

Planning Your Wedding

A Guide for Planning a Worshipful

Marriage Ceremony

Created for Community In Christ Lutheran Church

7621 Norman Island Drive

Cornelius, NC 28031

(704) 892-1020

www.communityinchrist.net

2012

Introduction:

This booklet is designed to help you plan your marriage ceremony. There is a multitude of information available about other aspects of a wedding: the reception, flowers, invitations, etc... This booklet focuses on the ceremony itself.

Let us first clarify two terms: wedding and marriage. A wedding (or marriage ceremony) is the public declaration of the covenant commitment established between a man and a woman. It is one very big day! The wedding is only the beginning of a marriage, which is the ongoing, daily commitment that couple makes to nourish and sustain one another through all of life's tribulations. It is a stabilizing relationship based on mutual enjoyment, forgiveness, fulfillment and understanding. The love you profess on your wedding day is the love that will grow and sustain you throughout your marriage.

Weddings often take place within the church, but both the state and the church have the legal right to marry couples. The difference between a church and a civil ceremony is the perspective each brings to the wedding. A church wedding is a service of worship and praise to God who is the source of life and love. Community in Christ Lutheran Church understands that, in officiating at a wedding, the pastor is not providing goods and services, but is engaging in an act of ministry. Therefore the pastor provides pre-marital counseling for all couples seeking to be married in the church and requires that the wedding ceremony be a service of Christian worship.

We invite you to attend a Sunday morning worship service at Community In Christ in order to better understand the flow and style of worship here. Services are held at 9:30 and 11:00.

This booklet is intended to help guide your wedding planning so that the ceremony is reverent and worshipful, while also being meaningful to both persons in the couple. The pastor looks forward to working with you in this process!

Wedding Planning Checklist

Don't forget to:

- Set date for first pre-marital counseling session
- Select scripture passages and hymns
- Contact pianist
- Finish planning marriage ceremony
- Schedule the rehearsal

The Marriage Ceremony: An Outline

The marriage ceremony follows the same basic pattern as Sunday worship and may include the following sections:

- **Gathering:** This section may include prelude music, the procession of the wedding party, an opening hymn, words of welcome and a greeting, the declaration of intention, and a prayer
- **Word:** At this time one or more passages of scripture may be read, responses may spoken or sung, and a sermon is preached. A hymn may also be sung.
- **Marriage:** This part of the ceremony contains the vows, the blessing and exchange of rings, the acclamation, and the nuptial blessing as well as other prayers.
- **Meal:** Communion may be celebrated at a wedding if both members of the couple are baptized Christians (regardless of denominational affiliation). This meal is an excellent sign of the unity all Christians have in Christ and that the couple now have together.
- **Sending:** The final section of the ceremony includes a benediction, the introduction of the couple, kiss, and recessional music.

The Marriage Ceremony: The Details

The following section contains many options for the details involved in each section of the marriage ceremony as outlined above. Take a deep breath and carefully consider which prayers, scripture texts, and hymns will express your relationship with God and with your partner and provide a worshipful experience on your wedding day. The exact wording of prayers, vows, and other elements aren't always set in stone. The pastor will help you customize your wedding ceremony so it is comfortable and worshipful for everyone.

The options which are included here are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

GATHERING

ENTRANCE

The assembly stands as the ministers and the wedding group enter. Music—hymn, song, psalm, instrumental music—may accompany the entrance.

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

The minister may introduce the service with these or similar words.

OPTION A

P: Dear friends: We have come together in the presence of God to witness the marriage of *name* and *name*, to surround them with our prayers, and to share in their joy.

The scriptures teach us that the bond and covenant of marriage is a gift of God in which a man and a woman are joined as one, an image of the union of Christ and the church. As *name* and *name* make their promises to each other today, we remember that at Cana in Galilee our Lord Jesus

Christ made the wedding feast a sign of God's reign of love.

