

WEDDING POLICY AND FEES CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH (CELC)

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) defines marriage as “A covenant of mutual promises, commitment and hope authorized legally by the state and blessed by God.” In the church, marriage is a gift of God intended for the joy and mutual strength of those who enter it and for the wellbeing of the whole human family. God created humankind with the need for companionship and the capacity to love, care for and nurture each other. A wedding service celebrates these gifts. To be married in a Christian worship service is, first and foremost a statement of faith indicating a desire and commitment to live in relationship not just with each other but also with God and God’s people.

Each Christian wedding is therefore a worship service that celebrates the love of the couple making a commitment to each other, while at the same time acknowledging the Source and Origin of that love. These Wedding Policies are designed to ensure that weddings performed under the auspices of Christ Lutheran Church will reflect this dual nature of a wedding service.

WHO MAY BE MARRIED

The primary responsibility of the CELC pastor regarding weddings is to officiate at the marriages of active members of CELC and their immediate families. However, the congregation recognizes that weddings for those who are not members of the church are a form of hospitality, outreach and evangelism. Therefore, the pastor will officiate at weddings involving non-members of the church as he/she is able.

The pastor always has the final authority to determine whether he/she will officiate at any wedding, regardless of the membership of the persons to be married.

WHO MAY OFFICIATE

The CELC Pastor always officiates at weddings that take place at CELC. Other clergy may participate with the approval of the CELC pastor. If approved, the invitation to other clergy is appropriately extended by the CELC pastor.

PRE-MARITAL APPOINTMENTS

There are four planning and counseling appointments required prior to the wedding:

1. Introductory meeting with the Pastor
2. Counseling Session #1 with Pastor or Pastor’s designee
3. Counseling Session #2 with Pastor or Pastor’s designee
4. Wedding planning session with the Pastor

WHERE WEDDINGS MAY OCCUR

The pastor officiates weddings at the church and off-site. Non-members may be married in the church, but there is a fee for using the building (see Fees, below). The location of off-site weddings must be approved by the pastor.

WHEN WEDDINGS MAY OCCUR

Wedding times and dates are at the discretion of the pastor and are scheduled with consideration of his/her schedule and the availability of the church.

Weddings are not normally scheduled during Holy Week.

HOW TO SCHEDULE YOUR WEDDING

Before any reservations are made for reception halls, caterers, etc., it is crucial to assure that the church and pastor are available for your date. **The reservation is not confirmed until the couple has had an initial meeting with the pastor.** That meeting may be scheduled by calling the church office, or by calling or e-mailing the pastor directly. Couples who are not members of CELC are strongly encouraged to attend at least one worship service prior to scheduling a wedding to make sure the pastor's "style" is appropriate for their plans.

It is recommended that planning begin at least 6-8 months prior to the wedding.

Initial arrangements and further planning should be done by the couple. The pastor strongly prefers to deal directly with couples anticipating marriage, not parents, etc.

EVERY WEDDING WILL INCLUDE . . .

As a worship service, every wedding performed under the auspices of CELC will include, at minimum: prayers, Scripture readings, a homily (short sermon that proclaims the Gospel), vows, and blessing/benediction. A variety of worship services are available for couples to choose, but these elements will be part of every service. Unless there are no seats available (at an off-site wedding), the congregation, including the wedding party, will typically be seated for Scripture Readings and the homily.

HOLY COMMUNION

The celebration of Holy Communion is always an option for a wedding service. Bread and wine for communion will be provided by the pastor/church. If Holy Communion is desired, it will be offered to all baptized Christians as is the practice of this church and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

MUSIC

Music that is part of a service of Christian marriage is understood to be an act of worship, offered to God in devotion, thanksgiving and praise. This does not mean that only “religious” music may be used, but all music must reflect this understanding and not detract from the worship nature of the service. Some music is simply better for receptions than worship. The pastor must approve all music selections (for the wedding service, NOT the reception!)

Unless he/she is unavailable, the Director of Traditional Music (organist/pianist) will normally play for weddings in the church. Please consult with the organist regarding music choices. The Director of Traditional Music or the pastor must approve additional or alternative musicians and soloists.

For away weddings, it is essential that the pastor be “in the loop” for discussions with musicians and DJ’s. Not only is the pastor’s approval necessary for music selections, but it will be helpful if those providing music are aware of the music needs and cues for the particular service.

REHEARSAL

Rehearsals normally take place the evening before the wedding and will be facilitated by the pastor. It is vital that all members of the wedding party be present and on time – this includes Bridesmaids, Groomsmen, Flower Girls, Ringbearers, parents, etc. The rehearsal is for the benefit of the wedding party, so that they can get comfortable with the service and with the space. For weddings at the church, the organist will attend rehearsals. It is strongly encouraged that other musicians and/or DJs (in the case of away weddings) be present at the rehearsal.

PLEASE consult with the pastor before scheduling your rehearsal, especially if it will deviate from the normal evening-before scheduling.

CANDLES

The church has two altar candles as well as two candelabras (except during Lent) that will be lit for the wedding service. If a Unity Candle Service is desired, the couple is responsible for providing three candles and appropriate holders.

BULLETIN

Due to the many demands on our Office Administrator’s time, we are unable to produce a Worship Bulletin for your wedding. However, if you desire to prepare and print one yourself or arrange for someone else to do so, the pastor will provide you with an outline of the service following your last meeting with him/her. The pastor may have examples of bulletins that have worked well in the past.

A few things to keep in mind about bulletins:

- Choose a bulletin that will be easy to open (Ribbons, seals, and stapling are not)
- Choose a font that will be easy for all to read . . . consider older guests!
- Choose how much text to include. It is often helpful to print the words that will be spoken by the congregation, especially the Lord's Prayer.
- Choose content appropriate for a worship service. Biographies, photographs, etc. may be best saved for the reception.
- You may want to include directions to the reception on the back or in an insert.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is only allowed during the processional and recessional. Guests will be asked to refrain from any photography during the rest of the service, and professional photographers will be asked to use only available light. Photographers are asked to stay in the side aisles or the back of the church and to never enter the chancel area (beyond the altar rail). The Pastor must approve video photography and placement of equipment. Videos may be taken from a fixed position in the back or side aisle of the church. The Pastor would like to meet or talk by e-mail or phone with your photographer and/or videographer before they set up their equipment. It is ideal if they are able to attend the rehearsal. Please share the appropriate Addendum at the end of this policy with your photographer and videographer.

RICE, BIRDSEED, BUBBLES

Due to safety and environmental concerns, no birdseed, rice, or other thrown items are permitted. BUBBLES are fun and look pretty in photographs and videos. Another alternative is to give guests small bells to ring to greet the couple as they depart the church (they also make a nice remembrance of the day).

DECORUM

A service of Christian marriage is at its core a worship service. Everyone involved, particularly members of the wedding party, is expected to guide their actions and attitudes with this in mind. Some celebrations are better left for the reception. **The pastor reserves the right to exclude from participation any member of the wedding party who is under the influence of alcohol or other substances. The pastor also has the authority to refuse to preside at the wedding in which either of the couple is under such influence.**

MARRIAGE LICENSE

It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain a marriage license from the county in which the wedding will take place which is valid for their wedding day. **The pastor cannot legally perform a marriage for which a Marriage License is not physically present.** For weddings at the church, the Marriage License may be given to the pastor at the rehearsal.

USE OF FACILITIES

Use of CELC facilities is subject to the policies developed by the CELC Church Council.

Use of the church is scheduled through the pastor. Decorations are to be minimal and subject to the pastor's approval. Nothing is to be taped or otherwise affixed to the pews or other furnishings. Hooks which do not leave a mark and poster putty are acceptable alternatives to tape. No flowers – or any other decoration - may be placed on the altar. The color of paraments is typically the color of the season in which the wedding takes place (i.e. White for Easter, Green for Pentecost, etc.)

Members of the church may use Zick Hall or Friendship Hall for their reception. Those spaces are scheduled through the CELC Office Administrator.

No smoking or alcohol* on church premises.

* Exceptions are wine for Communion and a small amount of champagne for a reception toast.

FEES

	Check Payable To	ACTIVE MEMBERS	ALL OTHERS
Pastor	Pastor	Optional Gift	\$250
Church	CELC	Optional Donation	\$250
Organist	Organist	\$175 +\$25 for rehearsal	\$200 +\$50 for rehearsal
Church Sexton	Church Sexton	\$50	\$50
Zick or Friendship Hall	CELC	Optional Gift	N/A
Zick or Friendship Sexton	Hall Sexton	\$50	N/A
Sound Tech (if needed)	Sound Tech	\$50	\$50

RECEPTION

Inviting the pastor to the reception and/or rehearsal dinner is not an expectation. If you do extend an invitation, the pastor (and spouse) will attend if time and circumstances allow. Please let the pastor know in advance if you desire him/her to offer a grace before the reception and/or rehearsal meal.

NOTE: On November 10, 2015, the Christ Lutheran Church Council approved this policy and also voted to, *“Grant the pastor, as a function of the pastor’s call, the same authority with respect to same-gender weddings as the pastor currently has with respect to other weddings.”*

ADDENDUM I

CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER

A Christian marriage service is a worship celebration, and therefore photographers should be as inconspicuous as possible to preserve the sacred nature of the gathering.

Flash photography is only allowed during the processional and recessional. Guests will be asked to refrain from any photography during the rest of the service, and professional photographers will be asked to use only available light. Photographers have shared with us that our sanctuary is well-lit and does not need additional lighting. When taking pictures at times other than the processional/recessional, photographers are asked to stay in the side aisles or the back of the church and to never enter the chancel area (beyond the altar rail).

Photographers must be in communication with the pastor prior to setting up any equipment. Ideally this is done prior to the wedding day and can be accomplished in person if the photographer attends the rehearsal. If this is impossible, contact by e-mail (celc1908@verizon.net) or phone (410-647-0340) are alternatives.

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ADDENDUM II

CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIDEOGRAPHER

A Christian marriage service is a worship celebration, and therefore videographers should be as inconspicuous as possible to preserve the sacred nature of the gathering.

Videos may be taken from a **fixed position** in the back or side aisle of the church. The Pastor must approve the placement of videography equipment.

Videographers must be in communication with the pastor prior to setting up any equipment. Ideally this is done prior to the wedding day and can be accomplished in person if the videographer attends the rehearsal. If this is impossible, contact by e-mail (celc1908@verizon.net) or phone (410-647-0340) are alternatives.