

Wedding Planning Guide



First Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Welcome!

Congratulations on your engagement! What a joy filled time of life! And, there is so much to do in preparation. This guide is designed to assist you in understanding the process of preparation for marriage through First Evangelical Lutheran Church (hereafter FELC). We are most honored that you wish FELC to participate in your journey toward your wedding day and your marriage.

You are encouraged to read this guide carefully and to give a gift to yourself by doing things in a timely manner. By attending to details in a timely and thoughtful manner now, you and your guests will be able to focus on celebrating your union in the presence of God on the day of your wedding.

“Lutheran Christians understand marriage in two ways. On the one hand, marriage is a gift. God intends to bring strength and joy to those who enter into marriage and, through marriage, to promote the well-being of the whole human family. On the other hand, marriage is a human estate. Two people make vows to each other, which are publicly witnessed, and society recognizes their status as legally married.” (*The Christian Life: Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, ELW)

FELC observes weddings as celebrations rooted in God’s love and affirms the guidelines of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod concerning the celebration of marriage. The wedding ceremony is a time of worship and reflects God’s presence and blessing by proclaiming that God intends the gift of marriage as a sign of both the union of Christ and the church and the joy of the reign of God.

Your choice to work with FELC in our planning reflects your desire for a Christian ceremony to begin your marriage. As part of this process, you are encouraged to worship regularly with FELC and to make time for daily prayer in your journey.

Welcome to the planning process for your wedding day!

1. To Begin

All who desire to plan a wedding at FELC (members and non-members) are required to fill out a “Wedding Request” form. This form allows the Pastor and Church Administrator to learn a little bit about you and to begin the scheduling process. It is highly recommended that you begin the process at least six month in advance of your desired wedding date. You can download a copy of the form at www.firstlutherangalveston.com or request a copy by calling the Church Administrator at 409-762-8477.

Do not set a date without clearing it with both the Pastor and the Church Administrator.

2. *Important Forms*

A. At Least Six (6) Months Prior to the Ceremony

1. **Wedding Request Form**

This is an application that begins the process of planning for your wedding day. Please fill this out and return it to the Church Administrator or Pastor.

2. **Wedding Planning Sheet**

This is a form that captures all the pertinent information for planning your wedding service. Please fill this out and return it to the Pastor (who will keep and review this with you often).

B. **Marriage License**

Marriages officiated by the Pastor of FELC are legally binding. For the Pastor to marry you, you must present a legal marriage license. For information on how to obtain a license in Texas you must contact the County Clerk at the Criminal Justice Center or visit www.galvestoncountytexas.gov/cc/Pages/MarriageLicense.aspx. Both parties to be married must be present to request the license.

If the wedding is to be solemnized outside of Texas, contact the similar governmental agency to acquire information for the issuance of the marriage license.

If either participant has been married before, proof will be required to verify the prior marriage has been legally ended and that the person is free to be legally married.

3. *Who May Be Married by First Lutheran Church*

FELC offers marriage ministry to members and non-members. As all weddings at FELC are understood by FELC to be Christian worship services, those asking to be married at FELC are encouraged to explore the Christian faith with the pastor and even to become active members of FELC. Instruction in the Christian faith and arranging for a baptism is encouraged to occur before the wedding date.

For a person to receive the member's rate for fees, the person must be an active member of FELC. Active membership is measured as a confirmed person worshipping and receiving Holy Communion and as making a measurable financial donation to the life of FELC a minimum of once during the current 12 months. Family members (who are non-members or not active members) of active members do not qualify as active members.

4. *Premarital Counseling*

Wedding preparation often focuses on all the details related to the celebration; however, this should not overshadow the real preparation for married life. Pastor will work with you through premarital counseling. This will include the administration of a relationship inventory tool followed by counseling sessions reflecting on the results. Couples generally enjoy this process and find it helpful and insightful. You should plan for at least five sessions to work through this process. If you are from out of the area, you will need to negotiate with Pastor with how to fulfill premarital counseling at FELC or how to arrange premarital counseling closer to where you live.

