Wedding Planner

Bethesda Mennonite Church
930 16th Street P.O. Box 130
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402-723-4562
# YOUR WEDDING

## A Celebration of Worship & Praise!

**Beliefs, Policies and Procedures**  
**BETHESDA MENNONITE CHURCH**  
Henderson, Nebraska

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**A Celebration of Worship and Praise**  
The Meaning of the Wedding ........................................................................................................ Page 3  
The Wedding Service .................................................................................................................. Page 3  
Other Considerations and Guidelines ....................................................................................... Page 4

**Wedding Helps and Policies**

- Statement of Church Policy ................................................................................................ Page 6  
- Timeline/Checklist ................................................................................................................ Page 7  
- Availability of Facilities ........................................................................................................ Page 8  
- Decorating ............................................................................................................................ Page 10  
- Sound System ..................................................................................................................... Page 11  
- Fellowship Hall/Kitchen Use .............................................................................................. Page 12  
- Music .................................................................................................................................. Page 13  
- Clean-up Responsibilities .................................................................................................... Page 14  
- Wedding Fees for Bethesda Members ............................................................................... Page 15  
- Wedding Fees for Non-Members/Non-Attenders .............................................................. Page 16

**Bulletin Announcement Samples** ..................................................................................... Page 17

**Map of Church Building** .................................................................................................. Page 18

**Forms:**

- Sound System Form .......................................................................................................... Page 20  
- Wedding Planning Information Form ............................................................................... Page 21  
- Church Reservation Form ............................................................................................... Page 22  
- Cleaning Check List .......................................................................................................... Included with Packet
A CELEBRATION OF WORSHIP & PRAISE

1. The Meaning of the Wedding
At Bethesda Mennonite Church we believe that God intends human life to begin in families and to be blessed through families. We also believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life (Mark 10:9.) Christian marriage is a mutual relationship in Christ, a covenant made in the context of the church (Ephesians 5:21). According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship. Marriage is meant for sexual intimacy, companionship, and the birth and nurture of children (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 3:25). (Article 19: Family, Singleness, and Marriage in Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective)

The Christian wedding ceremony is a Christian worship service and should reflect the beliefs of the church. Every couple needs to explore their own beliefs in relationship to church beliefs regarding the purpose and essence of their wedding service.

Couples should keep in mind that marriage is a covenant two people make with each other and with God, before friends and family; that the wedding is primarily an act of worship where God is praised and God’s blessing is asked for; that the wedding is a service permeated by the spirit of celebration even while the service is treated with dignity and seriousness; that the wedding is an occasion to welcome and experience the support of a community of caring people; and that the wedding is a binding legal contract.

2. The Wedding Service
There is no particular order of service for a Christian marriage. In fact, there is no biblical record at all of a wedding ceremony. The scriptures do, however, talk a great deal about marriage itself and about covenant making. One task of the wedding is to bring the biblical principles of marriage into a meaningful and worshipful wedding service. In addition there are no legal requirements for a marriage ceremony. But there is much tradition, locally and culturally, that contributes to marriage services. The following items are basic to a wedding service:

Order of Service: This information does not suggest a particular order of service, but instead gathers the individual parts which seem appropriate or necessary to include in the service. The parts need to be interwoven into a format which will best provide a worship setting for all the participants, with the pastor and the couple working together.

The Vows: The vows are the heart of the wedding and are intended to reflect the commitment that is being made. Couples may write their own vows or work with one of the pastors in choosing a vow. Whatever the process, the following understandings shall be considered. The vow is a commitment and a covenant which you are making to each other and with God; in which you pledge absolute faithfulness to each other. The commitment includes the totality of life; the good and the bad, the easy and the difficult. The covenant is permanent - until death separates you. The vow may include an elaboration of what love and the marriage relationship mean to the
The commitment is to a growing marriage relationship.

**Introduction to the Vows:** With this statement, the couple and the congregation are reminded of the sacredness, seriousness, and the joy which surrounds the pledging of marriage covenant.