Let us enter into this celebration confident that, through the Holy Spirit, Christ is present with us now also. We pray that this couple may fulfill God's purpose for the whole of their lives.

OPTION B

P: The Lord God in goodness created us male and female, and by the gift of marriage founded human community in a joy that begins now and is brought to perfection in the life to come.

Because of sin, our age-old rebellion, the gladness of marriage can be overcast and the gift of a family can become a burden. But because God, who established marriage, continues still to bless it with abundant and ever-present support, we can be sustained in our weariness and have our joy restored.

OPTION C

P: *Name* and *name* have come to make their marriage vows in the presence of God and of this assembly. The uniting of this man and this woman in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort they give one another in prosperity and adversity, and that their love may be a blessing to all whom they encounter.

Let us now witness their promises to each other and surround them with our prayers, giving thanks to God for the gift of marriage and asking God's blessing upon them, that they may be strengthened for their life together and nurtured in the love of God.

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Those who are declaring their intention to marry may be accompanied by their parents. The parents may place a hand on the shoulders of their children while responding to the question addressed to families.

The minister addresses the couple in these or similar words, asking each person in turn:

OPTION A

P: *Name*, will you have *name* to be your *wife/husband*, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love *her/him*, comfort *her/him*, honor and keep *her/him*, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

OPTION B

P: *Name*, will you receive *name* as your *wife/husband* and bind yourself to *her/him* in the covenant of marriage? Will you promise to love and honor *her/him* in true devotion, to rejoice with *her/him* in times of gladness, to grieve with *her/him* in times of sorrow, and to be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

OPTION C

P: *Name*, living in the promise of God, [joined to Christ in baptism,] will you give yourself to *name* in love and faithfulness? Will you share your life with *her/him*, in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, and will you be faithful to *her/him* as long as you both shall live?

Response: I will.

If appropriate, the minister may address the families of the couple in these or similar words.

P: Will you, the families of *name* and *name*, give your love and blessing to this new family?

The families respond: We will.

The minister may address the assembly in these or similar words.

OPTION A

P: Will all of you, by God's grace, uphold and care for *name* and *name* in their life together? **C: We will.**

OPTION B

P: Families, friends, and all those gathered here with *name* and *name*, will you support and care for them, sustain and pray for them in times of trouble, give thanks with them in times of joy, honor the bonds of their covenant, and affirm the love of God reflected in their life together? **C: We will.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

OPTION A

P: Gracious God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ into the world to reveal your love to all people. Enrich *name* and *name* with every good gift, that their life together may show forth your love; and grant that at the last we may all celebrate with Christ the marriage feast that has no end; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **C: Amen.**

OPTION B

P: Eternal God, our creator and redeemer, as you gladdened the wedding at Cana in Galilee by the presence of your Son, so bring your joy to this wedding by his presence now. Look in favor upon *name* and *name* and grant that they, rejoicing in all your gifts, may at length celebrate the unending marriage feast with Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

WORD

READINGS

The assembly is seated. Two or three scripture readings are proclaimed. When the service includes communion, the last is a reading from the gospels. Responses may include a psalm in response to a reading from the Old Testament, a sung acclamation preceding the reading of the gospel, or other appropriate hymns, songs, and psalms.

A list of appropriate scripture passages is included in the next section of this booklet. You may choose from this list, but it is not required. You should choose scripture that is meaningful to you as a couple.

SERMON

Silence for reflection follows.

HYMN OF THE DAY or SPECIAL MUSIC

MARRIAGE

VOWS

The presiding minister may address the couple in these or similar words.

P: *Name* and *name* I invite you to declare your vows to one another.

The couple may join hands. Each promises faithfulness to the other in these or similar words.

OPTION A

I take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband* from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.

