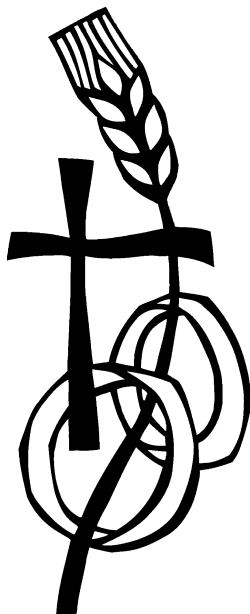


# Planning Guide for Marriage Services and Commitment Ceremonies



**HOLY TRINITY**  
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## Planning Guide for Marriage Services and Commitment Ceremonies

Congratulations and best wishes! We at Holy Trinity are eager to celebrate this special day with you and to assist you in preparing both for your service and your new partnership together.

The joy of sharing our lives with others has always been affirmed in our Christian tradition. Entering into covenant with another is one important way that two people may share their lives. It is a relationship that requires constant care and cultivation, and it is intended to develop and protect mutual trust between partners. Such relationships are also intended to be a blessing for the community and the world.

With public promises of love, trust, honesty, and commitment, this service marks the beginning of a covenant. In this festive worship service, everyone gathered is asked to join the couple in asking for God's blessing in their life together. Family and friends also pledge their support and encouragement to the couple.

The congregation of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church takes both your relationship *and* this worship service very seriously. Therefore every effort is made to preserve the integrity of the service that marks the beginning of the covenant relationship. This means that there should be an atmosphere of worship and thanksgiving during the entire service.

At least one party should be an active worshipping member of Holy Trinity at the time of scheduling the ceremony. If neither is an *active* member at the time the service is scheduled, non-member rates will apply. Out of consideration for Holy Trinity members, a non-member service will be scheduled no more than 10 months in advance. Your status as a member or non-member is determined at the time you reserve the date.

Celebrating this important day at Holy Trinity involves the following steps:

### **1. Meet with the Pastor**

The pastor will help you prepare for your life together and officiate at your service. During your first meeting, you will begin by choosing a date that is acceptable to both you and the pastor. In order to reserve a date, non-members are required to make a \$200 deposit at this time. If there are more than two attendants or more than 20 guests, a rehearsal is necessary and should also be scheduled at this time. Please inform your attendants to arrive one-half hour before scheduled rehearsal time. All attendants and parents of the couple must be in attendance. Rehearsals are usually held the evening before the ceremony and are conducted by the pastor. The organist is not in attendance at this time. Please plan on 45-60 minutes for rehearsal.

### **2. Take the *Prepare* Inventory**

You will be required to complete the *Prepare* personal awareness inventory, developed by Life Innovations, at least three months prior to your service date. This inventory takes about 40 minutes. It is not a test but simply a way that you can discover areas of strength as well as needs that you have as individuals and as a couple. The results will often inspire some good discussion!

### **3. Participate in Counseling**

This includes the use of *Prepare*. Couples are expected to meet with the pastor at least three times before the service. The sessions will make use of the *Prepare* inventory and results and will address various issues related to building and nurturing a strong relationship.

### **4. Plan the Service**

As stated above, we take both your relationship and the ceremony very seriously, and the music and readings should contribute to the atmosphere of worship. The pastor will help you through the process of planning a meaningful service.

## Liturgy

The ceremony is, first of all, a worship service. It is an occasion for worship and praise, not just an event for spectators to watch. The usual order of service in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (page 286) is not a rigid form. The rite is characterized by variety and flexibility, so that it may be adapted for a variety of situations. Feel free to discuss the liturgical options with the pastor.

### *Outline of the Service*

Prelude (organ, instrumental, hymn)  
Procession (organ, instrumental, hymn)  
Greeting  
Declaration of Intention  
Prayer of the Day  
Hymn or Solo (optional)  
First Lesson (optional)  
Psalm (optional)  
Second Lesson (optional)  
Gospel (optional)  
Sermon  
Hymn or Solo (optional)  
Exchange of Vows  
Giving of the Rings  
Acclamation  
Hymn or Solo (optional)  
Lighting of the Unity Candle (optional)  
Blessing and Prayers  
Lord's Prayer  
Benediction  
Recessional (organ, instrumental, hymn)

It is not necessary to provide bulletins for the service, but doing so can help the congregation to participate more fully. It is also a way to identify the attendants and other service participants. The church office does not produce bulletins, but the pastor will help you identify the parts of the service to include in a bulletin, if you choose to print one.

## **The Music**

Music plays a major part in our praise and worship of God. We will work with you to find music that is both meaningful to you and appropriate for a worship service.

Instrumental and vocal soloists can often add a beautiful richness to the service. However, the presence of soloists should not preclude the singing of congregational hymns. When people gather for this celebration, they will have the opportunity to witness the beginning of a covenant and to express joy and praise to God. Hymns are wonderful ways this expression might be made.

