

# HANDBOOK OF WEDDING POLICIES AND GUIDELINES



ZION ST. JOHN  
LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SHEFFIELD, IOWA

The wedding policies outlined in this handbook were approved by the Church Council of Zion St. John Lutheran Church on November 21, 1995, and amended in **May, 2011**.

## PREFACE

We as a congregation are pleased that you want to have your wedding in our church. The pastor 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 Ephesian 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.

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 promises before God and in the presence of the gathered community. You make your promises 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.

As you plan the wedding service, it is good to keep in mind that the marriage rite belongs to the Church and is a liturgy in praise of God,

asking for His very special blessing upon both the bridal couple and the gathered assembly. A man and woman are united in marriage, but the service belongs to the community of faith and is to give glory to Christ. That sense of praise to our Lord Jesus Christ is the theme that guides all our wedding practices at Zion St. John Lutheran Church.

### **SETTING AND CONFIRMING YOUR WEDDING DATE**

One of the first things you should do in planning your wedding is to contact the pastor. Ideally, this should be done at least six months before your projected wedding date. The date and time of your wedding and rehearsal must be confirmed by the pastor before they will be reserved for you by the church secretary. Although a tentative wedding date may be scheduled over the telephone, it is the normal policy of our parish community to confirm the date of a wedding only after an initial interview with the pastor. It is good judgment, therefore, to meet with the pastor before any public announcement is made.

Weddings will not be scheduled during the season of Lent when the attention of the Church is focused on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Because of the reflective nature of the Advent season, this season has also been a time when historically weddings were not celebrated. If you are in doubt about an appropriate time to celebrate your wedding, please talk it over with the pastor.

### **ANNOUNCEMENT AND INVITATION**

When a final wedding date is set an announcement of your wedding will be published in our congregation's newsletter, because for God's people a wedding ceremony is never private. It is always a communal event of prayer, praise, and thanksgiving to the God made known through Jesus Christ. This announcement will inform the congregation of your plans to be united in marriage and ask the members of our congregation to keep you in their prayers. This announcement could also include a general invitation for the entire parish community. However, invitation to the reception, should there be one (including a reception at the church), is only through a personal invitation from the bridal couple.

### **GUEST MINISTERS**

Normally the pastor of this congregation will officiate at your wedding. If it is your intention to have a pastor from outside the congregation participate or officiate, please talk to the pastor of Zion St. John first. If there are no theological considerations, he or she will then invite the other minister. The final decision on which pastor(s) will participate rests with the pastor of Zion St. John based on his/her Letter of Call.

### **PRE-MARITAL SESSIONS WITH THE PASTOR**

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

Your first session with the pastor will be for getting acquainted, sharing Baptismal documentation, and discussing what type of wedding you would like, as well as going over any initial wedding plans. After that you will have a better idea of the various options open to you in planning the wedding service as well as everything that needs to be considered.

After this initial session, further sessions will be set up to discuss the meaning of marriage from the Christian perspective, the expectations of marriage, our Christian understanding of the wedding ceremony, and further planning of the ceremony. These planning and counseling sessions are designed not only to take care of the details regarding the marriage service, but to help you look at yourself, your partner, and your relationship as you prepare for married life together.

### **MARRIAGE LICENSE**

Iowa law requires a couple to secure a license to marry. You are responsible for securing a marriage license. You may apply for a license at the office of any County Clerk of Court in the state. You must apply a minimum of three (3) days before the wedding, though we recommend you apply earlier. Normally the two of you should be present to apply. Be sure to take along your driver's licenses and a

witness (who must be 18) to verify your ages (legal age for marriage being 18). A fee will be charged. The license should be given to the pastor at least a week before the wedding date.

### **ORGANIST AND VOCAL MUSIC**

It is your responsibility to arrange for an organist for your wedding. We recommend that you use one of Zion St. John's organists. Whoever you choose to be a musician in your wedding should be capable and well practiced. In any case, you are responsible for making arrangements directly with the organist concerning the times and dates of your rehearsal and wedding. It is also your responsibility to set up a date for a consultation session with the organist at least two months prior to your wedding.

If you wish to have vocal soloists or any other musicians take part in the service, it is your responsibility to arrange for them as well. You should supply the organist with copies of any selections to be sung in the key that the vocalist employs. This should be done at least one month before the rehearsal. Instrumentalists should follow these same rehearsal guidelines.