OPTION B

In the presence of God and this community, I, *name*, take you, *name*, to be my *wife/husband*, to have and to hold from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

GIVING OF RINGS

P: Let us pray. We give you thanks, O God of grace, for your love and faithfulness to your people. May these rings be symbols of the promise *name* and *name* have made with each other; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **C: Amen.**

OPTION A

P: *Name*, I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

OPTION B

P: *Name*, I give you this ring as a symbol of my vow. With all that I am, and all that I have, I honor you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

ACCLAMATION

The presiding minister addresses the assembly. In places where the announcement of marriage is prescribed by law, that form should be used instead.

P: *Name* and *name*, by their promises before God and in the presence of this assembly, have joined themselves to one another as husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together let no one separate. **C: Amen. Thanks be to God.**

The assembly may offer acclamation with applause. A sung acclamation, hymn, or other music may follow.

Other symbols of marriage may be given or used at this time.

MARRIAGE BLESSING

OPTION A

P: Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to endure the cross for our sake, that we may have abundance of life.

By the power of your Holy Spirit pour out the abundance of your blessing on *name* and *name*. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace. Let your love be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders, and a crown upon their foreheads.

Bless them so that their lives together may bear witness to your love. Bless them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death.

Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast forever in your heavenly home, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

OPTION B

P: The Lord God, who created our first parents and established them in marriage, establish and sustain you, that you may find delight in each other and grow in holy love until your life's end. **C: Amen.**

Parents or others may speak additional words of blessing and encouragement at this time.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

The assembly stands. Prayers of intercession for the world and its needs may be prayed. These prayers, prepared or adapted for the particular occasion, may include the following or similar petitions. An assisting minister may lead the prayers.

OPTION A

A: Seeing how greatly God has loved us, let us pray for the whole world.

For the Christian community everywhere; for the life and ministry of the baptized, and for all servants of the gospel, that the church may be the risen body of Christ in the world. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: For all who are joined by bonds of marriage, kinship, and friendship, and for communities everywhere; for the nations, for all those who govern, and for justice and peace throughout the world. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: For those we love easily, and for those with whom we struggle, for those different from us and for those familiar to us, that we might be instruments of God's peace. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: For those who suffer in any way, and those who are lonely, for the sick, the dying, and those who are bereaved, for those who are poor, hungry, homeless, or unemployed, for the victims of violence, hatred, and intolerance. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: For all those who are joined to us in love; for our families, friends, and neighbors, for those separated from us by distance or discord, and giving thanks also for those who have gone before us (especially *name/s*). Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

Other intercessions may be added.

The presiding minister concludes the prayers.

P: Creator of all, you make us in your image and likeness and fill us with everlasting life. Hear the prayers of your people and grant to *name* and *name* grace to live in unity and joy all the days of their lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and praise forever. **C: Amen.**

OPTION B

A: On this day of rejoicing, let us bless God for divine love made flesh in Jesus Christ. We praise you, O God, for the joy that *name* and *name* have found in each other, and we pray that their love and faithfulness may reflect your gracious love and enrich our common life. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: Give them gentleness and patience, affection and understanding, readiness to trust one another, and, when they hurt each other, grace to acknowledge their fault and to give and receive forgiveness. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

If applicable:

A: Give to *name* and *name* the gift and heritage of children in accordance with your will; make their home a haven of peace.

OR

A: You have given *name* and *name* the gift and heritage of children; make their home a haven of peace. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: Use us to support *name* and *name* in their lives together. Give us such a sense of your constant love that we may employ all our strength in a life of praise of you. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: Strengthen and bless friends and family gathered here, even as we call to mind those who are absent from us. Console those who mourn the loss of loved ones, and be present with those for whom love is a stranger. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

A: Look graciously on the world you have made and for which your Son gave his life. Strengthen marriages, families, and communities everywhere. Defend and guide all who suffer want or anxiety. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

Other intercessions may be added.

A: We give thanks to you, merciful God, for those who have died (especially *name/s*). Strengthen us by the example of the saints, and bring us all to the marriage feast of the Lamb. Gracious and faithful God, **C: hear our prayer.**

The presiding minister concludes the prayers.

