



# GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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## Wedding Handbook and Guidelines

We want you to have a wonderful and memorable wedding and a deeply satisfying marriage. These things don't just happen; they take much thought and preparation. So we can satisfactorily assist you, the following information is provided to you. We wish you God's peace and love as you embark on a new journey together.

### TIMING IS EVERYTHING

As soon as you think you might consider Grace to be the site of your wedding, contact, Grace's Lead Wedding Coordinator, Deb Rutledge, via email at [d\\_rutledge@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d_rutledge@sbcglobal.net) or leave a message for [Ms. Rutledge](#), through the church office (216.321.2790) and she will call you.

[Ms. Rutledge](#) will be your primary contact for your wedding ceremony at Grace. After conversation and/or a site visit to Grace hosted by [Ms. Rutledge](#), you should do the following:

### NO LATER THAN SIX (6) MONTHS BEFORE THE WEDDING:

- **Reserve the date to use the nave (the sanctuary) and reserve the date with an officiant to preside at the wedding.**

To reserve the nave, please provide Grace's Office Manager, Jennifer Holland, with:

1. The complete Wedding Registration sheet (click for link to [Member Worksheet](#) or [Non-Member Worksheet](#))
2. A \$500 refundable deposit (check or money-order only). Receipt of the deposit locks in the date and rate.

To reserve Rev. David J. Ernat, as the officiant for your wedding please contact him at [prernat@graceheights.org](mailto:prernat@graceheights.org). You are encouraged to receive pre-marital counseling. Such counseling is included in the cost for a wedding at Grace. Counseling should begin no later than six months before the wedding ceremony.

**AS SOON AS THE DATE OF THE WEDDING CEREMONY IS CONFIRMED ON THE CHURCH CALENDAR:**

- ◆ A Wedding Director will be assigned to you and that person will be identified on your copy of the Wedding Registration you will receive after your deposit is received. The Wedding Director will help you in making wedding plans. Feel confident in the director's knowledge and ability.
- ***Counseling***  
All couples are encouraged to have pre-marital counseling. A Grace member, who is planning to be married at Grace, is required to participate in pre-marital counseling. (For wedding purposes, a Grace member is a person who: a) has officially been received into membership at Grace for at least eighteen months before making a deposit with the church to reserve a date for a wedding ceremony. That person must also have been an "active" member during those months; or, b) be part of a Grace member household. Household is defined as an immediate family member and includes biological, adopted and step, sons and daughters.

To facilitate the counseling process, the Pastor may use a pre-marital counseling devise such as Prepare-Enrich. Counseling encourages the couple to speak openly and honestly with each other and to explore ways of deepening their relationship with each other.

**TWO (2) MONTHS PRIOR TO THE WEDDING:**

- Make an appointment with the Organist. The Grace Lutheran Church Organist/Lead Musician, David Sparkes must be consulted about and approve all music and musicians to be used in the service. He can be reached by phone (330-603-2057) or email at [dsparkes@graceheights.org](mailto:dsparkes@graceheights.org).

**REMEMBER IT IS THE COUPLE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE CONTACT WITHIN THE GIVEN TIME FRAME.**

## **GRACE WEDDING FEE**

For a Grace member the fee is \$600. For a non-member, a guest of Grace, the fee is \$1,600. The fee goes to off-setting the cost to provide the following:

- Nave/Sanctuary (space/lights, heat/air conditioning)
- Public address/sound system
- Organ
- Altar candles
- Eucharist supplies
- Bride and groom lounges
- Parking
- Wedding Coordinator and an assistant as deemed necessary by Wedding Coordinator
- Sexton (Janitor)
- Altar Guild to set Holy Communion (Eucharist)
- Office Manager
- Organist
- Pastor (Ceremony and Pre-Marital Counseling)

Referrals are available for wedding bulletin productions/invitations, additional musicians, photographers, florists, disc jockeys and more.

All wedding couples are required to provide a \$500 deposit to secure the wedding day and time. The deposit is fully refunded unless the couple fails to manage themselves, their guests or ceremony participants, or the couple cancels their wedding date. ([Please see Policies Governing Weddings #12 & #13](#))

The cost for non-members can be reduced to \$1,400 should the Pastor of Grace not be used in the ceremony (\$100), nor provide pre-marital counseling (\$100).

