



Bethlehem's Wedding Ministry

(revised September 2026)

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN CHURCH
1620 Milwaukee Avenue NE
Aberdeen, South Dakota
605-225-9740
www.bethlehemaberdeen.org

Congratulations! Your wedding day is very special to you—and to us. The congregation of Bethlehem Lutheran Church is excited to be playing a part in your wedding day. We are excited to work with you as you plan your wedding day and prepare for your marriage.

MARRIAGE AND THE CHURCH

Marriage does not belong exclusively to the church. It belongs to all humanity. It is a social contract, governed and regulated by the state. But to the Christian, it is more than that:

- † We believe that marriage is a life-long relationship between two people, bonded in the promise of faithfulness.
- † We believe that marriage is rooted in the steadfast love of God and that God's faithfulness and self-giving love is the model for the relationship.
- † We believe that God, along with the church, desires marriage to be characterized by faithfulness, joy, love, growth, and fulfillment.

MARRIAGE PREPARATION/COUNSELING

All couples utilizing a pastor from Bethlehem participate in marriage preparation/counseling sessions. Although much of a couple's energy goes into preparing for the wedding, preparing for the marriage is even more important. Discussing your hopes for marriage, your expectations of each other, and some of the strengths and growing edges of your relationship is time well spent. In order to assist couples, Bethlehem requires couples to do **Prepare/Enrich**, which includes an online assessment and individual counseling sessions with a trained professional. The fee is \$150 payable to Bethlehem Lutheran Church. There is an additional fee of \$35 for the online assessment (payable online to Prepare/Enrich). For marriage preparation options provided through Bethlehem, please contact Lori Carpenter, Administrative Specialist at 605-225-9740.

Failure to complete appropriate marriage preparation may result in your wedding not being held at Bethlehem Lutheran.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

South Dakota law requires couples to secure a license to marry. It must be applied for a maximum of 90 days prior to the wedding at the **Register of Deeds** office in any South Dakota court house. At the Aberdeen office, appointments must be made to get the license. The appointment times are 9am, 10am or 11am. Couples must go together to the Register of Deeds Office, and will need to show a photo ID, such as a driver's license. There is a fee for the license and must be paid for in cash.

The marriage license should be brought to the church office at least by the Wednesday before the wedding and given to the Administrative Specialist office in the front reception area. It is recommended that you drop off the marriage license as soon as you get it if possible.

THE DATE

Call the church office to set a *tentative* date for your wedding. Do this as far in advance of the date as possible. Bethlehem is a living, breathing, vibrant congregation engaged in many ministries. Therefore, there are certain days throughout the year that the church building is not available for weddings. Only **after** you have had an initial meeting with one of our pastors and we have received a completed wedding information form and building use fee, your wedding and rehearsal dates will be placed on our master calendar.

For all wedding couples using the sanctuary, a **non-refundable deposit** of \$300 plus tax (which is the building use fee) is required when the wedding information form is returned.

THE TIME

Since Bethlehem is a living, breathing, vibrant congregation many ministries take place inside and outside of the building. We are not a wedding chapel. Many times there are multiple ministries happening on the same day. We want to do what we can to make your wedding day the best that it can be so we have set the following times that weddings are held at Bethlehem.

- † Saturday weddings held in the Sanctuary may be scheduled for 1:00 pm or 4:00 pm This allows for multiple weddings to be held on the same day at Bethlehem.
- † Sanctuary weddings are not held on Friday.
- † Chapel weddings can be scheduled on Friday.
- † Because they are smaller, Saturday weddings held in the chapel are traditionally held at these times but there may be some flexibility in scheduling.
- † It is important that you consult with your Bethlehem Wedding Coordinator when scheduling the starting time for pictures. In general, pictures being taken inside the building should start no sooner than 2 ½ hours before your wedding.
- † A wedding service usually takes approximately one hour from the beginning of the procession to the finishing up of the receiving line.
- † On occasion another service, such as a funeral, may need to be scheduled on the same day as your wedding. If that happens, the pastor will be in conversation with the couple so that service will not interfere with the wedding.
- † The rehearsal and wedding location & time for an offsite wedding will be approved by the officiating pastor.