Before you make arrangements with vocalists or instrumentalists who will participate in your wedding, please read the section **SELECTING MUSIC** and discuss your plans with the pastor and the organist.

### **PLANNING THE CEREMONY**

The liturgy used for weddings is found in the Lutheran Book of Worship, pages 202-205. As you meet with the pastor, you are encouraged to bring ideas about ways to personalize your wedding. One way to do this is to take an active role in selecting hymns and music, scripture readings, marriage vows, and prayers used in the wedding liturgy. (See Appendix A and B for suggestions.) Another way to give the ceremony your own unique expression might be to have members of your family or wedding party serve as readers of the scripture lessons or participate in the prayers. Of course, what is done in the service should be appropriate to a service of worship and consistent with the Christian understanding of marriage. Please be

sure to discuss any particular wishes and ideas that you might have with the pastor since he/she is responsible for the service and will make the final decision on any liturgical matters.

The rite of marriage may appropriately be celebrated within the context of the Lord's Supper and we encourage you to consider this option. The festive wedding imagery of the Sacrament as set forth in scripture and the liturgy has profound meaning for Christian couples. However, when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, the whole assembly is invited, not just the wedding party. If that may pose a religious problem for your families, it is better to plan the marriage service without the Sacrament.

### **SELECTING MUSIC**

A wedding is, first and foremost, a worship service--an occasion for worship and praise of the God who calls a man and woman together in marriage. It is not just a ceremony for spectators to watch. As in any worship service, the music should be chosen with great care. 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, and the invocation of God's presence and blessing. The music chosen should be of high quality and not cloud the mood of the service with triteness or sentimentality. It should moreover be within the ability of the performers at hand to play or sing with assurance.

Thus, secular music, although it may be beautiful, is unsuitable for a worship service. The music and texts selected for the service should be chosen with the underlying thought of glorifying God. Music which does not fit a service of worship is better used at a wedding reception.

In selecting music, ask yourselves these questions: Does this music and its text reflect praise to God? Is it based on or does it reflect a scriptural theme? Is it appropriate for use in a regular service of worship? Is the music within the ability of the musicians to play or sing with assurance? If you can answer "yes" to these questions, then the music is probably appropriate for the wedding service. There is an abundance of suitable music for use at weddings.

A wedding is a service of worship in which the guests are invited to be participants, not mere spectators. They are there not simply to watch but to be a congregation of God's people. Therefore, we encourage you to incorporate at least one congregational hymn into the service.

The selection of all music shall be worked out between the bridal couple, the organist and other musicians, and the pastor. However, the pastor will have the final decision regarding the use of any or all music. (See Appendix B for appropriate music suggestions.) **You must submit the music and lyrics to the pastor no later than one month prior to your wedding.**

### **CANDLES, DECORATIONS, AND FLOWERS**

Couples have a number of options regarding the decor of the sanctuary for their wedding. The candles on the altar will be lighted for the wedding ceremony. Additional candelabras may be used. You must provide the candles and make any necessary arrangements. Our congregation has two brass candelabras which you are welcome to use. When using them, please be sure to put plastic on the floor and to clean off excess wax after use. Do not use a sharp object to do this. If you have to use something to keep the candles standing straight, please use aluminum foil, paper towel, or something that can be easily removed afterwards. Aisle candles are discouraged, because of fire hazard and potential damage to the pews or injury to people. A unity candle may be used. Our congregation has a brass unity candle stand, although you must supply the candles if you desire to use a unity candle during the ceremony.

Please check with the pastor before rearranging the chancel area. The color of the paraments on the altar and in the chancel area are determined by the season of the church year. They are not changed for weddings. We have several banners, from which you may choose, to hang in the chancel area, if desired. An aisle runner is not necessary, but if desired, you must provide one.

It is your responsibility to provide floral decorations, if desired. Flowers should be placed in the appropriate vases on the altar. Please be sure to have them arranged in the plastic vase liners and not directly

in the brass vases. You may bring the liners to your florist during the week before your wedding. Please advise your florist that no decorations can be fastened to permanent furniture by means of nails, staples, screws, or wires. It would also be appreciated if your florist would work with the church staff in timing the installation of all decorations. We encourage you to leave the flowers on the altar for use during the regular worship service after your wedding, when we will also be including you in our congregational prayers. If you will be leaving the flowers on the altar, please let the church office know so that we can print this in our Sunday morning bulletin.