The cost to both Grace Members and guests of Grace, can be reduced by ½ with documented (receipts, contracts and so on) financial hardship. Financial hardship is reached when the cost of the wedding at Grace is equal or greater than ½ of the total wedding costs (not limited to the ceremony, reception, music, clothes, grooms meal, and so on).

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

Marriage is a wonderful and deeply satisfying commitment. A great marriage does not simply happen. It requires much intentional effort, including willingness from both parties to work at fostering intimacy, nurture and care.

The foundation of Christian marriage is the love of God as expressed through Jesus Christ. We learn about the joys and even struggles of life-giving love ultimately from God. Faith in and openness to God strengthens a couple's marriage.

Marriage vows that are spoken in the presence of an ordained minister indicate the sacredness of two people's love; therefore a marriage service is first and foremost a worship service. In the presence of God Almighty, two people publicly confess their love for and their commitment to one another.

- ***Setting the date***

Since the wedding service is a worship service, all details concerning the wedding and related arrangements must conform to such practices and standards of good taste as are consistent with the Christian faith and Grace Lutheran Church. A sample wedding service is found by hard copy in this booklet (click here for a sample [Lutheran Book of Worship](#) wedding ceremony. An Evangelical Lutheran Worship wedding ceremony will be available soon.)

- ***The Wedding Director***

The Wedding Director acts as a liaison, guiding hand and reference book for the wedding couple concerning the wedding service. Our directors were offered the position based on their organizational skills, willingness to perform their duties, and the chutzpah to pull it off. They have received training, work under the auspices of this church and have the ability to make decisions and adhere to the Grace Church guidelines for weddings. You can feel confident that the Wedding Director will handle the service with graciousness and ease. The Wedding Director will meet with the couple to discuss options, guidelines and schedules, to offer suggestions, and advise as requested. The Director will cover, but is not limited in discussion to, general church policy, staff services, decorations and accessories, use of the facilities and receptions held in Grace Church.

- ***The Rehearsal***

A rehearsal for a public wedding is essential. The rehearsal usually occurs the night preceding the wedding. The Wedding Director will arrange the time that is most convenient for all parties involved. The rehearsal should start promptly at the stated time and should last about 45 minutes. **Please note that \$100 will be expensed against your deposit for each 15 minute delay caused by the late arrival of participants.**

When two different Grace wedding rehearsals are scheduled for the same date, they will be scheduled no less than one hour apart.

The Wedding Director will guide you through the rehearsal.

Prior to the rehearsal and wedding, it is expected that all members of the wedding party will refrain from the use of alcoholic beverages. The couple is under obligation to make this policy known to other members of the wedding party. The reason for this rule is that most problems experienced at weddings are alcohol related.

The **Marriage License** is given to the Wedding Director at the rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, parents of the couple and any soloist or additional musicians not arranged by the [Organist](#), should be present at the rehearsal.

- ***Use of the Church***

Seating capacity in the main Sanctuary is approximately 500 plus 50 in the balcony and 50 in the chapel. **The length of the aisle is 90 feet.**

The congregation is not responsible for gifts, musical instruments, clothing, or other properties belonging to you or your party. It is necessary for you to assume all care and safeguards.

- ***Decorations***

All decorations must be removed immediately following the ceremony. No decorations should interfere with any activity of the congregation. Decorations are not to be displayed in the Chancel (by the Altar area).

## **POLICES GOVERNING WEDDINGS**

A Christian wedding service is a time of great excitement and joy as two people express the solemn commitment that underscores a very special relationship. Through the use of ritual, the Christian wedding service gives expression to the love, respect, and commitment between two persons who desire to express themselves in such a way before family, friends, and God.

The following policies are designed to enhance communication between the wedding couple and the church staff. We truly want you to have a wonderful and meaningful wedding.

