calendar, the couple is required to meet in person with the pastor. Although every effort will be made to celebrate your marriage on the date that you select, unavoidable conflicts can and do occur. It is wise to make sure of the availability of the pastor and of the church prior to making other arrangements.

The latest time for a wedding on Saturday is 3:00 p.m. Wedding dates and times are on a first come – first serve basis.

Marriages cannot be celebrated during Holy Week. These weeks for the next three years are:
April 10–17, 2022 April 2–8, 2023 March 24–30, 2024

3. Planning the Wedding

Couples should plan to meet with the pastor three–four times before the wedding. In these sessions, the nature of marriage, the history of the couple, their extended families, and the nature and content of the marriage liturgy will be discussed. While weddings must be planned in the keeping with the practices of the church, there are many options which can be exercised to personalize the service. A service will, therefore, be designed that will truly be your own, while preserving the elements essential to a service of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

In order to ensure an ongoing personal relationship between the church and the couple, the pastor and the church office will communicate directly with the couple regarding details of their wedding rather than through an agent such as a wedding planner or a relative. The wedding rehearsal will be conducted by the pastor of this congregation.

The presiding minister at the marriage liturgy is the pastor of this congregation. Assisting ministers are welcome and may be either ordained or lay persons. The order of service encourages family members, members of the wedding party, and others to carry out functions not reserved for ordained clergy, such as serving as a lector, usher, or soloist.

4. Outdoor Weddings

The pastor will consider marrying couples in non-traditional settings, but please keep in mind that an outdoor wedding in the sun can be fatiguing, especially for the very old and very young, and the ceremony therefore must be kept brief. Unless the setting is an outdoor chapel, Holy Communion would not normally be celebrated in this context. It is also much more difficult to provide music and voice amplification. Contingency plans must also be made to move indoors in case of inclement weather.

5. Holy Communion

Celebrating marriage within a service of Holy Communion is a beautiful and meaningful way to celebrate the fact that the unity between the couple is a sign of the unity between Christ and the Church. Lutherans believe that the Sacrament is the true body and blood of Christ and that all baptized Christians who have faith in Christ's real presence, regardless of their denomination, are invited by the Lord to receive the Sacrament here.

When Holy Communion is celebrated, we offer non-Christians and those choosing not to commune the opportunity to come forward and receive a blessing from the pastor.

When both partners are practicing Christians and willing to receive the Sacrament, we encourage Holy Communion to be included in the wedding liturgy. In certain family circumstances where this might cause a perception of division rather than the unity that is intended, the Sacrament might best be omitted. The pastor will help you decide when the inclusion of Holy Communion in the service is appropriate.

6. Scripture Readings

You may select four readings from the Bible. One should come from the Old Testament, one from the Psalms, one from the New Testament, and one from the Gospels. If desired, you may omit a Psalm selection. The following are some suggested readings. You may choose other readings with the pastor's guidance.

Old Testament	Psalm	New Testament	Gospel
Genesis 1:26-31	Psalm 33	Romans 8:31-35, 37-39	Matthew 5:13-16
Genesis 2:18-24	Psalm 100	Romans 12:1-2, 9-18	Matthew 19:4-6
Genesis 24:48-51; 58-67	Psalm 117	1 Corinthians 13:1-13	Matthew 22:35-40
Song of Solomon 2:8-14; 8:6-7a	Psalm 127	Ephesians 5:21-33	Mark 10:6-9
Isaiah 63:7-9	Psalm 128	Colossians 3:12-17	John 2:1-10
Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a	Psalm 136	1 Peter 3:1-9	John 15:9-12
	Psalm 150	1 John 3:18-24 1 John 4:7-12	John 15:12-17

If the marriage is being celebrated in a non-traditional location (such as an outdoor setting), you may select one non-Scripture reading. You may bring all ideas to the pastor when planning the order of the service.

7. Wedding Vows

You will want to consider the vows, or promises, you will be making to one another during this service. You may choose to write your own vows and promises to one another, or you may choose one of the standard options provided:

OPTION A: I take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband/spouse* 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.

OPTION B: In the presence of God and this community, I, *name*, take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband/spouse*; 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.

OPTION C: I take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband/spouse*, 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.

OPTION D: I take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband/spouse*, 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.

OPTION E: I, *name*, take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband/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, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.

OPTION F: 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.

8. Wedding Music

The marriage liturgy is a service of worship and every element of the service contributes to the worship of God. Live music, whether performed on the organ, piano, or any other instrument, is an act of worship and an offering to God. The use of recorded or secular music, therefore, is inappropriate for worship within the church. As in any service of worship, music which focuses on God who gives us to one another in love, which offers God praise and thanks, and which celebrates God's love for all people is the only music appropriate to Church weddings. There is a large quantity of musical literature available to couples which meets these standards and which cover a wide range of musical styles and periods.

The Director of Music can suggest and demonstrate numerous compositions from which to choose, thus adding to the dignity and uniqueness of your wedding liturgy.

The Director of Music of this congregation, **Fawn Albert**, will serve as the organist for weddings in the church. If she is not available, she will assist you in locating a competent organist, whose fees may be different from hers. You will want to establish a time to meet with the Director of Music for the purpose of selecting music. This date should be established no later than four weeks before the wedding. The pastor will help you connect with her.

9. Congregational Hymns

You may want to consider the use of some hymns, such as a Hymn of the Day to follow the homily delivered by the pastor. The following is a list of suggested hymns from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for use in a wedding. Others, of course, are possibilities, and can be selected with the guidance of the pastor or the Director of Music.

HYMNS – Evangelical Lutheran Worship

Hear Us Now, our God and Father – ELW 585
This Is a Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited – ELW 586

Jesus, Come! For We Invite You – ELW 312
Where Charity and Love Prevail – ELW 359
Love Consecrates the Humblest Act – ELW 360
Holy God, We Praise Your Name – ELW 414
Jesus Shall Reign – ELW 434
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling – ELW 631
Beloved, God's Chosen ELW 648
Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee – ELW 836

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty – ELW 858
Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven – ELW 865
For the Beauty of the Earth – ELW 879
O God Beyond All Praising – ELW 880
All People That on Earth Do Dwell – ELW 883

HYMNS – With One Voice

Bind Us Together – WOV 748
When Love Is Found – WOV 749
As Man and Woman We Were Made – WOV 751

10. Wedding Bulletins

Numerous options for your wedding bulletin are available and may be designed and/or printed by either the church office, by you, or by a combination thereof. If you choose to do all or most of this task, the office will provide an outline and all necessary worship texts. The typeface and design should be conducive for participation in the liturgy. The final draft will need to be approved by both the church office and the couple. The church may prepare the bulletins for a fee of \$20.00.

11. Rehearsal

A rehearsal, conducted by the pastor, will usually be scheduled the evening prior to the wedding. The pastor will explain what to expect for the order of the service and will instruct all participants in the roles and responsibilities. It is important for everyone involved in the wedding to be present for the rehearsal and to arrive on time.

12. Fees and Honoraria

All fees applicable to the wedding should be brought to the church prior to or at the rehearsal. If the fees are paid by check, the pastor will provide the full names of the persons to whom the checks should be made payable. If the wedding is taking place outside of the church building, a gift of \$100.00 to the ministry of the Saint John's Lutheran Church is recommended.

The dollar amounts listed in the following table are determined by the Church Council of Saint John's Lutheran Church.

Service	Amount
Honorarium for Pastor	At your discretion
Honorarium for Organist	\$150.00
Fee for Sexton (Housekeeper)	\$40.00
Use of Fellowship Hall (if desired)	\$40.00

PLEASE NOTE: All payments for fees and honoraria are required to be brought/mailed to the church office during office hours (9:00 am– 4:00 p.m.) one week before the wedding.

