

WEDDING MANUAL



Let us pray: O God, Heavenly Father, as You have drawn our hearts together to seek a union as husband and wife, guide us as we make our marriage preparations, that we might build our life together on Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation, and bring glory to Your Holy Name. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



Anchored
IN CHRIST

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

*A Church of The
Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod*

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CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR UPCOMING MARRIAGE

This manual is prepared to assist you in planning a Christian wedding here at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. It outlines things you may not have considered and gives what the congregation of St. Paul's expects and desires of you in planning this most happy and memorable occasion of your life together and to be pleasing and blessed in the sight of God.

BEFORE WE START - MEMBERSHIP IS REQUIRED

St. Paul's wedding services are only for members of the congregation. This means that at least one of the individuals getting married needs to be a member of St. Paul's congregation. But do not be discouraged - We would gladly receive you as a member through transfer of membership, or adult instruction, to be in fellowship with what we believe, teach, and confess in faith of Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

What is marriage? Is marriage an unchanging promise of commitment for life together forever, before God, or is it an invention of an outdated culture and, therefore, something that needs to be revised from generation to generation? Is marriage simply any two people choosing to live together for sexual convenience or mutual financial benefit or is it a prerequisite for the creation of families? Is marriage the union of man and woman or is it also the union of a man to another man or a woman to another? The message for Christians from the Word of God is that marriage is not whatever we choose to make of it. It is what God has made it to be.

Marriage is a one-of-a-kind experience between a man and a woman. No other relationship, even between closest friends or between parent and child, compares with the experiences unique to marriage.

Biblically, marriage is the one-flesh union of a man and a woman, the most natural expression of which is the procreation of children and the formation of a family.

More specifically though, Ephesians 5:21-33 speaks of marriage, but verse 33 comes as a surprise as Paul reminds us that, what we are really speaking about here is not just marriage, but marriage as a sign of Christ and the Church. In other words, marriage is an outward and spiritual sign of the greatest, holiest, worthiest, and noblest thing that has ever existed or ever will exist: Christ's love and commitment to His beloved Church.

An illustration from computer technology might help us understand this a bit better. Those familiar with icons on a computer screen will know that when you click on the icon, it opens up something behind it. You click on a simple icon, and a tremendous program opens up. Marriage, as God has given it, is such an icon, "an outward and spiritual sign of the greatest, holiest, worthiest, and noblest thing that has ever existed or ever will exist" as Luther put it.

When you "click" on marriage, you see the deeper reality of the relationship between

Christ and His Church. That is, when you look more deeply into marriage what you see are not just two people with a commitment to one another for life, but also a paradigm of God's commitment to us for life.

This is more than saying marriage is an illustration of our life with God; rather it is an earthly enactment of a heavenly reality. Marriage is the sign that reveals to those who have the eyes of faith to see it that God has wed Himself to us for all eternity. This is why marriage cannot be whatever a society wants it to be. It is given by God and as such it carries a message. Even more than an experience between a man and a woman who promise lifelong faithfulness to each other, marriage mirrors the relationship between God and His faithful people.

With all of that said, it is not our human prerogative to redefine marriage for the sake of political correctness, social justice or to accommodate the changing times. As God does not change, but is ever faithful, so marriage does not change and ever proclaims the faithfulness of God to His people.

WHY HAVE A CHURCH WEDDING?

There are many reasons why couples want a church wedding. For some, a church wedding has always been their dream, or the dream of their parents. Some are attracted to the building.

A Christian Marriage is about being centered in the Lord's Blessing and Creation of Marriage itself. For, in a Christian Marriage, the forgiveness of sins must be central, and the cross of Christ must be the source of forgiveness to touch, heal, and renew the bond of marriage. A marriage hangs together on the cross of Christ as pictured in the symbol on the cover of this manual. Also, a church wedding is your witness to both the church and the public of your faith in Jesus Christ and your trust in God's watchfulness over your new household.

THE CHRISTIAN WEDDING IS A WORSHIP SERVICE

You have asked for the privilege of being married in this church. This is good. Your desire to be married in a Christian church, by a Christian pastor, with a Christian marriage ceremony indicates that you want everything about your wedding and marriage to be Christian. Let us then consider those things that mark a wedding service as Christian.

The following are five points about a Christian wedding service that the church considers primary:

- 1) A Christian wedding is a church service. A Christian church service places Christ at the center of worship and asks that we direct our attention to Him alone. The focus is not to be upon the bride, groom, or anyone else, but upon Christ alone. Everything in a Christian wedding service must give evidence that we are centered in Christ Jesus and you stepping into the Holy Estate of Marriage before the Lord,

asking for His blessings.

