



Wedding Planning Handbook



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Introduction

What is Marriage?

Marriage is a time of public commitment between a man and a woman who wish to affirm their life together.

A marriage service is a sign of hope, a fulfillment of desire, and one of the most special occasions in the lives of those being married. From the church's perspective, marriage is a gift of God, a sacred and holy covenant between a man and a woman that has its foundation in the faithfulness of God's love. The marriage ceremony is the time of celebration when two persons unite with the mutual exchange of covenant promises. The one who presides represents the church, prays for the presence and blessing of the Holy Spirit, and invites the congregation to join in celebrating the union. Together they offer support and thanksgiving for the new family.

The first story of Jesus' ministry told by John is of Jesus as a wedding guest, called upon by his mother to turn water into wine. Several of Jesus' parables are of people at a marriage ceremony or feast. Through these stories Jesus and those who recorded his life showed the importance of marriage in their communities.

The Worship Service

A Christian marriage ceremony is a service of worship to God. The pastor invites the couple to share in the planning and writing of their service. Family and friends of the couple may be invited to share the leadership of the service by reading scripture, offering prayers, or in other ways. A marriage ceremony's validity is not how extravagant or simple the service is, but is about the commitment being made.

Planning with the Pastor

The first step is to schedule the service by speaking with the pastor of the congregation or calling the church office. This should be done before scheduling other events related to the wedding ceremony. The pastor will work with the couple concerning schedules, policies, practices, fees, and legal requirements. If the church sanctuary is to be used, the pastor will prepare the couple for marriage and preside at the worship service. Normally the pastor of the church officiates at all weddings held in the Church and will be the primary officiant. The pastor will meet with the couple several times before the ceremony. This is a time to talk about the Christian understanding of the marriage relationship and the couple's readiness to enter into the covenant as well as a time to get to know one another. In these meetings, plans are also made for the actual wedding service.

Wedding Guidelines

Arrangements

Careful planning for a church wedding is necessary. It is important that the date and time be confirmed early to avoid any possible conflicts in scheduling the pastor or the church building. Weddings are not normally scheduled on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or during Holy Week.

Use of the Church Building

A wedding in the church is always a worship service. Therefore, it is expected that members of the wedding party, family, and guests will conduct themselves in accordance with the respect shown for all sacred institutions.

- Smoking is not permitted anywhere on the church properties. Alcoholic beverages are also not permitted on the church property.
- It is the responsibility of the ushers to enforce the drinking and smoking policies stated above.
- Please refrain from using rice, confetti, plastic type sprays, or decorative ribbon due to the potential damage caused to our local wildlife. We recommend using birdseed or bubbles, if desired. If you would like to use these, please do so only after the service.

Wedding Decorations

All floral arrangements are the responsibility of the couple. Simple floral arrangements or ribbons may be placed on pew ends. We ask that no permanent devices be used to attach any decorations. We recommend the use of special non-marring tape or ribbons that can be tied around the pew ends.

The parament colors will reflect the appropriate season of the Church Year. Please refrain from moving any of the furnishings of the church (baptismal font, altar, etc.). A white runner for use upon entry of the bridal party in the aisle may be used as desired.

The church interior (nave and chancel) should be decorated to your satisfaction and within the above guidelines no later than two hours before the ceremony is to begin. Please coordinate with the florist to arrange to have all flowers delivered at least 2 hours before the service. All decorations can be done at the rehearsal or before the wedding. Again, we ask that all decorating be done at least 2 hours before the ceremony.

You are welcome to leave your floral arrangements in the church for Sunday worship. If you decide to do this, please let the pastor know so that an announcement regarding the arrangements can be placed in the Sunday worship bulletin.

Music

As soon as the dates and times of the wedding and rehearsal have been decided, the church organist should be contacted. The organist will then arrange for a conference with you to review music and make selections. The organist employed by this congregation ordinarily will provide his or her services for the wedding.

A marriage in the church is in the context of a worship service. We ask that secular music be reserved for a special and meaningful time during the reception.

If your plans for the wedding include a soloist, or other musicians, you will need to contact the organist, and all decisions are to be made either by, or with the consent of, the church organist and/or pastor. Please allow sufficient rehearsal time for both the organist and/or soloist.

Musical accompaniment other than the church organ is permitted, but is also subject to approval by the pastor and/or organist.

Please refrain from using the sound system as the pastor, organist or another member of the congregation shall operate the system.

Wedding Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is held shortly before the wedding (usually the evening before). It is a time when the entire wedding party can become familiar with the wedding service itself. It is important that all members of the wedding party, including the parents or guardians of the couple, be in attendance at the rehearsal if they are to participate in the wedding.

