

Wedding Planning Guide

Zion⁺
*lutheran
church*

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Introduction

Congratulations on your engagement!

This booklet will help answer questions as you plan your wedding at Zion. In order to help your wedding flow smoothly, please attend to the details in this guide in a timely manner. If you have questions along the way, please feel free to reach out to the Church Office.

Church Office hours:

Monday through Thursday - 9am to 5pm

Friday - 9am to 3pm

(The Church Office is closed on or following many holidays.)

Blessings on your preparations!

Staff and Contact Information

Administrative Assistant

Karen Sturdivant - Zion@ZionSA.org

210-688-3090

Pastors

Kathi Johnson - KJohnson@ZionSA.org

Al Jensen - AJensen@ZionSA.org

Dan Heim - DHeim@ZionSA.org

210-688-3090

Director of Music Ministries

Rob Mikulski - RMikulski@ZionSA.org

210-688-3090

Wedding Assistant

Contact information for your wedding assistant will be provided for you.

This guide may also be found on our website, ZionSA.org.

To Do List

As Soon As Possible

1. Request your date from the Church Office.
2. Wait for Church Office to confirm date.
3. Return paperwork to Church Office.
4. Contact pastor to schedule pre-marital conversations.

2-3 Months Before Wedding

1. Contact Director of Music Ministries to schedule consultation and select music.
2. Complete pre-marital conversation(s) with pastor.
3. Confirm days/times for rehearsal and wedding with pastor and Church Office.

1 Month Before Wedding

1. Apply for marriage license (contact the county for this).
2. Pay balance of Zion wedding fees.

Within 2 Weeks of Wedding

1. Finalize order of service with pastor, including selection of readings and vows.
2. If needed, plan your service folder/bulletin and get pastor's approval before printing.
3. Contact the Church Office for any questions, concerns, or last-minute changes or challenges.

The Basics

Preliminary Plans

All who wish to plan a wedding service at Zion must make a request with the Church Office. *Remember: keeping us up-to-date will help your wedding service go smoothly and beautifully.*

Please understand that dates for events at Zion are often booked far in advance. **You must wait for confirmation from the Church Office of all dates** (rehearsal, setup, wedding service). Bear in mind that the pastor and other staff's schedules are complex and must be taken into account when we schedule weddings. It is helpful to have a few different dates in mind when calling the church.

Please note: Zion does not hold weddings at the church during Holy Week (the week before Easter), or on/near major festivals of the church (which include, but are not limited to, Christmas and Easter). At this time, we are unable to accommodate weddings for non-members.

In order to be respectful of the pastor's, staff's, and facility schedules, days and times of rehearsals and weddings must be confirmed with the pastor and Church Office no later than two months ahead of time. (Although, the earlier, the better!)

Fees

The wedding fee is \$500 for members. The fee covers a wedding assistant and cleaning. It does not cover the Director of Music Ministries or other musician fees, the pastor's fee, or the usage of any spaces for rehearsal dinners, receptions, and the like.

To include visiting clergy or musicians in your service, Zion's pastor or Director of Music Ministries must consult with you and approve their participation. As our staff must be available to assist guest participants and offer you guidance through the planning process, working with outside participants does not change the fees stated above.

You will want to discuss appropriate additional compensation for visiting participants (which will not be taken from the church fee) independently with them. (For information about visiting musicians and clergy, see the **Music** and **Visiting Clergy** sections.)

Your fee covers the use of the sanctuary, plus spaces for attendants to wait and prepare. A fee schedule for the use of other spaces is available from the Church Office. All spaces to be used must be booked through the Church Office.

Checks may be made payable to Zion Lutheran Church. Payment by credit card is available through the Church Office. **The balance of your fees is due thirty days prior to the service.**

Parking

Zion has multiple paved parking lots available. In case of larger weddings, we also have unpaved, gravel parking available across Leslie Road. Please observe all signage and do not park in fire zones.

