

PLANNING A WEDDING AT INCARNATION LUTHERAN CHURCH

CONGRATULATIONS!

We are delighted that you are planning your wedding at Incarnation. More than a celebration, a wedding is the beginning of a lifelong covenant between two people, made before God and witnessed by family and friends. It is our joy and honor as clergy and staff to walk with you in this sacred journey and to support you as you begin this new chapter together.

From the earliest stages of planning through the rehearsal and the wedding day itself, our wedding coordinator will be by your side to ensure everything comes together with ease and care. This booklet is designed to offer both encouragement and practical guidance, with step-by-step support, helpful checklists, and important details for celebrating your marriage in our church.

May this season of preparation deepen your love and strengthen your faith, guiding you into a marriage rooted in God's grace and joy.

Contents

PREPARATION	3
GROWING IN LOVE AND FAITH.....	3
PLANNING YOUR DAY	4
Ceremony	4
Music	6
Bible Readings	7
Promises / Vows.....	8
Soundboard & Audio Visual	9
Unity Candle.....	9
Decorating the Church	10
Photography & Videography.....	10
Marriage license	10
Guest Book	11
Rehearsal.....	11
Reception at Incarnation.....	11
Bulletins.....	11
Sample Order of Worship for a Bulletin.....	11
DAY OF LOGISTICS.....	12
THE SERVICE OF MARRIAGE.....	13
HONORARIUM & SERVICE FEES	16
CHECKLIST & TIMELINE	18

PREPARATION

The time leading up to your wedding is a beautiful season of reflection. Beyond planning a day, you are preparing for a lifetime.

First conversations

- Please contact the church office early to begin the process. It is customary to look at the schedule a year prior to your proposed date; as soon as possible is best. Weddings are scheduled in consultation with clergy and church office. Rehearsals are booked at the same time. We recommend setting the date with the church before booking a reception venue
- Meet with our wedding coordinator to talk about the logistics of the actual wedding. This is usually done about 6 months before the wedding, but you are welcome to meet sooner. The wedding coordinator will go through a planning session so be prepared to take notes and ask questions. This meeting may include the wedding couple and any others you wish to invite, such as parents.
- Schedule a time to fill out the "Prepare Inventory" and schedule pre-marital conversations or counseling with the pastor who will preside over your wedding.

GROWING IN LOVE AND FAITH

Preparing for marriage is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on your love, explore your hopes for the future, and gain insights that will strengthen your life together.

To support you in this journey, we offer guidance and tools that touch on communication, conflict resolution, financial stewardship, and the many joys and challenges of shared life. There are two steps we invite you to take as part of your preparation:

Take the Prepare/Enrich Premarital Inventory

About 6 months before your wedding, you will complete an online inventory called Prepare/Enrich. This tool helps you celebrate your strengths as a couple and identify areas where you can grow together.

- **Time:** Approximately 1 hour to complete
- **How to start:** Contact the Incarnation office at 651.484.7213 or incarnation@incarnationmn.org

Meet with Your Presiding Pastor

Once you've completed the inventory, we encourage you to meet with the pastor who will preside at your wedding. Together, you'll review the inventory results and spend time talking about your hopes for your wedding service and your life together.

- **Number of sessions:** Usually 2–3
- **Session length:** About 1 hour each
- **Scheduling tip:** Try to schedule during regular office hours (Mon–Thurs, 8 a.m.–3 p.m.)

Completing these sessions before beginning detailed planning with your wedding coordinator helps ensure that your wedding day reflects both your love and the values you hold dear. This journey is about more than the wedding day; it is about building a strong foundation for your life together.

PLANNING YOUR DAY

Every couple's story is unique, and your wedding can reflect that. Our pastors will work with you to shape a ceremony that honors Christian tradition while also celebrating who you are as partners. This is your covenant day — so let your ceremony reflect your love, your faith, and the community that surrounds you.

Presiding Pastor

A pastor of Incarnation is usually the presiding pastor at all weddings. Our pastors preside on a rotating basis. If you would like to invite another pastor to participate in your wedding service, you may do so in consultation with the presiding pastor.

