

Spirit Life

C H U R C H

Wedding Guide



& Planner

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Preparation for the Celebration

Weddings can be one of the most festive and joyous worship services in the local church. A bride and groom celebrate the joining of their lives in holy matrimony, a covenant intended to last a lifetime. Their families and friends participate in the happy events, and church members and the pastor are part of the celebration. God is glorified in the vows and commitments that the bride and groom make to one another and to God himself.

From a practical standpoint, however, a wedding can be a very stressful event for a couple—especially the bride. In some ways, the worship service is one of the easier parts of planning. In addition to the bridal gown, the bridal party and the honeymoon, there are the many events of the day, the costs involved, the facilities that can be used, and the many people who assist with the work.

The Legal and Official Steps

Once the man asks the woman (and sometimes the reverse these days) for her hand in marriage, the love continues but the work begins. Couples have little or no experience in planning the event. They may not know that *the first step* is to consult with the pastor and set a wedding date with the church based on its availability for a wedding. Even then, the date is tentative until the couple goes through the official and legal steps of marriage. Churches and their pastors can guide the bride and groom through this process, since they generally have not secured a license before. After all, many couples go through the marriage process only once in life, so they may be unfamiliar with specific requirements in their county or state (and the requirements differ).

If one or both members of the couple have been divorced, then proof must be provided of a civil decree ending the previous marriage in order for a license to be issued. This issue hardly existed a decade or two ago; now it is more common. The county or state office will make sure that both parties are at least the minimum age for marriage in that state.

The Church and the Pastor

Once these preliminary steps are addressed, the officiating pastor can begin exact planning with the couple. The Pastor may want to review the wedding documents as part of pastoral wedding preparations. Spirit Life Church may have different standards and traditions than the church you grew up in or are familiar with, so these need to be discussed as part of the preparation.

Although everyone's situation is unique, as each couple is unique, the requirements in God's Word are not. The requirements God gives us are safe-guards or guard rails that keep our life on track and help us avoid making impulsive and foolish decisions. Therefore the pastor requires a 3-4 sessions with the couple to go over God's principles for marriage and what qualifies a couple to be married at Spirit Life Church. The couple and/or the pastor can request additional sessions as desired or needed.

During these pre-marriage sessions, the pastor will go over what God's Word says about marriage and offer opportunities for the best preparation possible, not just for the wedding ceremony, but for a lifetime of success in the marriage relationship.

Once these sessions are agreed upon, the pastor will check the dates and times with the church calendar and support staff for availability. Depending on what arrangements are made and the relationship the couple has with the church, an outline of the costs and requirements for use of the facility will be agreed upon. Since a wedding is a special event outside of the normal life of the church, fees are appropriately explained and collected in advance to avoid misunderstandings. A list of services and rental fees are listed on page 5.



Worship and Music

Once the church facilities have been reserved for the service, the bride and groom can work out the elements of the ceremony with the pastor. This includes any music selections. The pastor will outline the service itself, and work with the worship pastor to present or approve the music choices of the couple.

This process is important since some music may be inappropriate for a Christian wedding ceremony. The officiating pastor or worship pastor can offer excellent suggestions to make the decisions easier, and the music more worshipful.

Couples must make decisions about specific roles in the wedding, especially the attendants. Who will be the maid or matron of honor and the best man? How many bridesmaids will assist? In the same way, how many groomsmen will assist? Will the groomsmen also function as ushers to seat people? Will there be children in the service to function as the flower girl and/or the ring bearer? Whoever is responsible for tracking these choices—whether pastor, church administrator, secretary, or wedding coordinator—must know how many people will be involved in the service itself.

All of these participants need to go through a wedding rehearsal, often the day/night beforehand. The officiating pastor and possibly the worship pastor, the musicians or soloists, and the wedding coordinator need to be present to be sure all goes well—and to be sure that the service itself remains under the direction of the pastor as discussed with the couple and not the opinions of family or friends.

Behavior is a major issue, and policies do need to be stated regarding church expectations for the wedding party. It is required that all the participants involved in the ceremony not consume alcohol or non-prescribed drugs prior to the rehearsal or the actual ceremony. If the reception is on church grounds, these same rules apply as no alcohol and no smoking are permitted on church grounds.

