

Planning Your Wedding



Our Saviour Lutheran Church



So, you've decided to get married! Congratulations! We hope that your wedding and your marriage will be everything you want and hope it will be.

On behalf of the church family at Our Saviour Lutheran Church, we rejoice with you in your wedding. It is our hope that this booklet will make your planning process easier, whether you are getting married in the church itself, or in another location. Of course, we would encourage you to have your ceremony in the church, but realize that this is not always desirable or possible.

We consider the estate of marriage to be a sacred bond and we are pleased that we can play a part in this special time for you. The planning process is an important part of preparing for marriage.

This booklet is intended to give you some of the information necessary to make this occasion a meaningful one and to insure that the wedding and surrounding tasks run smoothly. **Please take the time to read this booklet** - it will answer most of your questions.

There is no requirement for church membership to be married at Our Saviour, however, at least one member of the Bridal Couple must be a Christian.

About our Church

Our Saviour Lutheran Church, organized in 1923, is a diverse congregation located in the fast changing, urban area of Jamaica, Queens, NYC, gathered together to celebrate in Word and Sacrament the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to root our hope in the power of God's word.

Persons from twenty-four nations of origin comprise this growing family of God who have been touched by God's love and respond by giving our lives in friendship and service.



Where do you start ?

If you have not already done so, please call the church office at **718-739-7452** to arrange your first meeting. This should be your first telephone call, not your last. Other arrangements such as the reception hall and limousines should be made after the time and date of the wedding ceremony are confirmed with the church. Please do not assume that the church is available. Call us first !

A great wedding takes time to plan. We will want to meet with you at least three times. This is important for several reasons. First, it will give you the opportunity to get to know the pastor better -- this alone will make for a better wedding ceremony. Second, we will spend time discussing issues that will play a central role in your marriage. Third, we will spend time planning almost every detail of your ceremony, making it a personal and a very special day for you and your families.

Because pastoral responsibilities are shared, you may be working with only one of the pastors throughout the planning process. It is also possible that only one of the pastors will officiate at your wedding.

You have a long and sometimes difficult road ahead of you as you plan your wedding. Having a wedding in a church or even in a hall - takes a lot of planning and attention to detail. Starting early will enable you to have a day truly worth remembering.

EVERYTHING will take longer on your wedding day than you imagined, so please add some extra time into your planning. When you are trying to figure out when your wedding should begin, we encourage you to work backwards from the time you must be at your reception. Factor in bad traffic, the Mets playing at home, Flower Girls stuck in traffic on the Belt Parkway, or any other thing that might creep in.

The wedding ceremony itself may only take about 45 minutes, but ----- you will never start exactly on time -- we need to come back in to sign the marriage license (in most cases) -- we might need to take some more pictures in the church after the wedding - and it will take you more than 1/2 hour to reach the limousines once you leave the church building (the record is 35 minutes)

In other words - plan for everything. You will be glad you did -- and remember: we are here to help.

What will we do ?

When will we do it ?

We will want to meet with both of you at least three times:

First session: months ahead of the planned wedding date. At this session, we will go through this booklet and answer any unanswered questions. We will start the basic planning and give you various options on how things might be done. We will also share with you the many mistakes that have been made by couples over the years. This time will also be a time to gather basic contact information.

Second session: a month or less prior to the ceremony. At this session, we will really dive into the planning process and begin laying out the Procession and the details of your wedding. This is an opportunity to really personalize your special day. At this session, nothing is final - things are still a “work in progress”

Third session: A week before the rehearsal and ceremony. At this session, we will make all the final arrangements, decisions about the bridal party, and decisions about the procession and ceremony. After this final session, there can be no more changes to anything



Along the path, should you have any questions about anything, please do not hesitate to call. We have seen it all and can offer advice about any aspect of your wedding day, as well as put to rest all those things that people will tell you “you must” do.

