



Faith Lutheran Church

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Christian greetings from Faith Lutheran Church and congratulations on your engagement. Your decision to get married marks a big step in your life, and we celebrate with you in your choice to have a Christian wedding and to model your new family according to God’s will. We will work with you in the wedding preparations, provide a beautiful and Christ-centered context for the ceremony, and be a loving and supportive family of faith as you move into married life together.

This booklet is designed to answer questions you might have about getting married at Faith. Please read it completely and return the attached information form, & fees which will verify and reserve the date and time of your wedding. If you have any questions not answered here, please do not hesitate to call the church office at 435-5524 for more information or clarification. May God’s blessings go with you as you prepare for your wedding and marriage.

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Who may get married at Faith Lutheran Church?

The basic rule is that members in good standing of the congregation may be married here. Exceptions to this rule need to be approved by the pastor and may include things like

- People who have made arrangements to join and are in the process of becoming members here at Faith.
- Former members who no longer live in the area but who wish to get married at their “home church.” This is acceptable with the permission of the pastor where the couple has current membership.
- Lutheran members of the armed services who need a suitable location for the families to gather for the wedding. This requires a letter from a military chaplain confirming that he has done the pre-marital counseling.
- Members of a sister LCMS congregation whose facility may not be suitable due to size, location, ongoing construction, etc. Normally this means that the couple’s pastor will also be doing the premarital counseling and performing the ceremony; Faith is providing the church building.

“...Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into inadvisably or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.”

(From the Opening Address of the Wedding Service, Lutheran Service Book Agenda)

We assume that you desire a church wedding instead of a secular wedding because you plan for your individual lives and marriage to be conformed to the Word of God, which defines and sets limits on Christian marriage. These parameters are not always the same as those commonly used by the wider culture. **In order to lay a solid foundation for Christian marriage, you both should plan to meet with the pastor before proceeding with the other wedding plans if any of the following apply:**

- One or both of you have any prior divorces.
- You are or plan to be living together prior to the wedding.
- One of you is a Christian and the other is not.
- You cannot obtain a marriage license from the State of Wisconsin.

This meeting with the pastor will provide an opportunity to discuss these issues from a Scriptural standpoint, make any necessary arrangements and get everything squared away before proceeding with the wedding plans. If you fit any of the categories above, your marriage will be all the stronger for taking God’s will seriously from the very beginning.

Getting Started

Generally we do four sessions of premarital counseling at some point prior to the wedding. Each session takes roughly 45-60 minutes. During these sessions we go through a few discussion exercises to get acquainted and make sure everything is in order and talk through the challenges marriages face. The final session is when we go over details of the service itself in preparation for the rehearsal. The whole process from the time you receive this booklet to the time you are actually married involves these steps:

- Step 1 Read this entire booklet, fill out the attached form, and return it with required fees to the church office. When that is done, your wedding day is reserved on the church, pastor & organists' calendar.

- Step 2 If necessary; schedule an appointment with the pastor to discuss any of the issues from page 2. This should be done as soon as possible after you turn in the form. This must be done before proceeding to the next step.

- Step 3 Contact the music director at the church to make initial arrangements regardless of who is performing music for the ceremony. This is necessary to confirm availability of rehearsal time and space and what equipment (microphones, pianos, etc.) may be needed. The advantage of hiring the music director is that there is a knowledgeable and experienced musician to coordinate the music and be on site to insure that things run smoothly during the ceremony. The music director is always given the right of first refusal for all ceremonies.

- Step 4 Schedule and attend the first premarital session. This meeting can happen any time prior to the wedding, though it should be enough in advance to get the rest of the meetings in. 6-9 months before the wedding is normal. Pre-marital counseling sessions are normally held on Mondays from 5:15 – 6:15 p.m. The remaining meetings get scheduled as part of the first meeting.

- Step 5 Prior to the wedding, obtain a license from the State of Wisconsin. After receiving the license, you can keep it at the church. A wedding cannot occur without the license.

- Step 6 Rehearsal. This usually takes about 45 minutes and happens the evening before the wedding. If the license is not already at church, bring the license to the rehearsal; the pastor will then take care of all the legal requirements.

- Steps 7-10 Wedding, reception, honeymoon, married life together to the glory of God.

Costs

Weddings are not a business for us or something we try to profit from, but there are many costs involved with Faith congregation hosting your wedding. However, we want to make sure all of our members have the chance to be married in our building regardless of their financial situation. The amounts we have listed here are what we think are simply fair to everyone. If finances are a special concern for you, please see the pastor, and we can probably work out ways of reducing these costs and the overall cost of the wedding depending on your other wedding expenses.

