



A guide to assist in preparations for Holy Matrimony

Grace Lutheran Church

1356 Government Street
Mobile, AL 36604
251-433-2749
www.gracelutheranmobile.com

Wedding Policy and Guidelines
September 2019



Grace Lutheran Church

Mobile, Alabama

"Receiving and Sharing God's Grace since 1867."

Greetings in Christ,

This guide is provided to help you plan your wedding appropriately and in accordance with Grace's accepted practices, so that your celebration will be both a sacred and joyous occasion. *"There was a wedding at Cana of Galilee...and Jesus was also invited..."* - John 2:1-2

Jesus chose a wedding to demonstrate His power for the first time. He desires to be present in our lives together especially at significant moments and turning points in our lives. Jesus Christ also desires to be present in the heart of your marriage so that rejoicing in all of God's gifts, we finally participate in the unending marriage feast with Christ our Lord.

Every marriage at Grace Lutheran Church is considered a worship service proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the blessing of man and woman as they join together in the bonds of holy matrimony. Therefore, Grace and its ministry serves you with our policy and some guidelines to help you plan your wedding ceremony at Grace in the spirit of Christian worship.

God bless your marriage!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Wayne J. Miller".

Rev. Wayne J. Miller

PREPARATION AND SCHEDULING (six months to one year before wedding)

1. It is absolutely imperative that you contact the pastor before finalizing any arrangements, dates, etc. for your wedding.

Church Office: 251-433-2749

Pastor Miller's Cell: 251-230-1886

2. The wedding rehearsal should also be scheduled well in advance, preferably at your first meeting with the pastor. Normally, rehearsals happen the evening before your wedding day. All members of the wedding party, including ushers and readers, should be present for the rehearsal. Rehearsals need not last more than 45 minutes, if all participants are on time and conducting themselves reverently and responsibly. The pastor is solely in charge of the rehearsal and the order of service. If there is a wedding planner/coordinator, please connect him or her with the pastor for a smoother experience prior to the rehearsal. The marriage license should be turned in to the pastor at the rehearsal or before.

3. The pastor and his spouse do not assume that they are invited to the rehearsal dinner (or the wedding reception), unless you directly invite them. If you desire their presence, please extend a written invitation as you would any other guest. Please understand that while we are grateful for your invitation, family or congregational responsibilities may require that we decline.

4. Weddings are not conducted during Holy Week, the period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday.

COUNSELING

Couples being married at Grace are required to meet with the pastor to plan the wedding service and for premarital counseling. A series of counseling sessions with both parties will take place to aid the couple in getting to know one another better and to receive guidance that the marriage might be both lasting and God pleasing. No marriage will be performed without these sessions having taken place. Grace's pastor reserves the right to deny the performance of a ceremony for any reason he sees appropriate. The length of the counseling sessions will be at the discretion of the pastor and scheduled at the convenience of the pastor and the couple. Sessions will also include a discussion of the ceremony and questions the couple might have. Appointments for beginning of such counseling should be made as early as possible in the planning process.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

A. State of Alabama requirements: Effective August 29, 2019, the process for entering into a legal marriage in Alabama changed. Under Alabama Act 2019-340, persons wanting to marry will no longer file an application for a marriage license with the county probate court, and the courts will no longer issue marriage licenses. Probate judges will instead accept notarized forms completed by couples as official records of marriage. This form can be obtained from the state or by the attached documentation. Once the court records the completed marriage certificate form, the marriage is legal. A wedding ceremony, vows, and/or witnesses will no longer be required for a recognized marriage in the state of Alabama. Questions? See the attached documentation or consult the State of Alabama Dept. of Public Health at www.alabamapublichealth.gov/vitalrecords/marriage-certificates.html

B. However, marriage in view of the Church, is still be considered a sacred union and therefore a worship service ceremony and vows are recommended along with a proper blessing. Please see Pastor for more information.