Fee for Weddings In the Church

The total fee for weddings in the church held in 2012: **\$ 1,000**

The Wedding Ceremony inside the Church includes just about everything you will need to have your wedding in the church. We have tried to make it as all-inclusive as possible. It includes:

- a) The use of the church itself
- b) The fee for the organist
- c) Full decorations in the church -- flowers, candles, candelabras, bows on the pews, etc. These remain the property of the church.
- d) Wedding Candle set - which is your to keep afterwards
- e) 100 wedding bulletins (programs) printed with the order of service and the Bridal Party names.

because of extreme liability issues, we no longer allow the use of an aisle runner, or white carpet down the center aisle.

This fee is for members and non-members of the church
(\$250 of that amount is a non-refundable deposit to hold the date)

In an attempt to simplify the process of planning your wedding and to provide you with the most complete wedding package we can, the following is the fee for weddings performed by the pastors of Our Saviour Lutheran Church. Please note that the fee remains the same for members and non-members of the church.

The "Time" Issue

There will also be a security deposit of **\$200** on the starting time of the wedding. This amount is over and above the wedding fee. If your ceremony starts within one-half hour of the scheduled start time, you get the deposit returned. If your ceremony begins one half hour after the scheduled starting time, you will forfeit the deposit. We do not want this money, however, if your wedding is late, we incur overtime fees from the organist and the clean-up folks.



The Interfaith Question

At Our Saviour Lutheran Church, we welcome the opportunity to solemnize the marriages of those of all faiths. While we do require that one member of the bridal couple are Christian, we do not require that both be Christian.

Because of the culture we live in, a very high percentage of wedding ceremonies at this church are interfaith, mostly Christian and Hindu. However, we must remind you that this is a Christian ceremony and we will not introduce influences from other religions into the ceremony.

That is not to say that influences from a variety of cultures are not welcomed. For example, “jumping the broom” in the African tradition and “blessing the Arras” in the Spanish tradition are examples of things that have added to the ceremonies here at Our Saviour.

If you are planning to hold ceremonies in both faith traditions, for example Hindu and Christian, care must be taken to leave time for the Christian wedding rehearsal. A decision must also be made as to who will actually sign the marriage license; the pastor, or the pandit.

Fee for Weddings Outside the Church

The total fee for weddings outside the church held in 2012: \$ 300

Unfortunately, the fee for weddings outside the church, whether in another church, in a reception hall, or in a park/garden includes nothing more than the pastor performing the ceremony and the time spent planning your ceremony.



When you get married outside the church, everything becomes your responsibility. We will still walk together through the planning process, but ultimately, all the planning falls on your plate.

We encourage you to think twice before deciding to get married outside the church. While at first, it might seem better for you and your guests, there are so many variables left up to you, that most times weddings in a hall, or other location, lack the professionalism, as well as the spiritual nature of weddings in the church.

In addition, most venues will not afford you the time for a rehearsal, which means that the wedding itself becomes both the rehearsal and the wedding.

This fee is for members and non-members of the church. Please keep in mind that the pastors of this church are only licensed to marry within the geographic boundaries of New York state. We can preside at your ceremony in another state, but we cannot sign the license.

Destination Weddings

In this day and age, destination weddings in Jamaica, St. Thomas, or on a cruise ship, are becoming all the rage. While they present a host of wonderful opportunities for both the couple and their guests, there are also a host of issues inherent with a destination wedding.

1) Please keep in mind that the pastors of this church are only licensed to marry within the geographic boundaries of New York state. We can preside at your ceremony in another state or country, and have done both in the past, but we cannot sign the marriage license.

2) There are no fees to the church for destination weddings, however we ask that you cover the expenses of the presiding pastor to and from the venue, housing, and meals while he/she is at the destination.

3) Should this be more expensive than you had anticipated, we can always work with you to find a pastor at the desired location who will fulfill your needs in a manner that meets your expectations.



It's never easy !

You have a long and sometimes difficult road ahead of you as you plan your wedding. Having a wedding in a church or even in a hall - takes a lot of planning and attention to detail. Starting early will enable you to have a day truly worth remembering.

We are here to help you with as much planning in all aspects of your wedding as you need. Having participated in many, many weddings, we are quite knowledgeable about catering halls, photographers, DJ's and all the other people and places you will be dealing with. We are here to be a resource for you as you plan. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions. Relatives and friends do not always have the best suggestions, nor do they always have the right answers.



