

THE WEDDING SERVICE

Please remember, the Wedding Service at Zion Lutheran Church is a worship service. As such, everything focuses on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. In the Christian Wedding, it is Jesus who is at the center of things, not the bride or the groom. Remembering this, all parts of the Order of Worship will fall into proper perspective. The Wedding Service is an assembling of God's people or "family" in His house to receive His blessing. All parts of the worship are to reflect this reverence for God.

Following is a brief explanation of the various parts of the Christian Wedding Service.

The Processional: The Wedding party enters the church and proceeds to the chancel (the front of the sanctuary). Special music for the processional is normally used. Suggestions for processional music will follow later.

The Wedding Homily: The couple may choose a special text for this sermon. The address is of short duration and is the pastor's message of the day to the couple.

The Scripture Lessons: There are many different portions of Holy Scripture which reflect God's position on marriage. The Pastor will share some possible selections with you. It is possible that the couple or close friends of the couple may be used to read certain sections of the Scriptures.

The Mutual Consent: Through this consent, the man and the woman show they are getting married because they both desire the union.

The Ceremony of the Rings: One or two rings may be used. If only one ring is used, it is always for the Bride. Usually the Best Man holds both rings; however, the Maid/Matron of Honor may hold one of the rings. The rings are given to the Pastor who in turn gives them to the Bride and Groom.

The Vows: The Couple is told to join hands. Facing one another, the Groom and then the Bride repeat their Vows one to the other. The Vows are the essential part of the Wedding Service. This is most often seen as the climax of the service, and therefore, should be as near the end of the service as possible.

The Unity Candle: The ceremony of the Unity Candle includes three candles: two smaller candles and one large candle. The two smaller candles are lit just before or right at the beginning of the service. These candles could be lit by the mothers of the bride and groom, by an usher, or by the Best Man and the Maid/Matron of Honor. The couple could also light the two smaller candles. At some point in the service the couple takes the two smaller candles and light the larger candle.

Please Note: *If you wish to include the Unity Candle ceremony, you will need to obtain the candles and their holders. It is also important that the candles are brought the day of the rehearsal.*

The Order of Service: Normally Order #1 is used, however, other variations are possible pending Pastor's approval. Solo-hymn selections can be added into or taken from the order of service. If the couple wishes, the Pastor can introduce the couple as Mr. and Mrs. before the Recessional begins.

SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON TEXT POSSIBILITIES: Following are a few suggested sermon texts and themes. You are not confined to just using one of the following texts. These Scripture verses may be used as a starting point as you begin to consider a text for your wedding address.

1. GENESIS 1:26-28a. Sermon thought: **"Answering God's Call."** In marriage we are affirming our basic human calling to be male or female. In marriage we express the ultimate fulfillment of that calling. Thus marriage is a climactic answering to God's call.
2. GENESIS 2:18-24. Sermon thought: **"When Two Become One."** The contradiction of marriage! The text speaks of our uniqueness as partners, but it also calls toward a union so close it may be considered "one flesh." Be yourself and affirm one another's special gifts as human beings. But be so attuned to one another that you become as one flesh. For such oneness, nothing less than Christ's harmony-giving love and forgiveness will be needed!
3. GENESIS 24:67. Sermon thought: **"A Simple Ceremony."** The marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. The simplicity of marriage is beautifully stated in this single verse. Especially appropriate for the simple wedding service.
4. PSALM 23. Sermon thought: **"A Peaceful Marriage."** The serenity of marriage is suggested in "green pastures...still waters." But many marriages have become like a wilderness or turbulent stream. Marriage itself is sometimes pictured today as such an emotionally complex relationship (wilderness), that it is virtually unattainable. Allowing the Shepherd to lead, the unnecessary baggage of marriage can be discarded for something more simple, more serene.
5. MATTHEW 7:24-27. Sermon thought: **"Marriage on the Rock, Not on the Rocks!"** Marriage, like Christian living, doesn't promise exemption from "floods and rain and wind," but creative fulfillment, including children, when Christ is the foundation.
6. JOHN 1:1,14. Sermon thought: **"True Love."** True in the sense of real. God's love became real in the coming of Christ. This is the call of Christian marriage: keep doing those things that make love real--in your physical love, in speaking love (not just assuming it), and in acts of love (especially forgiveness).
7. JOHN 2:1-2. Sermon thought: **"Jesus Also Was Invited."** Jesus is the most important guest at any wedding or in any marriage. He responds to our problems and distresses today even as He did at Cana. And He comes to be our guest through Word and Sacrament.
8. JOHN 3:27-30. Sermon thought: **"A Time of Joy."** The bride and groom "greatly rejoice" today. They can continue such joy for years as they adopt the motto of v. 30, first toward Christ, and then toward one another.
9. ROMANS 12:9-13. Sermon thought: **"Practice Hospitality."** Though not originally written on the subject of marriage, these words apply. Marriage is often a matter of "the little things." What has often gone out of a marriage is courtesy, respect, kindly affection. Treat your spouse and family as kindly as you treat your friends. Christ gives such consistent, ongoing affection.
10. ROMANS 15:5-6. Sermon thought: **"A Benediction for Your Marriage."** A stunningly simple, direct, and beautiful wedding text. The use of this text can make a profound impact and bring a strong message. The application is obvious.