What we always provide is premarital counseling, rehearsal, setup of the chancel area with paraments and wedding banners, use of the building for the day of the wedding for preparations and photos, and cleanup afterwards. Other things we often provide include the music and/or accompaniment, printing the service bulletins (covers must be purchased by the couple) and aisle candles with setup and take-down of candelabra. All fees must be paid in order to reserve your date.

Facility (Altar Guild setup, custodian, office)	\$100
Pastor	\$150
Organist/music	\$150 for most weddings. Weddings using soloists from outside and requiring additional rehearsals will be \$200 or more.
Aisle candles (if desired)	\$75

If you are renting the space as outlined on page 2, and do not hire our music director or pastor a fee of \$100 will be required to provide a congregational representative who will unlock / lock building and assist in your use of the facility.

Again, we do not want finances to get in the way of your wedding. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to ask.

Policies and Facts About the Building

Our building will be both a practical and beautiful place for your weddings; and you will have use of it before and after the wedding, because we do not schedule more than one wedding on the same day. Feel free to arrive early to make preparations and to schedule pictures in the gardens or in the sanctuary before or after the service. Some things about our facilities to help you plan—

- The bridal party will have choir room in the basement to get ready. The groom and groomsmen will have the lounge. You may choose to leave dresses, tuxes, etc. at the church after the rehearsal if your wedding is on a Saturday.
- The sanctuary has nineteen pews on each side of the aisle and 25 chairs in each transept. There are also 40 seats in the balcony. The church can accommodate about 300 people.
- The church has dark red aisle carpet. If you desire to have an aisle-runner (not recommended) it should be at least 65 feet long.
- The building is air-conditioned, but it will still be warm for those standing up in the wedding party because of the spotlights aimed at the front of the church.

The upkeep and appearance of our building is important to us, as is the fact that it is the house of God. We ask that you bear in mind the following policies concerning use of the building and grounds:

- No smoking inside. Anyone smoking outside must bring some sort of can to contain cigarette butts. Please do not throw any cigarettes on the ground, parking lot, or into the gardens. It is up to the wedding party to enforce this policy.
- No alcoholic beverages in the building or on the grounds, including the parking lot.
- No rice, confetti, rose petals, birdseed, or anything else that is thrown or scattered either after the service or during the processional by a flower girl. If this tradition is important to you, please incorporate it into the reception activities.
- Please do not adjust the controls of the sound system. If any changes need to be made, the Music Director or other representative of the church will take care of it.

In addition to these policies, we simply assume that everyone involved with the wedding will take care to leave things as they found them (take all boxes, flowers, decorations, etc. with you when you leave) and to act with due reverence for the fact that this is a house of worship.

The Wedding Service and Music

The pastor(s) of Faith will perform all weddings at Faith unless he/they work out another arrangement with the couple. Only members of the LCMS clergy roster may officiate, co-officiate, or otherwise serve in a clerical capacity at Faith weddings. Prayers, blessings, or official recognition of the wedding by representatives of other Christian denominations may take place before the meal at the reception.

The guiding principle behind all of our policies and procedures concerning the wedding service is that it is first and foremost a Christian ceremony and therefore a Christ-centered event. In order to plan the specific music for your wedding service, please contact one of our resident musicians:

Paul Heiser,
Music Director/Organist/Pianist

Work phone (920) 435-5524
pheiser@new.rr.com

Jill Janssen, Organist

Home phone (920) 336-6174

If you desire to make other arrangements for the music, please contact Paul Heiser to inform him and discuss the specifics of your plans with him or the pastors at Faith to make sure they are appropriate for our setting.

Weddings typically last about 30 minutes. Our order of service comes from the Lutheran Worship Agenda and includes an opening address, three Scripture readings (from Genesis, Ephesians, and Matthew) a short (5-8 minute) sermon, exchange of vows, rings, pronouncement of marriage, prayers and final blessing. Some popular or traditional elements of weddings services not in this agenda that you may or may not wish to add to your service include:

- Lighting unity candle after the pronouncement of marriage.
- Having mothers of the couple light the side candles before the processional.
- Father or parents of the bride responding to the question "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?".
- “You may now kiss the bride” after benediction.