You are welcome to use our guest book stand, if desired. If you are planning on having a guest book table, you must provide an appropriate table and table cloth.

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to make arrangements to have the chancel, sanctuary, and narthex areas of the church clean and to have all wedding decorations (except altar flowers) removed immediately following the ceremony. That way they will not be in the way for our Sunday morning worship services.

### **RICE AND CONFETTI**

Throwing rice and confetti are meant to add to the festive nature of wedding celebrations. However, since rice on the side walk creates a safety hazard and confetti creates cleaning problems, we request that your guests not throw either. Bird seed, however, may be used as an alternative outside the building.

### **WEDDING BULLETINS**

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have a bulletin 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 bulletin with the pastor. If you wish to have wedding bulletins, you must provide them. They may be purchased from a religious supply store or ordered through the church office at your expense. **Bulletins ordered through the church must be placed one month prior to your wedding.** The pastor will provide an outline of the wedding service for whoever does your

printing. Our church secretary is available to type and print **standard size (8 1/2X11) bulletins. Both members and non-members will be responsible for reimbursing our secretary for their work at their standard hourly rate, plus the cost of printing,** provided we receive your wedding bulletin information at least two weeks in advance of your wedding. **REHEARSAL**

Rehearsals are usually held the evening before the day of the ceremony and must be scheduled with the pastor. All members of the wedding party (bride, groom, bridesmaids, groomsmen, flower girls, ring-bearer, parents of the couple, ushers, and musicians) should be present at the time scheduled for the rehearsal. The pastor will walk the wedding party through the ceremony from beginning to end. Plan on the rehearsal lasting one hour and inform your wedding party that you expect them to be prompt.

If you have not yet given your wedding license to the pastor, please bring it to the wedding rehearsal at the latest. In the state of Iowa, the pastor completes the license and is responsible for returning it to the county clerk. Along with the pastor, the bridal couple, the maid or matron of honor, and the best man are required to sign the license.

### **USHERS**

It is your responsibility to arrange for ushers for your wedding. A minimum of two ushers is necessary to seat guests and family members. More ushers will be needed if you intend to invite more than 150 guests or if the ushers are also responsible for lighting the candles.

### **CLOSING THE GUEST BOOK**

It is the practice of our congregation to close the guest book 10 minutes before the service begins so that the ceremony can begin on time. Guests who arrive after the guest book has been closed will be ushered directly into the sanctuary. They should be given a chance to sign the guest book either after going through the congratulatory line after the service or at the wedding reception. Be sure to inform your guest book attendant of these procedures.

### **CONDUCT OF GUESTS**

Since the wedding is set within the context of worship, participants and guests are expected to conduct themselves accordingly. Smoking is not permitted in our church building. Alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs are not allowed on church premises (building or parking lot). Furthermore, if it comes to the attention of the pastor or another member of the church staff that any member of the wedding party is using alcohol or drugs on or near church premises before the wedding, or if any member of the wedding party arrives for the ceremony while under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances, it is our policy that the pastor not conduct the service. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to inform their wedding party and guests of this policy. Its intent is not to be punitive, but rather we expect you to recognize the sacredness and integrity of the wedding as a worship service, and be respectful of the church, our congregation, yourselves, your wedding party, your families, and your guests. In addition, 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 during the wedding.

### **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 or videos taken during the ceremony must be done from the balcony or from the back of the church and only with available light.

Formal poses for wedding pictures may be taken before or after the wedding at the discretion of the bridal party. However, as a matter of courtesy to your reception guests, you should consider taking your wedding pictures prior to the service. If you want the pastor to be in any pictures, be sure to inform him/her in advance. **While our sanctuary does have video capability, videos and power point presentations are best suited for the reception.**

**Our church has an excellent sound system. You will need to**

**arrange with our sound engineers for use.** ( Please see Appendix C for fees)

### **DRESSING ROOMS**

The bride and her attendants may use the bride's room on the lower lever of the educational wing to dress in and wait for the wedding. The men may use the Jericho Room on the upper level. Please arrange to have someone pick up your belongings after the ceremony.