To assist you in selecting music, Holy Trinity's organist and soloists have recordings of solos, processions, and recessions from which you may choose. If you do not find these selections to your liking or if you have already chosen your music, the pastor and/or Holy Trinity's organist will meet with you either to offer more selections for your consideration or to review the music you have chosen.

If soloists are used, special care must be taken to assure that the music is performed with reasonably high quality. Soloists should be selected on the basis of their musical ability and not on the primary basis of personal friendship. Holy Trinity does have access to excellent musicians, both vocal and instrumental. The staff would be pleased to make arrangements for you in this regard.

You will need to select several musical elements as you plan your service. Here are some suggestions:

### *Processional*

- Prince of Denmark's March (J. Clarke)
- Trumpet Tune (D. Johnson)
- Trumpet Tune (J. Clarke)
- Air from Water Music Suite (G. F. Handel)
- If Thou Be Near / Bist Du Bei Mir (J. S. Bach)
- Jesu, Joy of Our Desiring (J. S. Bach)
- Andante on the tune "Hyfrodol" (J. Callahan)

## *Recessional*

- Allegro Maestoso (Hornpipe) from Water Music Suite (G.F. Handel)
- Trumpet Prelude (Roman)
- Rondeau (J. Mouret)
- Improvisation on “God of Grace and God of Glory” (P. Manz)
- Improvisation on “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow” (M. Burkhardt)
- Improvisation on “Now Thank We All Our God” (M. Burkhardt)
- Toccata from the 5th Symphony (C.M. Widor)

## *Hymns*

There are many hymns that express gratitude for the goodness of creation, and for the faithfulness which God longs for us to model in our human relationships. Hymnody is a way in which the people are not mere spectators but an active congregation participating in the celebration, representing to the couple their presence and support.

- Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee (ELW 836)
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (ELW 858, 859)
- Let All Things Now Living (ELW 881)
- Now Thank We all Our God (ELW 839, 840)
- Lord of All Hopefulness (ELW 765)
- Jesus, Come! For We Invite You (ELW 312)
- Beloved, God’s Chosen (ELW 648)
- Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life (ELW 816)
- O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright (ELW 308)
- Soul, Adorn Yourself with Gladness (ELW 488, 489)
- Hear Us Now, Our God and Father (ELW 585)
- When Love is Found (Gather 179)
- You are the Voice of the Living God (Gather 222)

## **The Readings**

The reading of appropriate scripture will set the tone for your service. You may choose from the list of suggested passages listed below or you may select readings that have special meaning for you. The pastor will be happy to discuss possible readings with you as you plan the service.

### *Suggested Scripture Readings*

- Genesis 1:26-28, 31a The 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation
- Genesis 2:15, 18-24 Not good to be alone
- Ruth 1:1-8, 14-17 Where you go, I will go
- 1 Sam. 18:1b, 3, 20:16-17, 42a Jonathan's covenant with David
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12a Two are better than one
- Song of Solomon 1:15-2:4 You are beautiful, my love
- Song of Solomon 2:8-13 Love is strong as death
- Song of Solomon 8:6-7 A seal upon your heart
- Isaiah 61:10-11, 62:3-5 As a bridegroom and bride
- Matthew 5:13-16 Salt and light
- Matthew 7: 24-29 A house built on a rock
- Matthew 19:3-6 Let no one separate
- Matthew 22:35-40 The greatest commandment
- Luke 6:20-23 The Beatitudes
- John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16 The Word became flesh
- John 2:1-11 Wedding at Cana
- John 13:34-35 A new commandment
- John 15:1-11 Jesus, the true vine
- John 15:9-12 Remain in Christ's love
- Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 God's love in Christ
- Romans 12:1-2, 9-13 New life in Christ
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a The gift of love
- Galatians 5:1, 13, 14, 22-25 Fruits of the Spirit
- Ephesians 3:14-21 Rooted and grounded in love
- Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-14 Live in love
- Philippians 2:1-11 The same mind in you as in Christ
- Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord
- Colossians 3:1-4, 12, 17 Clothe yourselves with compassion
- 1 John 3:18-24 Love, not in word, but in action
- 1 John 4:7-12 Love one another

Other readings such as poems or reflections may be included upon consultation with the pastor, but they should not replace the reading of scripture.

### **The Vows/Exchanging Promises**

You may wish to write your vows. They should be consistent with biblical notions of faithfulness in relationship and should make clear that the promises are a lifelong commitment. The pastor must approve the wording you choose if it is not one of the forms below.

I take you; \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband/partner from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to faithful to you until death parts us.

I take you, name, to be my wife/husband/partner, and these things I promise you: I will be faithful to you and honest with you; I will respect, trust, help and care for you; I will share my life with you; I will forgive you as we have been forgiven; and I will try with you better to understand ourselves, the world and God; through the best and worst of what is to come until death parts us.