Because it is important to maintain proper reverence for the religious and Christ-centered nature of the service, please keep in mind the following policies in your planning:

- No flash photography by guests during the service. Pictures during the processional and recessional are permitted.
- Videotaping should be done from the balcony.
- Christian hymns and songs are appropriate for the ceremony. Romantic songs are appropriate for the first dance at the reception. The Music Director will be a resource for music selection & he or the pastor has the right to refuse music selections.
- Pre-recorded music is greatly discouraged. Exceptions are at the discretion of the Music Director.
- Traditional vows will always be used, we do not allow for the couple to write their own vows.
- Small children in the wedding party should sit with relatives after the procession during the service rather than stand up front.

The basic goal of your service plans should be to foster reverence and avoid unnecessary distractions. The reception is the right place to showcase humor, romance, cuteness, etc.

Customs, Suggestions, FAQs

Having worked with many couples throughout the wedding-planning process and with marriages after the wedding, the pastors of Faith have a great deal of experience with many of the decisions you are making. Every wedding is a combination of the central, unchanging, and universal design God has for marriage, and the many unique and personal touches that make this “your wedding.” Please consider the following suggestions and observations merely as something that may prove helpful to you as you plan.

- It is customary to invite the pastor to the reception, but he may or may not be able to attend. If he does attend, he customarily offers the prayer before the meal.
- The pastor is not typically invited to the rehearsal dinner. At your discretion you may invite the Music Director/musician if he/she has been working closely with the wedding party and other musicians involved in the ceremony.
- A friend with a good camera will get the pictures you will want to look at in the future. If you really want portrait quality photos, hire a photographer to do just a few poses after the ceremony, and ask your guests for doubles of all the snapshots they take of preparations and the reception.
- In general, spend less on frills that don’t mean much to you when you are a guest at other people’s weddings.
- Order an aisle runner only if it is a really important tradition to you. Our church is carpeted anyway, and the aisle runners often don’t unroll straight.
- Plan something for the groom to do the morning of the wedding before arriving at church, especially if the service is later in the afternoon and the women have hair appointments in the morning.
- Make sure someone who knows how to pin the flowers on the men’s tuxes is available at least half an hour before the service.
- Make sure the DJ knows your views on what constitutes fun and what constitutes poor taste when it comes to music, dancing, and other reception activities.
- Consider doing the receiving line at the reception rather than in the church right after the service.
- On the back of the bulletin thank everyone for coming, and include the couple’s new address and directions to the reception and the schedule, especially if pictures are scheduled between the ceremony and reception.
- Share with the pastor any tips on what you would do differently and what you would definitely recommend so that he can pass them along to other couples.
- Find a friend or relative to be your “crisis manager” the day of the wedding, give him or her all contracts, final payments etc. and the authority to make any decisions on your behalf the day of the wedding. Give his or her number to all vendors to contact on your wedding day. This will allow you and your parents to enjoy the day without the worries attached to event planning and management.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if we want our wedding in a park or some other setting besides church?

-This is not recommended for a variety of reasons, but certainly can be done. The \$100 facility fee does not apply.

We have a relative (or close friend) who is a pastor. Can he perform the ceremony for us at Faith?

-Yes, if he is on the LCMS clergy roster. The premarital counseling can be done by that person or by one of the Faith pastors. Clergy from other Christian denominations can be involved in other ways, such as offering the prayer at the reception. If someone other than the presiding pastor provides pre-marital counseling, please provide them with compensation per their congregations' expectations.

What if we want to get officially married soon, but have the ceremony at a later date?

No problem. Sometimes people get legally married in a small private ceremony so they can begin their married life together (sometimes military or job relocations play a role in this decision) but want to have the formal ceremony with dresses and tuxes and a reception and so forth later, when family is able to attend, when they've saved up the money, or when they're back in town. This works perfectly well. The formal ceremony is basically the same thing as a wedding service, but it is recognition of marriage/renewal of vows.

Why do we need to meet with the pastor before scheduling the premarital counseling if we are already living together?

Although society's norms change, God's plan for the family does not. Living together prior to marriage is one of the very common ways that the society's expectations have changed. This meeting with the pastor gives the couple and the pastor a chance to look at the Biblical moorings of the marriage. Every couple's situation is different, so there is no one solution, but at this meeting the couple and pastor consider some possible ways of making God's plan central to the couple's unique context.

What if we can't afford the costs?

Cost will never be the determining factor at Faith. Where there is need for it among our church members, all costs can be waived at the discretion of the pastor. However, the actual costs, such as paying the custodian, do not go away, so we try to be fair to all concerned, and limit these waivers to rare circumstances.