1. Name, date, and time of service will be entered on the calendar when the completed registration form has been received and the \$500 deposit has been paid. Dates should be reserved as early as possible, no later than six (6) months in advance.
2. A Grace Wedding Director is required for all weddings.
3. All fees are to be paid to the Office Manager thirty (30) days before the wedding service.
4. The church staff, including the Pastor, will arrange weddings with the wedding couple only, unless written instructions are received from the couple for staff to consult with someone else (such as a parent).
5. A consultation with the [Organist](#) must take place for all weddings, without exception. The Grace Church Organist has the right of first refusal for all weddings. The Organist must approve all musical selections and/or musicians. Please see [Music Guidelines](#) (pg. 8).
6. It is the couple's responsibility to see that the photographers, videographers, and others receive a written copy of the Grace policies for their respective activity. Those who fail to comply, or do not treat Grace personnel with respect, will be asked to leave the premises even if it means they cannot fulfill a contract to the couple. This also includes family members and guests.
7. If Holy Communion is served and the Pastor of Grace is officiating, the sacrament is offered to the entire assembly.
8. The use of church facilities for receptions is possible. Generally they are limited to coffee-hour type gatherings. For this option, as well as others (i.e., a catered reception) there are additional costs. Please speak with your

Wedding Coordinator if you wish to pursue this option.

9. Please consult with the Wedding Director regarding the use of Ring Bearers and Flower Girls. Generally, children should be no younger than five (5) years old. Sometimes very young children prove to be unwilling at the time of the service. Please understand such children must be excused as their needs must come before adult's desires. Children are not expected to stand still for the entire ceremony.
10. A person authorized by the Wedding Director will light the altar candles and Chancel candelabras.
11. Alcoholic beverages will not be served or brought on the church premises. This includes use of alcohol in cars and limousines in the parking lots.
12. Expenses against your refundable deposit are assessed at \$100 per 15 minute increments, when either the wedding or rehearsal is delayed because of late guests or participants.
13. If you cancel/change your wedding date, \$100 will be expensed against your deposit.
14. Please no rice or confetti. Grass seed, birdseed, and bubbles may be used outside only. **THE WEDDING PARTY MUST PROVIDE CLEAN UP.**
15. Grace Church can not accommodate weddings during: Holy Week, including Palm Sunday Eve and Easter Eve, on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or Pentecost Sunday.
16. Smoking is **not** allowed in the church building.
17. Wedding services are set with at least a four (4) hour difference, i.e. 11:00am and 3:00 pm, 1:00 pm and 5:30 pm.
18. There may be more than one clergy involved in the service. The Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church is the Presiding Officiant (does the wedding vows), unless the Pastor chooses to relinquish that right. If the sacrament is provided, the Pastor of Grace Church will be the Presiding Minister, unless the Pastor chooses to relinquish that right. Non-Grace clergy must follow Grace wedding guidelines for the service. When an approved guest clergy officiates, s/he must attend the rehearsal.
19. Special arrangements can be made for weddings with fewer than 20 persons in attendance. Special arrangements must be discussed with the Pastor of Grace.

## MUSIC GUIDELINES FOR WEDDING SERVICES AT GRACE CHURCH

The Marriage Service in a Lutheran Church is an Order of Worship; it is a time of joyous celebration. We celebrate God's goodness to the human family and lift to God our love and gratitude. Therefore, the music should be selected for suitability to a worship service of praise and thanksgiving, asking the eternal God's presence and blessing upon the marriage.

The music should seek to convey the message that in a Christian marriage service the couple stands there, not simply as a couple, but as a couple before God. It is meant to be sacred, exhilarating, and an unforgettable event. Music that dismisses God's place in relation to the couple is inappropriate. Grace's Organist will help determine whether a solo or musical composition is suitable.

Texts of vocal selections may be scripture based, a prayer asking God's blessing on your marriage, or an expression of thanksgiving to God for bringing you together. Instrumental music may be selected to reflect the mood of joy and celebration in the service. Wherever employed in the service, and by whatever instruments or voices, the music chosen should:

- Be high quality examples of the art of composition
- Not cloud communication of the content and mood of the service.

Music that is non-spiritual and sentimental in nature should be used at the reception and not during the worship service. The use of a CD, or similar accompaniment, is very strongly discouraged and forbidden in many parts of the service (i.e., processions). If CD music is approved and to be used, only Grace Personnel will operate the sound equipment.

There are many musical options possible, and therefore this part of the service should be carefully discussed with the [Organist](#) early in the wedding planning, at least two months prior to the service. The Order for Marriage calls for the Lord's Prayer to be prayed by the entire congregation and therefore the singing of it is discouraged as a solo. The [Organist](#) for the wedding will be the church organist unless otherwise agreed upon. The duties of the [Organist](#) include a music consultation with the bride and groom, the wedding rehearsal and the wedding service.