**Exchange of Ring:** A double-ring ceremony has long been a meaningful symbol expressing unending and pure love. Some couples choose to have the minister explain the meaning the ring exchange has for them. Other couples wish to express a further commitment to their partners as they exchange rings.

**Legal Statement:** Traditionally the wedding ceremony has included a formal, public announcement asking whether anyone has a good reason why the marriage should not take place. Most often this question is now omitted.

**Declaration of Marriage:** This statement, made by the minister, declares in brief fashion that the couple is now husband and wife.

**Congregational Participation:** The wedding service is a worship service in which the guests are fellow worshipers, not spectators, and more than only “witnesses”. For this reason, couples may consider having the congregation participate in singing, responsive readings (included in the *Hymnal: A Worship Book*), reading scripture, sharing, or communion.

**Family Involvement:** Family may be involved in a number of ways such as giving a family blessing instead of “giving the bride away”, providing music, reading poetry or scripture, sharing a brief talk of affirmation, including a symbolic act such as giving flowers or a gift, or having a time of prayer surrounding the couple.

**Couple Involvement:** In addition to the vows the couples also may contribute through music, readings, or prayer.

**Prayers:** Prayer should be included in the service as an essential part of the worship service. Prayers to include are invocations, prayers of blessing and benediction.

**Processional and Recessional:** The processional and recessional bring the couple into the church ready for the service, and out again once the service is over. Alternatives to the bride entering with her father include her entering with the groom, mother, brother, brother-in-law, uncle etc.

**Additional Ideas:** The pastor will be glad to visit with you about additional ideas and plans for the wedding service such as lighting the unity candle, communion, having a children’s story, suggesting family and friends consider making a donation in the couple’s name to charity, having family members make bread for the communion, having friends make banners for display, and other practical and celebrative considerations.

### 3. Other Considerations and Guidelines
a) The wedding service itself should be the central focus of the wedding day. All of the other events of the day need to be placed in the role of supporting cast, and should not be allowed to overshadow the main act.

b) There shall be a harmony between the beliefs and declarations of the wedding and the celebrating of the marriage. Too often there is a gulf between the values and orientation expressed in the wedding service and those expressed in the reception and other festivities. A Christian couple will want the events of the entire day to reflect their Christian orientation to life.

c) A good, basic principle to keep in mind for the wedding and reception is simplicity. To seek simplicity is to resist the idolatry of extravagance. Further, to seek simplicity is to know that celebration is at the heart of the way of Christ. A wedding apart from celebration is lifeless; but a wedding without discipline unto Christ is hollow and artificial. Simpler alternatives to extravagance and alternative ways to celebrate are available from the pastors.

d) The activities following weddings are changing rapidly - even from a few years ago. Couples want more choices and freedom on their wedding day. In some weddings today couples want to be free to use alcohol or to dance. Are wedding couples free to do this? In 1 Corinthians 10:23 - 11:1, the author Paul frames the issue not in terms of freedom and rights but in love. We stand with Paul in affirming your Christian freedom that does not compromise the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:25-27, 29b-30). While we do not suppose that to discourage or prohibit certain activities at weddings will sooner bring you to Christ and the Church, we do declare the excessive and inappropriate use of alcohol and immoral and impure behavior to be sin.

So where does that leave wedding couples? Right at the cross. In the end, Paul says it best when he says “imitate Christ”.

Congratulations on your engagement!! In order to help you, your families and the church staff make everything go smoothly during this special time, please read and follow these helps, policies & instructions. We hope you find this document helpful in your planning. Please let any of us know if we can be of more assistance.

Bethesda Wedding Coordinator

Statement of Church Policy
“The activities taking place in any part of our church building should be in agreement with church objectives; to provide a place of worship and prayer to foster Christian education and fellowship, to promote family unity and develop more family participation in church life, and be a positive witness in the community.”

(CC-060 Policy Manual)

“A Bethesda pastor must give primary leadership in all member’s weddings that take place at Bethesda. All requests from non-members must also be addressed by a Bethesda pastor. The pastor has discretion to approve or not approve any weddings.”