Incarnation is committed to providing a strong base of support for you as you embark on a life-long love and faithfulness as a couple. To that end, you will meet with the pastor who will preside at your wedding. Your time spent with the pastor helps us get to know you as a couple so that we may better support you in your married life.

If you wish to invite the presiding pastor and spouse to your wedding, please include them on your regular invitation list, sending them a formal invitation so they know of your desire.

Ceremony

While each service is unique, typically the order of a wedding worship service includes:

Prelude / Procession (organ, instrumental, or hymn)

Music begins as guests are seated. The processional marks the start of the ceremony and sets a reverent, joyful tone as the wedding party and couple enter.

Greeting

The presiding pastor welcomes everyone and opens the service with words of blessing and thanksgiving for the couple and the community gathered.

Declaration of Intention

The pastor asks each partner if they willingly enter into marriage, confirming their intent to love, honor, and remain faithful to each other.

Prayer of the Day

A prayer is offered, asking God's guidance, blessing, and presence over the couple and the ceremony.

Hymn or Solo (optional)

Music sung by the congregation or a soloist, celebrating God's love and the joy of the occasion.

Bible Readings

Selected Scripture passages remind the couple of God's guidance, the meaning of covenant, and the beauty of love and faithfulness.

Homily / Message

The pastor reflects on the readings and offers encouragement, wisdom, and spiritual guidance for the couple as they begin married life together.

Hymn or Solo (optional)

An additional musical element to provide reflection, worship, or celebration.

Exchange of Promises and Rings

The couple shares their vows and exchanges rings, committing themselves to one another in love and faithfulness.

Pronouncement of Marriage

The pastor formally declares the couple married, acknowledging God's blessing and the community's support.

Lighting of the Unity Candle (optional)

A symbolic act representing the joining of two lives into one. May include music or a reflective reading.

Marriage Blessing

The pastor prays for God's presence, guidance, and protection over the couple's life together.

Prayers of the People

The community prays for the couple, their families, and the wider world, offering support and thanksgiving.

Holy Communion (optional)

Holy Communion is a sacred meal of God's grace and love. It can be included in your wedding service as a celebration of unity and joy. Because it is a gift for all, it is open to the congregation, not just the couple. Please speak with your pastor if you wish to include it.

The Lord's Prayer

The congregation or soloist recites or sings the prayer Jesus taught, connecting the couple's union with God's care and guidance.

Benediction

The pastor sends the couple and congregation with God's blessing, marking the close of the service.

Introduction of the Couple (optional)

The newly married couple is formally introduced to their guests, often followed by applause or celebratory music.

Recessional (organ, instrumental, or hymn)

Music accompanies the couple and wedding party as they exit the sanctuary, concluding the ceremony and marking the joyful beginning of married life.

These elements are flexible, and together we will shape a service that feels authentic, reverent, and joyful.

Music

Music is more than background — it becomes part of the memory you and your guests will carry forever.

If you would like organ or piano music at your wedding and hope to have an Incarnation musician play, please contact our Worship and Music staff as soon as your date is set. The musician you are working with at Incarnation will be happy to play selections for you that would work well for the processional, recessional, and other music for your ceremony. While our musicians do not typically attend the rehearsal, they will have time on the wedding day to practice with any vocalists you include. Please reach out to the Incarnation Office, and we will be happy to connect you with the right musician to help make your service beautiful and meaningful.

You are welcome to invite other musicians to provide music for your wedding. If you choose to do so, we ask that you share your selections with the pastor to ensure they complement the flow and meaning of the worship service.

Hymns are a wonderful way to involve your guests and lift hearts in shared joy. They may be sung at any point in the ceremony—by the congregation, a soloist, or both. Choose hymns that are meaningful to you as a couple and reflect love, faith, and the sacredness of your vows. The hymns can be easily printed and inserted in your bulletin, or hymnals can be put in the pews so your guests can look up the corresponding #s. Your pastor or wedding coordinator can help guide your selections, however, the following hymns from Evangelical Lutheran Worship are often used.