C. To better encourage a lawful marriage and for our record keeping, any wedding ceremony preformed at Grace Lutheran Church must present and submit to the pastor a copy of the receipt and signed affidavit (see A) from the Country Clerk's office prior to the wedding.

D. Church Marriage Certificate: Grace will give the couple an attractive marriage certificate after the wedding which can be used as a memento for your Wedding Anniversary. The congregation will also record the marriage in its' permanent records, but it will not serve as legal proof.

LCMS STATEMENT OF BELIEF & MARRIAGE POLICY

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod accepts without reservation the writings contained in the Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Believing in the authority of Holy Scripture and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct interpretation and presentation of biblical doctrine, our congregation agrees to conform all of our teaching and practice to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

The marriage policy of Grace Lutheran Church, a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is and always has been consistent with the Synod's beliefs on marriage. We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32). The official position of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 ("To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions"), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and marriage. Our pastor/s will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

CEREMONY

The Rite

The ceremony to be used will be in accord with sound Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod practice and doctrine. Special vows written by the couple may also be used after consultation with the pastor. Effort will be made to incorporate any special wishes of the couple – processional, scripture readings, prayers, hymns, etc. Christian worship is incompatible with the secular and semi-religious rites and ceremonies of lodges and/or other organizations/societies and are therefore not permitted as part of the wedding ceremony.

Participation of the Congregation

Since the marriage ceremony is a worship service, those attending are encouraged to participate as appropriate. Considerations should be given to those who will probably be attending.

Wedding Party and the seating of Family Members and Guests

We will ask for an official listing of wedding party participants in the last couple of weeks, which will enable an organized and quick rehearsal. The entire wedding party and participants should be included in the program. If there are no ushers designated from the wedding party, groomsmen or family members should serve as ushers prior to the service. Whoever is “giving away” the bride needs to be determined. Where families are estranged or divorced, considerations must be made by the couple and their families prior to the rehearsal in order to avoid causing undue embarrassing situations.

Conducting of the Ceremony

Grace’s pastor will serve as the leader at the ceremony. Any additional people to be involved should be approved and coordinated by the pastor. Non-Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pastors cannot perform the ceremony. Any rostered LCMS Pastor may be invited to participate or officiate in accordance with the family’s request and with the Pastor’s approval. Clergy from other Christian denominations or non-Christian religions may be used to read the Scripture readings, provided they are not acting as a representative of their denomination or religion in any official capacity, such as being robed or vested. Family members or close friends may also read the Scripture readings. Only a rostered Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod Pastor may preach, read the Gospel, and officiate.

Music

Since the wedding ceremony is a service of Christian worship, all music, whether played or sung, should reflect a distinctly Christian message. In order that the hearts of all the worshipers may be moved to adore, thank, and praise the Lord for this day, Christian themes and moods are to prevail in the music chosen for the wedding service. The church organist and the pastor will advise on proper selections, most especially music during the actual ceremony, which will be of Christian significance.

The Organist fee and any other musician/singer related fees are payable at the time of the rehearsal. All soloists or musicians assisting will be required to rehearse with the organist prior to the rehearsal.

If another organist or pianist is desired, it should be discussed with Grace's organist and pastor to guarantee that he/she is capable of properly playing the church organ or piano. Practice times are encouraged and can be scheduled.

Congregational Hymns

Hymns can be included in the worship service to invite the congregation to better participate. The following list is approved out of our Lutheran Service Book, but not exhaustive. There are other hymns that can be obtained from the pastor or the organist. Any other hymns or songs requested by the couple must be approved by the pastor.

