

Guidelines for a Christian
Wedding Service at
Immanuel and St. John
Lutheran Churches
Hankinson, North Dakota



*For this reason a man will
leave his father and mother
and be united to his wife...*

Genesis 2:24

Immanuel and St. John's Lutheran Churches
205 2nd Ave NE | P.O. Box 440
Hankinson, ND
701-242-7834

Congratulations on your engagement! May God richly bless your plans!

Your wedding is an opportunity to witness to others your commitment to Jesus and to share your faith with those you love. We provide this booklet so you will better understand the policies for weddings at Immanuel and St. John Lutheran churches.

A Christian wedding is a service of worship, asking Christ's blessing upon the marriage. It is not just a social event: rather, it is first a spiritual worship service of the church, in which the pastor and congregation unite in prayer with the wedding couple to share their joy. It is also a legal act in which the pastor acts as an official of the state.

The regulations and guidelines for a Christian wedding shall always be those of the Church and the State in which the wedding will occur. The music, the vows, the service shall be thus approved by Immanuel/St. John Lutheran Church and agree with the traditions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod.

The Order for Marriage (LSB 275) is a service of the church, just as Holy Communion, Baptism, Ordination, and the Burial of the Dead are services of the church. The church, therefore, has both the right and the responsibility to oversee the marriage service so that it is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the authorized liturgy of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The marriage service is not the private option of the couple being

married, their families, friends, or professional wedding counselors.

The social aspect of the marriage is to be kept separate from the marriage ceremony. This is to take place at the reception or later. The pastor will marry couples who are members of this congregation or of another LCMS congregation with permission from that congregation's pastor. The pastor may marry couples if only one is a member of the LCMS and the other is a member of another Christian church, but the pastor is bound by Scripture not to marry couples if either one is not a Christian or if they are currently living together (2 Corinthians 6:14-15, 1 Corinthians 7, 12, and 13.)

Non-Member Weddings: Normally we perform weddings where one or both persons involved are members of Immanuel or St. John, or in special circumstances, of a sister congregation. We do not perform marriages for non-members, unless they are marrying a member. However, those who are not members are asked to participate in our Adult Instruction Class which will help make our church's teachings more familiar to the individual. In addition, the couple will both attend premarital classes with the pastor.

Member Weddings: We are happy and honored to perform marriages for members of the congregation. However, a church wedding is a privilege and honor not to be taken lightly. Mere membership in the congregation does not guarantee we will perform a wedding. Those who are under church discipline, who are living in defiance of His will, or whose membership has not shown

love for our Savior and His Word or a willingness to take part in His work cannot assume we are obliged to marry them. Our Board of Elders has the final authority to approve or disapprove any wedding application.

Qualifying Conditions: The purpose of the Christian Church is to proclaim forgiveness. However, where persons do not exhibit repentance for sin, forgiveness cannot be assured. Accordingly, where mistakes have been made by the couple and repentance is indicated, the marriage will not be hindered. Divorces and pregnancies outside marriage will be candidly discussed with the pastor before permission is granted for a church wedding, as will the sin of living together. For options with living together, please see “Second Thoughts about Living Together”

Parental Approval: No person under the age of 18 will be married without written approval of parents or guardians. If you feel you have legitimate reasons for exception, please talk with the pastor.

Authority: The pastor of Immanuel/St. John Lutheran Church is given the responsibility of ordering and conducting the services of the church to which he is called to serve. This responsibility applies equally to the occasional services (weddings, funerals, etc.) as well as to the regularly scheduled services of the congregational worship.

As the called representative of the congregation and responsible for holding worship services which are in keeping with our Christian and Lutheran traditions, the

pastor in consultation with our board of elders, is the final authority on all matters pertaining to the wedding service. We will not honor or recognize commercial wedding planners, photographers, or others whose main concern is other than the reverence of the service. Couples should not expect or ask for personal whims to replace the regular rules of worship.

The called pastor of Immanuel and St. John will arrange all weddings at these churches. If any other Lutheran clergyman, in fellowship with the LCMS, is to be involved, the pastor of Immanuel and St. John must be consulted for approval, and it is assumed that the pastor of Immanuel and St. John will also be involved in the wedding. Guest pastors shall follow these guidelines for the wedding worship service. The pastor of Immanuel and St. John's will not participate in joint worship services with pastors of denominations with which the Synod has not established fellowship relations. If you would like more information regarding these practices, please let the pastor know.

Meeting the Pastor: We require the prospective groom and bride meet with the pastor for counseling. No wedding will be performed without this prior consultation. Please call the church office in sufficient time to arrange a convenient appointment for these meetings. During these meetings, we will discuss various aspects of Christian living, your relationship, marriage, common problems of marriage, the worship service, and other practical questions.