The goal of FELC in requiring premarital counseling is to help each couple to begin their marriage as strongly as possible.

5. *Planning the Worship Service*

Once the premarital counseling has been fulfilled, a final session will be required to plan the actual worship service. This will include the details of the procession, participants, scripture readings, hymns, observance of Holy Communion (or not), and other requests. The Wedding Planning Sheet will help to expedite this process. You can download a copy of the form at www.firstlutherangalveston.com or request a copy by calling the Church Administrator at 409-762-8477.

A. The Church Administrator

The Church Administrator will serve as the **Church Wedding Director** for the rehearsal and wedding day for weddings at FELC. This may be requested for off-site weddings. The Church Wedding Director will assist with coordinating the use of the facilities and assist with the smooth running of the rehearsal, wedding ceremony, and reception, if on site.

B. Altar Paraments (altar cloths)

The altar paraments will be the set color for the liturgical season of the congregation. The color may not be changed.

C. Date and Time Restrictions

Weddings will not be conducted on December 24 or December 25, Holy Week (Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday), or the weekend of FELC's Oktoberfest.

Saturday weddings must be concluded and the wedding party out of the sanctuary by 4:30pm. Saturday evening weddings may be held after 7:00pm.

D. Pastor and Visiting Clergy

The Pastor's Letter of Call and our parish community policy designates that the Pastor of FELC will be the presiding minister of all weddings celebrated at FELC. If you desire a visiting clergy person to participate as an assisting minister in the marriage ceremony, please indicate this on the Wedding Request form. The invitation for Visiting Clergy to participate in the marriage ceremony is made by the Pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church.

E. Music

Once the wedding date is set and the plan is for the marriage ceremony to take place at FELC, contact our Organist/Choirmaster. The Church Administrator can assist you by providing contact information for the Organist/Choirmaster.

The music used in your marriage ceremony, must be in keeping with the spirit of Christian worship. As such, all music selected must conform to at least one of the following principals: it should reflect praise of God, the steadfast love of Christ, a scriptural theme, or the invocation of God's presence and blessing. (Secular music should be moved to the reception.) The music selection shall be worked out between the couple, Organist/Choirmaster, and the Pastor. All extra music or additional musicians must be coordinated with the Organist/Choirmaster.

As the marriage ceremony is a worship service, consider selecting at least one hymn/song for the congregation to join in singing.

6. *Using the Buildings***A. Rehearsal**

The building will be open 30 minutes prior to scheduled time of the rehearsal unless arranged differently prior to that day. The building will be locked 15 minutes following the rehearsal conclusion.

B. Wedding Day

The building will be open 2 hours prior to the service unless arranged differently prior to that day. The building will be locked following photographs in the sanctuary unless the reception is being held in the Parish Hall.

C. Clean-up of Special Decorations

The wedding party will arrange to remove all decorations in the church following the service but prior to any services of the congregation.

D. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use

Participants are not permitted to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during the wedding service at FELC. Cigarette smoking is not permitted on church grounds.

E. Receptions in Parish Hall or on Courtyard

FELC has a kitchen and the Parish Hall which may be booked for the reception. Another venue available for booking is the courtyard. Use of this space is in addition to the Sanctuary usage fee.

The use of the Parish Hall includes the use of tables and chairs owned by the congregation. The kitchen may be used as a staging area only. No cooking will be allowed. Caterers must provide their own serving equipment and utensils.

The Parish Hall can comfortably accommodate 75 seated guests. Larger receptions should be booked in the Lyceum or at the location of your choice.

All garbage must be placed in garbage bags and carried to the dumpster near the alley behind the building.

The Church Administrator or a Parish Wedding Coordinator from the congregation will be present on site to help with questions or concerns.

The areas used must be left in clean and good condition with all decorations removed.

If alcohol is served at the reception, a liquor license must be in place and a peace officer must be hired.-

F. The Lyceum

The couple may choose to use the Lyceum for the service or reception or both. To arrange such usage please contact Cynthia McEldowney (409-789-4142). The fee structure of the Lyceum applies to such usage.