REHEARSALS

Rehearsal times may be scheduled at 5:00 pm or 6:00 pm the evening before the wedding. Rehearsal usually takes about an hour.

The rehearsal is important and everyone in the wedding party, including parents of the couple, should be present. It is important that the rehearsal begins on time. The couple is responsible for seeing that everyone is in the sanctuary at the appointed time.

Please bring the following items with you to the rehearsal: programs, unity candle, taper candles and stand (if providing your own) or sand and containers.

THE PASTOR

Bethlehem's pastors want to help you with your wedding and your marriage. If you are a Bethlehem worshipper and you have a preference for a presiding pastor, please state that on the wedding information form. The pastors will try to comply as their schedules and sharing of duties allow, but also reserve the right to substitute for one another as necessary.

If you wish to also have another clergy person to participate in the wedding, first consult with the Bethlehem pastor who will be presiding at your wedding.

SOUND TECHNICIAN

A trained Bethlehem sound technician must be present at every service in the sanctuary to operate the sound system. The technician is also responsible for setting up microphones and practicing with musicians. The sound technician will be at the church one hour prior to the wedding service to practice with the soloists. Bethlehem will contact and assign the sound technician.

LIVE STREAMING

We offer live streaming of your wedding in the sanctuary if a trained Bethlehem streaming technician is available. The Bethlehem will contact and assign a streaming technician.

REQUIRED WEDDING FEES

Fees can be given to the Administrative Specialist.

*Use of Building Fee plus tax to be paid
at time the date is placed on the church calendar.*

- Use of Building
 - (sanctuary) \$300 plus tax
 - (chapel) \$200 plus tax
 - (outdoors/BLC Campus) \$200 plus tax

*** All fees must be paid in full at least two weeks prior to the wedding.**

- Organist/Pianist \$100 plus tax
- Wedding Coordinator
(required for Sanctuary weddings) \$125 plus tax
- Custodian
(required for Sanctuary, Chapel
& outdoor/BLC Campus weddings) \$ 75 plus tax
- Soloist (if provided by the church) \$ 75 plus tax
- Sound Board Operation \$ 75 plus tax
- Live Streaming \$100 plus tax
(if streaming staff is available)
- Music and/or other fees

The above fees are made payable to Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

- Pastor (suggested honorarium) \$200

The Pastor honorarium is paid separately to the officiating Pastor.

- Mileage for Offsite Weddings (at current rate)
for Rehearsal & Wedding

*The mileage, based on current IRS rates,,
is paid separately to the officiating Pastor.*

THE WEDDING COORDINATOR

The services of a Wedding Coordinator are a required part of every wedding at Bethlehem Lutheran Church taking place in the sanctuary. The Bethlehem Wedding Coordinator will be in charge of details regarding the parts of the wedding day that happen at Bethlehem. Those details include such matters as candles, ushers, seating of guests, receiving line, rehearsal, etc. The Wedding Coordinator will answer any questions you may have and be available to assist the wedding party with whatever may come up on the wedding day. The Wedding Coordinator will meet with the couple prior to the wedding day and be at the church for the rehearsal and wedding.

Couples wishing to have their wedding in the chapel with more than 4 in their wedding party (wedding couple plus 2 attendants on each side) will be required to have a Wedding Coordinator.

The couple will be notified which coordinator will be working with them. They should contact their Wedding Coordinator to arrange a meeting soon after they are notified. Bethlehem's Wedding Coordinators include:

**Teri Johnson
605-377-0355**

terij@sdjohnsons.us

**Kayla Carpenter
605-228-4157**

kjeanc92@gmail.com

THE LITURGY FOR MARRIAGE

The wedding ceremony is a worship service. The focus is on God. Generally, we follow the order for marriage as printed at the end of this booklet. The rite is characterized by variety and flexibility, so that it may be adapted to many situations and be open to creativity. The presiding pastor at your wedding will discuss the service options with you.