(DEA-210 Policy Manual)
TIMELINE/CHECKLIST

Following Engagement:
___ Contact the Church Office to tentatively pencil in your wedding date on the Church calendar. You will need to meet with the pastor first, before an official date is reserved on the church calendar.
___ Meet with the pastor to confirm your wedding date. The sooner, the better as schedules fill up quickly.
___ At the first meeting with the pastor, fill out a reservation sheet (included) and return it to the church office. At this time, a date for your wedding can be reserved on the church calendar. You will also work out wedding ceremony details, counseling, etc... with the pastor.
___ Contact the Bethesda Wedding Coordinator to schedule an initial meeting to discuss the logistics of your wedding day by calling ______________.

4-6 Months Prior to Wedding Date:
___ Meet with musicians to determine music selections.
___ The Wedding Coordinator will contact the Kitchen Supervisor to let them know you plan to use the Fellowship Hall or kitchen for the wedding rehearsal, reception or snacks. If the dishwasher or other large equipment in the kitchen is going to be used, a time will be scheduled by the Wedding Coordinator for the Kitchen Supervisor to check-in on the day of the wedding.

1 Month Prior to Wedding Date:
___ Meet with the Wedding Coordinator to review and finalize plans.
___ The Wedding Coordinator will contact a person to run the sound system and will fill out the sound system form on with the officiating pastor and route to the sound system operator.
*As a courtesy, the Sound System Manager, Wedding Coordinator and their spouses should be invited to the wedding and reception.

2 Weeks Prior to Wedding Date:
___ The Wedding Coordinator will inform the custodians of the upcoming wedding and plans to use the church facility.
* Weddings create extra work for the custodians, therefore we suggest that custodians and their spouses/significant other, be invited to the ceremony and reception.
___ The Wedding Coordinator will contact a person to run the sound system and will fill out the sound system setup form.
___ Bring a bulletin announcement to the office no later than Wednesday noon, 1-2 weeks prior to the wedding. Sample bulletin announcements are included in the packet.

Thursday before Wedding Date:
____ At this time, you may pick up a key from the church office to lock the bride’s room, the nursery and the Fellowship Hall.

Monday Following the Wedding Date:
___ Return the key to the church office.
AVAILABILITY OF FACILITIES

What is Available?
For weddings of church members/attenders held at Bethesda, the church facilities and furniture are available without cost. It is expected that families use the facilities and items with care and assume full responsibility.

1. Church Sanctuary
2. Fellowship Hall (banquet tables and folding chairs). Fellowship Hall may also be used as an air-conditioned location for the wedding parties to change if you desire.
4. Brides Room (dressing room for bride and her attendants).
5. Men’s Dressing Room (open Sunday school room may be used).
7. Candelabras (with candle lighters and snuffers).
8. Kneeling Bench

Borrowing Policy
Church members may rent folding tables and chairs at a cost of $10.00 per table and $2.00 per chair with permission from the church custodian. Church tables and chairs will not be allowed to be used for public sales or by non-members. Arrangements must be made with the custodians prior to removal of any tables or chairs. We ask that those using the tables “handle with care.” All other equipment may not be borrowed from the church for outside use without the prior approval of the Board of Business Administration.

(BUS-030, Policy Manual)

Sanctuary
No food or drink is to be taken into the sanctuary.

Dressing Rooms
Brides and attendants may dress in the Brides Room. The Groom and Groomsmen may dress in an open Sunday school room. A key that locks the Brides Room, Fellowship Hall, and Nursery is available from the church office. You are expected to return the key to the church office the following Monday. The church facility is locked after 5:00 p.m., however, the family is responsible for the security of personal items.

Fellowship Hall
Please inform Wedding Coordinator at your meeting regarding your plans for the use of the Fellowship Hall.
Church Kitchen
If you plan to use the church kitchen and/or tableware at any time for rehearsal, snacks or reception, the Wedding Planner will contact the Kitchen Supervisor.

