

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church

# Wedding Policy

157 Lady's Island Drive  
Beaufort SC 29907  
843 524 3461  
[www.stjohnsbeaufort.org](http://www.stjohnsbeaufort.org)



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## **A Ministry of the Church**

Marriage is a gift of God by which God has established human families and communities. By exchanging vows of commitment, a man and woman bind themselves to one another as husband and wife.

While it is possible to become truly and legally married without a wedding service, the church encourages people of faith to celebrate God's gift of love and committed relationship as an act of worship. In this worship the gathered community of Christ gives thanks and praise to God for the relationship of love which has led the couple to their promises of commitment and asks for the blessings of God upon their life together.

Because the wedding service is a service of worship and a ministry provided by the congregation, all weddings done through St. John's Lutheran Church will be conducted according to these guidelines. Our desire is not to be insensitive or overly restrictive to those being married, but to create a worshipful service.

This ministry is provided by the congregation to its active members and to other baptized Christians, at the discretion of the pastor. All persons desiring to be married at St. John's who are inactive members or non-members living in the local area will be strongly encouraged to become active participants at St. John's. All persons desiring to be married at St. John's who are non-members living outside the local area will be strongly encouraged to become active participants in another Christian congregation.

Since the pastor of St. John's is called to provide leadership for all worship services of the congregation, no plans concerning the service should be made prior to consultation with the pastor and all plans for the service must be approved by the pastor.

All couples are encouraged to seriously consider celebrating their wedding service in the church sanctuary due to the increased difficulty of creating a worshipful service in other spaces. Occasionally the pastor might agree to preside at a wedding in the sanctuary of another congregation or some other place suitable for worship.

## **Scheduling the Wedding**

When a couple decides to consider being married at St. John's, the couple shall immediately make an appointment with the pastor. The pastor will work with the couple to reserve a date, provide pre-marital counseling, make worship plans, and preside at the service.

Wedding dates are generally not put on the church calendar more than one year in advance. Persons who are active members are given priority in selecting dates over inactive members and non-members.

Weddings are not scheduled during Holy Week (from the Saturday before Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday) Thanksgiving weekend, Christmas eve, or Christmas day. Due to an increased number of congregational events, it is also often difficult to schedule weddings during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

## **Pre-Marital Counseling and Planning**

All couples who desire to be married at St. John's must participate in pre-marital counseling and planning. This includes three to four meetings with the pastor to plan the wedding service and to discuss relationship and

communication issues in an effort to help the couple prepare for building their marriage relationship. The pastor will arrange for the couple to take a pre-marital survey called *Prepare*. This tool helps identify both relationship strength and growth areas and forms the basis for the pastoral conversation. The cost of taking this survey is \$35, payable online at the time that it is taken.

### **Order for the Marriage**

The order for the wedding service shall be those outlined by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and the publications of the Renewing Worship commission.

### **Music for the Worship Service**

The director of music and/or organist of the congregation will work with the couple to provide music for the service or oversee other musicians who might participate. After the couple has met with the pastor and determined a mutually acceptable date for the service, the couple will be responsible for contacting the director of music and/or organist to confirm the date and to arrange a meeting to begin the process of selecting music. If, due to scheduling conflicts, the organist is not available, the director of music shall provide contact information for other qualified musicians.

All musicians not on the staff of the congregation shall be approved prior to their being contacted. The congregation organist is to be consulted before any other organist is secured. The director of music can assist couples with the securing of vocalists and/or additional instrumentalists.

All music to be used in the service must be approved by the director of music and/or organist. Because the wedding service is a worship service, the same criteria shall be used for selecting and programming music as on Sunday morning.

The following are examples of (but do not limit) the various ways this policy might affect the wedding service:

1. Secular music is generally not allowed as part of the worship service.
2. No taped/recorded music is permitted.
3. Vocal and/or instrumental compositions during the service will be limited in number and placement within the order as determined by the pastor.
4. Because the Lord's Prayer is a part of the liturgy in which the congregation participates, it may not be sung by a soloist.
5. The couple is encouraged to consider including congregational hymns as part of the service. The possibility of singing one or more hymns shall be discussed in the music planning process.

### **Wedding Party and Congregation**

It is recommended that the wedding party (best man, groomsmen, maid/matron of honor, bridesmaids, flower girl, and ring bearer) be limited to a total of twelve. This is due to the increased difficulty in creating a worshipful service with very large wedding parties.

If the wedding party includes children, they shall be at least four years of age at the time of the wedding. During the service, a specific separate individual sitting near the front of the sanctuary must be designated for each child. They will be responsible for removing the child from the wedding party if they become disruptive to worship.

No alcoholic beverages may be served or consumed on church property at any time. Members of the wedding party who break this rule or who appear to be intoxicated will not be allowed to participate in the rehearsal or wedding.

A couple may choose whether or not to invite the whole St. John's congregation to the wedding. If desired, the couple may place an invitation to the congregation in the bulletin or newsletter by contacting the church office.

The capacity of the sanctuary when set for a normal Sunday is 215 (not including the choir). If additional seats are needed, arrangement must be made in advance for setup and takedown of chairs.

### **Church Decorations**

Decorations in the church shall be limited to flower arrangements and candles. Flowers may be placed on the wall brackets behind the altar and ledges at the side windows. Flowers may not be placed upon the altar, baptismal font, or pulpit. While the flowers carried and worn by attendants are at your discretion, no artificial flowers shall be placed in the altar area.