License: The bridal couple will make arrangements for their marriage license in plenty of time prior to the day of the ceremony, and they should make the necessary inclusions on the documents that are required by the state. Please bring the license along with all related papers, both copies, the return envelope, and anything else in the envelope into the church office by Thursday noon if yours is to be a Saturday or Sunday wedding. No marriage can be performed unless the marriage license is issued in accordance with North Dakota law and is in the pastor's possession prior to the service. Please see info from pastor regarding this in the wedding packet.

Times for Weddings: Generally, weddings can be scheduled at convenience with certain exceptions. Regularly scheduled functions of the congregation or related organizations take precedence in the use of the church property unless other arrangements are made. Unless unavoidable, weddings should not be scheduled on holidays and will not be held the last two weeks of Lent. Weddings will not be held later than 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. On Sundays, weddings will not be held prior to 1:00 p.m. nor later than 5:00 p.m.

Renumeration: The organist and/or soloist are very vital people in the wedding service. An honorarium should be given to each of them, but it is up to the individual as to what the amount should be. Consideration should be given if extra rehearsals are necessary for the organist and soloist.

Use of Facilities: There are rooms that can be made available for dressing prior to the wedding. Our Parish

Hall is available for with some restrictions (see guidelines for Parish Hall Use on page 17). If you are interested, ask the pastor. If you use the Sunday school rooms for dressing, please appoint someone to check after the wedding for clothing, cameras, or litter, and to turn off the lights.

Rehearsal: Please instruct the wedding party to arrive on time for the wedding rehearsal. In view of the fact that the rehearsal takes place in the house of God, fitting attire should be worn. The rehearsal should take less than an hour and will be conducted by the pastor. It will be so designed as to assist you in a smooth service. All attempts are made to please the bridal couple and their parents. However, the pastor and the regulations of Immanuel/St. John Lutheran Church shall prevail.

Rehearsal Dinner: If you desire the attendance by the pastor and his wife and the organist and his/her spouse, please send an invitation so their schedule may be arranged.

Ushers: In general, ushers will be instructed in their duties at the time of the rehearsal. You should use ushers if you plan a formal wedding or if there will be a sizable number of guests. Ushers are responsible for seating guests, distributing bulletins, holding doors, dismissing guests, and other matters before, during, and after the service. You may want to consider whether or not you wish to seat your invited guests according to family loyalties. This is not necessary and can be omitted.

Candle Lighters: Care should be taken in selecting the candle lighters for your wedding service. They should be old enough and tall enough so that there is no difficulty in lighting the altar candles. They should wear formal attire as designated by the bride.

Flower Girl and Ring Bearer: Care should be exercised in the selection of the flower girl and/or ring bearer. They should be old enough to stand in formal posture, be attentive to the wedding service, and contribute to the overall worship experience. The child should be at least four years old or older. It would be better not to have them than to have a small child who takes away from the beauty and solemnity of your wedding service. Flower girls and/or ring bearers are not necessary in the wedding service.

Photographs: No flash photos may be taken during the worship service. Arrangements for posed photos before or after the service can be made if requested. Please ask your friends and relatives not to take photos during the service. Pictures of the entry of the bridal party as they start down the aisle is permissible. Be sure to inform the pastor if you plan to have your pictures taken before the service.

Before or after the service, you may pose for any pictures you or others may desire. The pastor will be happy to recreate various parts of the service for you. Please understand that we will not honor any prior contract or agreement that forbids guests to take photographs individually. If your contracted photographer objects to other taking pictures, guests will be given the opportunity

to take their shots before he begins and then will be asked not to shoot after he starts.

Photographers should not climb over or stand on church furnishings, enter behind the altar rail, or take it upon themselves to rearrange things for the convenience. We also expect that no discarded materials be thrown onto the floor or pews.

The photographer should inform the pastor if he will be needed to pose for photographs following the wedding ceremony. See pages 18 and 19.

Video: The use of video equipment, with the camera appropriately placed, is acceptable.

Conduct: Marriage is a very joyful experience. It is also a serious one. You and your wedding party are requested not to partake of any alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or the wedding service.

Music in the Service: Normally, only organists who are regularly employed here will be used for weddings. If you have what you feel is a legitimate reason for requesting another, consult with the pastor or head organist in advance.

As in other areas of the service, music used should glorify God. For this reason, we discourage the use of wedding marches from Wagner and Mendelssohn, the popular “Here Comes the Bride”, pop music, movie themes, or other inappropriate music. The proper place for such music would be at the reception, not in the worship service.