Time Issues

EVERYTHING will take longer on your wedding day than you imagined, so please add some extra time into your planning. When you are trying to figure out when your wedding should begin, we encourage you to work backwards from the time you must be at your reception. Factor in bad traffic, the Mets playing at home, Flower Girls stuck in traffic on the Belt Parkway, or any other thing that might creep in.

The wedding ceremony itself may only take about 45 minutes, but ----- you will never start exactly on time -- we need to come back in to sign the marriage license (in most cases) -- we might need to take some more pictures in the church after the wedding - and it will take you more than 1/2 hour to reach the limousines once you leave the church building (the record is 35 minutes)

Please talk to one of the pastors BEFORE you send out your invitations.

Music for Your Wedding - Part 1



One of the ways you will have to personalize your wedding, is in your choices in music. As you make your choices, please remember that this is a church service and the music should be chosen accordingly.

To make your choices easier, we suggest purchasing a CD of wedding music available at most record stores or on-line. A CD titled “The Ultimate Wedding Album” (available at Amazon.com) contains most of the commonly used pieces of music here at Our Saviour.

Most “traditional” weddings choose a processional which includes a combination of the following:

- a) For Escorted Guests --“Canon” or “Trumpet Voluntary”
- b) For the Bridal Party -- “Trumpet Voluntary” or Trumpet Tune & Aire”
- c) For the entrance of the Bride - “Wedding March” by Wagner
- d) Recessional - “Wedding March” by Mendelssohn

There are many other possibilities for your wedding music, however, please remember that the pastor reserves the right to veto any inappropriate choices. At our first session together, we will play these pieces on the organ for you to hear.

Music for Your Wedding - Part 2

One of the possible additions to your wedding ceremony is a hymn sung by the gathered congregation. This adds much to the service and augments the worshipful atmosphere of the day. Some commonly used hymns at weddings include, but are not limited to:

- a) "Hear Us Now, O God Our Father" - good tune - great words
- b) "Happy the Home When God is There"
- c) "O' Perfect Love"- good words, difficult tune - good solo piece
- d) "Blessed Assurance"
- e) "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"
- e) Other Choices ?

Another addition is the use of a soloist or special musician such as a trumpet player. Please note that these are not included in the fee schedule and are at your own expense. The church can procure soloists and other musicians, but only at your expense.

If you choose to have extra musicians, there are several things to keep in mind:

- a) This is a church service. Secular or popular music does not always translate well into the church setting.
- b) If the music is approved by the pastor, it is your responsibility to obtain sheet music for the required pieces. Our organist has a music library, but we cannot assume that he/she will have everything.
- c) Pre-recorded accompaniment CDs are one way of providing background music for a soloist. Again, the choice of all music in your wedding must be approved by the pastor.



Scripture for Your Wedding

One of the most important decisions for your wedding day is to choose at least two passages of scripture that will form the centerpiece of your wedding ceremony.

Following is a list of commonly used scripture passages and a few word description of that verse. . Please read through them in a Bible and make your choice. If you want to choose a passage of scripture that is not on this list, that choice will need the approval of one of the pastors.



Remember - this is what the pastor will use to frame his/her words at your special day - make them special for you.

Psalm 33	“Sing to the Lord a new song”
Psalm 100	“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.”
Psalm 128	“Happy is everyone who fears the Lord.”
Psalm 136	“O give thanks to the Lord forever, for he is good.”
Psalm 150	“Let everything that breathes praise the Lord.”
Genesis 1: 26-31	“Male and female, God created them.”
Genesis 2: 18-24	“ . . . and they become one flesh”
Song of Solomon 2: 10-13	“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away”
Song of Solomon 8:7	“Many waters cannot quench love”
Ruth 1: 15-17	“ Your people shall be my people”
Matthew 19: 4-6	“And the two shall become one flesh.”
John 2: 1-10	“You have kept the good wine until now.”
John 15: 9-12	That you love one another as I have loved you.”
1 Corinthians 12: 31 - 13:13	“Love is patient; love is kind”
Ephesians 5: 21-33	“Be subject to one another.”
Phillipians 4: 4-7	“Let your requests be made known to God.”
1 John 4: 7-12	“ Beloved, let us love one another.”