Floral markers for family seating may only be attached to pews with ribbon or floral wire – no tape or nails allowed. St. John's will provide "reserved" markers for those who choose not to use floral markers.

A florist of the couple's choosing may provide the altar flowers. The florist may place flowers in vases owned by the church or prepare flowers in other containers. The church's vases, however, may not be removed from the building. Florists may contact the church office to discuss options.

When a wedding is held on a Saturday, the flowers may remain in the church for Sunday worship and an appropriate acknowledgement will be placed in the Sunday bulletin. A decision whether to leave them for Sunday worship or remove them should be indicated during the wedding planning with the pastor.

The candles on the altar and in the wall brackets will remain in place for the wedding. The only additional location that candles may be placed is in the side windows. If candles are placed in the side windows, glass hurricane globes (available from the church) must be used. Additional candelabras and unity candles are generally not allowed.

The paraments (altar and pulpit hangings) for the service will be the color of the church year season. The couple may choose which banners from the congregation's collection will be placed in the chancel.

No furniture in the sanctuary shall be moved.

No decorations may be placed on the exterior of the building.

No aisle runners may be used.

### **Bulletins**

St. John's generally does not prepare or print wedding bulletins, as couples often wish to personalize them in ways beyond the capabilities of the church office. However, the office can prepare simple bulletins of the style used on for Sunday worship with sufficient advance notice.

In order to facilitate congregational participation in worship, couples are strongly encouraged to consider an “everything in the bulletin” format. As couples will be given numerous opportunities to personalize the worship service, this style of bulletin also makes a wonderful keepsake and reminder of the prayers, blessings, and words of encouragement offered in worship. Sample bulletins are available from the church office.

The Order of Service portion of the bulletin should be sent to the pastor for proofing before printing.

### **Photography and Video**

The only pictures that are allowed during the service are non-flash pictures by the official wedding photographer. These may be taken from the attic window or the narthex door or at the rear of the sanctuary. A picture of the bride and her escort may be taken in the narthex prior to their entering the nave. A picture may be made from the narthex door of the bride and groom as they recess at the conclusion of the service.

A videotape of the service may be made from the attic window or a stationary tripod at the rear of the sanctuary. No artificial light may be used.

Photographers and videographers must not move around the sanctuary during the service.

#### ***PLEASE NOTE:***

**Personal cameras and photography are not allowed in the sanctuary at any time during the service.** A notice of this should be placed in the wedding invitation or the wedding bulletin. As many people now carry cameras all the time, this is a difficult issue and we need your help in informing your guests. Guests may take pictures during the photo time after the service. You should discuss this with the professional photographer, as some do not like having pictures taken “over their shoulder.”

### **Rehearsal**

With the exception of very small weddings that involve no attendants, a wedding rehearsal is required. The time and date of the rehearsal is to be scheduled with the pastor at the time of scheduling the wedding.

The pastor shall preside at the rehearsal. No professional or non-professional wedding directors or planners are needed, nor will be allowed.

The rehearsal will begin promptly at the scheduled time. Therefore all participants in the wedding should be present fifteen minutes prior to the rehearsal time. The couple will be required to discuss details about placement of attendants, ushers’ responsibilities, and seating arrangements for family members prior to the rehearsal to help prevent the rehearsal from being too long.

### **Receptions and Rehearsal Dinners**

If the couple desires, the wedding reception and/or rehearsal dinner may be held at the church. An additional custodial fee may be required. If the couple wishes to consider using items belong to the church (tables, dishes, etc) an appointment to see what is available should be made with the church office.

The church custodian will be responsible only for cleaning floors and removing tables. The couple is responsible for having tablecloths cleaned and ensuring that the kitchen is cleaned.

No alcoholic beverages may be served or consumed on church property.

Rice, confetti, and other such items which are difficult to remove may not be thrown in the building or on the sidewalks. Alternate possibilities may be discussed with the pastor.

## Other Guidelines

No use of tobacco is allowed in the building.

The couple is welcome to invite other Christian clergy to participate in the service, with the prior approval of St. John's pastor. The St. John's pastor will indicate which part of the service will be shared with other participating clergy.

The bride and female members of the wedding party may use the congregation facilities to dress before the service. Male members of the party should arrive already dressed.

The congregation of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is not responsible for safeguarding personal property prior to, during, or following the rehearsal or wedding service. The couple will be responsible for and pay for any damages done to the facilities.

## Marriage License and Wedding Fees

The non-refundable Wedding Fee required of inactive members and non-members must be paid before a wedding date will be officially placed on the church calendar.

The marriage license, all remaining fees, and four copies of the final bulletin shall be delivered to the church office no later than five days prior to the wedding. A separate check should be written for each fee. A list of names of those to whom checks should be made will be provided during the wedding planning.

## Schedule of Fees:

<u>Fee</u>	<u>Active Members</u>	<u>Inactive Members and Non-members</u>
<b>Wedding Fee (non-refundable)</b> (covers staff time, bulletins, utilities, etc.)	no charge	\$500 (\$250 if location other than St. John's)
<b>Pastor</b>	no charge	\$250 (\$400 if location other than St. John's)
<b>Organist</b>	\$150	\$250
<b>Custodian (for service)</b>	\$100	\$200
<b>Custodian (for reception or rehearsal party)</b>	\$100	\$150

Note: At the pastor's discretion, fees may be reduced or waived for couples with limited finances.