Go, My Children, with My Blessing LSB 922
Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee LSB 803
Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus LSB 685
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty LSB 790
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling LSB 700
Blest Be the Tie That Binds LSB 649
Beautiful Savior LSB 537
Now Thank We All Our God LSB 895
Glory be to God the Father LSB 506
Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing LSB 860
Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest LSB 859
O Father, All Creating LSB 858
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing LSB 686

Musical Pieces for Processionals

Water Music Suite -Handel
Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring – Bach
Aria -Handel
Processional in A -Lien
Trumpet Voluntary -Purcell

Trumpet Tune in D Major -Purcell
Largo -Purcell
Sheep May Safely Graze

Musical Pieces for Recessionals

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee -Beethoven
Prelude in Classical Style -Young
Now Thank We All Our God
Trumpet Voluntary -Purcell
Praise to the Lord

Bible Readings

The speaking and hearing of God’s Word is typically planned through three readings – the Old Testament reading, an Epistle reading, and a Gospel reading – expressing the faith and identity we confess in Jesus Christ. You have the privilege of selecting three Scripture passages to customize the Christ-centered wedding ceremony. Pastor may choose the readings if you desire. The OT and Epistle Scripture passages that are chosen may be read by designated family and friends or other attendees (see conducting of the ceremony). The Gospel Lesson is normally read by the pastor. The Pastor should be informed about this in advance. Please read, study and choose one from each of the following groups:

Old Testament Lessons

Genesis 1:26-31
Genesis 2:18-24
Song of Solomon 2:10-13
Song of Solomon 8:7
Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 33
Psalm 67
Psalm 100
Psalm 117
Psalm 12
Psalm 136
Psalm 150

New Testament Lessons

Romans 12:1-2
I Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13
I Corinthians 13:4-7, 13
Ephesians 5:9-12
Ephesians 5:21-33
I John 4:7-12
Colossians 3:12-17

Gospel Lessons

Matthew 19:4-6
John 2:1-10
John 15:9-12
John 15:12-17

Designated Readers, if any: _____

Sermon

The Pastor's primary task in the wedding sermon is to preach Christ for us in the marriage feast of the Lamb in His Kingdom. His message may be made personal by showing how uniquely God created the couple. However, remember that while the Pastor may relate stories of the couple during the sermon, it is not the reason for his preaching. The proclamation of God's Word at the wedding ceremony is to point all in attendance to Jesus and our perfect marriage to him.

Holy Communion

While the celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar is not a common practice in Lutheran weddings, it can be included within a Divine Service Wedding Ceremony. Communion would be distributed not just to the bride and groom, but to all readily prepared Lutheran worshippers who are present since we recognize responsible communion practice. Due to the diversity of families and friends even in our Christian circles in regard to doctrinal beliefs, communion is not recommended as a part of the ceremony. The couple may receive communion privately with the pastor before or after the wedding ceremony. Please speak to Pastor for more information.

Vows

Traditional vows are recommended. However, you may edit or write your own with pastoral guidance and approval. Your promises must indicate what marriage implies and be clearly described as a lifelong commitment. The following are the traditional vows:

I, Name, in the presence of God and these witnesses, 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, and I pledge you my faithfulness.

I, Name, in the presence of God and these witnesses, 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, and I pledge you my faithfulness.

WORSHIP DECORUM

Candles

The purchase or rental of additional candelabras and extra candles is the responsibility of the couple. The church candelabras may be used, but the Eucharist candles on the altar itself are not to be lit for a wedding ceremony. All candles should be dripless, and protection laid out over the carpet. Grace has a unity candle stand for the couples use but the candles must be provided by the couple. Any other "unity" practice must be approved by the pastor.

Flowers

Flowers for the altar may be ordered or arranged by the family. Plastic liners for the brass flower vases may be picked up at the church and must be returned in time for the Sunday worship service. Flowers can remain on the altar for Sunday services if desired. Flowers are not to be billed or charged to Grace Lutheran Church. Arrangements for the delivery and placement of flowers or decorations may be made through the Church Office.