You will also need to think about who you would like to have read your scripture lessons.

Other Important People to Include in Your Wedding

The following are ways to include people you might have had a hard time deciding whether they were in your wedding or not in your wedding. These are all positions of “honor”

- 1) **The Director:** The Director is the person who will be in charge the day of the wedding. The Director **MUST** attend the rehearsal and **CANNOT** be a member of the Bridal Party or honored guest. The choice of a good director can be the positive difference in your wedding. A Director is **NOT** optional.
- 2) **Ushers:** You will need at least one person, preferably two people, to serve as ushers. They will need to be at the rehearsal and will need to arrive early for the wedding itself. They are responsible for a) handing out the programs, b) giving people directions to the bathrooms and to their seats, c) pulling down the aisle runner at the appropriate time. They cannot be a member of the Bridal Party. They cannot arrive with the bridal party - they must arrive before the guests. The ushers do not need to be men.
- 3) **Guest Book Attendant:** Someone to ask people to sign the guest book. Many people will walk right by unless someone reminds them. This person will also be responsible for taking the guest book to the hall after the wedding ceremony. The Guest Book Attendant cannot be a member of the Bridal Party and does not need to be a woman. They must arrive before the guests.
- 4) **Scripture Readers (Lectors)** Someone to read the scripture lessons at the appropriate time. The readers do not need to be at the rehearsal unless they are a member of the Bridal Party.
- 5) **Escorted Guests:** Are there special people in attendance who you would like to have escorted into the church immediately preceding the wedding ceremony? Examples would be a) the Mother of the Bride b) the Groom’s parents, c) Grandmothers d) a special Aunt

As you think of these possibilities, please also think about who would be escorting them. This is yet another good way to use someone who might not have made it into the Bridal Party, but would be honored to have a special place in your special day.

The Rehearsal - Everyone Must Come !

In order to finalize all the details and to run through the actual wedding ceremony with everyone involved, there will be a rehearsal of at least one hour held the night before the actual wedding.

This is very important.

A good rehearsal is the key to a good wedding ceremony. Please do not take the rehearsal lightly. Please make certain that everyone who is in any way involved with your wedding knows of this expectation in advance. Please make certain that all arrive at the church or hall on time.

Please bring with you to the rehearsal the following:

- a) Everyone who has a part in your wedding - everyone. This includes escorts, ushers and everyone who might have something to remember.
- b) Your marriage license
- c) the guest book
- d) any other items that you might forget on the wedding day

When ?

The night before is preferable. Too much time between rehearsal and wedding leaves too much opportunity to forget or for changes to creep in.

Everyone Comes ! Especially the Director - especially the groomsmen !

Other Considerations

The Size of Your Bridal Party

In a wedding, bigger is definitely **not** better. While we realize that it is difficult to say no to your family and friends, the more people involved in your wedding, the more difficult it becomes to get everything organized. There are many ways to include people in your wedding without having them actually be in the Bridal Party. Many of those ways will be outlined in this planning guide. Rule of thumb - keep it simple. Remember, if you have questions, do not hesitate to ask.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Sure, your three year old niece is really cute, but can she walk down the aisle in a church filled with people who are staring at her and taking her picture? Probably not. Rather than risk an embarrassing situation, we strongly encourage you to not let anyone participate in your wedding who is under the age of six. This comes from years of experience and years of watching children who are too young running out of the church screaming and crying or simply freezing and not knowing what to do. It really is unfair to expect anyone younger than six to be able to be a part of such a rigorous day.

A note about ring bearers: please give the real rings to the Best Man. Please do not tie the real rings to the Ring Bearer's pillow. This too, will eliminate many embarrassing moments.

The Limo Company

Please tell your limousine company in advance that aisle runners are not allowed. This might save you a few dollars. Please also tell them that we will be having a rehearsal. This means that their driver will not have the responsibility of lining you up in the church as they need to do at many churches which do not have rehearsals.

Photographers and Videographers

Will need to check in with the pastor prior to the ceremony so the ground-rules can be set. While we allow the photographers more freedom than most churches, there are things that we can share which will help them prepare their shots ahead of time.