### **THE RECEPTION**

Our fellowship hall and kitchen are usually available for wedding receptions. If you desire to use this space, please reserve it at the time you reserve the sanctuary for your wedding. As you make your plans, remember that alcoholic beverages may not be served on church premises and that smoking is prohibited within the church building. Dancing is also not permitted.

If desired, our WELCA women's group would be glad to arrange for and serve at your reception. In that case, details concerning the reception should be worked out with a representative of our WELCA. No general fee is charged for this service but a donation to our women's group would be appropriate. You would be responsible for providing the food and drink to be served as well as arranging the serving and punch tables.

Our women would set out the plates and cups, make coffee and punch, serve the food, wash the dishes, and clean up the kitchen. You would need to give details to the person from the circle who is in charge as to the number of guests expected, who the waitresses and cake cutters are, and anything else they would need to know to make the reception run smoothly.

You may also use our fellowship hall for your reception with a private caterer.

If you choose to use our fellowship hall and kitchen for your reception, then you are responsible for both setting up before and cleaning up

after as well as returning all tables and chairs to their proper places. If you take home table clothes or dish towels to wash, please have them back as soon as possible so that others may use them.

### **FEES**

There is no charge for the use of church facilities for members of our congregation. Other suggested fees are listed in the schedule in Appendix C. All such fees should be paid prior to the wedding.

### **APPENDIX A**

#### Suggested Scripture Readings

##### Old Testament Lessons:

Genesis 1:26-31

Ruth 1:16-17

Song of Solomon 8:7

Isaiah 63:7-9

Genesis 2:18-24

Song of Solomon 2:10-13

Isaiah 42:5-9, 43:1-3

Jeremiah 33:10-11

##### Psalms:

Psalm 33:1-9

Psalm 95:1-7

Psalm 103

Psalm 127

Psalm 136

Psalm 147

Psalm 46

Psalm 100

Psalm 117

Psalm 128

Psalm 145

Psalm 150

##### New Testament Epistle Lessons:

Romans 12:1-2

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Ephesians 5:21-33

Philippians 4:4-7

1 John 4:7-12

Romans 15:5-6

Ephesians 3:14-19

Philippians 2:1-13

Colossians 3:12-17

##### New Testament Gospel Lessons:

Matthew 5:13-16

John 2:1-10

Luke 12:22-32

Matthew 19:4-6

John 15:9-12

## SUGGESTED WEDDING VOWS

“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.”

“I take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband. I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful husband/wife, 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.”

“I take you, \_\_\_\_\_, 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 better to understand ourselves, the world, and God; through the best and worst of what is to come until death parts us.”

“\_\_\_\_\_, 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, \_\_\_\_\_, 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 ordinance, and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.”

## APPENDIX B Suggested Wedding Music

### Organ Processionals:

Arioso	J. S. Bach
Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring	J. S. Bach
Praise to the Lord	Arr. Paul Manz
Trumpet Voluntary(Prince of Denmark’s March)	J. Clarke / H. Purcell (w or w/o trumpet)
Fanfare	M. Otterstad
Sinfonies de Fanfare: Rondeau	J. Mouret (w or w/o trumpet)
Air from Water Music Suite	G. F. Handel
Canon in D	Pachelbel
Trumpet Tune	J. Clarke / H. Purcell (w or w/o trumpet)

### Congregational Hymn:

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”	LBW 543
“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”	LBW 551
“Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying”	LBW 31
“Crown Him with Many Crowns”	LBW 170
“We Praise You, O God”	LBW 241
“Holy Majesty, before You”	LBW 247
“O Holy Spirit, Enter In”	LBW 459
“Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now”	LBW 253

### Organ Recessionals:

Toccata from Organ Symphony V	C. M. Widor
Organ Concerto I	J. S. Bach
Prelude & Fugue in G Major	J. S. Bach
Little Prelude & Fugue in C Major	J. S. Bach
Little Prelude & Fugue in F Major	J. S. Bach
Prelude in Classic Style	Gordon Young
Psalm XIX	Benedetto Marcello
Hornpipe	G. F. Handel
Trumpet Tune	J. Clarke / H. Purcell (w or w/o trumpet)
Hallelujah Chorus	G. F. Handel

