



A Christian Wedding

Wedding Manual

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
1611 East Main Street
Watertown, Wisconsin 53094
920/261-2570**

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A Christian Wedding

Congratulations on your engagement! May our Loving God and Jesus Christ, His Son, watch over and bless your coming marriage!

It is important that the couple reads this booklet before sending in the Wedding Application. Some material may not apply to your wedding, but it is important that you are in agreement with the way weddings are performed here at Good Shepherd before plans are made and time and money are invested. Your wedding day is one of the most important dates in your lives. As the pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, I am pleased to share this occasion with you. By deciding to be married at a Christian church, you are showing your relatives and friends that your wedding day and your marriage will be Christ-centered. All of us at Good Shepherd want to do everything possible to help make your wedding a joyous, meaningful and memorable experience.

In planning the service, many brides and grooms think, “It is my wedding, isn’t it?” In a very narrow sense, the answer is yes. You are the ones being married. But in a more important and broader sense, the answer is no. While you have control over many of the things regarding your wedding day (i.e. whether or not to have an isle runner, etc) the wedding service itself is the responsibility of the church. The Christian church’s worship practices are determined by God, based on Scripture, and tested by almost 2,000 years of history. God clearly asserts ownership over the wedding service.

Here are five fundamental and important understandings about a Christian wedding service.

1) A Christian wedding is a service of worship!

A Christian worship service always insists that God be placed at the center of worship, and that we direct predominant attention to

Him, never wavering in our concentration. Anything (including the music) or anyone that shifts the focus from God violates this principle and will not be a part of the service. Many things which may be “cute” or “sentimental” are not appropriate for the service.

2) A Christian wedding is a public service.

The word “public” means that the service belongs to all the people of God, not to one or two people. Even those “private” wedding services, attended only by the Pastor, bride, groom and a few witnesses, will be done “decently and in good order” (1 Cor. 14:40). They too will be Christ-centered and reverent. In short, any service held in church allows and encourages the entire congregation to express its faith.

3) A Christian wedding is a corporate service.

Corporate means that all the Christians present are linking spiritual hands and uniting in one act of worship. Everyone has an important role in the worship process, whether they listen, speak, sing, or pray silently. A Christian wedding service is not a performance in which the bride and groom and wedding party are the actors, the Pastor is the stage manager, and everyone else is the audience. That’s not the way of it at all. All present are invited and encouraged to worship. All are to witness. All are to pray. All are to acknowledge that marriage is God’s idea and that, in this wedding, the bride and groom are accepting God’s plan for marriage.

4) A Christian wedding is a time of clear proclamation.

In the wedding, as in any Christian service of worship, we will say some very important things about Christ and the cross he bore for us. This is central to who we are and what we believe. We want to proclaim these things aloud and with openness, in the reading of the Word, in the sermon, in the music, in the art. Proclamation asserts that God loves us in Christ. Let your wedding do the same.

5) A Christian wedding service is a time of celebration.

Much is being celebrated at a wedding. We celebrate what “God has joined together” (Matt. 19:4-6) as husband and wife. We celebrate the gift of love and the blessing of marriage. We celebrate a rare reunion of family and friends. We celebrate Christ’s death and resurrection. . . for us. We celebrate the promises of the Lord that He will never abandon His children or forsake them. Celebration is essential to the wedding and gives texture to the service. The wedding service is a planned, organized service of celebration which remembers and reflects on all the causes of celebration.

This booklet is intended to assist your planning of a Christian wedding. Please try to remember that these rules are in place so that your wedding ceremony will be a Christ-centered service of worship. The ministry of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is not to perform wedding ceremonies, but to nourish marriages with the Good News of Christ, before, during and after the wedding itself. May yours be a beautiful wedding in the name of the Triune God and to His glory . . . and for your happiness.

Pastor David K. Groth
Senior Pastor

Getting Started With Your Wedding Plans

While membership in Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is not required of both persons, at least one or the other must be an active member or pursuing active membership. As divorce is directly against the will of God (Matthew 19:6), and it can be a barrier to re-marriage. However, if the divorcee sees his/her sin and seeks God's forgiveness, the grace of God takes this barrier away.