Other Considerations

The Marriage License

You are responsible for picking up your own marriage license at any marriage license bureau in the State of New York. Unlike many other countries, clergy in the U.S. cannot issue licenses, they can only sign them. Licenses in New York State are valid for 60 days and must be obtained more than 24 hours prior to the ceremony.

If you have already been legally married in a civil ceremony, you do not need to procure a new license.

For more information, you can call the Marriage License Bureau at **212-669-2400**

This number will tell you what you need to bring as well as directions to the Marriage License Bureau. It is good advice not to go to the Bureau on Mondays or Fridays.

Brides-to-be, you will be signing your name on the license as you will be known after the wedding. If, you are keeping your maiden name, nothing changes. However, if you are taking your husband's name or creating a new hyphenated name, it is a good idea to practice signing your new name prior to the wedding.

Receptions, Pastors, Invitations and Gifts

If you would like to have one or more of the pastors and their spouses attend your wedding reception, please be sure to send an invitation. Please do not assume that we are attending. Rule of thumb for us is: if we have not received an invitation, we are not invited - and we understand if we are not invited. .

Gifts: Because of the number of events we are invited to over the course of a year, for the pastors to give gifts at every one would bankrupt us, so we have made it a personal policy not to give gifts for weddings, as well as other occasions.

How Do We Walk Into the Church ?

This part of the wedding is called the **Procession** and is one of the most beautiful and most difficult moments of your wedding. Whether you are getting married in the church or in a hall, you must still make the same decisions about the procession. We will walk through the possibilities in the church space itself, but here are a few thoughts for you to ponder and questions to ask yourself.



1) In a Traditional Ceremony the men usually enter from the front of the church and wait for the women who walk up the aisle un-escorted.

2) In a less Traditional Ceremony, there are some other possibilities:

- a) The Bridal Party walks in as couples
- b) The Bride is escorted by both parents
- c) The Bride and Groom walk in together
- d) the Groom is escorted in first by his Mother or Parents

There are any number of variations on a theme to walk into the church or hall. Please know that, with a few exceptions, there is no “correct” way to do this, nor is there an “incorrect” way. There are however, Traditional and Non-Traditional ways to do things.

You will need to decide what feels best for you and your family. You will also need to decide what will make this wedding special for you.

We have no preference in style of weddings, but we do want this to be “your” wedding and encourage you to put some thought into the planning.

Along with this, you will need to decide the partners in your Bridal Party prior to the rehearsal. If it is your decision to arrange people by height, that too, will need to be thought out prior to the rehearsal

The Wedding Ceremony

The final part of this booklet is a copy of the wedding ceremony used here at Our Saviour. This is the ceremony used for all weddings - whether they are held in a reception hall, a garden, or inside the church.. It is a combination of many Christian traditions which forms the centerpiece of your special day. Yes, changes can be made to the ceremony, but must be approved by the pastor.

GREETING

Pastor to congregation:

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in God's presence to witness the covenant of marriage of _____ and _____ and to ask God to bless them. By our presence, we accept responsibility for supporting them in their new relationship. We are called to rejoice in their happiness – called to be patient when they make mistakes –to help them in times of trouble – and to remember them in our prayers.

Let us pray - eternal God, our creator and redeemer, as you gladdened the wedding at Cana in Galilee by the presence of your son, so by your presence now bring your joy to this wedding. Look in favor upon _____ & _____ and grant that they - rejoicing in all your gifts - may at length celebrate the marriage feast which has no end. Amen. (LBW)

LESSONS *the congregation will please be seated*

a hymn may be inserted between the lessons or before

SERMON / HOMILY

HYMN *(only if a hymn is part of the service)*

CHARGE TO THE COUPLE

Pastor to couple (couple joins hands)

_____ & _____ if it is your intention to share with each other your joys and sorrows and all that the years will bring -- with your promises bind yourselves to each other as husband and wife.

PROCESSION TO THE ALTAR

The wedding party moves to the altar area --

The couple stands facing each other with hands joine



THE VOWS

Pastor to woman:

_____ will you
have _____ to be your husband --
to live together in holy matrimony?
Do you promise to love him -- comfort him --
honor and keep him -- in sickness and in health --
and forsaking all others --
be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?