Access for the Disabled

Our sanctuary and restrooms are accessible from the parking lot to persons in wheelchairs and/or walkers. Our main church doors have a porte cochere over them so that disabled persons have a covered place to get out of and into vehicles. Parking vehicles under the porte cochere is prohibited.

Wedding Coordinators

Couples often hire a wedding coordinator to help in the planning and execution of their wedding day. Please make sure this person is in direct contact with the pastor and Zion's Wedding Assistant in advance of your wedding day. Wedding coordinators are expected to comply with instructions from Zion's pastor and staff.

Marriage License

You must apply for a marriage license in person at a county registrar's office. Please contact the county registrar's office for more details on requirements for a marriage license. County web sites usually contain all the information you need.

Receptions or Other Related Events

If you are interested in holding your reception (or other related events) at Zion, our Fellowship Hall or Family Life Center can be reserved, for additional fees. Layout of the space (including which tables are available) must be discussed with the Wedding Assistant ahead of time.

Please note that outside catering services must arrange with Zion to use our kitchen facilities.

You or your caterer are required to provide plates, napkins, flatware, table cloths, decorations, and the like.

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol may be served at the rehearsal dinner and/or reception. Zion's Alcohol Policy must be adhered to at all times by all participants, which helps Zion and its guests follow local laws. Serving alcohol to minors or allowing them access to alcohol is expressly forbidden. Church staff and/or the Wedding Assistant will have a copy of the Alcohol Policy and can answer specific questions. The Zion staff reserves the right to cancel or postpone the ceremony if illegal or inappropriate alcohol use by any member of the wedding party is discovered at the rehearsal or wedding.

The use of any illegal drugs anywhere on the church property is prohibited. The Zion staff reserves the right to cancel or postpone the ceremony if drug use by any member of the wedding party is discovered at the rehearsal or wedding.

Smoking is also prohibited in the church building and on the campus.

Wedding Assistant

The wedding assistant is a Zion member who works with the pastor, staff, and the wedding party to help ensure the rehearsal and the wedding service go smoothly. The wedding assistant will open and close the building for the rehearsal and the wedding, answer questions about the facilities and the service, and be available to help guide wedding participants at the beginning and end of the service. They will also work with any ushers and/or wedding coordinators that you have arranged for.

If needed, the Wedding Assistant will also work with you for any other usage of space at Zion (such as rehearsal dinner or reception space).

The Pastor

One of Zion's current pastors will preside at all weddings at Zion, and may honor requests for other clergy to participate and/or preside. When your wedding date is reserved, the pastor will begin working with you on pre-marital conversations and wedding service plans.

One to three pre-marital conversations with the pastor are typical. During these conversations, we will get to know one another and discuss the service in some detail.

Important: Zion's pastors are not trained or licensed mental health providers, therefore we cannot offer pre-marital counseling. If you want or need resources for licensed mental health providers to speak with before your wedding, please ask the pastor for referrals (which are confidential).

We are often asked how much is appropriate for the pastor's fee. Keep in mind that weddings involve extra time (often on evenings and Saturdays) for pre-marital conversations, rehearsal, and the wedding itself. Generally, pastors receive between \$250 to \$500, although any amount is received with gratitude.

Visiting Clergy

Zion welcomes the participation of visiting clergy in wedding services. If you have an ordained person who you want to involve in the marriage service, please let the pastor from Zion know as soon as possible. The participation and role of visiting clergy is at the discretion of Zion's pastors.

It is your responsibility to arrange an appropriate honorarium with a visiting pastor independently.

The Rehearsal

Your rehearsal will normally take place the evening before the wedding (other days/times can be arranged). Rehearsals last up to one hour. It is essential that all members of your wedding party and other participants be present and on time, including parents, grandparents, ushers, and any children who are involved in the service.

Please make sure the start time is adequate to allow rehearsal participants to travel and arrive on time, and to allow time for your rehearsal dinner or other plans that evening. Remember that traffic near Zion can be especially time-consuming during morning and evening rush hours on weekdays.

Dressing Rooms

Dressing rooms are available for your use on the day of the wedding. All rooms used by the wedding party are to be left in good condition. Any trash should be cleaned up and disposed of properly before the wedding party leaves the building.