Decorations

The baptismal font, lectern, pulpit or any chancel furniture will not be moved. The altar will only be dressed in flowers, the cross, the missal stand and our paraments (no pictures, bows, or other décor upon the altar.) Grace has no kneeler (priedieu), but these can be rented from a florist or rental center. Decorations/bows can be placed on the pews and windowsills, but no nails, screws, rough wire, tape or anything that may damage pews or walls may be used. The altar paraments and the Officiant's stole will be dictated by the season of the church year. It is the florist's or family's responsibility to remove any decorations brought in immediately after the wedding ceremony. Remember that the sanctuary is not a wedding "venue," but a house of worship and must be respected for our worshippers.

Guest Register

Those attending the wedding might look for a guest book to sign in order to give the newlyweds a keepsake and record of those who came to witness and celebrate. Grace Lutheran Church does not provide this amenity. It is the couple's responsibility to provide one for their guests if desired. Grace has a podium that can be used for the guest book.

Programs

These can be ordered ahead of time through the church office at the couple's expense. Any special cover must be purchased and delivered by the family prior to printing. Many couples prefer to produce their own which is permitted. However, the content and order of service is solely the responsibility of the Pastor. All Bible readings, music, and all other such arrangements for the bulletin must be finalized and approved by the Pastor. If using the church office, please notify the Pastor or the Office Assistant with how many programs to be produced so a fee can be established. General printing, excluding the paper and/or cover, is \$.25 for color, \$.10 black and white per program.

Photography and Video

Pictures and videos are allowed before, during and after the ceremony. However, flash photography, camera noises, and distracting movement of photographers or videographers are not allowed. Please respect the worship space. Video recording can be done from stationary locations from the back of church or in the balcony. All aisles should be kept clear for ease of movement for those attending the wedding. Connecting a loved one by video phone, such as Skype or FaceTime is permitted. Testing should be done to ensure that the device or program is silenced and working properly. Any mobile device or laptop may be used, though power cords to these devices are not allowed because close outlets are not available. The church's Wi-Fi can be used, and the password can be obtained from the Office Assistant or the Pastor. The couple is strongly encouraged to consider picture taking prior to the ceremony.

Reception Hall

Grace Lutheran Church does have a reception area that accommodates no more than 100 guests. The area can be used for a wedding reception or a rehearsal dinner. However, the family will be responsible for scheduling and compensating the food/caterer. If catered, the kitchen may be used, and the family is responsible for setup and cleanup. For non-members, there is a fee.

USE OF THE FACILITIES BY NON-MEMBERS

Grace's pastor or his representative is normally expected to serve as the worship leader for all weddings and worship services which take place here. All special requests of facilities for weddings are at the discretion of the Board of Elders. In case the couple requests Grace's pastor to co-celebrate the marriage ceremony, the Board of Elders must always be consulted. While wanting to help with the couples' desires, Grace must never jeopardize its integrity in clearly proclaiming the Gospel of salvation.

ALCOHOL POLICY

No alcohol is allowed in the sanctuary. Out of respect for the Lord's worship and the couple, alcohol should not be consumed prior to the wedding ceremony. If any member of the wedding party is intoxicated at the time of the wedding ceremony, the attendant will be removed from participation. If the bride or groom is intoxicated at the time of the wedding ceremony, the ceremony will be delayed or canceled. Pastor and/or his representative reserves the absolute right to delay or cancel the ceremony for any alcohol related issues if these terms are not adhered to.

LOGISTICS AND FEES

The Church seats 200 people comfortably with a maximum attendance of around 225.

Fees and honorariums, established by the Church Council, for the Pastor, organist, facilities or others should be made prior to the wedding service. Fees for facilities are to be submitted to Grace Lutheran Church.

<i>Who or What</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Non-Members</i>
Pastor	Discretionary (recommended \$200)	\$250
GLC Organist	\$250	\$250
GLC Soloist or Musician (if available)	\$100	\$100
Office Assistant / Programs	\$50 plus printing costs	\$75 plus printing costs
Sanctuary	free	\$500 (50% Deposit)*
Reception Area	free	\$500 (50% Deposit)*

**Deposit is required to reserve date and non-refundable.*

Note: For any breakage involved at any time, the couple will be billed for all expenses.