Visual Elements of the Service

Floral arrangements should be made, as well as decisions about a photographer and videographer. Church custodians and decorators have certain expectations about what is and is not allowed inside the church, or where items may be placed, and how they may be hung (to minimize any damage). It is easy to go overboard with floral and other forms of decoration. The officiating pastor or church wedding planner will work closely to ensure these possibilities.

It is important to set limits on photography and videography so that these activities do not become distracting to worship. The officiating pastor may need to state clearly at the start of the service the limits and use of cameras, cell phones and mobile devices if necessary.

Optional: The Reception

The reception may be held at the church or at another location so that all guests can be greeted and thanked. At Spirit Life Church we encourage the greeting of guests, followed by formal photos of the couple and the families in the sanctuary. This may require clear instructions to the guests where to proceed in preparation for the reception.

If the reception is at the Spirit Life Church, custodians, decorators and set up teams must be prepared to open and close the building and prepare it for presentation. There will need to be an agreed amount of time of total use of the church facility to accommodate the facilities teams and helpers.

A wedding is a joyous event, but it requires a lot of attention from church staff beyond the normal patterns of church activities. Spelling out specific steps for this helps the bride and groom, and all involved with them to have a memorable and happy time together—one to remember for *many* years to come.



Wedding Information Sheet

Wedding Date _____ Time _____

Rehearsal Date _____ Time _____

Officiating Pastor _____

Bride

Full name: _____
First Middle Last

Street _____

City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Phone (Home) _____

(Work) _____

DOB _____ Age _____

Member of Spirit Life Church? _____

First marriage? _____

If no, number of previous marriages _____

Parents' names:

Father _____

Mother _____

(Maiden name)

Maid/Matron of honor _____

Bridesmaids _____

Bridesmaids _____

Bridesmaids _____

Bridesmaids _____

Bridesmaids _____

Flower Girl _____ Age _____

Groom

Full name: _____
First Middle Last

Street _____

City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Phone (Home) _____

(Work) _____

DOB _____ Age _____

Member of Spirit Life Church? _____

First marriage? _____

If no, number of previous marriages _____

Parents' names:

Father _____

Mother _____

(Maiden name)

Best Man _____

Groomsmen _____

Groomsmen _____

Groomsmen _____

Groomsmen _____

Groomsmen _____

Ring Bearer _____ Age _____



Wedding Information Sheet *(continued)*

Location of Ceremony: Sanctuary Office Other (specify) _____

Number of guests expected: _____

Location of Reception _____

Number of guests expected: _____

Musician(s): _____ Contact Number: _____

Soloist(s): _____ Contact Number: _____

Sound Tech: _____ Contact Number: _____

Photographer: _____ Contact Number: _____

Florist: _____ Contact Number: _____

Wedding Fees and Rental Costs for Spirit Life Church

FEES	Member Cost	Non-Member Cost
Sanctuary	\$200	\$400
Sound Technician (required for Sanctuary)	\$50	\$50
Janitorial Assistance (required for all rooms)	\$75	\$75
Wedding Coordinator	\$75	\$75
Fellowship Hall	\$100	\$200
Fellowship Hall Kitchen	\$50	\$100
Pastoral counseling and officiating	\$150	\$300
Honorarium for Soloist / Musician	\$50	\$50

Note: A Down payment is required to reserve the event date.

All fees are due on the Monday prior to the wedding unless other arrangements are made.



The Wedding Ceremony

Organizing The Procession

The wedding procession, or entrance of the bridal party, occurs in a certain order that culminates with the bride. The bridal procession begins after all guests are seated and the processional (the music) has started. Bridal processions vary, depending on the style of the ceremony, but the traditional order of appearance (especially for a Christian wedding) is as follows:

- 1. The officiant, groom and (best man-optional) take their places to the right of the altar and face the guests a few minutes before the ceremony begins.**
Groomsmen can either take their places with the groom or escort the bridesmaids down the aisle (bridesmaid on the left, groomsman on the right). If they escort the bridesmaids, they can either walk with them from the back of the sanctuary or start with the groom and meet them halfway down the aisle, escorting them the rest of the way. When they arrive at the altar, they turn to face the guests.
- 2. Bridesmaids enter through the back of the Sanctuary, either alone or with the groomsmen.**
After they arrive at the altar, they turn to face the guests. Some try to line up the attendants by height, shortest to tallest on each side, with the shortest walking in first.
- 3. The maid or matron of honor is the last of the bride's attendants to walk down the aisle, either alone or with the best man.**
- 4. The ring bearer walks in next.**
- 5. The flower girl walks in just before the bride.**
It's acceptable for the ring bearer and flower girl to enter together. Depending on their ages, the flower girl and ring bearer may sit with their families instead of standing with the rest of the attendants.
It's also common for the ring bearer and flower girl to trade places with the maid or matron of honor.

