The candles can be lighted at either of two times. They can be lighted first, before the entrance of the grandparents and the mothers, or the mothers can be seated and then the candle-lighters can enter and light the candles.

Lighting the unity candle tapers:
If a unity candle will be used, the side tapers are usually lighted by a representative of each family, typically the mothers of the bride and groom. If the candelabra are lighted first, before the entrance of the mothers, each mother, as she is escorted in, will go to the front, where she will light the appropriate taper from the candelabra before being seated. If the candles are lighted after the mothers are seated, then the mothers will stand and walk together to light the tapers. Many mothers prefer this method, since it allows them to enjoy the entire proceedings, including the candle lighting.

If candelabra are not used, the mothers will light the tapers by using matches or a lighter that has been previously placed on the table with the candles.

Recessional:
At the end of the ceremony, the officiant will introduce the couple as husband and wife. They will then exit, followed by the flower girl and ring bearer, and then the maid/matron of honor with the best man. The bridesmaids and groomsmen will follow in pairs.

If the mothers will be escorted out, the usher who will escort the mother of the bride should enter and escort her with the father following. A second usher should then enter to escort the mother of the groom, with the groom's father following. Alternatively, the parents may stand and the fathers can escort their wives. The parents of the bride always exit first, followed by the parents of the groom. Two ushers should then dismiss guests by rows beginning with the front row or pew.

The couple should plan what they want to do after they have exited the ceremony. If there is no plan, they will be mobbed by the guests and forced into an impromptu receiving line, which can take valuable time. The couple can do several things, depending on their preference.

They might form a receiving line to greet guests as they exit the ceremony or they might choose to re-enter the room and personally dismiss the guests by rows so that they have the opportunity to greet each person.

If pictures will be taken after the ceremony, the couple, wedding party, and parents might exit into a nearby room where they will be out of sight of the guests. After the guests leave, the wedding party can quickly assemble for the photos.

If the couple would like to make a grand exit, perhaps to a waiting limo, they can disappear into a room or around a corner while the guests line up. The wedding party and parents will be first to form the line as they exit. Guests will follow their lead. The bride might provide flower petals, dried herbs, bubbles, or bird seed to be tossed at the couple as they exit through the line of guests.

The rehearsal:
The wedding rehearsal usually occurs the day before the wedding, but may be held sooner depending on circumstances. Everyone in the wedding, including the parents, grandparents, and members of the wedding party, should be present. If the couple has a wedding coordinator, she/he will direct the rehearsal, using a copy of the master plan that the couple and the coordinator created. If there is no coordinator, the bride should have made a written plan which she will use to direct the rehearsal.

The plan will contain the order of seating of the parents and grandparents and by whom, and the order of the processional and recessional. By following the plan, the rehearsal will go quickly and smoothly.

Though it is helpful if the officiant attends the rehearsal, not all are willing to do so, and that is okay. The parents and the wedding party will be most interested in learning how they will get down the aisle and where they will stand or sit. The coordinator will instruct them and she/he will be present at the wedding to be sure that everything goes smoothly.

Couples have great flexibility in planning the various portions of their wedding ceremony, depending on the requirements of their church or officiant and their personal desires. By taking the time to think through the various portions of the ceremony, the couple can create one that will be a reflection of their personalities, values, and beliefs.