

A Guide To The Marriage Ceremony



This guide is provided for you to get a feel for the wedding ceremony, so you can work out the details of your wedding.

Pastor Matt Thiele, 2020

An Intro To The Marriage Ceremony

TWO WORDS OF ADVICE For ENGAGED COUPLES

Keep It Simple

Simple is elegant! Keeping the ceremony simple will save you stress and help you enjoy things more. If you decide on something elaborate that can easily go wrong it will only give you more stress and take your focus away from each other.

Make Time For Each Other

Some couples feel like they never see each other before the wedding because they are so busy planning. What follows your wedding is much more important than the day – so start now by spending more energy investing in the relationship than in the wedding.

WHERE TO HAVE THE CEREMONY

No matter what location you can still invite God to the wedding! As a Lutheran pastor I am happy to perform a wedding anywhere as long as people understand that what I do will show God's unconditional love (grace) in Jesus Christ.

No matter where you choose to have the ceremony, please remember that "church" is not a building - "church" is what happens when people connect with God. The church is actually the people - who put their faith in God!

MUSIC – CHOICE, STYLE, PLACEMENT

Music for the wedding is a very personal choice. It's normal to have music at the start and end and often during the signing of the marriage register. You can choose what music is special to you – don't worry about offending the pastor with your choice of style because we respect you. Music can be played on CD, MP3, MP4, or by a band or performers. You are also free to have the performance of songs or the singing of songs of praise and these can be placed at any appropriate point throughout the ceremony.

BEFORE THE CEREMONY & THE ENTRANCE

A Bridal Procession is optional.

You can start in a variety of ways:

1. The Groom may be waiting with pastor. The bride arrives and "walks down the aisle".
2. The Bride and Groom may simply stand together before the pastor.
3. Sometimes the pastor meets the Bride and Groom at the church door, the ceremony is begun at the door before the whole party enters together during singing/music.
If you choose this option, please speak to pastor about how this can work!

The Marriage Ceremony

OPENING

Pastor welcomes the people, says a few words introducing the marriage ceremony.

The ceremony is formally begun with the words:

“In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

PRESENTATION

The ‘presentation’ or ‘giving away of the bride’ is an interesting tradition with very deep problems. It comes from a culture where women were literally considered to be property. This is why a young man would ‘ask the father’ for her and why a ‘dowry’ would be paid for her. The giving away then deepens this property image further. Jesus is totally opposed to treating people as property.

A more healthy way to think about this moment is ‘letting go’. For a marriage to be successful the parents must let go.

Because this tradition comes from a world that literally did treat ‘people are property’ I cannot ever do it. This would go against my core values.

The options are:

Either:

Parents of both the bride and groom present them both to be married!

The pastor asks all parents of both bride and groom to stand and asks:
“Who presents N & N to be married? I/We do.”

Or:

No presentation has to happen!

Either of these options fit into the Lutheran Church Book of Rites (1994).

PRAYER

Pastor Matt usually prays from the heart. But this is the traditional prayer...

“Faithful God, since you established marriage, unite N and N as they make their vows publicly to each other, and help them to remain faithful and build each other up all their lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

BIBLE READING/S

You may choose as few as one reading, or as many as you like!
Please ask your pastor for a new Bible so you can read these in a plain English Bible.

Some to look at: Genesis 1:26–31; Genesis 2:18–24; Genesis 24:50,51,58–67; Ecclesiastes 9:7–10; Song of Songs 2:10–13; Song of Songs 8:6,7; Isaiah 63:7–9; John 2:1–11; John 15:7–12; John 15:9–17; Romans 8:37–39; Romans 12:1,2,9–12; Romans 15:5–7; 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13; Ephesians 5:31–33; Colossians 3:12–19; 1 John 4:7–11,19.

SERMON

I often offer a short (5 mins) and personal talk on the meaning of marriage (and the meaning of life). It's for you and based on the readings you choose. Sometimes we leave the sermon out and give a slightly longer "introduction" that follows.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MARRIAGE VOWS:

The following is the "traditional introduction" to the vows, but it's also possible to simply say a few words at the end of the sermon to introduce what follows:

"Our Lord Jesus Christ said: Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female', and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no-one separate. So then, N and N, our Lord promises to bless those who honour his purpose for marriage and remain faithful to each other in it..."

DECLARATION OF INTENT

Please choose your preferred form of declaration:

"I therefore ask you: N, will you have N as your wife/husband, to live together faithfully in marriage? Yes, I will."

"I therefore ask you: N, will you have N as your wife, to live together, as God has ordained, in the state of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honour and protect her, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her, as long as you both shall live? Yes, I will."

THE VOWS

Please choose your preferred form of vows:

"I, N, in the presence of God and these witnesses,

*take you, N, to be my wife/husband;
and I promise to be faithful to you as long as we live.”*

or

*“I, N, in the presence of God, take you, N, to be my wife;
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,
so long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.”*

EXCHANGE OF RINGS

Wedding rings are optional.

They are traditionally worn on the fourth finger of the left hand.

You may not say anything during the exchange of rings, or choose from the following:

“I give you this ring as a sign of our marriage and the vows we have made today.”

or Vows

“Receive this ring as a pledge and token of wedded love and faithfulness.”

DECLARATION OF MARRIAGE

This part is a legal declaration under Australian law so the words cannot be changed.

Bride and groom join right hands.

The pastor places his right hand on their hands and says:

*“Since N and N have promised themselves to each other before God and in the presence of us
all, I, as a servant of God and by the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia, declare them
to be husband and wife. What God has joined together, let no-one separate.”*

THE KISS

The old tradition was for the groom to raise the bride’s veil here.

For many reasons I believe this is an unhelpful tradition and do not recommend it.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

If you want you might have something extra you would like in the service.

Common ideas include.

- *Blessing by the Parents: the parents might actually pray for or bless the married couple.*
- *Lighting Unity Candle: bride and groom together light a candle symbolizing their marriage*

- *Coloured Sands: blending two different coloured sands into a bottle/vase.*
- *Binding or Handfasting: a Greek and Celtic tradition of binding the couples' arms together.*
- *Holy Communion?*

I do not feel comfortable with offering Holy Communion at wedding ceremonies. You are likely to have many guests who are not Christian and cannot participate. Having Holy Communion can make them feel excluded as they can't take the bread & wine. Holy Communion is not an individual thing, but a corporate thing that brings the whole church together. So we only do it in private when you cannot gather with other Christians; in emergencies etc.

THE LORD'S PRAYER (OPTIONAL)

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen."

BLESSING OF COUPLE

"May your marriage reflect the love that God has for all of us in Jesus Christ. And the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen."

or

"May God bless you and keep you. May you share abundant life and drink deeply of the richness of God's love. May you give nothing but happiness. May you see your children's children. May you have joy and laughter, and those you love always near you. May your love together come from the heart of Jesus Christ. Amen."

or

"May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face. May the rains fall soft upon your fields. May the light of friendship guide your path together. May laughter grace the halls of your home. And when eternity beckons at the end of a life well lived, may the Lord embrace you and welcome you to the heavenly marriage feast. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

or

"May green be the grass you walk on, May blue be the skies above you, May pure be the joys that surround you, May true be the hearts that love you. May God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless and keep you. Amen."

SIGNING OF THE REGISTER

The bride and groom sign the wedding certificates.
Two witnesses are also needed to sign – they can be anyone you choose.
Often the signing witnesses are the “best man” and “matron of honour”.

PRESENTATION OF THE MARRIED COUPLE

When the party returns, the pastor may say the following or similar:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Mr and Mrs N & N...”