

## Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church Wedding Policy

Marriage is a gift of God, intended for the joy and mutual strength of those who enter it and for the well-being of the whole human family. God created us male and female and blessed humankind with the gifts of companionship, the capacity to love, and the care and nurture of children. Jesus affirmed the covenant of marriage and revealed God's own self-giving love on the cross. The Holy Spirit helps those who are united in marriage to the living signs of God's grace, love, and faithfulness.

Marriage is also a human estate with vows publicly witnessed. The church in worship surrounds these promises with the gathering of God's people, the witness of the word of God, and prayers of blessing and intercession [*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006*].

As such is it appropriate that weddings conducted at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church (the "Church") be conducted in a manner that is respectful of this gift.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide members and those having a connection with BELC direction for conducting a wedding at BELC. Further, it is our policy that a wedding conducted at BELC is consistent with the Christian beliefs of this congregation as determined by the Senior Pastor. A BELC pastor (or his/her designee) shall preside over all wedding services at the Church. This policy is to be maintained by the Wedding Committee of the Fellowship Ministry Team.

### POLICY

It is expected that one of the couple be a baptized Christian and have some connection with BELC (e.g., member or a family member) .

#### Scheduling

An appointment should be made with the Senior Pastor at least 30 days prior to the contemplated date desired. This makes it easy for the pastor to set his/her calendar and make sure the Church is available. Weddings are not scheduled during the season of Lent. Requests for weddings will be confirmed with the Church Office secretary. At the initial meeting, the clergy will review with the couple this policy, any additional expectations/requirements, provide the necessary forms for entering a wedding on the Church calendar, schedule premarital counseling, and discuss any special requests by the couple (including plans for music). The BELC Wedding Committee shall be kept informed in a timely way of all wedding plans (music, flowers, rehearsal, etc) in order to ensure all of the ceremony requirements are met. The BELC Facility Use Policy shall be followed for any facility of the Church required, e.g. Gibson Hall for rehearsal dinner.

### Premarital Counseling

The Pastor offers premarital counseling sessions. The premarital counseling sessions shall be completed before the wedding is scheduled. Arrangements may be made with the Senior Pastor to conduct premarital counseling for couples that may be having their ceremony conducted at a different church.

### License

The marriage license can be obtained from the county courthouse 30 days prior to, but no less than 72 hours before the wedding day. Canon and civil law require the Officiate to have the marriage license in hand before the ceremony can be performed. The license can be given to the presiding Pastor in advance by dropping it by the Church Office as soon as it is obtained.

### Ceremony

The Pastor will preside at the wedding ceremony. In special circumstances, he/she may invite other clergy upon the recommendation of the couple.

While the couple may hire wedding planners to assist with the ceremony and festivities, the Pastor has liturgical authority during the service, and the BELC Wedding Committee provides wedding day assisting services for the wedding party. The planning for photographers should be discussed with the Pastor beforehand to ensure they remain nonintrusive during the ceremony and are respectful to the wedding party, guests, and the Church.

### Music

The couple may opt to provide their own musicians/music/organist/pianist. Because the marriage ceremony is a service of worship, the plans for the music shall be reviewed by the Pastor for appropriateness. Request/approval/fees for use of the Church's equipment are covered in BELC's Facility Use Policy.

For couples wanting to make use of the Church's musical service, they will meet well in advance of the ceremony with the organist to plan the music. The organist can suggest appropriate music. Other reasonable suggestions and requests may also be accommodated consistent with the nature of the ceremony (i.e. worship service). Suggested minimum offerings to cover music are provided below.

### Flowers and Decorations

The altar is the focal point for all Church services including wedding ceremonies. Its paraments are determined by the Church season and may not be changed. Large floral arrangements may be used anywhere except on the altar. Traditionally, the flowers are left as a gift from the bride to the Church and will remain in the Church until the completion of following Sunday services. Flowers must be delivered to the Church well in advance of the planning ceremony start time. All personal flowers, including hand bouquets for the bride and her attendants, corsages, boutonnieres, etc., should also be delivered to the Church in plenty time. The name of the florist shall be provided to the Wedding Committee beforehand to ensure prompt delivery and proper placement well in advance of the beginning of the wedding ceremony.

The BELC Wedding Committee does not decorate or clean up.

### Rehearsals

The rehearsal is a brief walk-through of the wedding service. Participants will learn when, how, and where to walk, stand, or kneel at various points in the service, and will ideally come away with a basic understanding of the structure of the service and meaning behind its component parts.

Wedding rehearsal times must be scheduled with the Church Office and clergy and the Wedding Committee notified. Rehearsal, unless otherwise scheduled, will be held the day before the wedding. The rehearsal, like the wedding, will start on time. A good rehearsal is important to assure the wedding ceremony is conducted according to plan. All of the wedding party (attendants, flower girls, ring bearers, ushers, readers, etc) should be present and on time. The rehearsal is under the direction of the presiding Pastor. A Wedding Committee member will serve as a personal assistant during the rehearsal.

### Photography

Because a wedding is a religious occasion, a service of worship, photographs must abide by the rules established by the Church. Photographers are to remember they are recording, not creating the event. If there is a question or doubt, the Pastor or Wedding Committee member must be consulted.

Formal portrait photography will be completed by the appointed time the wedding party is to be at the Church so as not to interfere with the readying process. Fixed locations and videography must be approved by the presiding Pastor or Wedding Committee member.

### Other Considerations

The bridal party should arrive at the Church no later than 1½ hours prior to the wedding. Members of the wedding party should arrive at the Church not less than one hour before the time scheduled for the wedding service.

The ushers should arrive at the Church one hour prior to the ceremony to be ready to seat the guests 30 minutes before the wedding begins. The service will begin promptly at the appointed hour. A Wedding Committee member will coordinate and start the procession at the appointed time.

The wedding party will be given dressing room facilities and assistance with needs. It is important to designate someone to remove all personal belongings from the bride's room promptly following the service as the Church cannot be responsible for articles left unattended.

Unless other arrangements are made, the rooms will be opened two hours before the wedding. If necessary, arrangements for the delivery of the bride's gown should be made with the Wedding Committee member. Food and soft drinks may be brought to the dressing rooms, but NO drinking of alcohol or smoking is allowed on the premises of the Church except as approved via the BELC Facility Use Policy. Facilities shall be left as they were found.

For ecological and maintenance reasons, we ask that rice, rose petals, birdseed or confetti not be thrown on the Church property.

Additional Ceremonies

Other, related ceremonies (e.g. betrothal, one-year anniversary, affirmation of vows, etc) are also welcome but shall be conducted consistent with the Christian beliefs of this congregation as determined by the Senior Pastor and the requirements of this (and other related) policies.

**CHURCH OFFERING**

BELC Members

There shall be no offering expected for use of the Sanctuary for the wedding ceremony when one of the couple is a member of BELC or a child of a BELC member. Suggested offering amounts are provided below.

Non-BELC Members

Non-BELC member couples should consider including use of the Sanctuary in their offering to the Church. Suggested offering amounts are provided below.

***Suggested Offerings***

Offering	Member (\$)	Non-Member (\$)
Senior Pastor's Discretionary Fund	250	500
Use of Sanctuary	0	150
Other Facility/Equipment (including musical instruments)	(See Facility Use Policy)	(See Facility Use Policy)
Wedding Committee Services	50	75
Music	100	200
Custodial Cleanup	150	150

Revision	Revision Date	Review Date	Summary of Revisions
0	8/2011	2013	New