If the congregation's marriage policy is agreeable to you, then return the Wedding Application Form. The Pastor will act on this information, approving the schedule of your wedding and rehearsal. After you receive the approved "Wedding Application Form" from the pastor, you will want to do the following:

- 1) Immediately make arrangements for an organist at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church by calling 920-261-2570. It is important to establish early contact with the Director to begin planning wedding music. As our own organists are most familiar with the instrument and the service of worship, normally their participation is vital at the wedding service. The couple is encouraged to use our own soloists as well. The couple may supply their own soloist, provided he/she can perform adequately.
- 2) Three months prior to your wedding date, call for an appointment with the officiating Pastor. Normally there will be about 3 meetings of pre-marital counseling scheduled with the couple and the pastor. You may call him or the church secretary at any time to inquire about details not covered in this wedding booklet.

Your Wedding Team

Only resident called pastors of Good Shepherd conduct weddings at this church. In some instances, the Senior Pastor may request one of the part-time pastors to conduct a wedding.

If a couple has a close clergy relative, a pastor of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, they may request that the Pastor of Good Shepherd invite their relative to participate in the wedding ceremony. If a couple has a close clergy relative who is not a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, his/her participation is encouraged at the reception, though not permitted during the ceremony.

Occasionally, couples will engage a wedding coordinator or other wedding consultants. A wedding consultant is invited to assist with but not direct the rehearsal or wedding.

Wedding Music

Wedding music in all aspects shall serve the congregation at worship. The Rite of Holy Marriage brings bride and groom, their families and friends, ". . .in the presence of God." Among the myriad choices of music, the pastors and musicians at Good Shepherd request that wedding music be appropriate for a service of public worship, honoring the Triune God, and expressive of Christian faith in God.

In this regard, couples should consult with the assigned organist at Good Shepherd before making final selections of wedding music. A sample of appropriate selections for processional and recessional, solo pieces, and works for instrumentalists are printed in the Appendix of this booklet. Also, the singing of appropriate hymns is proper.

The Wedding Ceremony

As Christ blessed the wedding at Cana with his presence, we know He will also bless your union. Couples should become acquainted with the wedding ceremony of the Lutheran Church. The Order of the Marriage Service is set forth with essential parts underscored.

The Pre-Service Music

The Processional (and/or Hymn by the Congregation)

The Invocation

The Admonition

The Solo (optional)

The Reading of Scriptures

The Wedding Sermon or Meditation

The Solo (and/or Hymn) (optional)

The Consent of the Parents

The Declarations

The Exchange of Wedding Vows

The Ring Exchange

The Wedding Pronouncement

The Lighting of the Unity Candle

The Prayers

The Lord's Prayer (May be sung as a Solo)

The Benediction

The Tribute of Roses for the Mothers

The Recessional

A sample of appropriate selections for Scripture lessons is printed in the Appendix. It is a good exercise for the couple to choose together the lessons they wish to be read at their wedding.

Reflections on the Wedding Ceremony

Though some variation is permitted in the Order, especially with respect to placement of musical portions, this is the general outline of the wedding liturgy at Good Shepherd.

Readings are from the Bible, and are usually rendered by the officiating Pastor. If the couple wishes, non-ordained family members or friends may also read the lessons. We ask, however, that these readers be chosen carefully. We also ask that they limit their words to the lesson at hand. Anyone who reads should be at the rehearsal. There is a list of appropriate lessons in the Appendix. Normally, one Old Testament lesson is chosen, one Epistle lesson, and one Gospel. It is a good exercise for the couple to choose together two or three lessons they wish to be read at their wedding. Readings other than the Scriptures may be shared at the reception.

A member of the church's Board of Elders may be on hand at the wedding to help maintain the beauty of the Christian marriage service and to check the ventilation, lights, sound system, etc. He will be glad to answer any last minute questions. Couples may wish to have a printed Order for the Marriage Service. This is optional. Samples of former wedding service programs are available for you to through the church secretary at Good Shepherd. She will also help you select and order a wedding service folder. The officiating Pastor **must** approve every program before it is printed in mass. Printing may be done at Good Shepherd or at local shops in the community. In both cases, sufficient time (about two weeks) is needed.