Little Fugue in G minor	J. S. Bach
Trumpet Tune in C Major	D. Johnson
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee	Beethoven
Trumpet Voluntary	J. Clarke (w or w/o trumpet)
Menuet Gothique	Boellman
Firework Music (selections from)	G. F. Handel
Rondeau	Jean Joseph Mouret (w or w/o trumpet)

Congregational Hymn:

“A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”	LBW 229
“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”	LBW 221
“Let All Things Now Living”	LBW 557
“Lead On, O King Eternal!”	LBW 495
“Come with Us, O Blessed Jesus”	LBW 219
“Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing”	LBW 259
“On Our Way Rejoicing”	LBW 260
“Abide with Us, Our Savior”	LBW 263

**Hymns from the *Lutheran Book of Worship* / *With One Voice*:**

241 (LBW)	“We Praise You, O God”
245 (LBW)	“All People That on Earth Do Dwell”
250 (LBW)	“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”
253 (LBW)	“Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now”
256 (LBW)	“Oh, Sing Jubilee to the Lord”
260 (LBW)	“On Our Way Rejoicing”
263 (LBW)	“Abide With Us, Our Savior”
287 (LBW)	“O Perfect Love”
288 (LBW)	“Hear Us Now, Our God and Father”
315 (LBW)	“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”
320 (LBW)	“O God, Our Help in Ages Past”
333 (LBW)	“Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me”
356 (LBW)	“O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts”
456 (LBW)	“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”
474 (LBW)	“Children of the Heavenly Father”
481 (LBW)	“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”
514 (LBW)	“O Savior, Precious Savior”

518 (LBW)	“Beautiful Savior”
534 (LBW)	“Now Thank We All Our God”
535 (LBW)	“Holy God, We Praise Your Name”
543 (LBW)	“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”
548 (LBW)	“Oh, Worship the King”
551 (LBW)	“Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”
557 (LBW)	“Let All Things Now Living”
561 (LBW)	“For the Beauty of the Earth”
565 (LBW)	“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”
748 (WOV)	“Bind Us Together”
749 (WOV)	“When Love Is Found”
770 (WOV)	“I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry”

**Vocal Solos:**

“Borne Cry”	John Ylvisaker
“The Gift of Love”	Hal Hopson (2-part choral, flute)
“El-Shaddai”	John Thompson
“Love One Another”	Germaine Habjan (solo or duet)
“And On This Day”	Tina English
“Bridal Prayer”	arr. Jack Schrader
“Cherish the Treasure”	Jon Mohr (duet)
“God, A Woman and A Man”	Lilly Green
“He Has Chosen You For Me”	Pat Terry
“Household of Faith”	John Rosasco
“Make Us One”	Denise & Dwight Liles
“Sabbath Prayer” (“Fiddler On The Roof”)	Jerry Bock
“The Unity Candle Song”	Raymond Haan
“The Lord’s Prayer”	Leon Abbott Hoffmeister
“Lord’s Prayer”	Malotte
“Wedding Song” (There Is Love)	
“Wedding Prayer”	Fern Glasgou Dunlap
“O Father, Son & Holy Ghost”	Johann Kittel
“Song of Ruth”	Joyce Eilers (choir anthem or solo)
“Heavenly Father, Hear Our Prayer”	Hymn 289 LBW
“In This Very Room”	Ron & Carol Harris

**APPENDIX C**  
**Schedule of Suggested Fees**

<b>Use of Church</b>	<b>Member Non- Member</b>	<b>No Fee \$150</b>
Pastor--counseling, planning, rehearsal, and ceremony:	<b>Member Non-Member</b>	HONORARIUM <b>\$200</b>
Organist--consultation, practice, rehearsal, ceremony:		<b>\$100</b>
--consultation, practice, rehearsal, ceremony, accompaniment of a vocalist or other musician:		<b>\$125</b>
Soloist / Instrumentalist:		<b>\$ 50</b>
Custodian--Wedding only:		<b>\$ 75</b>
Wedding & reception:		<b>\$100</b>
Sound System Engineer		<b>\$ 75</b>
WELCA--preparing, serving, cleaning up after reception:		<b>\$125</b>



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