Ceremony Time
Saturday weddings shall begin no later than 5:00 p.m. If the Fellowship Hall is not being used for the reception, the wedding shall begin no later than 6:00 p.m.
DECORATING

When is the church available to decorate?
Please discuss with the Wedding Coordinator a time when you may begin to decorate the church. If a death occurs within the congregation, a funeral will not be scheduled on the day of your wedding. However, please be aware that you will need to work with the pastor and the Wedding Coordinator on the availability of the sanctuary and Fellowship Hall for decorating in the days prior to your wedding in the event of a funeral.

Responsibility
The family is responsible to arrange for all decorations and arrangements of the church for the wedding service.

Candelabra
Plastic sheets must be placed under the candelabra to protect the carpet from wax drippings. Please use plastic if you have candles in the Narthex as well. Plastic sheets are provided and are stored with the candelabras.

It is expected that the candelabra will be cleaned and put away by the family following the wedding. To clean the candelabra, please use a hair dryer to melt the wax and wipe clean; please do not scrape.

Per fire code, no one is allowed to transport lit candles within the church.

Communion Table
The Communion Table of our Lord is to be set apart for the purpose of serving Communion. Therefore, we prefer that only the Bible and the elements of Communion be placed on the Communion Table. For some in the church it is not an issue, but for some it brings distress. Refer to Romans 14:12-19.

(DEA-100 Policy Manual)
SOUND SYSTEM

Who will run the Sound System?
A list of congregational members (Sound System Managers) who are trained to run the sound system are the only individuals able to run the sound system. The Wedding Coordinator will make arrangements to have a Sound System Manager available for the wedding service.

The Wedding Coordinator will fill out a Sound System Set-up Form several weeks prior to rehearsal. This should include a sketch of where people will stand and what type of microphones you want them to have. If you are unsure of what is available or what will work best, please ask the Wedding Coordinator.

What do I need to know?
Due to the expensive nature of the sound equipment, sound system personnel respectfully request that only trained personnel handle the equipment. Removal of the pulpit microphone needs to be cleared through the Sound System Manager and only Sound Technicians can remove the pulpit microphone.
FELLOWSHIP HALL/ KITCHEN USE

What about the reception?
As soon as the date has been set, the Wedding Coordinator will schedule the use of the kitchen and/or the Fellowship Hall with the Kitchen Supervisor. The current Kitchen Supervisor is listed on the refrigerator in the church kitchen. Any use of the kitchen (for reception, rehearsal or snacks) needs to be scheduled through the Wedding Coordinator and Kitchen Supervisor. The Kitchen Supervisor must be there if you plan to use the dishwasher.

Who will serve? What if I hire a caterer?
The family is responsible to arrange for the serving of the reception.

During Canner Week
The Bethesda Church Council has set policy that during the week of canner, (usually scheduled late November or early December,) the Fellowship Hall and kitchen will not be available for any activities.

What items may I use in the kitchen?
1) All kitchen and Fellowship Hall articles are available for use when the reception is held in the Fellowship Hall.
2) Bridal gift tables should be covered with damask tablecloths instead of lace tablecloths.
3) Questions on available items should be directed to the Kitchen Supervisor or Wedding Coordinator.

What else should I know?
1) The host and hostess are responsible for giving servers instructions, as well as for cleaning the candle holders and arrangements used on tables.
2) Servers are responsible for cleaning up tables.
3) Please bring containers for leftover food (Tupperware for cake and sandwiches; glass jars for leftover punch, etc..) Unmarked items will be disposed of when left in the refrigerator or freezer for more than two days.
4) The family is responsible for washing tea towels, tablecloths, etc. and returning them to the kitchen as soon as possible.
5) A report of broken articles is appreciated so that replacement can be made.
How do I select Music?
Music plays a major role in most wedding services. It is therefore appropriate to give careful thought to the planning of music for the wedding.

