

# WEDDING PLANNING HANDBOOK

St Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
3771 Easton Avenue, Bethlehem, PA. 18020  
(610) 694-0212  
[www.stmarksbethlehem.com](http://www.stmarksbethlehem.com)

## PREAMBLE

Of all the many arrangements you will be making for your wedding day, the arrangements you make with the church are the most important. The following material is provided to assist you in your planning for your wedding at St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bethlehem, PA. The people of St. Mark's Church celebrate the love you have found in each other and are glad to assist you in your preparations for marriage.

Marriage is not an exclusively Christian possession. It has been taking place for centuries, across all cultural lines and within all faith traditions. But, in its Christian form, God's steadfast love is celebrated as the model of faithfulness and love for the couple being joined together and for all in attendance. Marriage is a glad occasion in which the participants (couple and congregation) celebrate within the context of worship all the gifts received from the Creator.

If you have questions, please contact ([office@stmarksbethlehem.com](mailto:office@stmarksbethlehem.com)), or ([pastor@stmarksbethlehem.com](mailto:pastor@stmarksbethlehem.com)), or 610-694-0212.

## SCHEDULING AND ARRANGEMENTS

Careful planning for a church wedding is necessary. It is strongly recommended that you contact the church office and pastor as soon as you have any idea regarding a possible date for the wedding. This should be no less than four months before the date. The date and time should be confirmed early to avoid any conflicts on the schedule of the pastor or the church building.

No weddings are to be performed on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or during Lent or Holy Week.

## PREMARITAL PREPARATION

A couple planning their wedding at St. Mark's Church shall participate in the marital preparation sessions hosted by Lutheran Congregational Services. Information can be found at [www.lutherancongregational-services.org](http://www.lutherancongregational-services.org) under the "Individuals" tab.

It is important to meet with the pastor for planning. Please review vow, Bible lesson, and music suggestions at the end of this handbook. The wedding service

may include the Sacrament of Holy Communion. However, all assembled will be invited to participate and receive the sacrament. Holy Communion by its intent and definition is a corporate act intended for all who believe. Therefore, Communion only for the couple or the wedding party cannot be allowed.

The planning time is designed to give the pastor and the couple opportunities to share, in an informal atmosphere, the significant meaning of Christian marriage. Do not hesitate to ask questions and to express your opinion to the pastor and/or your future spouse. It is our desire that your wedding be one of the most significant moments in your life.

## INVITATIONS

The pastor, organist and their families will not consider themselves invited to a wedding reception unless they receive an invitation as with other guests. The same applies to invitations to the pastor for rehearsal dinners or other gatherings.

## USE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING

### GENERAL

You should complete all of the building use forms as found on the Frequently Asked Questions section of our website - [www.stmarksbethlehem.com](http://www.stmarksbethlehem.com).

A wedding in the church is to be in the context of a service of worship. Therefore, it is expected that members of the wedding party, family, and guests will conduct themselves in accordance with the respect shown for all sacred institutions.

All members of the wedding party are expected to refrain from the use of alcohol or drugs of any kind before or during the wedding ceremony. The ceremony is a solemn occasion conducted in the presence of God and should reflect a mature sense of joy based on an appreciation of the gifts that God grants in marriage. The pastor will not participate in the wedding if substance use is suspected.

Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church building at any time. Smoking is permitted outside the building. It is requested that the "butt buckets" be used for discarded cigarette butts.

In respect for the food needs of the world, no rice will be thrown as the bride and groom leave the church. As a token of concern for God's creatures, bird seed may be used. However, packets of seeds should not be given to the guests until the bridal party is ready to leave the church. No confetti or other paper or plastic-type sprays or decorative ribbons shall be used, nor the release of balloons. *A \$125.00 Damage Fee is expected before the wedding. If there is no damage or debris left from the wedding, the fee will be immediately refunded to the couple.*

## WEDDING DECORATIONS

The church interior will be available to be decorated to your satisfaction either following the rehearsal or 90 minutes before the ceremony is to begin. Please share this information with your florist and wedding party.

All floral arrangements are the responsibility of the couple. Flowers may be placed on the wall shelf or other small tables in the chancel, but not the altar.

Simple floral arrangements or ribbons may be placed on pew ends. Do not use any screws, nails, tacks, staples, wires or any other fastening device on furnishings or structure. We recommend the use of non-marring tape or ribbons that can be tied around the pew end.

You are welcome to leave your floral arrangements in the chancel for the Sunday worship service. If you decide to do this, please give ample notice to the pastor and an announcement of thanks regarding the arrangements will be published in the Sunday worship bulletin.

Furnishings of the church (baptismal font, paschal candle, altar, etc.) should not be moved for a wedding. A white runner for use upon entry of the bridal party in the center aisle is permitted. Consult with your florist concerning this item. Extra candle stands are permitted, please consult with your florist. The church possesses a wedding candle stand to hold one large central candle and two smaller side candles for a wedding candle lighting ceremony if you wish to use it. You are responsible for the candles. Consult with the pastor to determine sizes of candles.