Last to come down the aisle is the bride, who traditionally walks on her escort's left arm.

Some couples choose to have the bride walk on the right so that no one is between her and the groom when she arrives at the altar.

Make sure your attendants practice pacing themselves about four to six rows apart and walking serenely down the aisle at the rehearsal. Nervousness tends to make people rush down the aisle — which doesn't make for a very elegant entrance.

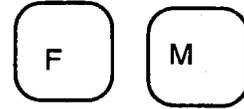
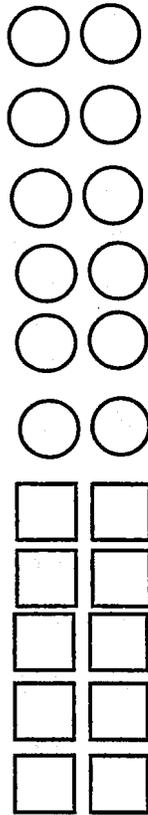
On page 7 is a Layout of the Wedding Processional as the wedding party arrives at their positions.



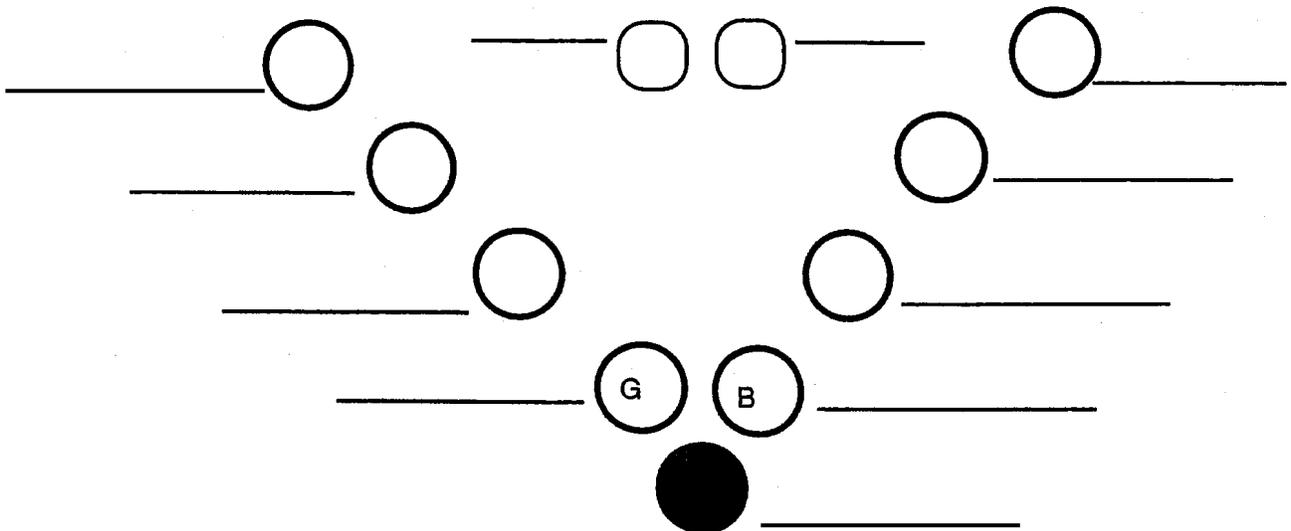
Wedding Service Layout



GROOM's SIDE



BRIDE's SIDE





SAMPLE MARRIAGE CEREMONY OUTLINE

Pre Service Music: This usually begins 15-20 minutes prior to the Processional

Processional Music Begins:

Seating of the Parents

The processional music begins with the seating of the honored guests:

- Seating of the Groom's grandmother
- Seating of the Bride's grandmother
- Seating of the Groom's parents
- Seating of the Bride's mother

Bridal Processional Begins

- Minister and Groom enter usually from stage right. If the Groomsmen are not escorting the Bridesmaids down the aisle to the altar, they also enter together with the Minister and Groom.
- Bridesmaids enter, usually down the center aisle, one at a time. If the Groomsmen are escorting the Bridesmaids, they enter together.
- Maid or Matron of Honor enters. If she is being escorted by the Best Man, they enter together.
- Flower Girl and Ring Bearer enter.

Wedding March Begins

The Bride and her father (or other Escort) enter. Typically the Bride's mother will stand as a signal for all of the guests to stand. Pastor will announce, "All rise for the Bride."

To the Congregation: "You may be seated"

Welcome / Intro: Dear Family and Friends...

Opening Prayer.

Giving Away of the Bride: "Who gives this bride in marriage?"

Special Song (solo)



SAMPLE MARRIAGE CEREMONY OUTLINE (cont.)

Charge to the Bride and Groom...

Scripture Reading: Example - Ephesians 5:22-33

Charge to the Witnesses...

Charge to the Congregation...

Vows:

Exchange of Rings: *(Do you have the rings please?)*

Pronouncement: **To Bride and Groom:** *Join right hands, please.*

Closing Prayer

LIGHTING OF THE UNITY CANDLE (Optional)

Presentation of the Couple:

Recessional Music Begins:

The wedding party exits the platform, typically in the following order:

- Bride and Groom
- Maid or Matron of Honor and Best Man
- Bridesmaids and Groomsmen
- Flower Girl and Ring Bearer
- The Ushers return for the honored guests who are escorted out in reverse order of their entrance.
- Ushers may then dismiss the remaining guests, either all at once, or one row at a time.

POST SERVICE MUSIC



Final Thoughts

Spirit Life Church is honored to be a part of assisting in and celebrating your wedding. We will do all we can to make both the spiritual ceremony and the civil ceremony meaningful and life changing. We believe that God has ordained marriage and will put His blessing on it as you make your commitments to each other.

The wedding ceremony is only the start of your new life together and the beginning of a life-time of commitments that you will make to each other. We pray that you will take advantage of all the resources and opportunities to grow your marriage relationship. You live together as husband and wife is to be a reflection of the relationship that Christ has with His church. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

We encourage you to build your life around the things of God such as prayer, worship, Bible reading, church attendance, service to Him and His calling on your life. You have been brought together for God's purposes and the more you serve together the more you will be united in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If at any time you need the support of your church, your pastors or Christian brothers and sisters in the Lord, do not hesitate to contact us. Spirit Life Church is here as a resource for your spiritual life and your marriage.

Following God's Principles

A relationship between a man and woman offers us tremendous satisfaction for companionship and love. It can also tempt us to make decisions based on emotion and not on God's Biblical instructions. The pastors of Spirit Life Church strongly suggest the couple follow God's Word in order for God's blessing to be secured in their relationship.

We value the spiritual lives of the couples we marry. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul discusses this principle. "Do not be unequally yoked to unbelievers". That is why we can not marry a couple if they are "unequally yoked" spiritually, meaning that they do not share the same faith. Both people must have surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and be committed to establishing a Christian home and to pursue a personal relationship with Christ.

We value the Biblical definition of purity. We ask that the couple must remain celibate and not engage in sexual activity at any time prior to the wedding. We strongly suggest that the couple live separately to remove temptation and to avoid the appearance of evil. This is a protection against divorce, as research has found that couples who live together have a higher divorce rate than those who do not.

We value the importance of community and normally only marry couples who regularly attend Spirit Life Church. We understand that many people choose to get married may not attend church regularly or attend a different church. Because weddings require extra time and are not part of the normal pastoral duties or church calendar, we must limit the number of weddings that can be performed. We give priority to those who call Spirit Life Church their home and have become participating members through the normal membership process.

In conclusion, these principles have been expressed based upon God's plan for marriage, and are meant to encourage, protect, and strengthen the couple's commitment to Christ. Due to the nature of interpersonal relationships and individuals levels of maturity, there may be some exceptions to these guidelines. These exceptions will be determined on an individual basis by our pastors.

The First Step

Once you are sure you want to be married or would like to seek counsel about your relationship, set up an appointment with the Lead Pastor at Spirit Life Church. You can contact him through at: 414-305-4694 or email at: twilke@spiritlifechurch.com.