

Estherville Lutheran Church

Wedding Planner

(Adopted – February 13, 2013)

We are delighted that you have chosen to be married in a service of worship in our church. A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ, and to one another so it is appropriate that your marriage begins in the church. It is at church where the people of God come together and corporately praise God and ask God's blessing and guidance on the couple marrying. The congregation and the pastor are responsible to God and to the State of Iowa in performing marriages. Obviously no couple can be married without a license; however, simply having a license does not require a pastor to marry a couple.

I. Scheduling

To schedule a wedding at Estherville Lutheran Church, call the church office and schedule a time to meet with the pastor. During the penitential season of Lent weddings are usually not scheduled. If a wedding is scheduled during this time the somber mood of the season will be maintained, for example, there will be no flowers around the altar, banners, candelabra or other festive decorations. Weddings will not be scheduled during Holy Week. The pastor of Estherville Lutheran Church will officiate at the wedding. Where it is the desire of the bride and groom to invite another pastor to participate in the wedding, discuss this with our pastor and then the two pastors will confer with each other.

II. Preparing for Your Life Together

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America strictly defines and authorizes the pastor's role in this process:

Before solemnizing a marriage, the Minister shall counsel with the persons about to be married, and shall diligently inquire first as to whether the union contemplated be in accordance with the Word of God; second, whether it be in accordance with the laws of the state. No marriage shall be solemnized unless the Minister be convinced that God's blessing may properly be asked upon it. All arrangements for the marriage shall be made in consultation with the Pastor. Due reverence shall be maintained in the preparation for, and the celebration of, the marriage.

In light of our commitment to these goals this congregation expects the couple to attend a minimum of four counseling sessions with the pastor to discuss specific plans for the wedding itself and to provide the opportunity to look beyond the wedding to the marriage. It is the goal of our congregation to help each couple get off to the best start possible in their marriage.

The pastor will schedule these counseling sessions with each couple a considerable length of time before the marriage service. A marriage preparation tool and a personality indicator will be taken by the couple.

FOCCUS. Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study. This instrument is an aid for marriage preparation. It helps the couple to communicate openly about many subjects that are important to the relationship.

The Meyer's Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI). This indicator identifies personality preferences and is useful in explaining how individuals process information and make decisions in their lives.

For couples who live out of the state, counseling is still required. The couple may discuss other options for counseling with the pastor.

III. The Wedding

The Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal normally precedes the wedding on the day prior to the wedding. The pastor conducts the rehearsal giving each participant adequate opportunity to understand and learn one's role. This usually takes one hour. The participants should rely upon the pastor to give directions when necessary and should, therefore, relax and enter into this Christian service with a sense of joy and celebration with memories to savor.

It is important that all wedding participants be present at the rehearsal, including the bride, attendants, the one escorting her down the aisle, the groom, attendants, ring bearer, flower girl, ushers, both sets of parents and other guests of honor, pianists, organists, soloists, lectors and any guest clergy. It is important for all participants to be on time!

The bride and groom are requested to advise the members of the wedding party that they shall refrain from consuming alcoholic beverages before and during the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. No alcoholic beverages are to be consumed on the church property

The Marriage Service

The marriage service is a service of Christian worship. Weddings follow the order of service as prescribed by the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) or the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW). Couples may choose to organize their wedding around the celebration of the Lord's Supper. When the wedding service includes the Lord's Supper, the communion will be made available to all worshipers. Weddings may also be included as a part of the regular Sunday worship service.

Vows

Couples may plan to include one of the following vows as a part of their wedding service:

Vows #1: *I take you N., 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. (Alternative: "until death parts us.")*

Vows # 2: *N., I take you to be my wife / husband from this time onward, to join with you and 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.*

Vows #3: *I take you, N., 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.*

Vows #4: *I take you, N., 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 the worst of what is to come as long as we live.*

Vows #5: *I, N., take you, N., to be my 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 do us part, according to God's holy ordinance: and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.*

If the couple wishes they may write their own vows. These will include a lifelong commitment and be approved by the pastor.

Selected Scripture Readings

Select up to three lessons from these lists or any other scripture lesson in consultation with the pastor. The pastor may use one of the lessons you picked for the sermon or may choose another.

Suggested Old Testament Readings

Genesis 1:26-31	Male & Female created
Genesis 2:18-24	God creates man & woman
Song of Songs 2:10-13	Love in the Spring
Song of Songs 8:6-7	Unquenchable Love
Psalms 103:1-5,17-18,22	Praise God's great love

Jeremiah 31:31,33-34	Covenant of forgiveness
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Two are better than one
Isaiah 63:7-9	Praise God's unfailing love

Suggested New Testament Readings

Romans 12:1-2,9-12	A Living Offering
1 Corinthians 12:13 - 13:13	The Hymn of Divine Love
Ephesians 5:21-33	How to love one another
Philippians 4:4-9	Worthy qualities for marriage
Colossians 3:12-15	Worthy qualities for marriage
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24	What God wants from us
1 John 3:18-19,22-23	Love God and one another
1 John 4:7-11,19	God's love inspires our own

Suggested Gospel Readings

Matthew 5:13-16	Salt & Light for the earth
Matthew 22:35-40	The Greatest Commandment
Mark 10:6-9	Faithfulness in marriage
John 2:1-10	The Wedding at Cana
John 15:9-12	Command to love each other

Procession and Recessional

About five minutes before the start of the wedding, the guests of honor and all who are in the procession will line up at the entrance to the sanctuary. Guests of honor are often ushered in by the groom with the groom's grandparents entering first, then the bride's grandparents, next comes the groom's parents and finally the mother of the bride. Once the guests of honor are seated the wedding procession itself will begin. The groom's attendants may join the groom by the altar and watch the procession or they may escort the bride's attendants down the aisle. It is recommended that flower girls and ring bearers be at least 4 years old. If younger an adult may need to walk with them down the aisle.