## **DRESSING ROOM**

The wedding party is welcome to use the choir room or Fellowship Hall for dressing and/or waiting prior to the ceremony. Please be careful to protect any personal or valuable items. Care of these items is the responsibility of the couple, the church cannot be responsible for any loss or damage in this regard.

## **MUSIC**

As soon as the dates and times of the wedding and rehearsal have been decided, the church organist should be contacted via the church office email or phone number. The organist will then arrange to meet with you to review music and make selections. The organist employed by this congregation ordinarily will provide his or her services for the wedding. The customary fee shall go to the congregation's organist except when he or she is unavailable. If another organist is used, that person should arrange rehearsal time through the congregation's organist. Guest organists should not change preset stops on the organ without permission.

A marriage in the church is in the context of a service of worship. Therefore, couples should select from a wide range of religious music appropriate for weddings. Favored secular music shall be reserved for a special and meaningful time during the reception. Extra costs incurred for the purchase of special music shall be paid for by the couple. Musical accompaniment other than the church organ is permitted, but should reflect respect for the occasion.

If your plans for the wedding include a soloist, soloist should work with the organist to schedule opportunities to rehearse together. Please do not place the organist under the pressure of a last minute rehearsal.

### **WEDDING REHEARSAL**

The wedding rehearsal is held shortly before the wedding. It is a time when the entire wedding party can become familiar with the wedding service. All of the wedding party shall be in attendance at the rehearsal and it is urged that all members of the wedding party be prompt.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

No flash pictures are to be taken during the wedding ceremony. This applies to all photographers, professional and amateur. Flash pictures entering and the bride and exiting the sanctuary are permitted. Video photography is permitted without flood lights. All photographers should respect the solemnity of the worship service and should consult with the pastor with regard to the wedding service.

### **FEES**

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Non-Member*</u>
1. Church use	0.00	220.00
2. Fellowship Hall use	0.00	125.00
3. Pastor	150.00	250.00**
4. Organist	150.00	175.00
(additional fee if using a soloist)	30.00	30.00
5. Damage Deposit (Refundable)	125.00	125.00

\* The Non-Member fee schedule is applicable to all weddings in which neither the bride nor the groom are active members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church.

\*\* When the pastor of another congregation assists the pastor of St. Mark's, appropriate reimbursement should be made to that pastor as well.

**PLEASE NOTE:** All financial remuneration must be made at the time of the wedding rehearsal.

Please prepare **separate checks** for Church Use & Damage Deposit (payable to *St. Mark's Lutheran Church*), Pastor, and the Organist. Fee for use of Fellowship Hall may be combined with Church Use.

**BIBLE LESSONS** (These are some commonly used lessons, but not the only options. Choose one [1] from each category - First Lesson, Second Lesson, Psalm, and Gospel)

Suggested Old Testament readings for the First Lesson:

Genesis 1:26-31	Male and female created by God
Genesis 2:18-24	God creates man and woman
Song of Solomon 2:10-13	Love in the spring
Isaiah 63:7-9	The steadfast love of God
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Two are better than one

**SUGGESTED EPISTLE** readings for the Second Lesson:

Romans 12:1-2	A living offering
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13	A hymn of love
Ephesians 5:21-33	Marriage and mutual respect
Philippians 1:9-11	Love that grows

**SUGGESTED PSALMS:**

33, 100, 117, 127, 128, 136, 150

**SUGGESTED GOSPELS:**

Matthew 19:4-6	Two become one
John 2:1-10	Wedding at Cana
John 15:9-12	Love one another

**HYMNS** (Evangelical Lutheran Worship [selection is optional])

632	O God, Our Help in Ages Past
883	All people that on Earth Do Dwell
533	Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty
848	Give to our God Immortal Praise
858	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
539	Abide with Us, Our Savior
585	Hear Us Now, Our God and Father
631	Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
586	This Is a Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited
648	Beloved, God's Chosen
312	Jesus Come! For We Invite You
308	O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright
488	Soul Adorn Yourself with Gladness
816	Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life

- 840 Now Thank We All Our God
- 823 Praise the Lord! O Heavens
- 871 Sing Praise to God, the Highest Good
- 836 Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- 867 In Thee Is Gladness
- 833 Oh, that I had a Thousand Voices
- 879 For the Beauty of the Earth

**VOWS** (Select one or use as ideas for your own vows)

I take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my *wife/husband* from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.

In the presence of God and this community, I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my *wife/husband*; to have and to hold from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

**CHECK LIST**

\_\_\_ Minister contacted \_\_\_\_\_ Church Reserved

\_\_\_ Registered with Lutheran Congregational Services for Marriage Preparedness

Date(s) attending \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Wedding Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Church forms completed

\_\_\_ Organist contacted - Name \_\_\_\_\_;

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Music selected \_\_\_\_\_ Soloist \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Flowers Selected \_\_\_\_\_ Florist \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Photographer - Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Reception Hall Reserved - Place \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Rehearsal Dinner Arranged - Place \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ License Application

\_\_\_ License Received

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