Woman replies "I do"

Pastor to man:

_____ will you
have _____ to be your wife --
to live together in holy matrimony?
Do you promise to love her-- comfort her --
honor and keep her-- in sickness and in health --
and forsaking all others --
be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?

Man replies "I will"

Pastor to congregation:

Let us join in a word of prayer -- eternal God -- creator and preserver of all life -- giver of all grace -- bless and sanctify with your Holy Spirit _____ & _____ who come now to join in marriage. Grant that they may give their vows to each other in the strength of your steadfast love. Enable them to grow in love and peace with you and with one another all their days -- that they may reach out in concern and service to the world -- through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (UMH)

Man repeats after Pastor:

In the name of God --
I _____ take you _____
to be my *wife* --
to have and to hold --
from this day forward --
for better -- for worse --
for richer -- for poorer --
in sickness and in health --
to love and to cherish --
until death parts us.
This is my solemn vow.

Woman repeats after Pastor:

In the name of God --
I _____ take you _____
to be my *husband* --
to have and to hold --
from this day forward --
for better -- for worse --
for richer -- for poorer --
in sickness and in health --
to love and to cherish --
until death parts us.
This is my solemn vow.

BLESSING AND EXCHANGE OF RINGS

The Pastor takes the rings and says the following blessing

We now ask God to bless these wedding rings -- as they are a sign of love and faithfulness -

Let us pray

Bless – O Lord, these rings –and those who will wear them - may they always remind them of your love for them – your wholeness – your perfection and your peace -- may those who wear them live in love and fidelity – may the circle of these rings remind them of the love that encircles them today – as their lives are now joined in an unbroken circle. Bless them by their love for one another and by your presence in the families which they bring together in love. In your name we pray. Amen.

*Man / Woman repeats after Pastor -
while placing ring on finger.*

I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.
With this ring - I thee wed.

BLESSING

Pastor to couple: (all joining left hands)

_____ & _____ by their promises before God and in the presence of this congregation have bound themselves to one another as husband and wife. Blessed be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit -- now and forever. Those whom God has joined together let no one put asunder. Amen.

Couple kneels

The couple kneels -- Pastor prays over couple:

Eternal God -- without your grace -- no promise is sure. Strengthen _____ & _____ with patience, kindness, gentleness, and all other gifts of your Spirit, so that they may fulfill the vows they have made. Keep them faithful to each other and to you. Fill them with such love and joy that they may build a home of peace and welcome. Guide them by your word to serve you all their days. Amen. (BCW)

Couple stands and faces each other

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE

*The couple / Mothers light the outer candles
the couple lights the center candle together*

In a true covenant – neither partner is diminished – but both continue to grow in the warmth of their love for one another – rejoicing in each other’s strength and in their independence. Their union kindles a new light in this world which is the light of their love.

The candle burning here represent their families and their love that have nurtured ____ and ____ to this day.

The candle they will light together represents their unique love and the union they now share.

COMMUNITY VOWS

Pastor to congregation:

Family, friends, and all of you gathered here with _____ and _____ will you promise to support and care for them in their life together. Will you promise to sustain and pray for them in times of trouble – give thanks with them in times of joy – and honor the bonds of the covenant they made today.

Congregation: **We will with the help of God**

Pastor to congregation:

Before God and in the presence of this congregation, _____ & _____ have made their solemn vows to each other. They have confirmed their promises by the joining of hands and by the giving and receiving of rings. Therefore I joyfully proclaim that they are now husband and wife.

The husband and wife may kiss

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Pastor to the couple:

The grace of Christ attend you
The love of God surround you
The Holy Spirit keep you
That you may live in faith
Abound in hope
And grow in love
Both now and forevermore
In the name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (BCW)

RECESSIONAL

The Bridal Party leaves the altar



And Finally . . .

Should you have any question at any point in your planning process, please do not hesitate to call. We are here to assist you in any way we can.

May you both find joy in each other that grows day by day as you walk down this road together.

Blessings !



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