Note: As there is a worship service every Saturday at 6:00 p.m., the sanctuary *must* be vacated by 5:00 p.m. and preferably by 4:30 p.m. This allows time for proper clean-up. In addition, it allows quiet time for those who come early for silent meditation. **Please alert your photographer to this.**

The Wedding Rehearsal

The date and time of the rehearsal will be set when making application to be married at Good Shepherd. Please set the hour when all parties can arrive comfortably on time.

In general, rehearsals are held the evening prior to the day of the wedding ceremony. The rehearsal is a preparation for the wedding

as a worship service. Organists are present for rehearsals at Good Shepherd. Practice for soloists with the organist, however, should be scheduled for another time, perhaps before or after the rehearsal. Other personnel to be present at the rehearsal are: bride and groom, attendants, ushers, readers, ring bearer and flower girl, and parents from both sides of the wedding party.

Rehearsals last about forty minutes. The officiating Pastor will conduct the rehearsal. Participants will be asked to gather initially in the front pews of the church sanctuary. The Pastor will share some preliminary remarks. Then the bridal party will find their places in the chancel, and walk through the service with the bridal party. The pastor will share instructions for the ushers.

The Wedding Party and Participants

There are no fixed rules on the size of the bridal party. However, if children participate, we suggest five years of age or older. During the service, children will always be seated with relatives in the first or second pew from the front. Two witnesses, 18 years of age or over, are required at any wedding ceremony. A dressing room is available for the bride and her attendants.

The Marriage License

Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal or present it earlier at the church office, making certain that the officiating Pastor receives these important papers.

Residents of the State of Wisconsin must apply before the County Clerk of the county in which either has been a resident for at least 30 days prior to date of application. They may be married in any county of the state. Out-of-state residents must apply in the county where the marriage is to be performed. Good Shepherd is in Jefferson County. When obtaining a marriage license, both parties must be present to make the application.

In Jefferson County: Apply at the County Clerk's Office, 320 S. Main St. room 109, Jefferson, Wisconsin. Applications are taken from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Please call (920) 674-8630 with any questions.

In Dodge County: Apply at the County Clerk's Office, 127 E. Oak Street, Juneau, Wisconsin. Applications are taken from 8:00 am - 12:00 pm and 12:30 - 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Please call (920) 386-3602 with any questions.

Application for license must be made at least 6 days before the ceremony. The license is good for 30 days from the date of issuance. To avoid conflict with the various requirements, it is suggested that application be made 7 to 35 days before the wedding date.

Photographers and Photographs

With regard to pictures, we ask that each couple counsel with their photographer and share the following information:

- 1) Photographs may be taken before or after the wedding ceremony.
- 2) Aisle shots are permitted for the parents and the bridal party during the processional and recessional.
- 3) No flashes or strobe lights are permitted in the sanctuary during the wedding ceremony, from the close of the processional to the beginning of the recessional.
- 4) Video cameras/recorders are permitted from a stationary tripod. Video equipment is not permitted near the chancel, nor in the chancel itself during the ceremony. Roving video picture taking is NOT PERMITTED in the sanctuary.
- 5) All parties taking photographs or using video equipment at the request of the bride and groom should counsel with the officiating Pastor prior to the ceremony.

Flowers

Because the Christian faith honors the living Lord, only fresh cut, living flowers may be used by the wedding party and to decorate the chancel. They may be placed on the Altar itself, on the floor in front of the Altar, in front of the of the lectern, or on the flower stand behind the Altar. Floral pieces should NOT be used to decorate the communion rail.

The rows of chairs along the center of the aisle may be decorated. We have clips that may be used to attach bows. DO NOT use nails, screws, wire, or any other fastener which may damage the varnish of church furniture. (Note: The aisle runner is not a necessary part of the wedding service. If the couple desires a runner, one may be purchased from a florist.)

Candles

Two candles on the Altar are lighted for every worship service. Candelabra may also be used in the chancel. In addition, the church also has candle lanterns that can line either side of the center aisle. Candelabra may be rented from a florist.

A Unity Candle may be used. Good Shepherd will provide the candle base. The center wedding candle is provided by the couple. We also ask that the couple provides the two tapers so they match the unity candle.