There is much beautiful and appropriate music available for the wedding. The organist who plays for you will be glad to provide a sampling from which you may choose.

Soloists: Instrumental or vocal soloists may be used in the service as desired, but their musical selections must be in keeping with the character of the service. Sentimental or romantic songs that glorify love, marriage, the bride or groom, or any human institution cannot be used. Best solo selections are appropriate hymns of the church. Remember the purpose of the wedding service is to praise and worship God. Our organist must know and approve the musical selections in advance.

The two necessary criteria for the selection of music for use in the wedding services are these:

1. That the text (in the case of vocal music) express the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
2. That the music provide a setting which will enforce and enhance the worship of God's people and which will serve as a worthy offering to God.

Flowers: The bridal couple has permission to have altar flowers, using the vases of the church. Additional basket or candelabra bouquets are permitted in addition to the altar flowers, but these should be placed elsewhere in the chancel. Basket bouquets should not be placed directly on the altar. If you desire to leave flowers for the following Sunday, arrangements should be made with the Altar Guild or whoever is up for flowers that month. Your florist is one to provide such things as the aisle runner, unity candle, tribute to parents, flowers, or decorations for the ends of the pews.

Decorations: Special decorations of any kind will be permitted in the chancel area (behind the kneeling rail) at the discretion of the pastor. Pew ends may have some decorations if they are attached so as not to damage the wood. Decorations not in keeping with Christian principles will not be allowed. Some brides like to use a white aisle runner. If you wish one, you must make arrangements with your florist for this item.

Colors (or Paraments): The liturgical color for the day will be the color used on the altar and worn by the pastor. Under no circumstances will they be changed simply for the wedding. These paraments are used symbolically to remind us of God and His attributes and change only with our liturgical church year. This means that they may be white, green, violet, blue, or red for your wedding depending on the date.

Candles: Arrange with the florist for any extra candles for a candlelight service. They must have wax drip shields to protect the chancel area, or the candelabra must stand on protective plastic. Candles will be the expense of the couple except for the oil candles on the altar. There is a candelabra for the unity candle. Candles may be purchased from a Christian bookstore. The fair linen on the altar must be protected by waxed paper or plastic wrap.

Unity Candle: The use of this special candle to signify oneness in marriage has become popular with some. If you desire its use, you must make arrangements with your

florist who will provide an appropriate arrangement. The Church has a candelabra to use for the Unity Candle.

Tribute to the Parents: After the Unity Candle is lit, some couples like to present a rose or other flower to each set of parents as a way of thanking them for their support and help. Again make arrangements with your florist to provide the appropriate flowers for your use.

Kiss at the Altar: Certainly the house of God is an appropriate place to show the first sign of affection in the marriage. This will be your decision and makes only a slight difference in the end of the service. You can let the pastor know your wishes at the time of the rehearsal.

After the Service: We ask that your guests do not throw rice in or outside of the church. Please have them aware of this policy. In the past, bubbles and noisemakers have been employed instead. Doing so may forfeit the \$100.00 deposit discussed on the Wedding Parish Hall Guidelines below.

Reception: If the reception is to be held in the fellowship hall of the church, the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the persons to be contacted may be obtained by calling the church office. The rates for serving the reception and the services to be provided are listed in the Guidelines for Parish Hall Use. Alcoholic beverages will not be served or permitted on the church premises.

All Rules and Suggestions: are given so that you may have a beautiful and sacred service for the beginning of your married life.

Order of Service: Groom's parents are ushered down the center aisle, then the bride's mother. The seating of the bride's mother is the signal for the wedding to begin. The bride's mother is the last one down the aisle before the wedding party, and the bride's parents are the first ones to leave after the wedding service is over.

As the wedding party assembles before the altar, the order for entry for the men is:

Groomsmen

Best Man

Groom

The order for entry for the women is:

Bridesmaids

Maid or Matron of Honor

Bride

If a ring bearer and or flower girl are used, they enter just preceding the bride.

A suggested order for the receiving line, either in the narthex of the church or at the reception would be:

Groom's father

Bride's mother

Bride

Groom

Groom's mother

Bride's father

An alternate arrangement is to have the parents stand in the receiving line together.

A suggested order of wedding worship service is as follows (LSB 275):

Pre-service music

Seating of parents

Lighting of Candles*

Processional

Invocation

Hymn or Solo*

Scripture readings

Wedding Sermonnette

Solo or Hymn*

Declaration of Intent

Marriage vows

Exchange of rings

Pronouncement of husband and wife

Intercessory prayer

Lord's Prayer (may be sung)

Lighting of the Unity Candle*

Benediction

Recessional

Post-service music

*May or may not be used

Good Hymns for a Christian Wedding

- LSB 922** – “Go, My Children, With My Blessing”
- LSB 860** – “Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing”
- LSB 940** – “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name”
- LSB 859** – “Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest”
- LSB 700** – “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”
- LSB 895** – “Now Thank We All Our God”
- LSB 858** – “O Father, All Creating”
- LSB 862** – “Oh, Blest the House”
- LSB 790** – “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

In addition, it is a fine practice to put some of your favorite hymns in the wedding service. Some of these hymns would be a good choice for a solo verse as well!