The first, and most important consideration, is that the context of the wedding is worship. The music should be appropriate for worship. The text of vocal and choral music should emphasize a Christian understanding of love.

The selection of musicians should be determined by the context of worship as well. Experienced organists, soloists, and ensemble groups will have suggestions for appropriate wedding music. Please consult with them. The following list is of collections of organ wedding music that may be a helpful reference to begin with as you plan with your organist.

Wedding Music Books I-V Edited by David N. Johnson, published by Augsburg
Wedding Music Volume I and II published by Concordia Publishing House

*Copies of these books are available from the Bethesda Director of Music, Rod Drews.
** You will want to meet with your organist 4 to 6 months in advance to listen to a variety of wedding music to select from.

The actual wedding ceremony may be planned in many ways. There is not only one way that is correct. Plan a wedding worship service that reflects who you are as a Christian couple. The pastor and musicians will help you with this aspect.

Fees for Musicians
The experience of the musicians and your expectations of them for your wedding service can help you to determine the proper amount of money to give to your musicians.

Policy for Guest Organists
Any outside organist used for weddings... must be cleared with the Music Committee and/or Director of Music. The organist then needs to make arrangements to meet with one of the regular church organists to be instructed about our organ. The Music Committee and Director of Music have the right to deny access to the organ if the request comes for someone who is inexperienced or inadequately prepared to handle a large pipe organ.

(ED-MUS 020 Policy Manual)

Please do not place flowers or plants on the pianos or organ.

(ED-MUS-050 Policy Manual)
CLEAN UP RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the family to clean up the church following the wedding. The custodian(s) will be there to assist.

When you leave the church following the ceremony...
If you have a reception or any activity following the wedding that requires the party to leave, you MUST ASSIGN A CLEAN-UP COMMITTEE (6-8 people) to STAY BEHIND and clean up the changing rooms, sanctuary, kitchen, Fellowship Hall, and any other location that was used for the wedding. Please be considerate of late hours for the custodians and follow this procedure. It is too late to wait until all the festivities are over to clean up. The Wedding Coordinator will ask you who is in charge of the clean-up committee so they know whom to speak with that evening.

Rooms
Most rooms and the Fellowship Hall are used for Sunday school on Sunday morning. The family is expected to put everything back where it was and to clean up any litter before leaving the church.

Tables/Chairs
Return tables and chairs to the way you found them. The custodians will be available following the wedding to assist.

Litter
Pick up all litter along the sidewalk, street and within the building. NO rice or birdseed is permitted anywhere in the building. Anything that has been scattered along the sidewalk must be cleaned up.

Please see the attached Cleaning Check List for additional clean up responsibilities.
WEDDING FEES FOR BETHESDA MEMBERS

Members will pay a fee of $300.00. This fee includes the use of a Sound System Operator, Kitchen Supervisor, Custodian(s) and Wedding Coordinator. Checks should be made payable to Bethesda Mennonite Church and given to the Wedding Coordinator.

It is suggested that the officiating pastor(s) and musician(s) be given an honorarium.

(CC-265 Policy Manual)
WEDDING FEES FOR NON-MEMBERS/NON-ATTENDERS

Wedding Fee......................................................................................................................................................$675.00
Includes use of candelabras, fans, sound system, communion table, kneeling bench, and other
furniture items upon request. Also assumes use of the Bride’s room and one other
classroom to get ready in. Includes use of sanctuary for rehearsal. Also includes use of
Fellowship Hall for a staging area, but tables/chairs/etc.... are not to be rearranged, and
individuals must clean up after themselves. Includes fees paid to Wedding Coordinator, Sound
System Operator and Custodians.
Reception Fee..........................................................................................................................................................$400.00
Includes use of Fellowship Hall, tables, chairs, sound system, and linens (plastic table covers
are the couple’s responsibility to provide). Includes use for rehearsal dinner, however, the
couple is required to clean up after themselves. Includes use of kitchen to prepare food and
wash dishes. Use of dishes, utensils and other kitchen items are included in this fee as well
as a fee paid to the Kitchen Supervisor.