WEDDING SCRIPTURE READING SAMPLES

Genesis 2:18-24

¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." ¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This

is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Proverbs 3:3-6

³ Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

¹ There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: ² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, ³ a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, ⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, ⁵ a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, ⁶ a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, ⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, ⁸ a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Matthew 19:4-6

⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵ 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'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Matthew 22:34-40

³⁴ Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" ³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

John 3:16-20

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

John 3:27-30

²⁷ To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. ³⁰ He must become greater; I must become less.

John 15:9-12

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain

in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

Romans 12:1-2, 9-13

¹ Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will. ⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 15:5-6

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 13

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹² Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 5:21-33

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their

own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Colossians 3:12-17

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever

grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

1 John 4:7-12

⁷ Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

⁹ This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

A BENEDICTION

MAY GOD BE WITHIN YOU TO REFRESH YOU

The world is full of anger and fears. We need the Holy Spirit within us as in Moses' day. Ezekiel promised a new spirit within His people. The Kingdom of God is within us. Create in me a new heart, O Lord, for all the fears and sins. Bring me daily to repentance and the new life in Christ.

Psalm 51:10

BEFORE YOU TO GUIDE YOU

God walks before us to clear the way. He has chosen us before the foundation of the world, and we are holy and blameless in Jesus Christ. He will present you faultless before the presence of His glory. So now He goes before us to guide us home, all the way home. How sweet it is!!

Jude 24

BEHIND YOU TO SUPPORT YOU

The Angel of the Lord was in the pillar of cloud which came behind Israel and protected them from Pharaoh's might at the Red Sea. God stands behind His people in divine support! Behind us we hear the sounds of heavenly voices as Isaiah and Ezekiel of old. **Exodus 14:19**

MAY HE SURROUND YOU TO PROTECT YOU

Without God, darkness and sorrows of death surround us. Sickness and age point us to death, and reality is often miserable, even for God's people. But we are God's people, children, heirs, brothers and sisters in Christ. And the Lord surrounds us, our total life. He sees it all and protects us from everything. **Psalm 139:3**

BE ABOVE YOU TO BLESS YOU

Moses and Joshua note that God is in heaven, above us in glory. From that position He gives us His bounty: wisdom and light from above. Every good and blessed gift is from Him, complete from the Father of lights. And he doesn't change that attitude toward us who are in Christ. **James 1:17**

AND BENEATH YOU TO HOLD YOU IN HIS LOVING ARMS

God crushes Satan under our feet in Christ. Underneath God's people are the everlasting arms of God: and He shall "thrust out" the enemy, our enemies, and we shall dwell in safety all our days and for all eternity. How great to have His everlasting arms beneath us! **Deuteronomy 33:27**

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

God of homes and marriages, hear our prayer. You have established marriage for our welfare and happiness. Marriage was Your plan and only with You can it work out with true joy.

Remind us that we are equal, but still different and unique. Give us patience as we play the game of life with two different set of rules. Grant that we may accept one another in our differences with Your kind of patience and love.

Turn our minds and hearts to those roles that you have outlined for husbands and wives; and grant us the narrow focus on what You have given to us as husbands or wives.

Bless husbands and wives, that they may find in each other that gift that You always intended.

Teach us that marriage is not living merely with each other or even for each other, but rather two who are united with You as Master and Lord. Grant that we first seek Your kingdom and righteousness, trusting You to add all the other things we need. Help us to put Christ first, our spouse second, and ourselves last.

Comfort us with the assurance that there is no great problem when we have problems in our marriage. For You are with us. You speak to us. You give us a way to turn all our problems into opportunities to serve You, and to be a blessing one to the other.

Grant that we do not expect perfection of each other, for that belongs alone to You. May we minimize each other's weaknesses and magnify one another's virtues and strengths. Let us be swift to praise and build each other, viewing each other through loving and patient eyes.

Develop us, O Lord, to be what You would have us be as wives and women, men and husbands. Give our marriages enough tears to keep us tender one to another, enough bruises to keep us humane one to another; enough failure to keep us before You, holding tightly to Your hands, and enough success to make us sure that we walk with You and You are with us.

May we never take Your love nor the love of each other for granted.

When life is failing, the sun is setting, the morning mist of eternity dawning, may we as husband and wife be found hand-in-hand, still thanking You for each other and serving You joyfully, faithfully, together, until at the last we shall rest in Your loving arms.

All this we ask through Jesus, the Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.