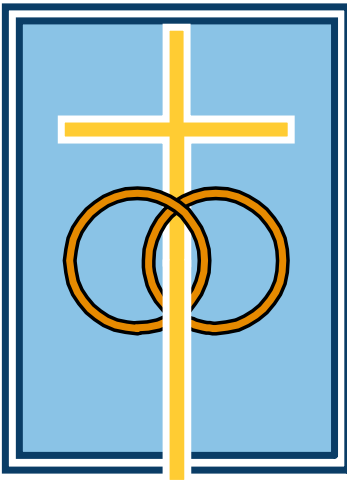


Planning Your Wedding



St. John's Lutheran Church

**884 Newfield Avenue
Stamford, CT 06905
(203) 322-0066
www.stjohnelca.org**

Welcome!

The congregation of St. John's Lutheran Church is delighted that you are considering or have chosen our church as the site of your wedding. The wedding celebration is one of the most joyous occasions that you will share. It is an act of joyful worship. It is a service wherein we ask God's blessings on you and your union. It is a reflection of your relationship with the Lord who loves you unconditionally.

The following information and guidelines are set forth to help couples have an orderly, worshipful wedding and prepare for a life-long relationship with each other. Read it in its entirety before contacting the church.

As you prepare to be joined together, may God bless your preparations, your wedding, and the commitment you are making to one another.

Revised 9-4-2023

How to Schedule Your Wedding

1. Contact the office at office@stjohnelca.org or phone the church (203-322-0066) as far in advance of your proposed wedding date as possible.
 - Those of non-Lutheran background, those remarrying, and those who are non-members are welcome to be married at St. John's Lutheran Church.
 - If you have special circumstances surrounding your upcoming marriage, please share this with the pastor.
 - **Make no other wedding plans or commitments until the church has approved your selected date.**
2. If the pastor agrees to officiate and is available on the date you have chosen and the required deposit has been received, your wedding and rehearsal will be placed on the church calendar.
 - No weddings will be scheduled during Holy Week or days that are national holidays.
 - Reservations for wedding dates and times are on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - Be aware that yours may not be the only wedding scheduled on the day you select.
3. At the time you schedule your wedding and rehearsal on the church calendar, mail or deliver a \$500 non-refundable deposit to the church office.
 - Checks should be payable to "St. John's Lutheran Church."
 - **Your scheduled wedding date will not be considered "reserved" until the deposit is received by the church office.** The balance of fees is due one week before the date of the wedding.
 - The pastor will provide you with a specific list of fees that apply to your wedding.
4. Contact the Director of Music, Nathan Lively, at nathanklively@gmail.com to schedule an appointment well in advance of your wedding to discuss all music associated with the marriage rite. The Director of Music plans the music for all weddings and plays for all ceremonies at St. John's. In the event the Director of Music is not available to play for your wedding, he will arrange for a substitute.



God has something wonderful in store for you!

In the midst of all of the preparatory details for a wedding, sometimes it is easy to forget two other important preparations – living in a life-long relationship of marriage and living in a life-long relationship with the Lord Jesus and his church.

The officiating pastor will contact you three to four months prior to your wedding to schedule one or more appointments with you. If you need to speak with the pastor earlier, feel free to contact the pastor. Your time with the pastor will be spent not only talking about the specific details of the wedding service, but will also focus on your marriage relationship within the context of the Christian faith. You will explore what is distinctive about a marriage grounded in Jesus Christ, your personal relationship with the crucified and risen Lord, and your commitment to the community of faith, the church.

Those who have no congregational affiliation or who are St. John's Lutheran inactives are welcome to be married at St. John's Lutheran Church. We trust that God comes to us in the gathered community of faith with the Word of grace and life and with Sacraments which nourish and strengthen. We believe God has something wonderful in store for you! If you are a non-member or inactive, we would like to invite you into an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ and the congregation.

How to Plan Your Wedding Service

A wedding is, first and foremost, worship of the God who calls a couple together in marriage. Your wedding is worship, and God is the one who whom we offer prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Recognizing this as you plan your ceremony will give you a clearer vision of what your wedding service should be.