Checks should be made payable to Bethesda Mennonite Church and given to the Wedding Coordinator.

It is suggested that the officiating pastor(s) and musician(s) be given an honorarium.

Other:
Couples are asked to provide their own extension cords, tools, tape, tacks, plastic, and any other items to
be used to decorate for the wedding and/or reception.

A meeting with the head custodian 1-2 weeks prior to the wedding is required.

ALL COUPLES married at Bethesda are required to read and adhere to the Bethesda Wedding Planner
Manual. A manual can be obtained at the church office or online at www.bethesdamc.org.

** This policy refers to the couple getting married or their parents (i.e. if the couple or parents are
members, they are not required to pay the additional fees.)

(CC-260 Policy Manual)
BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT SAMPLES

Please feel free to change these to suit your needs and taste, or you may write your own. Bulletin announcements are due in the office 1-2 weeks prior to the ceremony.

1. (Parents of Bride) announce the approaching marriage of their daughter, (name of Bride) to (name of Groom), son of (Parents of Groom) of (town, if not from Bethesda) on (date) at (name and location of church).

2. (Parents of Groom) announce the approaching marriage of their son, (name of Groom), to (name of Bride), daughter of (Parents of Bride) of (town, if not from Bethesda) on (date) at (name and location of church).

3. (Parents of Bride) and (Parents of Groom) announce the approaching marriage of their children, (name of Bride) and (name of Groom), on (date) at the (name and location of church).

4. (Name of Bride) and (Name of Groom) will be united in marriage on (date) at the (name and location of church).

*If you would like to invite the public to the ceremony, you may say so at the end of the announcement. It is then advisable to state the starting time along with the date.
SOUND SYSTEM SET-UP FORM

Please fill out the Sound System Set-up Form with the officiating pastor and give it to the Wedding Coordinator prior to rehearsal. This should include a sketch of where people will stand and what type of microphones you want them to have, for example, head-set, hand held microphone, standing microphone. If you are unsure of what is available or what will work best, please consult the Wedding Coordinator.
## WEDDING PLANNING INFORMATION FORM

| Name of Bride |  |
| Name of Groom |  |
| Contact Number |  |
| Date of Wedding |  |
| Time of Wedding |  |
| Pastor Choice |  |
| ☐ Yes – We will use the Sanctuary |  |
| ☐ No – We will not use the Sanctuary |  |
| ☐ Yes – We will use the Fellowship Hall |  |
| ☐ No – We will not use the Fellowship Hall |  |
| ☐ Yes – We will use the Kitchen |  |
| ☐ No – We will not use the Kitchen |  |
| ☐ Women’s dressing room needed |  |
| ☐ Men’s dressing room needed |  |
| Organist/Pianist |  |
| Vocalist |  |
| Sound System |  |
| Photographer |  |
| Videographer |  |
| Caterer |  |
| Rehearsal Time |  |
| Notes: |  |

### To Do:
- Processional/Recessional Songs
- Ceremony Songs
- Programs
- Bulletin Announcement
- Pre Wedding Article
- Post Wedding Article
- Payments for Sound System, Custodian, Musicians, Wedding Coordinator

### Items to Review with Pastor:
- Ceremony Order
- Wedding Party
- Family Lists
- Rehearsal Arrangements
CHURCH RESERVATION FORM

This form is to be filled out by the couple and the pastor at their first meeting. It is to be given to the office staff before a date can be reserved on the church calendar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Bride</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Groom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Phone Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bride’s Cell Phone Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s Cell Phone Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date requested for wedding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor requested for wedding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time wedding will begin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date and time rehearsal will begin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities requested for wedding:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Sanctuary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Fellowship Hall/Kitchen for Reception (Kitchen Supervisor must be contacted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Fellowship Hall/Kitchen for Rehearsal (Kitchen Supervisor must be contacted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please inform the custodians at your meeting with them if you plan to use the Fellowship Hall for any activities other than those specified above.

______________________________ Date

______________________________ Officiating Pastor