MUSICIANS

An organist of Bethlehem plays at all weddings where organ music is desired. Our organist is also available to accompany singers at your wedding. Please contact organist Darlyne Johnson at 605-395-6668 at **least two months** before your wedding to schedule your wedding.

If you desire piano music only at your wedding, a Bethlehem organist is not required. You may ask your own pianist. If you are in need of names of those who may be available to play piano at your wedding, please ask your wedding coordinator for a list of pianists who have played for weddings at Bethlehem or contact the church office for names and contact information.

Before arrangements are made with a soloist or instrumentalist, please read the section about music and discuss your plans with both the pastor and the organist/pianist.

If sheet music needs to be purchased by the Bethlehem musician these fees will be added to the final wedding fee total.

GUIDELINES IN SELECTING MUSIC

Since your wedding is a worship service, it should embody high standards of quality and the texts should reflect the praise of God, the steadfast love of Christ for his church as the foundation and model for love and fidelity in marriage, and the invocation of God's presence and blessing.

Music used in the marriage service may be instrumental and/or vocal. It may be organ music or other instrumental music, such as strings, brass, or woodwind, performed by a soloist or an ensemble. It may be music with text sung by a single voice, duet, small ensemble, full choir, or congregational hymns.

Live music is required for the processional and recessional as well as preludes and postludes. Recorded music may be used as special music during the service with **prior, special permission.** Please speak to both the pastor and wedding coordinator.

Although recorded music is not encouraged, if recorded music is used, the CD must be brought to the church the week before if not sooner so it can be tried on our sound system. There have been occasions when a burned CD has not played on our sound system and alternative CDs needed to be found.

Because we desire your wedding service to reflect positively both on you as a couple and on our community of faith, we ask that all music to be used during the service is discussed and okayed with your presiding pastor.

PROGRAMS

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have printed programs to inform members of the congregation of the order of service and the names of participants in the wedding. Please email (office@bethlehemaberdeen.org) or drop off a draft copy of your bulletin to the church office before printing. This will allow the pastor to review and check the bulletin for accuracy. **Bethlehem does not prepare or print the program for you.**

PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEOGRAPHY

Each wedding is a worship service of the Church. During the worship service itself we ask that no flash photographs be taken and that all photographers/videographers remain at the back of the sanctuary behind the worshippers. If it is absolutely essential, the video/photographer may kneel during the processional (only) but it is expected that this person will discretely return to the back before the worship begins. A remote-controlled video camera on a tripod is allowed to be placed in the walkway next to the west window if another point of view is desired.

Formal pictures may be taken before or after the service. Indoor pictures may be taken in the space reserved. Photographers not acquainted with Bethlehem should plan to discuss with the pastor or Wedding Coordinator the above regulations for photography during the worship service.

DECORATIONS

Please be aware that any seasonal church displays in the narthex and sanctuary need to stay and will not be moved.

The chairs in the sanctuary will not be moved unless there are wedding guests in wheel chairs. For liturgical reasons, flowers are placed on flower stands rather than on the altar or font. **Aisle runners are not permitted.**

Because of local fire regulations, aisle candles need to be an enclosed globe style which stand on the floor and are secured to the pew with a rubber gripper. These can be rented from some florists. The congregation is not permitted to hold candles. Be sure to put plastic under any wax candles used.

If pew bows or other items are used, they must be secured to the pew with hooks or ribbons. NO TAPE is to be used on the pews.

No rice, birdseed or confetti throwing is allowed. Sparklers may also not be used. Bubbles are a welcomed alternative and may be handed out as the guests LEAVE THE SERVICE (outdoors only). Silk Flower petals are allowed but cannot be thrown outside.