Location

- The sanctuary of St. John's Lutheran Church seats 250 worshipers maximum.
- For smaller weddings, you might prefer holding your wedding in the Ina Ellen Chapel. The chapel is a beautiful, intimate worship space which comfortably seats 50 worshipers. The pipe organ accompanies wedding services held in the chapel.

The Order of Worship

The pastor provides the liturgy that will be used for the service. If you have ideas for modifications of the service, feel free to discuss them with the pastor. If the suggestions meet with the approval of the pastor, they may be incorporated into the service.

Holy Communion

You are encouraged to include Holy Communion as part of the wedding ceremony. The bread and wine of the Sacrament will be offered to all who are baptized and believe that Jesus is present in the meal to forgive sins and promise everlasting life, not just to the bride and groom or the wedding party.

Vows and Scripture Lessons

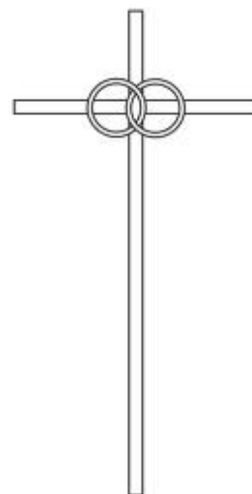
- Usually the vows provided by the pastor will be used in the service; alternative vows suggested by the couple will be reviewed by the pastor.
- You may select up to three Scripture passages for use in the service; otherwise, the pastor will select appropriate wedding texts. *Appendix I* provides possible Scripture texts.
- Non-biblical readings are not permitted.

Music

The Christian wedding is a service of worship. Choose music that will point people to God and show evidence of your Christian commitment. There is room for personal taste and variety of music. All music should lend itself to the criteria of appropriateness for worship – music should reflect a distinctively Christian content.

The criteria of what is appropriate for worship is sometimes difficult to define precisely.

- It is helpful if you ask whether or not the music and words honor the God in whose name we gather.
- Unless the lyrics reflect Scriptural texts, popular, secular music is usually not appropriate for worship; we suggest such music be played at the reception.
- If you have suggestions of music to be played or sung at your wedding, we welcome your suggestions and would be happy to review it with you to determine its appropriateness for Christian worship. While the final decision is at the discretion of the pastor, please know that your suggestions will be taken seriously.
- The Director of Music will acquaint you with various music selections within the context of the number of guests, liturgical season, and Christ-centeredness. Feel free to share your ideas or suggestions with the Director of Music or pastor.
- The singing of hymns is strongly encouraged and allows for the assembled congregation to actively participate in the service. One or two hymns would be appropriate. (*See Appendix II*)



Organist and Musicians

It is your responsibility to contact the Director of Music for an appointment to review and select music for your wedding. Contact the Director of Music, Nathan Lively, well in advance of your wedding to schedule an appointment (nathanklively@gmail.com).

The organist of St. John's Lutheran Church or a substitute arranged for by the Director of Music should be used at all weddings where the organ or piano is employed; exceptions will be only at the discretion of the Director of Music.

- The Director of Music will help you choose music for the service and arrange for all musicians.
- Should vocalists or instrumentalists be requested, the Director of Music can secure the additional musicians. You may consider other vocalists or instrumentalists provided they have the musical ability to enhance a worship service.
- The organist does not attend the rehearsal, so the organist and vocalists or instrumentalists will need to arrange their own rehearsal. Rehearsal time usually takes place immediately before the wedding service.

Ring Bearers, Flower Girls, Junior Attendants

We are delighted to include children as members of the wedding party. However, we suggest you consider the special "challenge" for those children who are very young. The service seems very long to little ones, so we ask you to keep this in mind when selecting youngsters for a role in the wedding.

Participation of Other Clergy

We welcome the inclusion of clergypersons from other denominations. The pastor of St. John's Lutheran will preside; the invited clergy will assist. It is important that the assisting clergyperson be present for the rehearsal.

Readers

You are welcome to have lay persons read the Scripture Lessons during the service. Because it is important that everyone clearly hear God's Word, readers should be able to project vocally and speak distinctly. Readers need to be present at the wedding rehearsal to receive instructions from the pastor and to become familiar with the speaker system in the church. We recommend that readers not be from the wedding attendants.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are usually held the evening prior to the day of the wedding. The rehearsal normally takes between 45 and 60 minutes. *All* persons involved in the wedding should be present and on time; please account for traffic and work schedules. Ushers must be present to learn of their special responsibilities. Family should also attend so they know escorting procedures and seating placement.