Some Bible Readings Related to Marriage

- **Genesis 1:26-28**
 - Male and Female he created them
- **Genesis 2:7, 18-24**
 - They shall become one flesh
- **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9-10**
 - A threefold cord is not quickly broken
- **Song of Songs 2:10-13; 8:6-7**
 - Many waters cannot quench love
- **Isaiah 61:7-11**
 - As a bridegroom decks himself

- **Hosea 2:18-23**
 - I will betroth you to me in faithfulness
- **Matthew 19:4-6**
 - What God has joined, let no one separate
- **Mark 10:1-9 (13-16)**
 - What God has joined, let no one separate
- **John 2:1-11**
 - Wedding at Cana
- **John 15:9-12**
 - Abide in my love
- **Romans 12:1-2**
 - Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:4-5**
 - Glorify God in your body
- **1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3**
 - The greatest of these is love
- **Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-33**
 - Walk in love as Christ loved us
- **Philippians 4:4-7**
 - Rejoice in the Lord always
- **Colossians 3:12-17**
 - Put on love, which binds everything together
- **1 Thessalonians 4:1-8**
 - God called us in holiness
- **Hebrews 13:1-8**
 - Let marriage be held in honor by all
- **1 John 4:7-12**
 - Let us love one another
- **Revelation 19:6-9**
 - His Bride has made herself ready
- **Revelation 21:1-5**
 - The Holy City prepared as a bride

Guidelines for use of Immanuel Parish Hall for a Wedding

1. Charge for a wedding is \$40 for Immanuel Members, \$50 for St. John's Members, and \$75 for all others.
2. There is a deposit fee of \$100 for all weddings. This amount would be returned to the couple if the church requires no extra custodial work after the wedding. The deposit would be pro rated, depending upon how much work the custodian has to do following the wedding.
3. If a rehearsal dinner is held in the parish hall, additional charges would be \$40, \$50, and \$75 for rental.
4. You are responsible for any broken items. Please leave the kitchen clean.
5. No items are to be removed from the basement, parish hall, or kitchen. This includes coffee pots, roasters, tables, and chairs.
6. Dirty dishcloths and towels are to remain here. Please place them in the laundry tub in the janitor's room.
7. Garbage is to be bagged and left in janitor's room.
8. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on church property.
9. This is a smoke-free facility.
10. Nails, pins, tape, sticky tack, etc. ARE NOT to be used to post items, pictures, banners, etc. on parish hall walls.
11. Charges are to be paid to the pastor at the time of the reservation.

To the Photographer

Please give a copy of this to the photographer before the wedding date.

You are an invited guest at this wedding with a special purpose. You have been chosen by the bride and groom to help make this a special day to be remembered. We would like to cooperate with you in every way possible. We realize that there are differing customs among various churches, and so having our policies in print may help you.

1. No flash photographs are to be taken during the wedding service, including available light shots. The principle we follow is that everyone present during the service is part of the worshipping body. Worshipers are to focus their attention on God's Word and the service.
2. We will allow video taping of the service during the ceremony. Tripods must not block aisles or exits.
3. Pictures of the processional and recessional are permitted. Please stay as far to the rear of the church as possible, using common sense and courtesy in not disrupting the flow.
4. Language, dress, and conduct should indicate respect for God's house.
5. Do not climb over rails, stand on pews, or use the altar.
6. The area behind the kneeling rail surrounding the altar is not to be used as a short cut to establish props of any kind. Please stay in front of the rail at all times.

7. If you desire the candles lighted for the background, please ask the pastor. Please do not light them yourself. If you desire to reconstruct portions of the service, please inform the pastor and take such pictures prior to other shots.

8. We cannot allow you to forbid guests to take their own pictures. We will not honor such an arrangement even if you have it written in your contract with the couple. Wedding guests are asked not to take pictures during the service and are told they may take them afterward. We understand your concerns and if you desire, we will ask all those who wish to take such pictures to do so prior to your beginning and then ask them not to shoot while you are working. Please check with the pastor if you have any concerns.

Thank you for your cooperation. We look forward to having you worship with us.

God's richest blessings as you look forward
to your married life, lived in the shadow of
the cross of Christ.