Any ushers, guest book attendants, etc., should also be present. This is important in order to convey information about the location of restrooms, telephone, water, first aid, etc. Knowledge of any nurses or doctors attending the wedding should also be available.

All members of the wedding party are asked to arrive promptly for the rehearsal.

All fees should be given to the pastor on rehearsal night, if not before. The Wedding License must be brought to the rehearsal for the pastor's information.

Photography

No flash pictures are to be taken during the wedding ceremony. This applies to all photographers, professional and amateur. Flash pictures of the bride and her attendants entering and the bride and groom and wedding party exiting the nave are permitted. Available-light shots and time exposures are permitted. Video photography is permitted without floodlights and if the person holding the camera remains stationary. All photographers should respect the solemnity of the worship service. Distracting movements and positions must be avoided. The professional photographer should consult with the pastor in advance with regard to appropriate positions and locations from which the photographer can operate.

Photo sessions after the ceremony are encouraged.

Legal Issues

Important: The marriage license **must** be given to the pastor prior to the wedding ceremony. The best time for this detail to be accomplished is at the rehearsal. The pastor cannot officiate at a wedding ceremony unless the proper license has been presented. The pastor will complete and sign all the forms necessary on the day of the wedding, return one part of the certificate to the couple, and forward the marriage license itself to the Clerk of the Orphans Court for registry.

In Berks County, apply for a marriage license at Berks County Register of Wills Office. More information can be found on the Berks County web site at <http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/RegWills/Pages/MarriageLicense.aspx>



Wedding Planning Worksheet

Name of Bride: _____

Name of Groom: _____

Date of Service: _____ Location/Time: _____

Parents of the Bride and Groom:

Bride:

Groom:

Names of those included in the Bridal Party:

Bride:

Groom:



Wedding Planning Worksheet

Will there be a photographer or videographer? Yes No

If yes, please be aware that no flash photography may be taken during the service as this is a worship service and should be held sacred.

If using the church organist, what music of hymns (if any) would be played during the service?

Name of Hymn or Musical Selection:

If Hymn, which hymnal and number:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Possible Wedding Service Outline:

Prelude

Entrance - "Here Comes the Bride" as an example...

Greeting - "Dearly beloved..." as an example...

Introduction - "Who gives this woman?" as an example...

Prayer

Reading of Scripture

Homily

Declaration of Intention: "Do you take..." as an example...

Pledge of Support

Vows of the Marriage Covenant

Exchange of Symbols

Unity Candle or Other Symbol

Announcement of Marriage

Blessing

 Communion

Benediction

Hymn or Postlude - "Wedding March" as an example...



Wedding Planning Worksheet

Possible Scripture Readings: *recommendation is to pick one Old Testament or Epistle reading and one Gospel reading*

Old Testament

Genesis 1:26-28, 31; 2:18-24

Psalms 23, 33, 34, 37:3-7, 67, 100, 103, 112, 117, 121, 127, 128, 136, 145, 148, 150

Song of Solomon 2:8-13, 8:6-7

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Isaiah 54:5-8

Hosea 2:16-23

Epistles

Romans 8:31-39; 12:1-2, 9-18

1 Corinthians 6:15-20, 13:1-13

Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:2, 21-33

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Peter 3:1-9

1 John 3:18-24, 4:7-16

Revelation 19:1, 5-9

Gospels

Matthew 5:1-12; 5:13-16; 7:21, 24-29; 19:3-6; 22:35-40

Mark 10:6-9, 13-16

John 2:1-11, 15:9-17



Wedding Planning Worksheet

Declaration of Intent (*questions of do you take*): Traditional Modern

Pledge of Support (*children residing with couple*): Yes No

Names and ages of children (if any):

Vows of the Marriage Covenant (*these are the covenant promises made to each other*):

Traditional Modern Self

Exchange of Symbols: Yes No

Unity Candle or other symbol of joining in marriage: Yes No

Lord's Prayer: Debts/Debtors Trespasses Sins

Fees for use of building and resources (*suggested honorariums*):

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>
For Use of Church	Discretionary	\$200 *
Pastor	Discretionary	\$250
Organist (optional)	\$100	\$150
Sexton (per room used in church)	\$75	\$100
Bulletins (per 100 printed)	\$15	\$20
Printing Fee for bulletins	\$30	\$40

* Persons wishing to use our church building for a wedding, who are providing their own officiant (that is, not using any of the ministry of the church), may rent the church building for \$600, which will include rehearsal and wedding. Any musicians other than our church organist should be cleared with the church organist, and practice times scheduled at no extra cost. The above fee does not include sexton or organist fees. All other requirements, including scheduling and deposit, are the same as for other events listed above.