

Gethsemane Lutheran Church

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Dear Cassie and Jordan,

Congratulations on your engagement to be married! We of Gethsemane Lutheran Church are pleased to be able to minister to your special needs as you prepare to be married. We hope this letter will be helpful to you as you begin planning for your wedding day.

The following is the Wedding Policy of Gethsemane Lutheran Church and some commentary on it.

Date & Time

As soon as you can, contact the Pastor to establish the date of your wedding. The Pastor will try to accommodate you, but the later you make these arrangements, the more likely scheduling conflicts will arise. A date and time for rehearsal will need to be established as well. Traditionally, weddings are not celebrated during Holy Week. There will be no wedding scheduled later than 6p on Saturday evenings.

Pastor

The Pastor of Gethsemane will be the chief officiant for the service, without exceptions. If desired, other Pastors may assist upon approval of the Pastor and/or the Church Council. If you would like another Pastor/priest to share in the service, please let the Pastor of Gethsemane know their name and phone number so he/she can extend a proper invitation to them. Finally, it is not assumed that the Pastor attends the rehearsal dinner or reception, so if you desire the Pastor to attend, please send an invitation.

Premarital Counseling

The Pastor will not preside at a wedding which has not had adequate planning and preparation. Our hope for you is that you will be preparing for your marriage as well as your wedding, therefore pre-marriage counseling is a must. This ministry to you takes an investment of time. So, again, early contact with the Pastor is essential. There will be at least three such sessions planned.

Organist & Music

It is your responsibility to contact an organist or pianist to play at your wedding. If you choose to have the Pastor prepare your music digitally, those selections need to be made at one of your early, pre-marital meetings. (*Early contact with the organist or pianist is also advisable.*) A great deal of music has found its way into the wedding service which, due to both the words and the music, fails to reinforce the spiritual significance of the wedding service. Some music may not be appropriate for a church service. You may wish to reserve these selections for the reception. The final approval of all music at the wedding rests with the Pastor, so check all music with the Pastor before giving it to your musicians.

Wedding Service

The wedding service is first and foremost a worship service. It is an occasion for worship and praise – it is more than a ceremony for spectators to watch. The focus is on God. That understanding of the marriage service must be clear at the outset of your planning. The conduct of all participants should be in keeping with the solemnity of the service. The Pastor reserves the right to halt any service when a member of the party or any guests in the church are not conducting themselves with propriety. The wedding service will be one approved by the ELCA or the Pastor. This also includes vows. (*As an aside, the throwing of rice is not allowed, as it is both harmful to birds and not a Christian rite, anyways!*) All members of the wedding party must be in attendance at the rehearsal to ensure an organized wedding service.

Decorations

Decorations are a simple and creative way to bring added beauty to the worship space. If you plan to use decorations, keep in mind the solemnity of the occasion as you are choosing decorations. Again, a wedding service is a worship service, so every aspect of the wedding should reflect the worshipping mood of the occasion. The colors of the current Church season will remain in the church (*meaning, no changes for "wedding colors"*). All decorations are to be provided by the wedding party. Please make early arrangements as to when the flowers and/or family will be at the church to decorate. Any decorations attached to the pews, altar rail, etc. must be attached by fun-tack, Command-Strips, or some other means that will not mar the wood finish. No thumbtacks, pins, or tape may be used.

Pictures

Please instruct photographers that no flash pictures are to be taken during the service. Two exceptions – as the wedding party enters the sanctuary and again as they exit. Time exposures can be taken any time. Photographers should check with the Pastor upon arriving prior to the wedding. Video camera equipment will remain in the back of the Sanctuary. (*The wedding party should remain the focus of attention, not the photographer!*) Pictures are normally taken after the service, but you may find it more convenient to take them before the service. Either way is appropriate.

Fees & Rentals

There is a \$25 rental fee for use of the building, and a \$25 fee for our Custodian, both of which should be paid no later than one (1) week prior to the wedding. The Pastor's Fee is \$200 and is due two (2) weeks prior to the wedding. If the wedding is to be held at a location *other* than the church, then the Pastor's Fee will be \$200 *plus* additional fees for mileage to/from the rehearsal location *and* to/from the wedding location. Organists and other musicians set their own fees, so you will want to check with them. In-house musicians (*including if the Pastor prepares the music*) have set a fee of \$50.

Alcohol and Smoking

The use of drugs, tobacco, nicotine, or alcohol of any kind is strictly prohibited inside the church. Alcohol use is forbidden anywhere on church grounds, including in the parking lots. The only exception would be use of wine for Holy Communion. Please note: No wedding will be conducted while anyone in the wedding party or anyone in attendance is under the influence. Smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited in all areas *indoors*, and prohibited within 50ft of the Church building. Please ask your guests to respect these rules and to smoke outdoors if they need to smoke.

This is a very exciting time for you as you look to make a new beginning with someone special. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. As you prepare for your marriage, you may want to read a devotional book together. We do ask that consider attending worship together on a weekly basis as a spiritual discipline in preparation for your life together. Please discuss, and plan carefully and seriously. A well-planned marriage service is a positive beginning for a truly happy and satisfying life together. May your special worship service be a great blessing to all who attend.

PERSON 1: _____
PERSON 2: _____
PASTOR: _____
DATE: _____

In Christ,



Rev. Brenda L. Greenwald

Wedding Policy – Revised May 2023
Gethsemane + St. Stephen's Lutheran Churches