All arrangements for the wedding service must be made with the pastor prior to the rehearsal; rehearsals are not the time for last minute changes in the service. The pastor will oversee the rehearsal and guide participants through details, responsibilities, and movement in the wedding ceremony.

Receptions

For a modest fee, the church hall and kitchen are available for a reception immediately following the wedding, subject to space and time availability.

Couples are responsible for providing all food and drink, coffee, paper products, decorations, servers and cleanup.

Out of consideration to our custodial personnel, we ask that receptions at the church conclude by 10 pm. Remember, most weddings are on Saturdays and the custodian must prepare the church facilities for Sunday morning use. We do not wish to rush you, but ask only for sensitivity to the needs of the church and its custodial staff.

Staff

Couples need to understand that because wedding dates are usually reserved far in advance of the actual ceremony, the regular pastor or organist of the congregation may not be available due to vacations or other commitments. In such instances, the church is responsible for arranging substitutes. If this is a concern to you as a couple, it is your responsibility to be in conversation with the appropriate staff person(s) to discuss availability.

Fees

In preparing for a wedding, there are certain fees, professional and otherwise. At the time you reserve the wedding and rehearsal dates on the church calendar, a \$300 non-refundable deposit is required. The balance of all applicable fees is due at least one week before the date of the wedding. Checks are made payable to "St. John's Lutheran Church." However, honorariums to pastor, organist, custodian, soloists and instrumentals are paid directly to the individuals; the pastor will provide you with names and amounts.

Fees for services provided are as follows:

Facilities

Use of worship space and prep room	\$500
Use of kitchen and hall for reception	\$500
Pew Torches	\$200

Personnel

Pastor	\$600
Director of Music & Organist*	\$500 (plus \$75 for each additional rehearsal)
Soloist/Instrumentalists	\$300 (per musician)
Custodian (set up and clean up)	\$300 (plus \$200 if the reception is held at the church)

Fees are subject to change and become effective immediately for all couples on the wedding calendar of the congregation.

*The Director of Music meets with couples and plans all music with them. If the Director of Music is not available to play the organ for the wedding, he will secure a substitute organist at the current American Guild of Organist rate.

Decorations

Because the sanctuary and chapel are already beautiful spaces for worship, wedding decorations need not be elaborate. Decoration plans should be reviewed with the pastor well before any arrangements are made.

Flowers

- Flower arrangements are limited to two bouquets placed on stands at the top of the chancel steps. You will need to make arrangements with a florist for the selection, purchase, and delivery of flowers to the church. Flowers should be delivered to the church a minimum of one hour prior and no earlier than three hours prior to the appointed time of the wedding. Please have the florist place the arrangements on the flower stands.
- You may wish to have the flowers used at the wedding remain at the church for use at the Sunday morning worship. If so, please notify the church administrative assistant not less than a week prior to the wedding so that your gift of flowers for the Sunday worship can be acknowledged in the printed worship bulletin.

Candles

- Candles certainly beautify the worship space. The regular altar candles and candelabra used for worship in both the sanctuary and chapel are utilized for the wedding free of charge.
- The main sanctuary also has pew torches that line the center aisle. There is a \$150 fee for the cost, installation, and cleanup of the torch candles.
- The only additional candle permitted is a Unity Candle (and the two small candles to light it), if it is part of the wedding ceremony. Before you purchase a Unity Candle, check the stand that the church provides to ensure a proper fit.



Other Decorations

- Bows or small flower arrangements may be placed on the ends of the pews where members of the family sit and are the responsibility of the couple; nothing should be affixed with tape or other securing method that could mar the pews.
- Because the worship space already has a simple beauty, arches, additional candles, kneelers, ferns, etc. are not permitted. The color of the pastor's stole, paraments, and liturgical banners will be the liturgical color of the day of your wedding.
- "Theme weddings" are not allowed.