P: Most gracious God, you have made us in your image and given us over to one another's care. Hear the prayers of your people, that unity may overcome division, hope vanquish despair, and joy conquer sorrow; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
C: Amen.

MEAL (optional, but advised if possible)

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **C: And also with you.**

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words. Then, the assembly is seated.

OFFERING (optional)

OFFERING PRAYER (included if offering is included)

DIALOGUE

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

The pastor continues for the proper preface for the day.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is sung.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

OPTION A

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

OPTION B

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

OPTION A

P: Taste and see that the Lord is good.

OPTION B

P: Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

COMMUNION

Assembly song and other music may accompany the communion.

After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands. The presiding minister may say a table blessing, using these or similar words.

OPTION A

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **C: Amen.**

OPTION B

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in eternal life. **C: Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this holy meal, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. So strengthen us in your service that our daily lives may show our thanks, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
C: Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

The presiding minister proclaims God's blessing in these or similar words.

OPTION A

P: The blessed and holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

OPTION B

P: God Almighty send you light and truth to keep you all the days of your life. The hand of God protect you; the holy angels accompany you; and the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever.
C: Amen.

SENDING HYMN (optional)

DISMISSAL

An assisting minister may send the assembly forth in these or similar words.

A: Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

A hymn may be sung or instrumental music played as the wedding group and the ministers depart.

Scripture Passages

The scriptures provide wisdom and inspiration on how we are to live in relationship with one another. This list is provided for your convenience, it is not meant to be comprehensive. You may select other passages of scripture if you wish. Two or three readings are proclaimed.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:26-28, 31a *Woman and man created in the image of God*

Genesis 2:18-24 *Companionship rather than loneliness*

Ruth 1:16-17 *Where you go, I will go*

Proverbs 3:3-6 *Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 *Two are better than one*

Song of Solomon 2:1-13 *The voice of the beloved*

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 *Many waters cannot quench love*

Isaiah 63:7-9 *God's steadfast love lifts up the people*

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *The new covenant of the people of God*

PSALM

67 *May God be merciful to us and bless us*

100 *We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture*

117 *The steadfast love of the Lord*

121 *The Lord keeps watch over you*

127 *Unless the Lord builds the house*

128 *Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's ways*

150 *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord*

NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 *If God is for us, who is against us*

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 *A living sacrifice and genuine love*

1 Cor. 13:1-7, 13 *The greatest gift is love*

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 *Walk in love, as Christ loved us*

Philippians 4:4-9 *Rejoice in the Lord always*

Colossians 3:12-17 *Clothed in compassion, kindness, meekness*

Hebrews 13:1, 4-6 *Let marriage be held in honor*

1 John 3:18b-24 *Let us love in truth and action*

1 John 4:7-16 *Let us love one another for love is of God*

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-10 *The beatitudes*

Matthew 5:14-16 *You are the light, let your light shine*

Matthew 7:21, 24-29 *A wise person builds upon the rock*

Matthew 19:3-6 *What God has united must not be divided*

Matthew 22:35-40 *Love, the greatest commandment*

Mark 10:6-9 *They are no longer two but one*

Luke 6:36-38 *The measure you give*

John 2:1-11 *The wedding at Cana*

John 15:9-12 *Love one another as I have loved you*

HYMNS

The following hymns are appropriate for use during a marriage ceremony.

All the hymns listed here are found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW). Other hymns may also be appropriate. You are not limited to this list. If a hymn is to be used during the ceremony, please discuss it with the pastor and the organist.

585 Hear us now, our God and Father

586 This is a day, Lord, gladly awaited

648 Beloved, God's chosen

816 Come, my way, my truth, my life

312 Jesus, come! For we invite you

836 Joyful, joyful we adore thee

839, 840 Now thank we all our God

308 O Morning Star, how fair and bright!

488, 489 Soul, adorn yourself with gladness

653 Ubi caritas et amor

631 Love divine, all loves excelling

502 The king of love my Shepherd is