Loose balloons are not allowed indoors due to the possibility of setting off fire sprinklers.

Pets are not allowed inside the building unless they are working animals such as guide dogs.

All items used for decoration need to be removed immediately following the wedding.

HOLY COMMUNION

As baptized Christians, you may want your marriage set in the context of the celebration of Holy Communion. Since it is a sign of unity, the entire congregation will be invited to participate. We do not offer communion only to the wedding couple. **All are welcome** to the Lord's Table believing that Jesus died for our sins and is present in the meal.

WEDDING VOWS

Wedding vows are the most important part of your wedding. These are the promises that you are making to each other as you begin your married life together. These are the promises that you look back upon throughout your journey. These are the promises that will shape your marriage.

Some vow possibilities are included in this booklet. You are welcome to write your own vows or even take part of one of these printed vows and combine them with parts from other vow possibilities to make them your own. Feel free to discuss your vows with your pastor.

RECEPTION

The Fellowship Hall of the church may be rented for a wedding reception. If you wish to use the church facilities for your reception, you should request this as soon as possible. Contact the church office at 225-9740 for the Building Use Policy Form and Fee Schedule. All receptions can be catered. Please contact the church office for reception details. **The Wedding Coordinator is not responsible for reception details or duties.**

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Typically, two separate dressing rooms are available for the wedding party to use, the Fireside Room and Room E19/E21. Food may be brought into both of these rooms. A refrigerator and sink are usually available in these rooms. It is extremely important that all food and drinks remain in these rooms!

Chapel weddings during the week will be using Conference Room 1 and Conference Room 3.

There is to be no alcohol. Bethlehem's policy is to maintain a smoke-free and alcohol-free environment. Alcoholic beverages are PROHIBITED in all areas of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church building, parking lot and grounds. If alcohol is found inside the building or in the parking lot, the pastors reserve the right to cancel the wedding. The only exception is unopened alcohol which may be in a vehicle for use after the service is done, such as on a party bus.

It is imperative that people are assigned to pick up dressing areas before or after the service. Please make sure all garbage is placed in the garbage cans, all of the wedding party's items are removed from the rooms and everything is put back in order.

The guest book will be closed at least five minutes before the ceremony begins by the pastor or the wedding coordinator so that people may be seated and the service start on time. The guest book can be reopened after the service and/or opened at the reception area.

It is the responsibility of the wedding party to arrange for the care of their property before, during, and after the ceremony. Leave all valuable personal belongings and gifts in the care of parents, friends or attendants during the service. The church cannot be responsible for lost or stolen articles. If items are found after all have left, they will be turned into the lost and found at the front office.

CHAPEL WEDDINGS

Weddings in the chapel are available for couples with guests of 80 or less. A custodial fee is included in the Use of Building Fee. There is a \$275 charge plus tax for the use of the chapel which is to be paid at the time of reserving the date.

Couples wishing to have their wedding in the chapel with more than 4 in their wedding party (wedding couple plus 2 attendants on each side) will be required to have a Wedding Coordinator.

The couple will be notified which coordinator will be working with them. They should contact their Wedding Coordinator to arrange a meeting soon after they are notified. Bethlehem's Wedding Coordinators include:

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OUTDOORS/BLC CAMPUS WEDDINGS

The Date/Time

Call the church office to set a tentative date for your wedding. Do this as far in advance of the date as possible. You may pick up a copy of the wedding information form in the church office. After you have had an initial meeting with one of our pastors and we have received a completed wedding application and fees, your wedding date and time and rehearsal date and time will be placed on our master calendar.

Backup Plan

There should be a backup plan in place in case of inclement weather, condition of gardens, etc... If the backup plan is to have the wedding in the sanctuary at Bethlehem, the regular wedding fees apply (see page 9).