G. Liability

The couple will be asked to sign a liability form prior to the marriage ceremony rehearsal.

Damages incurred by FELC due to misuse of the property will be the responsibility of the couple.

7. Miscellaneous Concerns

A. Confetti, Rice, Etc...

FELC does not permit the throwing of plastic confetti, flower petals (fresh or frozen), rice, or birdseed inside or outside of the church building. (Though an old cultural tradition, these items leave behind a mess that is not easily cleaned up.) The release of balloons is not permitted as this creates environmental hazards for wildlife. First Lutheran does not permit the release of wildlife (doves, butterflies, etc.) on its premises. Once the newly married couple is outside, bio-degradable paper confetti may be used or bubbles may be blown.

B. Aisle Runners

FELC does not permit the use of an aisle runner, as it poses a significant safety/fall hazard.

C. Candles

There are oil filled candles situated on or near the altar. These candles are lit for all worship services. Pew candelabras are available, but the wedding party must provide dripless candles.

D. Flowers

Flowers may be placed in the two flower vases of the congregation (or on sturdy/solid holders provided by a florist.) Flowers may not inhibit the use of the chancel. Only real flowers may be used for the altar arrangements. Please advise your florist that no decorations can be fastened to permanent furniture by means of nails, staples, screws, or adhesives. You should arrange the delivery time of flowers with the Church Administrator and it is recommended that a member of the wedding party is present to receive them.

You are invited to leave the chancel floral arrangements in the sanctuary for use on the following Sunday. If you choose to do so, please report this to the Church Administrator.

Pew and floral decoration plans must be approved by the Church Administrator/ Wedding Coordinator prior to the wedding.

E. Photographers and Videographers in the Sanctuary

Photographs in the sanctuary are normally scheduled two hours prior to the start of the wedding service and must be completed 30 minutes prior to the start of the service. You are encouraged to have as many photos taken prior to the service so as to assist in movement to the reception following the wedding service. Photos following the wedding service should be planned into the schedule.

No flash photography may be done during the wedding service. Your photographer should speak with the Pastor prior to the wedding day for specific questions. Photographers are expected to not detract nor inhibit the worship service. The photographer may not move around the front of the sanctuary nor in the chancel during the wedding service.

Video cameras may be positioned prior to the wedding service so as to capture the wedding service. The videographer may not move around the front of the sanctuary nor in the chancel during the wedding service.

F. Dressing Rooms

Dressing rooms are available for your use on the day of your wedding service. These and all spaces used by the wedding party are to be left in good condition. Please consult the Church Administrator if dressing rooms are needed.

G. Wedding Service Folder

If you plan to provide an order of service handout for your guests, you will need to arrange for the production of this with the vendor of your choice. Providing an order of service handout for your guests is advisable and an outline of the service is available through the Church Administrator.

8. Fee Schedule

	<u>Member**</u>	<u>Non-Member</u>
Deposit/Date Reservation	No charge	\$150*
Sanctuary Usage	No charge	\$1,500
Reception Space	No charge	\$1,000
Church Administrator	\$75 cash	\$200 cash
Custodial Fee	\$75 cash	\$75 cash
With Reception	\$200 cash	\$200 cash
Clergy Fee	Honorarium	\$400
Organist	\$250	\$350
Flat Fee Totals	\$600 (plus Honorarium)	\$3900 (Includes Reception Charges)
** see page 3 for what constitutes a member		\$2775 (No Reception)
		*due within 30 days after request to hold date

Checks should be made out individually as follows:

<i>Church Usage</i>	<i>First Lutheran Church</i>
<i>Reception Space</i>	<i>First Lutheran Church</i>
<i>Parish Wedding Coordinator</i>	<i>cash in marked envelope</i>
<i>Custodial Fee</i>	<i>cash in marked envelope</i>
<i>Clergy</i>	<i>Name of Pastor</i>
<i>Organist</i>	<i>Name of Organist</i>

****ALL fee payments are to be given to the Pastor at the rehearsal in clearly marked individual envelopes.**