



THE WEDDING BOOK

Sharon Lutheran Church
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Marriage is a personal covenant between two people who have committed themselves to one another in a lifelong relationship. In marriage you will pledge to share and grow in your love for one another.

We are excited that you have chosen God's house in which to pledge your faithfulness to each other, seeking God's blessing on your covenant. This information booklet has been prepared to assist you in planning your wedding at Sharon Lutheran and to help ensure that your wedding will be a very endearing memory. We pray God's blessing for both of you.

Please read through this booklet and familiarize yourselves with the various wedding policies and procedures at our church. Through the months of excitement and planning ahead you are encouraged to continue to use this booklet as a reference guide.

Persons who have been married in a civil ceremony are welcome to have their marriage vows blessed by the church. (Inform the pastor if this is your situation.)

Sharon Lutheran Church will honor and celebrate all weddings that conform to ELCA doctrine and the laws of the United States of America. Individual weddings are subject to approval by the Pastoral staff.

Getting Started

The following arrangements should be made before making further plans for your wedding:

Scheduling and Arrangements

The scheduling and arrangements for all weddings at Sharon Lutheran begins at the church office. The request for a date is foremost in your mind. It is in ours as well. You will find the official request form included with this booklet. Please read this booklet in its entirety. Then complete the Wedding Request Form. Both the individuals preparing for marriage need to sign it. This indicates both parties understand and agree to the stipulations required by Sharon Lutheran. A \$200 deposit is required within 7 days of booking your wedding to confirm your date. The deposit will be refunded within 10 days following your wedding service if the building is left clean and in good condition. After your deposit has been received, you will receive a letter confirming your reserved date and time.

When reserving a date, please note that no weddings can take place at Sharon on the following days:

- Holy Week (from Palm Sunday to Easter)
- Synod Assembly Weekend
- Rummage Sale Week
- The Week of Christmas

Please check with the church office if you have any questions about these days. **All dates will be confirmed by the Pastoral Staff.**

Weddings are held at Sharon for both member and nonmember couples. Membership status is determined at the time of initial contact with Sharon Lutheran regarding the scheduling of the wedding.

Please be aware that we are a church involved in many ministries, so there may be other groups using some of the spaces in our building at the same time as your wedding.

PLEASE NOTE:

Normally, only one wedding is scheduled per day. Rehearsal dates and times may have to accommodate another wedding.

Venue and Private Residence Wedding Ceremonies

You may be choosing to hold your wedding ceremony at a location other than the Sharon Lutheran Church building. If you desire to have a Sharon Lutheran Church pastoral staff member officiate your ceremony, complete the Wedding Request Form indicating your ceremony location. A Sharon Lutheran Church pastoral staff member will officiate at your venue or private residence ceremony with the following provisions:

- The engaged couple will complete the marriage preparation sessions approved by Sharon Lutheran pastoral staff.
- The wedding ceremony will be conducted as a Christian worship service. All ceremony music, rituals, and readings will be approved by the pastoral staff member.
- If the ceremony is held on a Saturday, the pastoral staff member will have time to return to Grand Forks by 8:00 pm. If the ceremony is held other than Saturday, and more than one hour travel time by car from Grand Forks, overnight accommodations will be provided for the pastoral staff member.
- Mileage will be reimbursed following IRS federal guidelines for any travel of 30 miles or more.

The Pastoral Staff

The Pastoral staff member who will officiate at your wedding service has been called by Sharon Lutheran Church to "preside at rites of the church". That means it is the responsibility of the pastoral staff member to see that your marriage service is performed in keeping with the policies of the congregation and within the tradition of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

If you would like a particular pastoral staff member from Sharon Lutheran to officiate at your wedding, please indicate that at the time you make reservations for your wedding. We will try to honor your request, but cannot guarantee that it will be granted. The pastoral staff also reserve the right to substitute for one another when necessary.

If you would like to invite another pastor or religious officiant to participate in your wedding service, that can be done in conjunction with a pastoral staff member from Sharon Lutheran. **Note: Honorarium is expected for the guest officiant, the pastoral assistant, and the pastoral staff member from Sharon Lutheran should he/she be involved. It is also customary to reimburse your guest officiant for mileage and/or travel expenses.**

The Pastoral Assistant

A Pastoral Assistant will be assigned to assist you and the pastoral staff member in carrying out your wedding. The Pastoral Assistant will be involved in matters related to the rehearsal and the wedding service and will be a resource to assist you in many questions regarding the wedding. The Pastoral Assistant is not a Wedding Planner, and therefore will not assist you in reception and other details not related to the Wedding Worship Service.

Marriage Preparation

All couples being married at Sharon Lutheran are expected to participate in marriage preparation sessions. These sessions are led by the Sharon Lutheran pastoral staff. After reserving your wedding date, the pastoral staff member presiding at your wedding will contact you to schedule the marriage preparation sessions.

The License

For all but the blessing of a civil marriage, couples must secure a license to marry from the State of North Dakota. Residents of North Dakota may get their marriage license anywhere in the state of North Dakota; non-residents of North Dakota must get their license in Grand Forks to be married in Grand Forks county. The license may be obtained by contacting the Grand Forks County Clerk's Office, 151 S. 4th St., Grand Forks, ND. We encourage you to have the license in the church office at least one week prior to your wedding date to allow adequate time for preparation.

Planning the Wedding Worship Service

The order for marriage in the Lutheran church is not a rigid form. The liturgy, like marriage itself, is meant to open doors to possibilities, not to exclude creativity. The pastoral staff member will discuss liturgical options with you as you meet to plan your wedding ceremony.

The pastoral staff member who presides at your wedding ceremony is the final judge as to what is appropriate. Assisting ministers (special friends or relatives) may be used in the service as readers of Scripture.

The Musicians and Music

Sharon Lutheran Church has several individuals who are available to play either organ or piano music for your wedding ceremony. We will provide you with their names and **it will be your responsibility to contact one of them directly to discuss the music.**

In addition to piano or organ, some couples like to incorporate a vocalist or instrumentalist (e.g. flute, trumpet, etc.) within the ceremony. Please discuss this in your initial phone contact with the musician. This will allow plenty of time to schedule extra rehearsals.

Throughout the centuries music has been one of the primary vehicles that the church has employed to praise and thank God. There is a vast selection of music that is particularly appropriate for wedding ceremonies. **Remember that your wedding ceremony is a Christian worship service. Therefore it is important to choose music that emphasizes our praise and thanks to God. Purely secular music is best left to be used at your reception or wedding dance.**

If the musician has a question regarding the appropriateness of a song you will be asked to contact the pastoral staff member who is presiding at your wedding for final determination. The pastoral staff member presiding at your wedding has the final say as to the appropriateness of your music.

Recorded Music

Some couples ask to use recorded music. While there is nothing inherently wrong with recorded music, you should know that live accompaniment can head off many of the technical difficulties associated with recordings. Missed cues and long pauses are uncomfortable for everyone, and ultimately detract from the beauty of the occasion. We strongly suggest that you refrain from recorded music.

Congregational Hymns

Since the wedding ceremony is a Christian worship service, it is appropriate for those gathered to sing together. A hymn also adds to the sense of participation in the service by those attending. Hymns may be sung in place of other vocal music or instrumental procession and recession. A list of appropriate hymns can be provided.

Decorations

Weddings at Sharon Lutheran should respect the sacred space that the church was designed for. Decorations should complement the existing worship accessories. The paraments (altar cloths) at Sharon Lutheran are designed and used according to the church year. They are not decorations. Therefore the paraments may **not** be changed to coordinate with colors you have chosen for your wedding. Other appointments, decorations or displays related to the liturgical season or current emphasis in the church are **not** to be changed **or removed** for weddings.

No adhesive substances may be used to secure decorations on the pews. Ribbon, pipe cleaners, string or rubber bands are acceptable to attached the decorations to the pews.

Floral decorations may be used. Real flowers are encouraged for use in the chancel. **No** flowers are allowed on the altar, piano or organ console.

In addition to altar candles, Sharon Lutheran also has both black and white free standing candelabras, with oil candles, that you may use.

For maintenance and safety reasons, we ask that any candles provided by you be a dripless variety.

For safety reasons, the use of aisle runners is discouraged at Sharon Lutheran.

Flower petals may be dropped by the flower girl preceding the bride down the aisle.

Please note that Sharon Lutheran does not have storage space for extra candelabras and/or floral sprays. Please arrange individuals to transfer these items to your reception immediately following the worship. Any decorations used in the sanctuary must also be removed immediately following the wedding service.

Optional Unity Rituals

The Unity Candle is an optional for a wedding ceremony. Lighting the candle visually symbolizes the joining of two lives in marriage. Symbols make a lasting impression so it is important that we use them with care. You are invited to light a unity candle during your marriage ceremony if you desire. The pastoral staff member officiating at your wedding will discuss the most appropriate methods of lighting the candle. Note: You are responsible to provide your own unity candle along with two tapers (side candles and holders).

Some marriage couples choose to use a sand ceremony to symbolize the oneness in marriage. There are many variations to how this is done, but typically separate containers of colored sand are used and are poured into a third container. Again, you are responsible for providing your own sand and containers.

Other symbolic rituals can be used only with the approval of the pastoral staff member officiating at your wedding.

Suggested Scripture Readings

Usually, two scripture lessons are read during the wedding service. You may choose to have more or less. The following is a list of scripture passages couples frequently ask to have read. It is not meant to be exhaustive, merely to stimulate your thinking.

Old Testament Readings:

Genesis 1:26-28	<i>Woman and man created in the image of God</i>
Genesis 2:18-24	<i>Companionship rather than loneliness</i>
Proverbs 3:3-6	<i>Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart</i>
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	<i>The strength of relationships</i>
Song of Solomon 2:10-13	<i>The voice of the beloved</i>
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	<i>Many waters cannot quench love</i>
Isaiah 63:7-9	<i>God's steadfast love lifts up the people</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	<i>The new covenant of the people of God</i>
Psalms 67	<i>May God be merciful to us and bless us</i>
Psalms 100	<i>We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture</i>
Psalms 117	<i>The steadfast love of the Lord</i>
Psalms 121	<i>The Lord keeps watch over you</i>
Psalms 127	<i>Unless the Lord builds the house</i>
Psalms 128	<i>Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's way</i>
Psalms 150	<i>Let everything that breathes praise the Lord</i>

New Testament:

Romans 15:5-6	<i>Live in harmony, glorify God</i>
Romans 8:31-35, 37-39	<i>If God is for us, who is against us</i>
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18	<i>A living sacrifice and genuine love</i>
I Corinthians 12:31-13:13	<i>The greatest gift is love</i>
Ephesians 3:14-19	<i>The breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love</i>
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33	<i>Walk in love, as Christ loved us</i>
Philippians 4:4-9	<i>Rejoice in the Lord always</i>
Colossians 3:12-17	<i>Clothed in compassion, kindness, meekness and patience</i>
I John 3:18-24	<i>Let us love in truth and action</i>
I John 4:7-16	<i>Let us love one another for love is of God</i>

The Gospels:

Matthew 5:1-10	<i>The Beatitudes</i>
Matthew 5:14-16	<i>You are the light, let your light shine</i>
Matthew 7:21, 24-29	<i>A wise person builds upon the rock</i>
Matthew 19:3-6	<i>What God has united must not be divided</i>
Matthew 22:35-40	<i>Love, the greatest commandment</i>
John 2:1-11	<i>The wedding at Cana</i>
John 15:9-17	<i>Love one another as I have loved you</i>

You may select a reading from each category if you choose. The order of worship indicates that at least one lesson should be read. A reading from the Gospels is necessary if you choose to celebrate Holy Communion at your wedding ceremony. In addition to readings from the Bible, a selection from a secular source may be used if it is in harmony with the spirit of a Christian worship service. Be especially careful with poetry. Many love poems are personal and private expressions not appropriate for public reading at a wedding. The use of secular readings must be approved by the pastoral staff member.

The Exchange of Promises

You have the option to choose from several different vows. The pastoral staff member will provide you with some examples in your wedding service planning.

You may wish to write your own vows. They must include promises of lifelong faithfulness to your spouse. If you write your own vows, be careful not to promise the impossible. Vows must be written and given to the pastoral staff member one week prior to your wedding ceremony.

Holy Communion

As baptized Christians, you may request that your marriage be set in the context of the celebration of Holy Communion. Celebrating marriage in the context of Holy Communion enriches the meaning of marriage and our understanding of the sacrament. Marriage often involves a festive meal; Holy Communion always does. Marriage is a sign of intimacy and union and communion; so is Holy Communion. The Holy Communion abounds in festive marriage imagery in which Christ the bridegroom celebrates with his bride, the Church, in the heavenly wedding banquet which knows no end.

Holy Communion is a sign of unity, and the Sacrament is not appropriate unless the congregation is invited to participate, for the body and blood of Christ belongs to the whole church.

If you plan to have Holy Communion as a part of your wedding service, please indicate your intent as you talk with your assigned pastoral staff member during your planning session.

Additional Notes

Ushers

A minimum of two ushers are necessary in order to seat and dismiss worshipers (more may be needed if more than 150 guests are in attendance) Ushers should be mature people, as the nature of their task requires confidence and decisiveness.

Bulletins

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have printed bulletins to inform members of the congregation of the order of worship and the names of participants in the worship service. You should discuss the use of the bulletin with the pastoral staff member. Purchase of bulletin covers and printing are the responsibility of the couple. The Sharon Lutheran church office does not print wedding bulletins.

Photography

Photography during the wedding ceremony is allowed. It should not distract from the ceremony or hinder the participation of worshipers. Photographers are not permitted in the altar area during the ceremony.

No flash pictures may be taken during the wedding service. Video recording your ceremony is permissible, but must be done in an unobtrusive manner. The pastor will talk with your videographer about camera placement. The videographer should not move from place to place during the wedding service.

Note: The bulletin is the best place to remind the worshipers that no flash pictures should be taken during the service. The following notice may be included in your wedding bulletin:

Please refrain from using cameras with flash during the ceremony. Thank You.

Alcoholic Beverages

It is not uncommon for alcoholic beverages to be consumed at the occasion of a wedding. Should you choose to have your wedding at Sharon Lutheran, we ask you to inform your friends and family that **no alcohol** may be consumed on the premises or in the parking lots of Sharon Lutheran. Ask your friends to abstain from alcohol prior to the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. While weddings are cause for celebration, they are also solemn occasions of worship, requiring a certain standard of behavior. Weddings at Sharon Lutheran are a privilege, therefore, the pastoral staff member may dismiss any persons in the wedding party who appear intoxicated. The only beverage allowed in the sanctuary is water.

No smoking is allowed inside the church building.

No pets allowed in the wedding service.

No Throwing Rice or Bird Seed

We ask that you do not throw rice or birdseed at Sharon Lutheran Church. If you wish to be showered with something as you leave the church, soap bubbles are an option.