Hymn	ELW #	Theme / Use
Go, My Children, with My Blessing	543	Sending blessings; ideal for recessional
Hear Us Now, Our God and Father	585	Invocation and prayerful reflection
This Is a Day, Lord, Gladly Awaited	586	Celebration of the wedding day
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling	631	Love and devotion; well-suited for vows or unity rituals
Bornng Cry	732	Life-long commitment and God's guidance
Be Thou My Vision	793	Spiritual guidance and focus on God's presence
Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life	816	Faithful journey together; vows accompaniment
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	836	Praise and joy; festive congregational hymn
Beautiful Savior	838	Praise and reverence; suitable for procession or recessional
Now Thank We All Our God	840	Thanksgiving and gratitude; recessional favorite
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty	858	Joyful celebration; processional or congregational hymn
For the Beauty of the Earth	879	Gratitude for creation and God's gifts; opening or recessional

Bible Readings

Marriage is grounded in God's Word. Typically, couples choose two readings from the Bible. You may ask loved ones to read these passages or have the pastor read them. Consider how the passages reflect your shared values, hopes, and God's blessing on your marriage.

Scripture	Theme	Tip
Genesis 2:18-24	Companionship and unity	Celebrates partnership; popular for vows

Genesis 24:48-51, 58-67	Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah	Shows God's guidance in finding a spouse
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	Enduring love	Classic love passage; very poetic
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Strength in unity	Emphasizes mutual support and God's presence
Psalms 127	God builds the home	Highlights God's blessing over your marriage
Psalms 128	Walking in God's ways	Encourages joy and faithfulness together
Psalms 121	God keeps watch	Can be used as a blessing over the couple
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13	Greatest gift is love	Most popular; emphasizes love's qualities
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33	Walking in Christlike love	Connects marriage to Christian faith and example
Colossians 3:12-17	Compassion, kindness, patience	Encourages virtues for a strong marriage
Matthew 19:4-6	God unites a couple	Classic for vows and ceremony readings
Mark 10:6-9	Becoming one	Reinforces commitment and unity
John 2:1-11	Wedding at Cana	Symbolizes God's blessing and celebration in marriage

Promises / Vows

The vows or promises that you make to one another are at the center of the wedding service. It is by your promises that you bind yourselves together as a married couple. You may choose between the following options for the wording of your promises, or you may adapt the wording in consultation with the pastor.

Option 1: I take you, (name), to be my wife/husband from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us. (LBW)

Option 2: In the presence of God and this community, I, (name), take you, (name), to be my wife/husband; 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.

Option 3: I, (name), give myself to you, (name). By the grace of God, I promise to support and care for you. In the love of Christ, I promise to love and cherish you. With the Spirit's help, I promise to be faithful to you, as long as we both shall live.

Option 4: I take you, (name), to be my wife/husband, and these things I promise to you: I will be faithful to you and honest with you; I will respect, trust, help, and care for you; I will forgive you as we have been forgiven; and I will share my life with you, through the best and worst of all that is to come, until death parts us.

Option 5: I, (name), take you, (name), to be my wife/husband, and I promise before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband/wife; in plenty and want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

Soundboard & Audio Visual

To ensure quality sound for your wedding worship service, an Incarnation-trained soundboard operator will be present. This sound technician will be able to properly mix the sound levels for any readers, soloists, musicians, and the pastor.

If there are additional technology needs up and above (i.e. the use of projection, special lighting, recording, etc.) there are additional fees for this. See "Summary of Honoraria and Fees" for details on the cost.

Media Guidelines

PowerPoints need to be submitted 1 week in advance through a downloadable file transfer service (WeTransfer and Dropbox are preferred). Please make sure that the photos all fit on the slides. If you'd like to add a video to your slideshow, you can insert it onto one of the slides, but please also refer to the guidelines for videos below and send an additional copy of that video file with your PowerPoint.

Videos need to be submitted 1 week in advance through a downloadable file transfer service (WeTransfer and Dropbox are preferred). Make sure that the video resolution is at least 1080p. Your video file should have one of these file extensions: .MOV or .MP4. Please make sure to name your video file with the names of the couple, the date of the service, and video for wedding (EX: Walton and Whitacre January 27 2023 Video For Wedding). Please make sure that any editing you do to the name of the file comes before the file extension.

Please note that any media shown in the Sanctuary will require an additional fee of \$100 for a Media Technician.

Unity Candle

Many couples use a unity or marriage candle to symbolize the action of two uniting to become one. You will need to provide both the unity candle (3" pillar) and tapers. Please purchase quality candles to minimize dripping. If you desire to use this in your wedding service, please tell your wedding coordinator.

Decorating the Church

Our sanctuary is beautiful on its own, but thoughtful touches can personalize the space.

To help your wedding space feel beautiful and welcoming, flowers may be delivered up to three hours before your ceremony. Please remind your florist that the church will not be open earlier and be sure they have the exact location of Incarnation.

For seating, there are 18 rows of pews on the left side of the center aisle and 16 on the right. Guests are typically seated in the two center sections, which accommodate about 200 people.

If you'd like to use an aisle runner, we recommend a 100' runner, especially if a flower child will be scattering petals. Aisle runners are optional but should be securely fastened for safety.

The paraments (altar cloths) reflect the church year and its seasons, each carrying special meaning. These appointments, along with seasonal colors, create a rich backdrop for worship and celebration. You may wish to consider these details when planning your flowers and décor to enhance the beauty of your wedding day.

If you have questions about colors or seasonal arrangements, your wedding coordinator or presiding pastor will be happy to help.

Photography & Videography

If you plan to use a professional photographer, we recommend planning early. Please be sure your photographer knows the exact location of Incarnation and that there will be 2½ hours available for photography on the day of your wedding. To maintain the reverence of the ceremony, flash photography is not allowed during the service.

Videography is welcome if it does not interrupt or distract from worship. Please use discretion with the number of cameras and consult your wedding coordinator regarding their placement.

Marriage license

Marriage licenses may be obtained from any courthouse or government center in the state of Minnesota up to six months in advance of the wedding date. In Ramsey County, you may call 651.266.8265 for up-to-date information on requirements and fees or visit www.co.ramsey.mn.us; or visit the website for the county in which you live. You can either drop off your marriage license in the church office in advance of your wedding day or give it to the wedding coordinator at the rehearsal.

Guest Book

If you'd like to include a guest book at the church, let your wedding coordinator know so a podium can be provided.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are usually held the evening before the wedding and are a wonderful opportunity for everyone to become comfortable with the flow of the ceremony. We ask that the entire wedding party be present. Your wedding coordinator will guide the rehearsal and help ensure that everything runs smoothly.

To respect everyone's time, the rehearsal will begin within 15 minutes of the scheduled start, even if some participants are late.

Reception at Incarnation

If you are planning to hold your reception at Incarnation, your wedding coordinator can help you make the arrangements.

Bulletins

Couples are responsible for creating their own wedding bulletins. If you choose to have your bulletin printed by the Incarnation office, reference the Fees section for estimated cost. Please submit a draft to the presiding pastor for approval before printing to ensure everything aligns with the service and church guidelines.

Sample Order of Worship for a Bulletin

Prelude

Processional

Gathering

 Greeting

 Declaration of Intention

 Prayer of the Day

Service of the Word

 Scripture Reading(s)

 Special Music

 Homily

The Rite of Marriage

 Exchange of Promises

 Giving of Rings

 Marriage Announcement

 Unity Candle or Special Music

Marriage Blessing

Prayers of Intercession

The Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Recessional

DAY OF LOGISTICS

Access to Incarnation

The church will be available to you starting three hours before your ceremony. During this time, you are welcome to use the Sanctuary, main Atrium, Grace Hall West (if you are serving food), the main restrooms, Bethany Lounge, and one additional room, unless other arrangements have been made.

For everyone's safety and comfort, we ask that children be supervised.

Rooms for Dressing

We provide rooms for the wedding party to get ready and prepare for the ceremony. Whenever possible, these rooms include an adjoining or nearby bathroom for convenience.

Refreshments

We understand that your wedding day is long and exciting! Light snacks and beverages such as crackers, cheese, or fresh fruit can be helpful to keep everyone energized. Clear beverages like water, 7-Up, Sprite, or mineral water are recommended to avoid stains. Please serve all food and drinks only in Grace Hall West, as the kitchen will not be available. The sanctuary, Bethany Lounge, and Atrium should remain free of food and beverages. Recycling bins are available in Grace Hall.

Ushers

We recommend having at least two ushers for your ceremony. For larger celebrations, one usher for every 50 guests helps ensure everyone is comfortably seated. Ushers should plan to arrive about an hour before the service to welcome guests and provide any needed assistance, helping the day feel smooth and welcoming for everyone.

Celebration Guidelines

To ensure a joyful and safe celebration, we ask that your wedding party refrain from alcohol before the ceremony. Alcohol is not permitted anywhere on church grounds.

Smoking is allowed outside only, and we ask that cigarette butts and ashes be disposed of in the containers provided near the main entrances.

To protect our building, local wildlife, and neighbors, we kindly ask that rice, birdseed, confetti, or balloons not be thrown or released, indoors or outdoors.

THE SERVICE OF MARRIAGE

(From Evangelical Lutheran Worship Pages 286-291)

Prelude

Processional

Gathering

Greeting

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Declaration of Intention

The minister addresses the couple asking each person in turn:

___(name)___, will you have ___(name)___ to be your wife/husband, to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her/him as long as you both shall live?

I will.

The minister addresses the assembly:

Will all of you, by God's grace, uphold and care for ___(name)___ and (name)___ in their life together?

We will.

Prayer of the Day

The presiding minister leads the following or another prayer of the day.

Let us pray. Gracious God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ into the world to reveal your love to all people. Enrich ___(name)___ and ___(name)___ with every good gift that their life together may show forth your love; and grant that at the last we may all celebrate with Christ the marriage feast that has no end; in

the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Special Music (optional)

Reading(s)

Homily

Special Music (optional)

The Promises

The wedding couple face one another and join hands. Each promises faithfulness to the other. See options under the Promises / Vows section.

Giving of Rings

The couple exchanges rings with these words.

__(name)__, I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faithfulness.

Marriage Announcement

The presiding minister addresses the assembly.

__(name)_and_(name)_, by their promises before God and in the presence of this assembly, have joined themselves to one another as husband and wife. Those whom God has joined together let no one separate.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Lighting of the Unity Candle (optional)

Special Music (optional)

Marriage Blessing

Most gracious God, we give you thanks for your tender love in sending Jesus Christ to come among us, to be born of a human mother, and to endure the cross for our sake, that we may have abundance of life.

*By the power of your Holy Spirit, pour out the abundance of your blessing on
__(name)__and*

___(name)_. Defend them from every enemy. Lead them into all peace.
Let your love be a seal upon their hearts, a mantle about their shoulders,
and a crown upon their foreheads.
Bless them so that their lives together may bear witness to your love. Bless
them in their work and in their companionship; in their sleeping and in their
waking; in their joys and in their sorrows; in their life and in their death.

Finally, in your mercy, bring them to that table where your saints feast forever
in your heavenly home, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The assembly stands. Prayers of intercession for the world and its needs may be
prayed. Each petition ends with the following:

*O God, source of all life,
hear our prayer.*

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is prayed by all or may be sung by a soloist.

*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. Save us from the time of trial and
deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now
and forever. Amen.*

OR

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy
will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and
forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and
lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction

Blessing

The presiding minister blesses and sends the entire assembly with these or similar
words.

Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, keep you in his light and truth and love, now and forever. Amen.

