

Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church

Wedding Policy and Procedures

Wedding Policy

Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church believes a wedding ceremony should be a beautiful occasion and Christ-centered. A wedding is a celebration of two people God has brought together. The wedding and all of its preparation shall be done in a way to bring honor and glory to God. For further clarity, see Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church's *Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality* (p.6).

Wedding Procedures

1. Counseling

All engaged couples being married at Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church are required to have at least 4 counseling sessions with a counselor on our staff, unless otherwise arranged and approved by Pastoral Staff and/or Elders. The counseling must be completed one month prior to the wedding. It is the couple's responsibility to complete the four sessions. The church believes these counseling sessions are essential in providing a Christ-centered wedding.

2. Making Reservations

Applications for use of Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church facilities will be made with the church's office manager through the *Facility Use Guidelines and Request Form*. A \$100 reservation fee and \$50 damage deposit are required at the time reservations are made. Dates will not be calendared until these fees are paid.

The reservation fee will go toward the personnel expenses of the wedding. The damage deposit may be returned to the bride following the wedding, pending no damage to the facilities by the caterer, florist, or guests. In addition to these deposits, it is necessary for a wedding contract to be signed and returned to the office manager before the wedding can be calendared.

Remaining fees are payable to Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church in care of the finance office, and must be received 5 business days prior to the rehearsal.

The Wedding Reservation will include:

- Dates and times for rehearsal, wedding, and reception
- Specific facilities desired
- Names of florists, decorators, photographers, etc.
- Name of party to be responsible in event of damage

The wedding and rehearsal dates must be approved by the Pastor with regard to his own schedule and the church calendar. Approval will be given following the couple's initial appointment with the Pastor.

Please note: Wedding invitations should not be printed until this date has been confirmed by the Pastor and the church office.

First priority for facility usage is given to members of Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church and their children. Members may schedule a wedding up to one year in advance of the wedding date. Regular attenders and any non-members will only be allowed to schedule a wedding upon approval by the office manager and/or Elders.

All weddings at Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church must be overseen by one of the Pastors on staff or a former Pastor of Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church. A Pastor of another church, a spiritually mature family member, or other individual may assist in the wedding upon approval from Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church Pastoral Staff and/or Elders.

The church will not schedule weddings or rehearsals on: Easter weekend, July 4, Labor Day, Memorial Day weekend, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. Weddings will only be scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays. Weddings may be scheduled no later than 4:00pm in the Sanctuary on Saturdays and may be scheduled as late as 8:00pm on Fridays.

3. Rehearsal

The rehearsal must begin promptly, and on time, since a large number of people are involved and delays consume every person's time. Ideally, rehearsals will be scheduled between 5:00-7:00pm. Following are several additional rehearsal guidelines:

- Both sets of parents, and all ushers, shall be present for the rehearsal
- A sound technician will **not** be present at wedding rehearsals
- All members of the wedding party **must** attend rehearsal
- All musicians **must** attend rehearsal, although there will not be time during the rehearsal for soloists to rehearse songs. Rehearsal with the accompanist shall be arranged at another time

The Pastor or wedding coordinator will direct the rehearsal. The bride will be responsible for designating a person to coordinate the wedding party prior to the processional.

4. Fee Schedule

Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church does not wish to charge its members for the use of facilities; however, it is necessary to charge for personnel providing services for church member weddings. Again, all remaining fees are payable to Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church in care of the finance office, and must be received 5 business days prior to the rehearsal.

The Pastoral staff, in consultation with the finance committee, determines the fees for use of church facilities. These fees are subject to change and able to be changed based upon circumstances and actual schedule of wedding in question.

Wedding Fee: \$350 (less \$100 if Reservation Fee already paid); this cost includes:

- A wedding coordinator who will be present and available to assist during the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding (\$150),
- A sound technician who will provide microphones for pianists and soloists and play any accompanying sound track you may have (\$100),
- Maintenance personnel for setup before and cleanup after the wedding, to include the setup of table and chairs before the reception and for cleaning and resetting for Sunday activities after the reception (\$100).

Following is a list of suggested honorariums, given for the benefit of assisting the wedding couple as they consider their wedding budget:

- Pastor: \$100-\$150 (in addition to the Prepare-Enrich registration fee of \$35 for Pastoral counseling; please note: there is no charge for counseling sessions for church members),
- Vocalists: \$50,
- Musician/pianist: \$75

It is common practice and accepted etiquette to give any gifts of thanks to the participants of the wedding at the time of the rehearsal.

5. Music

Since a wedding is a worship service, all music must promote worship. All music must be either sacred, contemporary Christian selection, or classical song. The Pastoral Staff and/or Elders must approve all music. Any exceptions to this procedure will be reviewed and approved by the Pastoral Staff and/or Elders. Their judgment will be based upon the lyrical content of the song. All music shall be approved at least two weeks before the wedding rehearsal.

The couple will be responsible for contacting organists, pianists, soloists, and any other musician they wish to play/sing for their wedding.

If Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church musicians are requested, the wedding hostess (or point of contact) will coordinate the selections with the Pastor. If another pianist is engaged, it is mandatory Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church Pastor be contacted for approval at least three weeks prior to the wedding. The Pastor will grant musicians who are preparing to play for wedding a reasonable amount of practice time.

The piano and instruments are to be moved only by Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church staff.

Nothing is ever to be placed on one of the instruments (i.e., flowers, candles, pictures, etc.). The piano is a finely finished instrument, not a piece of furniture. This applies even if the piano remains covered. Be sure the lid and keyboard cover are closed after the wedding.

6. Decorations

No furnishings may be moved from other parts of the building. Facilities staff will remove any furnishings not customary for weddings.

Nails, tacks, staples, screws, pins, tape, or anything that will mar the woodwork, chairs, and wall finishing may not be used.

Clear plastic must be used under all candelabras to protect the carpet.

The florist is expected to remove all decorations and equipment promptly following the ceremony.

No equipment, candelabras, etc. may be left at the church over the weekend. It is the family's responsibility to take all decorations home with them.

All church property must be left in the condition in which it was found, otherwise the damage deposit will not be refunded.

The florist must schedule an appointment to meet with the wedding coordinator at least six weeks before the wedding.

Facilities staff will not load or off-load equipment or decorations to be used in the wedding.

If fresh flower petals are used for aisle processional or recessional (by flower girl, etc.) the bride must provide an aisle runner.

Only dripless candles may be burned in the church facility.

Punch-type beverages must not have a red color base.

Florists and photographers will be held responsible for damage resulting from careless placing or handling of floral arrangements, decorations, and candles.

7. Dresses and Valuables

The bride is strongly urged not to leave her wedding dress or bridesmaids dresses in the bride's room on Friday night. The church will in no way be responsible or liable for personal items such as dresses, wraps, purses, silver, glassware, or cameras brought to the church for use in a wedding or reception.

All clothing, gifts, and other personal effects belonging to the wedding party must be removed from the premises immediately following the reception. The wedding party is responsible for security of all their belongings, as the church is an open building, with many rooms with non-locking doors. Therefore, we are dependent upon each person to be responsible for their personal property and the church cannot be held responsible for loss.

8. Photography

Photographers may take pictures before or after the ceremony throughout the building. Photographers and videographers are not allowed to stand on chairs. There will be no flash photography allowed during the wedding ceremony.

9. Catering

Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church's main kitchen is available for use during the wedding reception.

Kitchen appliances, including utensils, and tableware are not available for use.

Caterers must leave the kitchen as clean as they found it or the fee to clean it will be taken out of the damage deposit.

All caterers must meet with the wedding coordinator (or point of contact) six weeks prior to the wedding. If no caterer is being used, the bride or responsible party will be required to meet with the Pastor to go over the guidelines for using Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church's reception facilities.

10. Audio/Visual

An audio CD of weddings in the sanctuary can be made and provided for the wedding party if requested in advance. The wedding may be videotaped if the cameras remain stationary and relatively inconspicuous during the wedding ceremony and use existing light. Slide or video presentations may be used in the actual wedding service; however, the content must be in keeping with a Christ-centered wedding and must be approved by the Pastor.

11. Childcare

Due to insurance liabilities, no childcare may be provided at Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church for weddings.

12. Other Important Instructions

Ceremonial dancing is allowed at the reception (i.e. bride/groom, father/daughter, mother/son). All other dancing is prohibited in the building.

There will be no use of tobacco products or drinking of alcoholic beverages in the building or on the church grounds.

The use of rice is discouraged at any time during the wedding celebration. It is strictly forbidden any place other than the parking lot. Distribution of rice bags, etc. must take place outside the building. Birdseed, bubbles, etc. are acceptable alternatives, again, outside the building. Glitter, confetti, and small cut-out table décor (i.e., metallic stars, etc.) are prohibited due to vacuuming difficulties.

The marriage license must be delivered to the Pastor or wedding coordinator no later than the night of the rehearsal.

All members of the wedding party shall be at the church no less than one hour prior to the ceremony.

In the midst of all your planning, remember your wedding is not just a social affair. It is a public testimony that both of you are entering a covenant with each other before God. The wedding ceremony is very important, but the marriage to come is even more important. Your faithfulness and commitment to the Lord and each other will be a great witness to the world around you. Don't let the details of planning, and everyone's varying opinions of the right way of doing things, crowd out the all-important reality of "Christ in you, the hope of glory!"

Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, for a lifetime as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that intimate sexual activity not be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe marriage is a beautiful portrait of Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, cohabitation, pre-marital sex, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

We believe that in order to preserve the function, purity, and integrity of Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to those both inside and outside the church, it is imperative that all persons desiring to be married at Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church agree to and abide by this *Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality* (Matthew 5:16; Acts 15:19-20; Romans 2:4; Ephesians 5:5; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). It is our desire in performing marriage ceremonies that we celebrate and bless what God is doing in the lives of the couple getting married. Therefore, we cannot knowingly celebrate and condone what God clearly denounces and forbids in His Word.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We further believe that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ and covered by His atoning death (Romans 8:1).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity as image bearers of God Himself (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the beliefs and practices of Swan Lake Evangelical Free Church.