You may bring snacks and/or non-alcoholic beverages for the wedding party on the wedding day. These items may not be brought the day of the rehearsal and left overnight. (Please note that Zion does not supply plates, napkins, cups, glasses, or the like.) Food and drink may not be brought into the Sanctuary. Care must be taken to clean up any spills immediately.

It is important to assign a person (who is not in the wedding party) to remove all your belongings from the dressing rooms, sanctuary, and from the narthex gathering area immediately following the service.

Photography and Videography

Photographs in the sanctuary may be taken before and after the wedding service. If taken before the service, the photographer should be done 30 minutes before the wedding start time. If taken after, you should plan on having your guests proceed to the reception without having them greet the wedding party so you can begin taking pictures as soon as possible.

Photographers may use a flash only at the beginning of the service during the procession, and at the end during the recession. Photos during the service may be taken without a flash from the back of the sanctuary, the sides, or in the balcony. A videographer may record the service from the back of the church, the side, or the balcony. Photographers and videographers should not interfere with the worship service by walking around or using flash. All photographers and videographers are expected to comply with instructions from Zion pastors and staff.

The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary and other facilities will be opened 30 minutes prior to your rehearsal, and 2 hours prior to your wedding service. Zion's sanctuary seats approximately 400 people when full.

The Sanctuary is decorated with paraments and other items used to enhance worship. Our church year follows the life of Christ, and to emphasize the proper spirit of each season, paraments are placed on the altar and ambo, and worn as stoles by the pastor. ***Paraments are changed at the specified times of the year and will not be changed for wedding services.*** Other items will only be moved by Zion staff at the discretion of the pastor.

Candles

Zion typically has altar candles out for worship services. Zion does not have candles to line the center aisle, and candles may not be affixed to the pews in any way. Candle stands may not be placed in any aisles.

Unity Candles and Related Rituals

The unity candle and related rituals are a modern addition to the traditional wedding service. These may be incorporated into the service in consultation with the pastor. Other rituals expressing the marital union may be used in the service, developed in consultation with the pastor. A table may be set in an area approved by the pastor.

Decorations

Nothing may be attached or fixed to the pews, walls, or any other surface in the Sanctuary with any kind of adhesive (tape, glue, etc.) If you wish to have a decoration on the ends of the pews, they may be loosely attached with ribbon or other material. Items may not be placed on the altar or any musical instruments.

Flowers

Flowers may **not** be placed on the altar. All arrangements must be placed in consultation with staff. There is room in the narthex (sanctuary entrance) for a smaller arrangement near your guest book, if you wish. Your florist will have access to the sanctuary two hours before the wedding service. Zion is not responsible for flowers left after a wedding, and they may be disposed of once the wedding party has left the premises.

Miscellaneous

Please use care with food and beverages in our buildings. Zion does not permit the throwing of confetti, rice, or birdseed. Once the wedding party is outside it is permissible to blow bubbles. Zion does not permit live animals or birds anywhere in the building (except for trained service animals). Use of fireworks/pyrotechnics or sparklers on Zion's property is prohibited.

The Marriage Liturgy

Below is a template of the order of service for Marriage. A wedding service may include Holy Communion, if desired, at the sole discretion of Zion's pastoral staff. **The pastor will provide a more detailed overview of the service during pre-marital conversations.**

Prelude

Seating of the Family

The assembly stands for the bride's entrance.

Procession/Entrance

Greeting

Introduction

Declaration of Intention

Prayer of the Day

The assembly is seated.

Scripture Readings (See **Scripture** section for options.)

Two or three scripture readings are read.

Homily

Vows (See **Vows** section for notes)

Giving of Rings

Acclamation

The assembly may offer acclamation here with applause.

Other symbols of marriage may be given or used at this time (unity candle or similar).

If the service includes Holy Communion, the pastor will offer the Great Thanksgiving here, followed by the assembly praying the Lord's Prayer together. Communion distribution then occurs. The wedding couple may participate in distributing communion to the assembly. It is not appropriate for only the wedding couple to commune. During the distribution, special music may be offered or hymns may be sung.