In the presence of God and this community, I, \_\_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_\_, to be my wife/husband/partner; to have and to hold from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as we both shall live. This is my solemn vow.

\_\_\_\_\_, I take you to be my wife/husband/partner from this time onward, to join with you and to share all that is to come, and to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, and in all circumstances of our life together to be loyal to you with my whole life and with all my being until death parts us.

## **5. Obtain Your Marriage License**

Minnesota State Law requires couples to secure a license to marry. You may apply at any Clerk of Court office in the state. You must produce proof of age. Please note: after application, it takes about 7-10 business days to receive your license.

## **6. Pay all Church and Personnel Fees**

The balance of all church and personnel fees is due in the church office two weeks prior to your service. Pay all fees in one check made payable to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. If you have asked a friend to sing or have arranged for a vocalist from outside the church, you will be responsible for reimbursing them.



## **Fees For Marriage Service / Commitment Ceremony**

Maintenance / custodial fee (use of worship area)	
Active members	\$200.00
Non-members or inactive members	\$400.00
Organist	\$200.00
Soloist(s) - minimum	\$100.00
Instrumentalists	varies
<i>Prepare</i> Inventory	\$35.00
Use of aisle candles	\$20.00

## **Fees for Reception**

The Community Room or gym may be used for reception. The fee is determined by length of time used.

The Church Staff assumes the responsibility for setting up tables and chairs in the reception area.

## **Other Guidelines and Suggestions**

### **1. Children**

Children bring joy to any occasion. All children need a responsible adult to supervise them at the rehearsal and the day of the ceremony. This will take any pressure off you as a couple and ensure their safety.

### **2. Photography**

It is suggested that posing for pictures be done before the guests arrive. This permits the couple and attendants to join the guests at the reception without delay. A personal time for the couple to see each other before the photos is given in a quiet place without interruption from the photographer, attendants, or family members. You should designate one person to facilitate this.

Pictures in the sanctuary are limited to two hours and will end 45 minutes before the service for an opportunity for the couple and attendants to prepare for the ceremony. This is a time for quiet, meditation, prayer, or relaxation. They shall be uninterrupted by any outside party and remain in one location so that the service may start on time.

The photographer is not allowed to use flash during the service. Photographers are to be inconspicuous during the service, not going past the front pews or on the chancel/altar area. Audio-visual is allowed during the service; however, video camera operators are not permitted to move about during the ceremony. Video cameras should be set up before service, preferably in the balcony, and left running.

### **3. Dressing Areas**

The Mary Martha Room and library are both available to the couple and attendants for changing. Everything must be removed from these rooms before the service begins. It is the responsibility of those using the rooms to arrange for the care of their property before, during, and after the ceremony. Leave all valuable personal belongings and gifts in the care of parents, friends, or attendants during the service. The church is not responsible for lost or stolen articles.

### **4. Clean Up**

Since you and the attendants will be very busy the day of the service, plan for a couple of people to stay afterward to put everything back the way it was when you arrived and pick up any items that may have been forgotten.

### **5. Suggestion Concerning Gifts**

In the past, some couples have taken steps to limit the giving of traditional gifts. Sometimes guests have been encouraged to provide a contribution to the World Hunger Appeal or another charity in honor of one's marriage.

## **Additional Etiquette and Church Regulations**

This service will be a worship service of the church. Participants and guests should conduct themselves accordingly. The pastor reserves the right to halt any ceremony when a member of the party or a guest in the church is not conducting him/herself with propriety.

We do not allow throwing rice or birdseed in the church building or outside the building. It is hazardous on floors and difficult to clean up.

No food or beverage is allowed in the church sanctuary. If the party has food or beverage before the service, it should stay in the dressing rooms or Community Room.

The entire Holy Trinity building is a non-smoking area, and the use of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

**Some frequently asked questions:**

**1. How many ushers will we need?**

If you are planning for more than 100 guests, you will need at least three ushers.

**2. Will we need to order altar flowers?**

It is best to be modest - a single, simple arrangement for the right side of the altar is sufficient.

**3. We would like a candlelight service. May we use the candelabras or aisle candleholders?**

Yes. Arrange with the pastor when you are planning your service. We will provide candles.

**4. May we tape the service?**

Yes, but a video recorder must remain stationary and should be set up in the balcony. An audio-tape can be made through our sound system. No flash pictures are allowed.

**5. Who do we contact for last-minute changes?**

If there is a last-minute scheduling change, you should contact the pastor, 612-729-8358.

**6. May we have our reception at the church?**

Yes. You are welcome to use the church for your reception. There is an additional fee (see fee schedule above). The church does have dishes, bowls, and silverware for you to use. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed.