

*Ascension Lutheran Church*

*Wedding Guidelines*

*for the general public*

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## WELCOME

Ascension Lutheran Church is pleased that you are considering exchanging your marriage vows in our sanctuary. The service is a ministry of Ascension and requires careful planning. These guidelines have been prepared to aid you. Please contact the church office at (704) 487-5679 as you begin your planning. Our blessing to you and yours.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

As Christians we believe and understand the Rite of Marriage to be a mirror image of the faithful relationship between God and God's people. A marriage service is a unique service of worship. The service provides a special occasion for a man and a woman to publicly declare their love for each other before the Triune God and the Christian Community. This service also includes praise, reading of scripture, and prayer. At this time the couple enters into their covenant of fidelity, which is a commitment to lifelong marriage. Under appropriate circumstances, it is possible to place the marriage rite within the full liturgy of Word and Sacrament (Holy Communion).

As the designated leader of all worship services, the pastor therefore oversees and offers guidance in the planning of the marriage service. Secular rites and customs are, for the most part, inconsistent with the marriage liturgy. The pastor will be fully vested for the service; vestments direct attention to God, reflecting the beauty, majesty and splendor of God and providing a continuity of Christian worship through history and with our ancestors in the faith.

Please note that weddings are discouraged during the season of Lent and Holy Week. These are solemn times of the church year in which no festivities are observed.

## INITIAL PROCEDURES

- 1) Contact the pastor as soon as possible and set a time for an initial appointment. It is important to do this immediately so that the preferred date of the wedding does not conflict with the pastor's schedule, the musician's schedule, or with the use of the facilities. Specific times and dates of the wedding and the rehearsal need to be set at that time.
- 2) At least four counseling and planning sessions with the pastor are required prior to the marriage. The sessions will focus on strengthening the couple's understanding and appreciation of each other as God's gift to each other and the world, and the importance of God's presence in their marriage.
- 3) Arrange for a consultation with the organist well in advance of any other planning you do. This consultation is necessary in that the organist is responsible for all music and musical instruments in the church.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

If desired, an announcement of an upcoming wedding may be published in the congregation's worship bulletin using this form: "    Name     and     Name     have announced their intention to marry on     date    , and ask for your prayers." Another announcement may be published in the worship bulletin on the Sunday before the wedding. On the Sunday following the wedding an announcement will be included in the congregation's worship bulletin using this form: Congratulations and God's blessings upon     Name     and     Name     who were married on     date     at Ascension.     Name     officiated.

## MARRIAGE SERVICE

Lutherans acknowledge that marriage is a gift of God, intended for the joy and mutual strength of those who enter it and for the well-being of the whole human family. It is also a human estate, with vows publicly witnessed. It is solemnized at the altar of our Lord, placing the marriage relationship under the blessing and

commandment of God. We use the book *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* for the wedding service (p. 286 ff.). Variations in its use are to be worked out with the pastor. Ascension is open to have visiting clergy assist the pastor in the wedding service. The visiting clergy should consult our pastor in regard to his/her participation.

### READINGS

Suggestions for readings are at the end of these guidelines. Generally, one lesson each from Old Testament, Psalms and New Testament are chosen.

### VOWS

There are vows in the wedding service; however, alternate vows are also included at the end of these guidelines. Couples may choose to write their own vows with the pastor's guidance and approval; if they choose to do that, written copies of the vows must be provided to the pastor at least one week before the wedding.

### COMMUNION

The marriage service may include the celebration of Holy Communion if both the bride and groom are baptized and communing members of a Christian church. Communion is never received by the couple alone because it is a congregational celebration. The newly married couple may serve as ministers of communion with the Pastor. All baptized participants are invited to commune. If Holy Communion is to be celebrated, the Altar Guild must be notified to make preparation.

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is prayed by the entire congregation. The couple may choose which of the two versions (p. 290) is said.

### SANCTUARY

The seating capacity of the church nave is approximately 178. This will be reserved for you at the time of your initial registration.

### FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

A beautiful wedding is a way to glorify God. Simplicity of flowers and decorations keep the altar defined as the focal point. **Candleholders, candles** and a **kneeling bench** are owned by the church and available for use. Decorations are not permitted on the altar. The **paraments** display the appropriate color and symbols of the season of the Church Year. They may not be changed or removed. The pastor will inform the bridal couple of the parament colors for the day of their wedding. Potted palms, ferns, or other plants may not be placed on the floor without waterproof protection under them. Plastic protection must be under additional candelabra. Ascension provides **Eucharistic candleholders** and **candles**. All candles are retained by the church. The use of Ascension's florist (Mike's) is encouraged since they are aware of floral arrangement capabilities. If another florist is used, they need to use the liner for our flower vase.

You will need to provide the altar flowers unless flowers have already been paid for by a church member. If the bride wishes to add or use special flowers to the arrangement, the bride makes payment arrangements with the florist. Bows or ribbon decorations may be used on the pews with proper plastic clips. No thumbtacks, nails, or pins are permitted. If a **unity candle** is desired, it will be necessary for the wedding couple to provide the holder and the candles. This can be arranged with the florist or from wedding supply stores. If the couple desires to provide their own unity candles and holder they may do so. A **Bride's Book**, provided by the couple, may be placed in the narthex with an attendant, if desired.

The Altar Guild needs to be contacted for placement of all chancel properties.

## ACOLYTE, CRUCIFER AND PROCESSIONAL

If there is a processional, the bridal party may furnish the acolyte and crucifer (who will be trained by the pastor) or one of Ascension's regular worship assistants may serve for the service. All persons lighting the altar candles or carrying the cross will wear vestments provided by the church.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

No flash photographs are to be taken during the service. We strongly suggest that the wedding party pose for pictures before or after the service. If video equipment is to be used, its placement and use must be discussed with the pastor prior to the wedding service. No photography or video equipment may be placed on or behind the altar. (Please inform all photographers of this policy.)

In order that wedding guests may be appropriately instructed, we encourage that the following announcement be included in your worship bulletin regarding the use of photography: *The bride and groom request that all guests please refrain from taking pictures during the worship service.*

## BULLETIN

A wedding bulletin may be ordered from a catalog through the church office, with printing to be provided by the church office or by an outside printer of the couple's choice. Such a bulletin would contain the outline of the service, a list of family members and participants, musical selections, and reception announcement, etc. If a bulletin is to be printed by the church office, please have the information available to the office no later than one week prior to the wedding. (See #6 under honoraria)

## REHEARSAL

Normally, a rehearsal is held starting at approximately 5:00-7:00 p.m. the night before the wedding. The rehearsal will begin promptly at the scheduled time and will last one hour. The entire bridal party needs to be in attendance: all male and female attendants, ring bearer, flower girl, the parents of both bride and groom, visiting clergy, ushers, musicians, organist, and any other participants. Persons serving as lay readers should be prepared to read the portion of scripture assigned to them. Please be sure everyone is aware of the rehearsal time and that they are expected to be there on time. If the rehearsal time is not honored or if any one of the participants is inebriated, the pastor may cancel the wedding service without any refund of fees.

## DRESSING ROOMS

The choir rehearsal room is available for the use of the bride and/or attendants if they desire to dress at the church preceding the wedding. Groomsmen may dress in one of the classrooms or meeting rooms in the education building or in the lounge in the fellowship hall. Keys will be provided to assure adequate security for items left in this room during the service.

## WEDDING DIRECTOR

Ascension does not have a wedding director, but the pastor and Altar Guild representative will assist in this capacity. It is important to see that there is a proper protocol to follow escorting family members and guests before and after the service. It will also be necessary to see that the grooms' men, the bride's attendants, the groom, the bride, and ushers enter the sanctuary at the proper time for the service. These matters will be addressed during the rehearsal.

## MUSIC

Ascension's organist has the right of first refusal for all weddings in the church. Early consultation with the organist to determine availability for the service and the rehearsal, as well as to discuss appropriate music, is the responsibility of the couple. If the couple wishes to have another organist play for their wedding, it may be only with the advice and consent of Ascension's organist.

The music should be in keeping with Christian worship, reflective of fine art and of high quality. Only sacred vocal music is allowed. Secular music may not be used, nor any music that is recorded. Secular music of special meaning to you should be reserved for the wedding reception.

Ascension's organist must be consulted about all music. It is the responsibility of the couple to contact the organist/musicians and arrange wedding music about three months before the wedding.

Congregational singing is suggested. This participation will allow your guests to be participants in your wedding. Many hymns are appropriate, including the following (numbers are from the Evangelical Lutheran Worship):

Hear Us Now, Our God and Father	# 585	Beloved, God's Chosen	# 648
Let All Things Now Living	# 881	Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life	# 816
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	# 631	O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright	# 308
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee	# 836	Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness	# 488
Now Thank We All Our God	# 839/ 840	This Is A Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited	# 586
Jesus Come! For We Invite You	# 312		

Special music is often used at weddings. Musicians should be competent vocalists or instrumentalists. When there is a vocal solo, it is to be sung immediately before the service (prelude) or after the benediction (postlude). The musician or soloist should contact the organist well in advance of the wedding in order that the organist can be fully prepared.

Musical selections should complement the service and maintain worship of God as a central theme. The above list of hymns is a good starting point for choosing music. The organist may also have some ideas for music especially written for the marriage service. The music for a wedding ceremony typically consists of the following:

- Prelude as the guests are arriving and being seated.
- Processional as the wedding party enters the sanctuary.
- Recessional as the wedding party leaves the sanctuary.
- Postlude as guests leave the sanctuary.
- Appropriate vocal or instrumental solos and congregational hymns, may be used.

If you wish to have a friend or family member sing or play at the service, arrangements must be made with the organist when you meet with him to select music. Additional instrumentalists or vocalists are paid directly by the wedding couple.

## RECEPTION

Our Fellowship Hall is not available to non-members. All arrangements for a reception must be made off-site.

## NURSERY

There is a nursery available for use during the service, but the church does not provide attendants.

## RICE

Birdseed instead of rice may be thrown outside the church as a gift to others of God's creation and in thanksgiving for the new marriage. We discourage the release of butterflies. Please discuss your plans with the pastor.

## MARRIAGE LICENSE

The marriage license is to be brought to the church office one week before the wedding.

## FEES

The fee for non-members to use Ascension is \$1500.00. This fee must be paid in full by the time of the rehearsal. This comprehensive fee includes: honoraria for the Pastor and the Organist, as well as payment for the bulletins, fees for custodial services and the use of the facility.

## ALTERNATE WEDDING VOWS

(Name), 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).

I take you, (Name), to be my wife/husband.

I promise before God and these witnesses  
to be your faithful wife/husband,  
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 (until death parts us).

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 share my life with you;  
I will forgive you as we have been forgiven;  
and I will try, with you,  
to better understand ourselves,  
the world, and God;  
through the best and the worst of what is to come  
as long as we live (until death parts us).

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, with the help of God,  
I promise to be faithful to you  
as he gives us life together.

I, (Name), take thee, (Name),

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; 'til death us do part,  
according to God's holy ordinance;  
and to you I pledge my faithfulness  
(thereto I pledge thee my troth).

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.

## SUGGESTED WEDDING SCRIPTURES

### Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a  
Genesis 2:18-24  
Genesis 3:5-7, 15-20  
Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67  
Deuteronomy 6:4-9  
Jeremiah 31:31-32a, 33-34a

### Psalms

Psalm	37:3-11, 23-28	Psalm	113
Psalm	67	Psalm	121
Psalm	91	Psalm	128
Psalm	96	Psalm	139
Psalm	103	Psalm	145
Psalm	111	Psalm	150

### New Testament

#### Epistles

Romans 12:1-13  
1 Corinthians 6:13-20  
1 Corinthians 7:1-40  
1 Corinthians 13  
2 Corinthians 11:2-4  
Ephesians 3:14-21  
Ephesians 5:2, 15, 21-33  
Colossians 3:12-17  
1 Peter 3:1-9  
1 John 3:18-24  
1 John 4:7-19  
Revelation 19:1, 5-16

#### Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12a  
Matthew 5:13-16  
Matthew 7:21, 24-29  
Matthew 19:1-12  
Matthew 22:35-50  
Mark 10:2-16  
John 2:1-11  
John 3:29  
John 15:9-17  
John 17:20-26