14. The Marriage License

A valid Pennsylvania marriage license is required to be married at Saint John’s Lutheran Church. To obtain this legal document, you can apply for a license at the office of a District Magistrate or at the County Court House. When applying for a marriage license, proof of identification is required (birth certificate or driver’s license). State law requires a three-day waiting period before issuing a license. Lehigh County recommends applying 2-3 weeks in advance of the wedding date. Keep in mind, however, that the **license is only valid for 60 days from the date of issue**. These procedures and laws apply to all couples married in Pennsylvania, without regard to their state residency. Marriage licenses issued by other states are not valid in Pennsylvania.

Once obtained, the marriage license may be brought to the church office during office hours (9:00 am– 4:00 p.m.) a few days before the wedding so it can be filled out by the pastor. The pastor is prohibited by law to perform a marriage without a Marriage License in her possession before the wedding.

15. Photography and Videography

To ensure that the sacred nature of the wedding is honored, wedding photographers are asked to consult with the pastor prior to the wedding liturgy. Flash photography is not permitted during the liturgy itself, during which the wedding photographer may only take shots from the back and sides of the sanctuary, staying behind the pews. Scenes can be recreated for photographers following the service. Videography, with existing light, is permitted from a camera on a tripod from the back or sides of the church. Photography by the congregation, with or without flash, is only permitted during the procession in and the procession out. It is not permitted during the liturgy.

16. Décor and Use of Space

Flowers are scheduled to be displayed on the altar for Sunday mornings and can be used for your wedding, if scheduled for a Saturday. You may also have flower arrangements made. Flower arrangements may be placed behind, in front of, or beside the altar, near the lectern or pulpit, and other locations – however, they may not be placed directly on the altar. We suggest they be placed in containers that you can take with you. If you desire to leave them in church, they will be placed somewhere in the chancel and announced in church the next day. The church’s florist is Kern’s Florist in Slatington, or you may select your own. Please have your florist contact Sharon Stehly, (610) 767-6361, to discuss options and arrange time to deliver flowers.

The florist may provide any bows which are to be used on the pews. However, **use of a runner for the aisle is discouraged** as it causes a tripping hazard and liability.

Chancel furniture (the chairs, baptismal font, paschal candle, etc.) may not be removed. The paraments used will be the color appointed for the day, according to the season of the year. Decorations may not be attached to the walls. Masking tape, ribbons, or rubber bands must be used to attach decorations to the pews with the consent and approval of the pastor.

If a candlelight service is planned, with candles being placed down the center aisle and/or side aisles, a fee of \$30.00 is charged.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, and flower petals is prohibited. Due to environmental concerns, guests are to refrain from releasing balloons or birds. Soap bubbles are encouraged and can be much more fun.

17. Flower Girls and Ringbearers

Flower Girls and Ringbearers should be of age and mature enough to walk down the aisle to the front of the sanctuary without assistance (ex: no wagons). Exceptions can be made for couples who share a child and/or children together and would like them to participate in the liturgy.

18. Alcohol and Drug Policy

The consumption of alcoholic beverages in the church, including by members of the wedding party, is strictly prohibited. **The pastor is prohibited by law to marry if either partner in the couple is intoxicated and/or under the influence of illegal substances.**

19. Will the pastor come to the reception or rehearsal dinner?

Please understand that the following is information, not a request for an invitation. The pastor is happy to attend wedding receptions and rehearsal dinners if her schedule permits it, but only if she is invited in advance. It is common to invite the pastor to provide a prayer and blessing at the reception, although such an invitation is neither required nor expected. On occasion the pastor may be accompanied by a spouse, if he is also invited. However, we understand that it is inappropriate and presumptuous to come without an invitation, and the pastor will not plan to attend unless specifically requested.

To Conclude

The staff of Saint John's Lutheran Church rejoice with you as you plan for your coming wedding. We look forward to celebrating this happy day with you, and we pray that God will bless you as you plan for it. Feel free to call upon us for any assistance we can provide!