



Trinity Lutheran Church ELCA

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A Wedding Guidebook

- I. Introduction
- II. How to Begin
 - A. Scheduling
 - B. Costs
 - C. Wedding License
 - D. Off-Site Weddings
- III. Pre-marriage counseling
- IV. The Wedding Service
- V. Suggested Readings
- VI. Suggested Music
- VII. Other Details
 - A. Photographs
 - B. Birdseed, Bubbles, etc.
 - C. Alcohol/Food/Smoking
 - D. Decorations
 - E. Rehearsal

We Welcome You

Dear Friends,

We are honored that you are considering having your wedding at Trinity Lutheran Church. All relationships are God's brilliant gift to us, including romantic relationships. We are delighted that you have found a love so great that you are ready for lifelong commitment! We welcome all couples, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, who are in publicly accountable, life-long, monogamous relationships to consider having your commitment blessed here.

At the heart of marriage is the promise of love and faithfulness by which two people bind themselves together in a lifelong commitment. The church celebrates and accompanies the couple through this life passage by witnessing your promises, proclaiming the Word of God in connection with this transition, and praying for God's blessing on you as a couple and on your families.

Trinity is a distinctively Christian church in the Lutheran tradition, but we welcome inter-denominational and inter-faith weddings. We require that at least one partner be a baptized Christian, though you need not be a member of Trinity Lutheran Church.

We've prepared this booklet to help you through the process of creating a meaningful ceremony.

II. How to Begin

A. Scheduling

As soon as you have a date in mind for your wedding, please check with the church office to see if the date is available. Obviously, the earlier you select a date, the better the chance you will have that the ideal date is available for your service. Because of the church celebrations surrounding Holy Week (the week before and including Easter) and the week before Christmas through New Year's, Trinity cannot accommodate weddings at those times.

To confirm your date, please submit the Trinity Wedding Information Sheet and ½ of the fees due as a deposit. Then please contact the pastor to set up your initial meeting. (You will probably meet with the pastor three times, depending on your needs.) You also need to schedule a meeting with the Church Musician in order to explore music options.

B. Costs

The standard cost for a wedding when one or both partners is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church is \$1000.00 This includes the pastor, the organist, the use of the building, and the custodian's services. If neither partner is a member of Trinity Lutheran, the cost is \$1400. If this presents a financial hardship for the couple, please discuss your concerns with the pastor.

C. Wedding License

It is your responsibility to obtain your marriage license. Please contact the Dane County Register of Deeds (www.co.dane.wi.us/regdeeds). There is a five-day waiting period, and the license is valid for only 30 days, so please plan accordingly. Please bring the license and your final payment to Trinity Lutheran Church at least one week prior to your wedding.

D. Off-Site Weddings

The pastor at Trinity Lutheran is usually available to officiate at off-site weddings. Although you may not necessarily meet with the church musician for off-site weddings, all other protocol related to a wedding at Trinity Lutheran Church wedding is still expected. Because off-site weddings require some extra preparation and travel for the pastor, a fee of \$300 for the pastor is expected for off-site weddings.

III. Pre-marriage Counseling

All relationships benefit from the wise and skilled guidance of a professional counselor/therapist. The church wishes to be an active force in strengthening relationships and building up loving families.

As a result, couples who marry at Trinity Lutheran church are expected to participate in a pre-marriage workshop offered through Lutheran Social Services. These workshops are offered year-round, usually once a month, at various churches in the Madison area. For dates and locations, please visit

www.lsswis.org/LSS/services/counseling/premarriage-workshops.html

If you choose to seek counseling elsewhere, please check with the pastor to ensure that your desired facilitator is approved. To facilitate the wedding planning process, this session should be scheduled as soon as possible.

From *Whistling in the Dark*, by contemporary theologian Frederick Buechner, on the subject of marriage:

“They say they will love, comfort, honor each other to the end of their days. They say they will cherish each other and be faithful to each other always. They say they will do these things not just when they feel like it but even—for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health—when they don’t feel like it at all. In other words, the vows they make at a marriage could hardly be more extravagant. They give away their freedom. They take on themselves each other’s burdens. They bind their lives together in ways that are even more painful to unbind emotionally, humanly, than they are to unbind legally. The question is: what do they get in return?

They get each other in return. Assuming they have any success at all in keeping their rash, quixotic promises, they never have to face the world quite alone again. There will always be the other to talk to, to listen to. If they’re lucky, even after the first passion passes, they still have a kindness and a patience to depend on, a chance to be patient and kind. There is still someone to get through the night with, to wake into the new day beside. If they have children, they can give them, as well as each other, roots and wings. If they don’t have children, they each become the other’s child.

They both still have their lives apart as well as a life together. They both still have their separate ways to find. But a marriage made in Heaven is one where a man and a woman become more richly themselves together than the chances are either of them could ever have managed to become alone.”

IV. The Wedding Service

There are myriad ways to modify and adapt this service, but the general outline is as follows. It is expected that the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church will officiate at the service, but guest pastors can be invited to assist.

The Order of Service

Procession—The wedding party enters the sanctuary. How this happens can vary according to your preference and in conversation with the pastor. Often the groom accompanies his parents in, followed by the attendants, usually in couples. The bride enters last, often with her parents. If you choose, the procession may include the cross, banners, or other fitting elements for the service.

Greeting/Introduction—A formal exchange between the pastor and congregation immediately after all have entered the sanctuary; the pastor highlights the church's understanding of marriage.

Declaration of Intention—The couple announces their intention to marry, and the congregation offers their support and blessing. Parents or other family members may speak additional words of encouragement at this time.

Prayer of the Day—Prayed by the Pastor or another person of the couple's choice, asking for the presence of Christ at this celebration

Hymn/Solo*--There are many appropriate places in the service for congregational singing or special vocal or instrumental music; this is one such spot. Others might be between Scripture readings, after the sermon, during the lighting of the Unity Candle if there is one, or during Holy Communion, if that is part of your service.

Scripture readings—Declaring the steadfast love of God, usually two or three passages are read by the pastor or other readers selected by the bride and groom. Typically, there is one reading from the Old Testament, one from the New, and one Gospel reading. Other readings, such as a poem or other special text, may be included at this time.

Sermon—A brief reflection by the pastor on the Scripture readings.

Exchange of Vows—The heart of the wedding service takes place when the couple exchange promises with one another. There are several options listed in this booklet, but it is perfectly appropriate to revise and adapt them, or to write your own.

Exchange of Rings—Rings are exchanged as tangible, outward signs of the promises being made.

Declaration of Marriage/Blessing—The pastor pronounces the official union of the couple, and prays a blessing upon them on behalf of the whole congregation.

Unity Candle*-- Some couples like the symbolism of lighting one large candle from two individual tapers; other symbolic actions may take place at this time (for example, if the couple have cultural traditions that they want to incorporate, or if children are part of this new family, this might be a time for special blessings).

Prayers/the Lord's Prayer—Because a couple is always part of a larger community, these prayers are prayed by the whole congregation for the sake of the world. They focus on the gift of love to the couple and to all of creation, and call to mind all who are in need. The prayers conclude with the Lord's Prayer.

Holy Communion*--Like marriage, the Eucharist is a covenant characterized by self-giving love. When a wedding service includes the meal, the Body and Blood of Christ is offered to all who wish to encounter Christ, regardless of denominational differences, and not just to the wedding party. Consider baking the bread as a couple, or having someone special make it for you, as well as asking friends and family to assist the pastor in distributing the elements.

Benediction—The pastor asks God's blessing on the new husband and wife and all those gathered.

Presentation—The new bride and groom are introduced for the first time as husband and wife. (This is an appropriate moment for the exchange of a kiss). Please let the pastor know what surnames should be used.

Recessional—The wedding party exits the sanctuary to serve God in word and deed.

V. Suggested Scripture Readings

Usually a couple chooses two or three, often one from the Hebrew Scriptures and at least one from the New Testament. Typically, when Holy Communion is a part of the service, one of the readings is from the Gospels. Family members and friends are welcome to serve as readers!

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalms 33, 67, 100, 117, 127, 128, 136, 150 or others

Proverbs 3:3-6

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Song of Solomon (Song of Songs) 2:8-14, 16

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

Isaiah 54:5-8

Isaiah 63:7-9

Jeremiah 31:31-34

New Testament

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18

1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13

Ephesians 3:14-19

Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33

Philippians 4:4-9

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Peter 3:3-4

1 John 3:18-24

1 John 4:7-16

Revelation 19:1, 5-9

GOSPEL

Matt. 5:1-12

Matt. 5:13-16

Matt. 7:21, 24-29

Matt. 19:4-6

Matt. 22:35-40

Mark 10:6-9

John 2:1-11

John 13:34-35

John 15:9-12

John 15:12-16

John 17:20-26

VI. Suggested Music

Because a wedding is a worship service, please select music that will speak of God's love for us and our love for God. Our Church Musician will help you. We encourage other favorite love songs to be presented at the rehearsal dinner or the reception.

VII. Other Details

A. Photographs

Photographs of your wedding are an important part of the day, so pictures (including flash photos) may be taken during the service. Please advise your photographer to use discretion and good taste, keeping in mind that this is a worship service.

Videotaping the ceremony is also permitted. There are a number of vantage points within the sanctuary that work well. Please select a stationary position for the camera before the service begins, as moving around in the middle of worship is distracting.

B. Birdseed/Bubbles, etc.

Confetti, birdseed, or bubbles are permitted outside the building. No rice, please!

C. Alcohol/Food/Smoking

With the exception of communion wine, NO alcohol can be consumed in the church building or on church property. Some exceptions might be made *after the wedding* if your reception is being held on the church premises. (Please make a written request to this effect and the church council will consider your request). If there is inappropriate use of alcoholic beverages by members of the wedding party on the day of the rehearsal or the wedding, it is the privilege of the pastor to refuse to perform the wedding.

There is no food or drink of ANY kind permitted in the sanctuary. Please respect this as a place of worship. Please consult with the pastor about using the kitchen or making food available in other rooms. Please contact the church office for information if you are considering using our Fellowship Hall for your reception.

There is strictly no smoking within the church building. There is a designated area outside for those who wish to smoke. Please dispose of your cigarette butts in the proper receptacle.

D. Decorations

The paraments on the altar and the banners on the walls reflect the liturgical church season (blue in Advent, green in Pentecost, etc.) and do not change for weddings. A wedding banner is available for your use if you desire. Bouquets of flowers may be placed on our flower stands, or you may arrange with your florist for other display options. No flowers may be placed on the altar. If you will be lighting a unity candle, doing a sand ceremony, or other visual symbol during the service, you must provide those items. A small table will be available for placing these symbols in the chancel area. Other flowers, candles, and decorations are permissible and possible, but are your responsibility. Please talk with the pastor about your ideas.

E. Rehearsal

Normally, a rehearsal takes place on the eve of the wedding, but other times are certainly possible. It is important that all participants be in attendance at the rehearsal. It usually lasts about 45 minutes.

Benediction

May God our Creator bless and keep you.

May the sun of many years shine upon you.

May the love you have for one another grow and hold you close;

May your dreams come true, and when they don't, may new dreams arise,

May you serve your neighbor in need.

May joy and peace fill your lives.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.