Aisle Runner

The use of an aisle runner is strongly discouraged because of the difficulty of securely fastening the runner to the front of the church and because one can easily trip on folds in the runner. However, if an aisle runner is used, it is your responsibility to rent one from a florist or bridal shop and have it placed in the sanctuary at least one hour prior to the appointed time of the wedding. Plastic aisle runners are not permitted; cloth must be used. The aisle length of St. John's Lutheran sanctuary is 75 feet.

Worship Bulletins

You are welcome to print and distribute a wedding bulletin. Although the church does not provide this service, the pastor will provide you with an outline of the Order of Service portion of the bulletin and the correct spelling of church staff that may be included in print.

Additional Information

Marriage License

A valid marriage license must be obtained from the office of the Town Clerk at the Stamford Town Hall. Visit <http://www.stamfordct.gov/town-clerk/pages/marriage-information> for current fees and specific requirements. The license must be received by the church office no later than one week prior to the date of the wedding. This is an important detail, so be sure to obtain the marriage license well in advance of your wedding date.

Photography

You are welcome to have the wedding photographed or videotaped within the "Standards for Photography and Video at Weddings." It is important not to mar the worship with distractions; therefore limits have been established to make sure nothing detracts from our worship. All photographers and videographers are required to closely follow the established guidelines. You are to give a copy of the "Standards for Photography and Video at Weddings" to the photographer and/or videographer prior to the wedding. [The "Standards" are included near the end of this publication.]

You are encouraged to have pictures taken prior to the wedding service if time permits in the sanctuary schedule. This avoids the rush of taking pictures after the service and can be a courtesy to the guests who might otherwise have an extended wait at the reception.

Throwing Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed or Releasing Balloons

Throwing rice, confetti, or birdseed and the releasing of balloons are not permitted at the church due to sensitivity to animals and the environment. Please inform guests of this request.

Alcoholic Beverages and Smoking

- Smoking is not permitted on the church premises.
- Alcohol is permitted at receptions held at the church, but couples must obtain liability insurance according to specifications available from the pastor and proof of the required insurance given to the church office no later than one week before the date of the wedding.
- Alcohol use is prohibited at the rehearsal and wedding service.

Food and Drink

Occasionally, couples have small lunches or snacks available for their family and/or wedding party prior to the start of the wedding. For custodial reasons, all food and drink are to be confined to designated spaces, and wedding parties are expected to clean up after such lunches or snacks.

Security

While theft is a very rare occurrence, you should not leave purses or other valuables unattended in the church during the wedding. Further, unless the wedding reception is held at the church, wedding gifts should not be brought to the church. If the reception is held at the church, gifts brought by guests should not be left unattended. St. John's Lutheran assumes no responsibility for theft or damage to personal items.

Job Matrimony

Standards for Photography and Video at Weddings

St. John's Lutheran Church

884 Newfield Avenue, Stamford, Connecticut 06905 203-322-0066

In order to ensure dignity and respect for weddings within the context of Christian worship, all photographers and videographers are required to abide by the following guidelines as established by St. John's Lutheran Church.

Arrival Time Photographers are to be at the church no later than 30 minutes preceding the appointed time of the wedding. Videographers should have equipment completely in place no later than 30 minutes prior to the starting time of the wedding. All photographers and videographers are to speak with the officiating pastor well in advance of the starting time of the service.

Dress As is befitting the dignity and beauty of a worship service and wedding, all photographers and videographers shall wear attire which is professional and formal.

Limits At no time during the service is the photographer permitted any further than the third pew from the front of the sanctuary. This will allow ample room for taking pictures as guests and wedding party enter and leave the sanctuary. Pictures may be taken from the balcony only with the prior consent of the organist and provided there is no interference with musicians who must play or sing; consent from the organist must be obtained no later than 30 minutes prior to the starting time of the wedding.

All photos taken during the wedding service (excluding the processional and recessional) must be taken with available light. No flashes are allowed during the wedding service.

Following the service, photographers are welcome to pose any portion of the wedding rite. The pastor will be available for such posing, if desired. Pictures including the pastor should be taken before group photos of the wedding party and families.

If the schedule at the church permits and the couple agrees, pictures can be taken prior to the wedding service but must be concluded at least 30 minutes prior to the starting time of the wedding.