Flowers for the Mothers

Two single roses (fresh cut) may be placed on the altar rail. Following the benediction at the close of the ceremony, the bride and groom may carry the roses to their mothers seated on either side of the aisle in the front pew. The organist plays quietly as the couple goes first to the bride's mother and then to the groom's mother. Thereafter, they regroup in the center for the recessional.

Guest Book

If a guest book is desired, the couple shall provide it. A stand in the narthex may be used for this book. We suggest placing the stand near the main entrance of the church so that guests may sign the book when arriving for the ceremony. It is proper to have an attendant at the guest book.

DECORUM

Conduct in the Church

We surely have no right to ask the blessing of Almighty God upon a marriage which ignores Him in His own house. You and your guests are reminded that the church is God's House. All present at rehearsals and the wedding should conduct themselves with the reverent joy that is appropriate for the occasion of joining two Christians together in love. Joy and love are appropriate; levity and lewdness are not.

Tobacco and Alcohol

*No alcoholic beverages are permitted in the church and school premises of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School, indoors or outdoors. This is inclusive of the parking areas.

If necessary, the bride and groom should inform their friends and acquaintances of this policy. Smoking is prohibited inside Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School.

Receptions at Good Shepherd

Wedding receptions may be held at Good Shepherd in the Fellowship Hall on the lower level of the building. There is no building fee for holding the reception at church. However, the custodians must be paid, in addition to the \$50 fee, \$10.00 per hour. There are certain limitations attached to the use of the Fellowship Hall. No reception can go past 5:30 PM, as there is a worship service upstairs at 6:00 PM. (Sound travels!) Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on church and school property.

Fees and Honorariums

For those who serve at church weddings we ask well deserved recognition in terms of modest honorariums. The schedule of fees listed here has been established by the congregation's Board of Elders and Board of Directors. They are the following:

Use of church	No fee
Custodian	\$50.00
Soloist	\$50.00
Organist	\$75.00
Pastor	Elders suggestion of \$125
Bulletins	Fee varies; please see the church secretary for ordering and printing information.

Please make out separate honorariums in individual envelopes.

Please present these honorariums at the rehearsal.

Reporting weddings & engagements to the Watertown Daily Times

Deadline for wedding announcements and photographs is 6-8 weeks after the ceremony. A fee is not charged for wedding or engagement stories and photographs. You may report your engagement or wedding on a standard form available from your photographer or from the Daily Times office (115 W. Main Street).

Finally

As you know, a church is more than just a place for marriages. Therefore, we expect that after your wedding you will return to Good Shepherd and actively participate in the life of the congregation. On a very real and practical note: those couples who are active in their congregation statistically are much less likely to get a divorce than those couples who are not members of a congregation or are not active. Marriages, especially in the first years, are typically filled with tensions and minor problems as two personalities adjust to complement one another. During this time, a church home greatly increases the possibility of a lasting union.

May Almighty God bless your marriage and all your hopes for a Christ-centered future! Go with God and with joy through life together!

APPENDIX I

Scripture lessons

Typically, one Old Testament Lesson, one Epistle, and one Gospel Lesson is chosen. Suggested Texts:

Old Testament

Genesis 2:18-24	Psalm 37:3-7a	Isaiah 54:10
Numbers 6:22-27	Psalm 103	Isaiah 62:5b
Joshua 24:15	Psalm 118:14	Jeremiah 17:7-8
Ruth 1:15-17	Psalm 121	Jeremiah 31:3
Psalm 23	Psalm 127:1	
Psalm 27	Proverbs 3:5,6	
Psalm 31:1-5	Isaiah 41:10	

Gospel

Matthew 6:25-34	Luke 14:20
Matthew 7:24-29	Luke 24:28-29
Matthew 19:3-6	John 2:1-11
Matthew 28:16-20	John 10:11
Luke 10:38-42	John 10:27-30

Epistle

Romans 8:28-32	Ephesians 5:21-33
Romans 12:9-18	Hebrews 13:4-5
1 Corinthians 11:11-12	James 3:3-12
1 Corinthians 13:1-13	Revelation 19:9
Ephesians 4:32-5:2	