Marriage Blessing

The couple may greet one another with a kiss.

Dismissal

Recessional

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

Postlude

Scripture Readings

Below are suggested scripture readings for the wedding service. If desired, the pastor may also choose the readings.

Old Testament

Genesis 1.26-31
Genesis 2.18-24
Proverbs 3.3-6
Ecclesiastes 4.9-12

Song of Solomon 2.10-13
Song of Solomon 8.6-7
Isaiah 63.7-9
Jeremiah 31.31-34

Psalms

Psalms 33
Psalm 67
Psalm 100
Psalm 117
Psalm 121

Psalms 127
Psalm 128
Psalm 136
Psalm 150

New Testament Letters

Romans 12.1-2, 9-18
I Corinthians 12.31 - 13.13
Ephesians 3.14-19
Ephesians 5.21-33

Philippians 4.4-9
Colossians 3.12-17
1 John 3.18-23
1 John 4.7-12

Gospels

Matthew 5.14-16
Matthew 7.21, 24-29
Matthew 19.4-6
Matthew 22.35-40

Mark 10.6-9
John 2.1-10
John 15.9-12

Considerations About Vows

The pastor will give you options for vows that are already written, or you may compose your own.

General advice for composing original vows or modifying vows:

- The primary promise in Christian marriage is faithfulness to one another in a life-long covenant that is not dependent on things always being good, happy, perfect, or based on the temporary feelings of romance.
- Keep your vows as simple as possible.
- If you are composing your own vows, write them down and give them to the pastor before the wedding service so he/she can hand them to you during the service.

Music

- It is our practice that Zion's Director of Music Ministries serves as musician for all weddings held at Zion, unless unavailable on the date of the wedding. If unavailable, they will find a substitute. Other organists or musicians may play for weddings, and these **must** be cleared with our Director of Music Ministries well in advance of the wedding date.
- Contact the Director of Music Ministries two months before your wedding date to schedule a consultation regarding your wedding music.
- If you are making use of a vocal soloist or instrumentalist, it is up to that person to contact the Director of Music Ministries directly to arrange rehearsal times. Because of the time involved, extra rehearsals may require additional fees, at the discretion of the Director of Music Ministries.
- Because the wedding ceremony is a service of worship, music selections must be appropriate for use at any church service (i.e. sacred in nature). Save secular selections for use at the reception. Zion's Director of Music of Music Ministries will make final decisions regarding music.
- No recorded music is permitted during, before or after the wedding service. This includes soloist accompaniments on CD.
- The singing of hymns can be a welcomed addition to the wedding service. The Director of Music Ministries can work with you to select appropriate hymns.
- Please note that the Director of Music Ministries has a separate fee of \$250. Any additional musicians you wish to hire are your responsibility to pay.

The Wedding Bulletin

If you plan to provide an order of service bulletin for your guests, you will need to arrange for your own preparation and printing. **Zion staff and equipment is not available to type, lay out, or print wedding bulletins.**

Using the above resources (especially the outline on p. 11) and the advice of the pastor and musicians, you should be able to provide a helpful source of information to those attending the service. Please do not rearrange the order of service. Our pattern of worship is ancient, and is laid out the way it is for both theological and practical reasons.

The bulletin makes a great deal of difference in the worship experience of your guests.

- When you look at fonts, font sizes and paper color, think about who may attend, and consider whether the text is easy to read.
- You may choose only to print the outline of the service. However, when you choose how much text to include in the order of service, consider how familiar your guests are with the service. Many people are unfamiliar with church services, so it is necessary to print all the words spoken by the assembly (including things you might know by heart, like the Lord's Prayer).
- Holy Communion services usually need more text and music printed.
- Hymnals are available in the pew racks for singing of hymns - the Director of Music Ministries can provide hymn numbers for you.
- A brief note from the bride and groom, thanking the guests for being a part of this special celebration is appropriate, as is acknowledgment of loved ones, whether they are present or not.