Video equipment will be set-up in a location as directed by the pastor. No artificial light is permitted. All video cameras are to be placed on tripods and remain stationary. Moving about the sanctuary with video cameras is not permitted under any circumstance.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix I

Scripture Passages for Weddings

You are welcome to make suggestions to the pastor concerning the selection of Scripture passages for the wedding service. Normally, three texts are read – one from the Old Testament, one from an Epistle, and one from the Gospels.

Designated readers may read the Old Testament text and/or the Epistle passage. The pastor reads the Gospel text.

The following are some options for you to consider. You are welcome to recommend passages not included below to the pastor. Your selections will be read in the wedding service with the pastor's consent.

Old Testament Texts

Genesis 1:26-31	Psalm 33:1-5, 20-22
Genesis 2:18-24	Psalm 100
Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67	Psalm 128
Jeremiah 31:31-34	Psalm 134
Ruth 1:1-18	Psalm 136:1-9
Song of Solomon 2:8-10, 14, 16; 8:6-7	Psalm 150

Epistle Texts

Romans 8:31-39
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18
1 Corinthians 13:1-7, 13
Philippians 4:4-7
Ephesians 5:21-33
Colossians 3:12-17
1 Peter 3:8-9
1 John 4:7-12
Revelation 19:1, 5-9

Gospel Texts

Matthew 19:4-6
Matthew 22:35-40
Mark 10:6-9
John 2:1-11
John 15:9-12

Appendix II

Congregational Hymns

You are encouraged to include one or two congregational hymns as part of your wedding. Hymns provide the opportunity for your guests to participate and lift their voices in praise to God. You will discuss hymn selections when you meet with the Director of Music.

Below is a list of hymns for you to consider that are appropriate for the occasion of a wedding. The hymns may also serve as selections for soloists or instrumentals. All hymns are from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*.

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	504
All Are Welcome	641
All Creatures, Worship God Most High	835
All Glory Be to God on High	410
Be Thou My Vision	793
Beautiful Savior	838
Borning Cry	732
Come, Join the Dance of Trinity	412
Drawn to the Light	593
For the Beauty of the Earth	879
God's Word Is Our Great Heritage	509
Holy God, We Praise Your Name	414
Holy, Holy, Holy	473
Jesus Shall Reign	434
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	836
Let All Things Now Living	881
Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil	512
Lord of All Hopefulness	765
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	631
Now Thank We All Our God	840
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	858
Rise, Shine, You People!	665
Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us	789
Thy Holy Wings	613
We Are Called	720
You Are Mine	581

Appendix III

Checklist

As you plan your wedding at St. John's Lutheran Church, there are various decisions to be made and options for you to consider. Use the following checklist for your own purpose to guide you in those areas where you have decisions and options.

- Have we made date/time reservations for both the wedding and the rehearsal?
- Have we provided our \$500 non-refundable deposit to the church?
- Have we contacted the Director of Music to set an appointment for music and hymn selection?
- Do we want soloists or instrumentalists in our wedding?
- Do we want to propose Scripture Lessons to the pastor? Which ones?
- Will we select readers or will the pastor read the Scripture Lessons?
- Have we made arrangements with a florist for flowers?
- Have we notified the church office if we want to leave flowers for Sunday morning?
- Will we have a Unity Candle as part of our wedding ceremony? Will it fit the provided stand?
- Do we want to make advance arrangements for pew torches?
- Will we have a greeting or receiving line at the church or at the reception?
- Have we made photography and/or video arrangements?
- Have we sent required guidelines to photographer and/or videographer?
- Have we decided if pictures will be taken before or after the wedding service or both?
- Will the reception be at the church? If so, have we made arrangements in the church office?
- Have we obtained the marriage license from the Town Clerk?
- Do we know precisely who the wedding attendants are and the order they will stand?
- Have we selected ushers? Will groomsmen double as ushers?
- Have we determined which family and/or special guests will be seated by the ushers?
- Do we have a complete list of fees and honoraria recipients from the pastor?

The marriage is so much more important than the wedding. We encourage you to keep your plans simple, to concentrate on the religious significance of the worship, and to avoid getting carried away with exterior trappings. This is not a show. Keep it simple and sacred!

Thank you for choosing St. John's Lutheran Church for your wedding. Should you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the pastor. We want to work with you to make your day all that you want it to be. May God bless you as you plan for your wedding and begin a new life together!