Introduction of Couple

Kiss (optional)

Recessional

Postlude

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HONORARIUM & SERVICE FEES

A wedding involves many people who contribute their time, talent, and care to make your day truly meaningful. From the pastors who guide your spiritual preparation, to the musicians who help create a sacred atmosphere, to the coordinator and staff who ensure everything runs smoothly, each person plays an important role in supporting your marriage.

Apart from the building fee, all honorariums and fees listed below should be given to the Wedding Coordinator before the rehearsal. This ensures that everyone who is contributing to your day is properly recognized and that your wedding proceeds smoothly. Checks are made out directly to each person. If the name of the person receiving the honorarium is not known, please leave the line blank when writing the check.

In addition to these gifts, personal notes of thanks are a heartfelt way to express your gratitude. A few sincere words to your pastor, musicians, or coordinator can mean as much as any monetary gift, letting them know how much you appreciate their care, guidance, and dedication in making your wedding day special.

Service	Honorarium / Fee	Description
Pastor	\$300	Typically entails two or three meetings (including the premarital counseling), and wedding service consultation. For off-site weddings, the fee is \$350 due to additional responsibilities, plus mileage if outside the Twin Cities.
Premarital Inventory	\$35	A widely used tool in premarital preparation, payable online at the time of completion.
Wedding Coordinator	\$300	Required for all weddings except those with fewer than 50 guests and no more than four total in the wedding party. Includes guidance throughout the planning process, rehearsal, and wedding day support.
Musician(s)	\$300 – Organist/pianist (if needed)	Includes consultation, rehearsal with a soloist on the wedding day, and music for the service. Additional fees may apply for extra rehearsals or arrangements. Soloists or instrumentalists are available through the Director of Worship and Music; fees start at \$250.
Soundboard Operator	\$150	Oversees quality sound for the service, including setup of microphones and sound checks. Additional technology needs may incur extra fees.
Candelabras & Candles (Optional)	\$25	7-branch candelabra (2 available) at no charge; pew candles (5 pairs available) \$25.
Wedding Bulletins (Optional)	\$75–\$300	Covers printing costs if produced by Incarnation staff. Couples are responsible for content and must submit a draft to the presiding pastor for approval prior to printing.
Building Use Fee	\$200	Includes sanctuary use, Bethany Lounge for dressing, Grace Hall for refreshments, lighting, and climate control.
Custodial Fee	\$200	This fee includes secured opening and closing of the facility; custodial care and clean-up.

CHECKLIST & TIMELINE

Planning your wedding is an exciting and joyful time, but it can also feel overwhelming with so many details to manage. This timeline is designed as a gentle guide to help you focus on what truly matters—your love, your vows, and the beginning of your life together. Each step includes practical tasks while leaving space for moments of celebration and reflection.

Task	Due Date
☐ Reserve wedding date through the Incarnation Office	As soon as possible
☐ Indicate rehearsal time and reserve reception hall (if applicable)	As soon as possible
☐ Submit Reservation Form and Building Fee	Within 10 days of requesting date
☐ Complete Prepare Premarital Inventory online	6–7 months before
☐ Schedule first premarital counseling session with pastor	After completing inventory
☐ Complete premarital counseling sessions	4 months before
☐ Confirm date with Incarnation musicians (if applicable)	4 months before
☐ Wedding coordinator contacts couple to answer early questions & schedule meeting	6 months before
☐ Meet with wedding coordinator to review guide, tour facilities, confirm wedding/rehearsal times	6 months before
☐ Meet with organist and soloist(s) about music selections	6 weeks before
☐ Submit bulletin with scripture, vows, music selections to presiding pastor for approval	2 weeks before
☐ Submit bulletin info to Incarnation Office staff (if printing there)	2 weeks before
☐ Bring marriage license and any outstanding fees/honorariums to Incarnation Office	2 weeks before
☐ Confirm florist and photographer know Incarnation location & earliest building access (3 hours before)	1 week before
☐ Take a wedding-free romantic date together	1–2 weeks before

We are here to support you to ensure your wedding service is a beautiful day for you and your families. Thank you for entrusting us with this important occasion.