The pastor must approve your service folder before it is printed. Please email or drop off a draft of the bulletin at least a week prior to your wedding.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q. When can we have access to the church for the rehearsal and the wedding?

A. For rehearsals, the building is open 30 minutes before the start time. For the wedding service, the building is open 2 hours ahead. Setting up for other events (such as a rehearsal dinner or reception) will be coordinated with your Wedding Assistant.

Q. What items can be left at the church on the rehearsal night?

A. Items such as bulletins, decorations, and other small items may be left overnight at the church after the rehearsal, but we cannot be responsible for any clothing, jewelry, music or electronic equipment, or other valuables. Zion Lutheran Church is not responsible for lost or stolen items left at the church. Please note that food may not be left overnight.

Q. Do weddings and rehearsal usually begin at the scheduled time?

A. We will respect your time and your guests' time, in addition to respecting staff and facility schedules. We expect that you will, too. Rehearsals and wedding services will need to begin on time.

Q. How long is the wedding ceremony itself?

A. The wedding service will last approximately 30 minutes. (With Holy Communion, 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the number of guests.)

Q. How much time do we have after the ceremony is over?

A. We expect the church will be vacant within one hour after your service ends. (Example: If your wedding begins at 4pm and is over at about 4:30pm, the church is usually empty by 5:30pm.) Keep this in mind as you decide how to greet your guests and plan any photography that will take place after the service.

Q. What about my marriage license and certificates?

A. You must bring the marriage license to the wedding and leave it with the pastor to sign, record, and return to the county. Usually, a friend or family member should be left in charge of getting this to the pastor on the wedding day.

Q. Do we need witnesses to our wedding?

A. No. The marriage certificate has a place for optional witness signatures.

Q. Can children be included in the ceremony?

A. Yes, we welcome them. Talk with the pastor about meaningful ways of including children in the service.

Q. Should we have a unity candle?

A. You may choose to have a unity candle lighting in your service. Other meaningful rituals that express the union of the couple may also be considered. Talk to the pastor about appropriate ideas.

Q. Are there rules about wedding party size?

A. Generally, having more than 8 total bridesmaids/groomsmen is unwise. The placement of so many people at the front of the church is visually cluttered and limits visibility for members of the assembly.

If you have more than eight people whom you want to participate in your wedding, consider allowing them to be ushers or greeters. Having plenty of ushers and greeters stationed throughout the church will help your guests feel welcome.

Q. Is the Lutheran marriage service different from the common conception of marriage services?

A. The Lutheran service differs from “common knowledge” in a few small ways that you may want to consider. It is no longer part of the Lutheran liturgy for the pastor to ask, “Who presents this woman to be married?” (or a variation on that theme). This is a question that dates to a time when women were considered property, therefore, it is not appropriate to imply that the bride does not present *herself* to be married. The pastor can discuss with you other ways for the parents or family to be involved in the service, if desired.

Q. Should we have Holy Communion at our wedding?

A. This is a decision you will want to discuss with the pastor. Communion is a wonderful way to celebrate unity, but it can be challenging at a marriage service where those in attendance may not share one religious background. In these circumstances, it may highlight more tension than unity. If you have Holy Communion, the whole assembly is invited to commune (it is not appropriate, for example, to have Communion only for the bride and groom or wedding party). If you do have Communion, the wedding couple (or others) may assist with the distribution.

Q. What is the best way to list the members of the wedding party in the service folder/bulletin? May I include a brief biography of each member?

A. At the end of the order of service it is appropriate to list all the participants (including ushers, pastor, musician, wedding party, and others). You may want to include a one-line description of each person (i.e. “friend of the groom” or “sister of the bride”). The sharing of biographical information and personal stories is a good thing to save for the reception since it is not a part of the service that needs to be printed for your guests in the worship folder. Please double check spelling of staff names and titles with the Church Office.

Q. Can we involve our pets in the wedding?

A. Neither pets nor live animals or birds of any kind are permitted at Zion Lutheran Church, except for trained service animals.