The bride and groom lead the procession out of the sanctuary. The wedding party and guests of honor follow. After greeting the wedding party and guests of honor the couple may then return to the front of the nave and begin ushering out people.

A reception line may be formed in the narthex or even outside in good weather. After the greeting of bride and groom, the marriage license is signed. Usually, the maid-of-honor and the best-man sign as witnesses. They need to be available, so that the license can be signed properly.

IV. The Decoration of the Sanctuary

Flowers should be planned in consultation with the pastor. Live flowers are preferred for bouquets to be placed near the altar. No decorations or flowers are placed on the altar as this space is reserved in respect for the ministry of Word and Eucharist. The couple is responsible for procuring the unity candle. The congregation has candelabra that you may use.

V. Music

The marriage service is a service of worship. Worshipful music should be carefully chosen. The use of congregational hymns is appropriate for the processional and recessional. Likewise, a variety of songs and the use of various instruments are also encouraged. Popular music and love songs may be used before and after the service with the pastor's approval. Songs that express ideas contrary to the church's teachings cannot be used. (i.e. "I Swear")

It is your obligation to arrange for the services of an organist/pianist. The musician may be most helpful in selecting instrumental music or hymns for the prelude and postlude (as guests arrive and leave) and processional and recessional selections (as the wedding party enters and departs). The soloist needs to be in contact with the musician regarding the scheduling of practice time and in consideration of the music. Likewise, other instrumental soloists or accompanists should be in conversation with the musician.

Suggested Hymns from the Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW)

Entrance Hymns

253 – *Lord Jesus Christ, be present now.*

375 -- *Only-Begotten, Word of God Eternal*

456 -- *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

549 -- *Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven*

543 -- *Praise to the Lord, The Almighty*

Seasonal Hymns: Advent/Christmas

39 - *Joy to the World*

258 - *Hosanna to the Living Lord*

Epiphany

518 - *Beautiful Savior*

Easter

143 - *Now Let the Vault of Heaven Resound*

Pentecost

508 - *Come Down, O Love Divine*

Gen-eral

219 -- *Come With Us, O Blessed Jesus*

224 -- *Deck Thyself with Joy and Gladness*

245 -- *All People that on Earth Do Dwell*

249 -- *God Himself is Present*

250 -- *Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty*

253 -- *Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now*

263 -- *Abide With Us, Our Savior (recessional)*

287 -- *O Perfect Love*

288 -- *Hear Us, Now, Our God and Father (recessional)*

315 -- *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

320 -- *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*

341 -- *Jesus, Still Lead On*

356 -- *Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts*

357 -- *Our Father, By Whose Name*

445 -- *Unto The Hills Around I Lift My Eyes*

451 -- *The Lord's My Shepherd*

456 -- *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

490 -- *Let Me Be Thine Forever*

504 -- *O God, Eternal Source of Love*

517 -- *Praise Ye the Father*

518 -- *Beautiful Savior*

521 -- *Let Us, With a Gladsome Mind*

534 -- *Now Thank We All Our God*

551 -- *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*

553 -- *Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart*

VI. Picture Taking

No flash photography is allowed by anyone, amateur or professional, in the sanctuary at any time during the worship service - from the end of the procession until after the benediction. To do so would be a harsh interruption of the dignity and reverence of the service and a distortion of the true purpose of the wedding. Pictures may be taken at the rear of the church as the bridal couple is returning down the aisle. If a bulletin is prepared please include the following statement; *“No flash photography is allowed during the wedding service.”* Non-flash photos by a professional photographer and any video recording may be taken from the rear of the sanctuary during the service. Before and after the service pictures may be taken in the sanctuary, with proper reverence for the worship center of the church. It is recommended, if scheduling allows, that formal pictures in the sanctuary be taken before the wedding service as a courtesy to guests awaiting the start of the reception and to allow adequate time after the service to greet and enjoy guests.

VII. Suggested Donations

These donations include sanctuary, janitorial expenses, use of candelabra and pew bow clips)

For members or family of members of Estherville Lutheran Church – \$100 and \$50 for Sound Board operator.

For non-members of the church - \$200 and \$100 for Sound Board operator.

If the reception is held at the church there will be additional fees

Suggested Honorariums: *(best if given at the rehearsal)*

\$200 for the pastor(s) officiating at the wedding.

\$100 - \$150 for the pianist or organist.

\$50 - \$75 for a soloist.

VIII. A FEW DETAILS TO CONSIDER

- The bridal party is welcome to use the Fireside Room for putting on wedding attire.
- Ushers should arrive at least 45 minutes before the appointed time of the wedding. They should be prepared to function about 30 minutes before the service.
- Please, no smoking indoors.
- Throwing rice, confetti, glitter or birdseed on church premises is not permitted. If bubbles are used, be sure to pick up all discarded plastic bottles in the parking lot.
- Cleanup and leave-taking should be accomplished as quickly as possible for the sake of those who will use the facilities after you.
- The marriage license should be brought to the church office no later than day of the rehearsal.
- Worship service bulletins may be purchased through Christian bookstores at your expense. Our church secretary will help you format and duplicate these if you need assistance. .
- If you wish to have the pastor or the musicians to attend the rehearsal dinner or reception, they should receive an invitation prior to rehearsal evening.
- If there are any questions about use of the church, decorations or anything else not addressed in this policy, please submit them to the church secretary who will refer them to the appropriate party who will then respond with an answer.
- The capacity of the sanctuary is 300 and Bethany Hall is 200. We are not responsible for over capacity crowds in case of liability.