Wedding Fees

The following fees are paid to Bethlehem Lutheran Church:

- Premarital Education (PREPARE/ENRICH) \$150
- Office Processing Fee \$75 plus tax
- Offsite/BLC Campus Wedding Fee \$200 plus tax
- Custodian \$75 plus tax

Pastor Fees

The following fees are paid by separate payment to the officiating pastor:

- Honorarium \$200

Use of BLC Property

No items are to be taken out of the Bethlehem building (like chairs, tables, etc...)

The Bethlehem facility will be opened for use of the dressing rooms for the wedding party and for use of the restrooms.

Music

It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to arrange for any musicians which will be a part of the wedding service. Fees are to be arranged directly with musicians. Please discuss with the pastor any music selections you would like to have as a part of the service.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal usually takes about one hour. Please make arrangements with the pastor for rehearsal time.



OFFSITE WEDDINGS

The Date/Time

Call the church office to set a tentative date for your wedding. Do this as far in advance of the date as possible. You may pick up a copy of the wedding information form in the church office. After you have had an initial meeting with one of our pastors and we have received a completed wedding application and fees, your wedding date and time and rehearsal date and time will be placed on our master calendar.

Wedding Fees

The following fees are paid to Bethlehem Lutheran Church:

- Premarital Education (PREPARE/ENRICH) \$150
- Office Processing Fee \$75 plus tax

Pastor Fees

The following fees are paid by separate payment to the officiating pastor:

- Honorarium \$200
- Rehearsal Mileage at the current rate
- Wedding Mileage at the current rate

Music

It is the responsibility of the wedding couple arrange for any musicians which will be a part of the wedding service. Fees are to be arranged directly with musicians. Please discuss with the pastor any music selections you would like to have as a part of the service.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal usually takes about one hour. Please make arrangements with the pastor for rehearsal time.

WEDDING VOW POSSIBILITIES

- 1) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband/spouse
from this day forward,
to join with you and share all that is to come
and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.
- 2) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband/spouse,
and these things I promise you: I will be faithful to you
and honest with you, I will respect and trust,
help and care for you; I will share my life with you;
I will forgive you as we have been forgiven;
and I will try with you to better understand ourselves, the
world and God; through the best and worst of what is to
come until death parts us.
- 3) I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband/spouse.
I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful
husband/wife/spouse,
to share with you in plenty and in want
in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health,
to forgive and strengthen you,
and to join with you so that together we may serve God and
others as long as we both shall live.
- 4) _____, I take you to be my wife/husband/spouse from
this time onward, to join with you and share all that is to
come,
to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to
respond, and in all circumstances of our life together to be
loyal to you with my whole life and all my being until
death parts us.
- 5) I, _____, take you, _____, to be my wedded
wife/husband/spouse, 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, till death us do part,
according to God's holy ordinance, and I pledge you my
faithfulness.

SCRIPTURE READING POSSIBILITIES

**These are only possibilities. You are free to choose other Scripture from the Bible, especially if there is a passage that is particularly meaningful to you. Usually one or two Scripture readings are chosen for the service.*

John 15:12-17

Romans 12:1-2, 9-13

Matthew 7:24-27

Ephesians 5:21-33

Song of Songs 8:5-7

Song of Songs 2:10-13

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Psalms 150

Romans 15:5-6

Genesis 1:26-31

Genesis 2:18-24

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Marriage Service
(Not all the text will be in the bulletin you prepare)

* indicates optional items

(fill in blank with song title or scripture)

SEATING OF GUESTS

SEATING OF PARENTS

PROCESSION

GREETING

PRAYER

SCRIPTURE READINGS

WEDDING MESSAGE

SOLO/SONG OR HYMN *

MARRIAGE INTENTIONS

MARRIAGE VOWS

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

ANNOUNCEMENT OF MARRIAGE

LIGHTING OF UNITY CANDLE * OR

BLENDING OF THE SANDS

BLESSING

PRAYERS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

PRESENTATION OF COUPLE

RECESSIONAL