



THE WEDDING BOOK

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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 Pastor.

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 prospective bride and groom 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. The church calendar will be checked and, if available, your wedding date and time will be added and reserved. Sharon Lutheran is a large, active church. Rehearsal times and dates need to accommodate other scheduled wedding ceremonies.

When reserving a date, please remember that Holy Week (the dates of which change each year) begins on Palm Sunday and concludes on Easter Sunday. Since this is a period of time when all the attention of the church is directed toward the mystery of redemption, no weddings take place at Sharon Lutheran during this week.

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.

When your requested date and time have been cleared through the church office you will receive a letter confirming your reserved date and time. **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. In the rare instance that a second wedding is scheduled, that wedding party must comply with Sharon Lutheran scheduling needs.

The Pastor

The Pastor 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 Pastor to see that your marriage service is performed in keeping with the policies of the congregation and within the tradition of the Christian Church.

If you would like a particular pastor 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 pastors also reserve the right to substitute for one another when necessary.

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

The Pastoral Assistant

A Pastoral Assistant will be assigned to assist you and the pastor 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 pre-marriage classes. The center of these activities is a two-day retreat by LifeWorks, which offers a number of retreats during the year. Couples should find one (there are some each year in Grand Forks) that fits their schedule and register to attend it as soon as possible. Cost of the retreat is \$300, which is a small investment in your relationship and your future life together. This investment in your relationship is only a small percentage of the cost of your wedding day, but it is the most important piece as you prepare for marriage and look to the future. To assist couples with this cost, it is encouraged to include the cost of the retreat when registering gifts for guests or to invite parents, grandparents, godparents, or special friends to provide the cost of the retreat as their gift to the couple. In case of hardship, a \$100 scholarship is available from Sharon Lutheran. A simple request form is available from the church office. If, because of distance or other unavoidable obstacles, the retreat is not an option, contact your presiding pastor for alternatives.

The pastor presiding at your wedding will meet with you after your retreat for some follow-up work as well as to help you to plan your wedding service. Please contact the presiding pastor when you have completed the retreat and are ready to plan the service. The church phone number and email addresses for the pastors are included on the contact page in your packet.

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 pastor will discuss liturgical options with you as you meet to plan your wedding.

The pastor who presides at the wedding 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. We will provide you with their names and **it will be your responsibility to contact her/him directly to discuss the music.** Should you desire another organist, she/he should be trained and have experience with a pipe organ.

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 is a 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 organist has a question regarding the appropriateness of a song you will be asked to contact the pastor who is presiding at your wedding for final determination. The Pastor 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 service is a 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 and on the altar. **No** flowers are allowed on the 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 driplless 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.

Unity Candle & Sand Ceremony

The Unity Candle at times is used in the marriage service. 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 pastor 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 weddings 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.

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. 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 pastor.

The Exchange of Promises

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

You may wish to write your own vows. They should be consistent with the biblical understanding of marriage and should make clear that the promises are a lifelong commitment. The pastor must approve the wording you choose if it is not a form that has been provided. If you write your own vows, be careful not to promise the impossible.

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 the pastor 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.

Ring bearers

Weddings often include ring bearers and flower girls. It is expected that any child participating in weddings be at least 3 (three) years old.

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 pastor. Purchase of bulletin covers and printing are the responsibility of the couple. The Sharon Lutheran church office does not print wedding bulletins.

Note: The bulletin is the best place to remind the worshipers that no flash pictures should be taken during the service.

Photography

We strongly suggest that formal pictures be taken **before** the service. This means you will be able to join your guests at the reception in a more timely fashion by having your pictures taken before the ceremony.

Some may object to this practice because of the tradition of "not seeing the bride" before her march down the aisle. The origin of this tradition, however, dates back to the 1800's and arranged marriages where the groom was not allowed to see the bride's face before the ceremony was completed to assure that he would not back out of the arrangement. It is possible to capture this moment in ways other than delaying photos until after the ceremony.

Video taping 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.

No flash pictures may be taken during the wedding 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 pastor 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.

Throwing Rice or Bird Seed

We ask that you do not throw rice at your wedding. If you wish to be showered with something as you leave the church or your reception, birdseed is preferable. We ask that birdseed not be thrown inside the building.