- 2) A Christian wedding service is a public worship service that belongs to God's people and expresses the Christian faith. This will be your reason for being sensitive and using only acceptable Christian expressions.
- 3) The Christian wedding service is a corporate church service where God is serving His people. Every person present has an opportunity to listen, speak, and pray silently. The Christian wedding is not a performance where the bride and groom are the actors, the pastor is the stage prompter, and everyone else is the audience. God is serving us with His Word and blessing a man and a woman in the estate of marriage.
- 4) A Christian wedding service is to be a clear proclamation of your life and salvation won by Jesus Christ on the cross. In the wedding you will want to proclaim this in such a way that all your guests will know about the love of God that moved Him to send His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and rise again for the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life through faith in Him.
- 5) A Christian wedding service is a time of celebration. We want to celebrate God's blessing on you taking your places in the blessed estate of marriage.

WHAT TO DO ONCE WE GET ENGAGED?

The first thing to do upon engagement is to contact the pastor concerning the potential wedding date, time, and pre-marital pastoral counseling. You cannot assume a wedding date and time without communicating with the pastor.

DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE SITUATIONS

There are Biblical reasons why an application for a church wedding would not be approved. Remember, marriage is in the realm of the state, not the church. A church wedding is for Christians, who are repentant sinners, believing in Jesus Christ and bearing fruits of repentance. Such reasons for concern, difficulty, or denial of a wedding in the church would be:

- 1) When the state licensing requirements are not met by the couple.
- 2) When the couple disagrees with the church's policies as laid out in this manual.
- 3) When the couple is living together outside of wedlock and refuses to acknowledge that such a condition is a sin. A couple living together publicly outside of marriage is publicly saying that *they don't care that they are living in sin and have no fear of God or hell.*

How to fix the situation of living in sin and to have a wedding in the church:

If the couple, now confronted with their sin, has contrition and faith, let them show the fruits of that faith by:

- 1) Separating until the day of the wedding.

- 2) Move the wedding date drastically forward to an earlier date.
- 3) Go to the court house, get a marriage license, and come back with a pair of witnesses, and have the ***Rite of Marriage*** service before the altar in the presence of God. Then a public celebration and blessing of your marriage can occur at the originally scheduled time.

AGE

Bride and Groom: State law dictates that the bride and groom must be at least 18 years of age, or have a parental consent to marry.

CHURCH ENTRANCE

It is important for the bride and groom to make arrangements with the pastor to gain access into the church on the day of the wedding because there isn't always someone here.

CONFETTI

Confetti, rice, birdseed, sparklers, real flowers, or other materials are not to be thrown anywhere in the church building or grounds. Silk rose petals may be dropped down the main aisle; however, it is the responsibility of the wedding party to pick up ALL petals immediately after the church service.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

No decorations of any kind (candles, flowers, ribbons, etc) may be installed into the furnishings of the church, walls, or woodwork by use of nails, staples, screws, glue, gummed tape, tacks, bare wire, or clamps. Decorations which are allowed may stand on the floor or be tied with ribbon, fishing line, string, or plastic/paper coated wire.

Decorations may be put up the day before the wedding provided it does not interfere with any scheduled church activity. No decorations may be placed beyond the Communion Rail except for flowers. It is the responsibility of the wedding party to ensure all flowers and decorations are removed immediately after the church service and/or photographs.

Aisle runner: Aisle runners may be used and is the wedding party's responsibility to provide and remove immediately following the church service.

Candles: North Dakota fire codes prohibit the use of open flame handheld candles or aisle candles. An alternative is to purchase or rent flameless battery operated candles. It is the wedding party's responsibility for setting them up and taking them down. You may use a unity candle (*dripless*) as part of your wedding service; however, it is also the responsibility of the wedding party to supply. Under no circumstances will candles be placed on top of the organ or pianos.

Paraments: The church paraments and their color follow the church season and the color will not be changed for the wedding.

OTHER PARTICIPATING CLERGY

If the wedding couple has a family member or friend who is an LCMS (Lutheran Church -Missouri Synod) pastor whom you would like to assist or perform the wedding service, a request should be made well in advance to the pastor. Only in cases where the pastor would not be in good standing with the synod would this pastor be denied to participate. Also, according to the LCMS constitution and CTCR documents, pastors or other church workers outside of fellowship with the LCMS are not allowed to participate in the wedding service (*this would include clergy of the Roman Catholic, ELCA, Methodist, Baptist, etc*).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash pictures may be taken prior to the service and following the service, but not during the church service itself. If there is a particular portion of the service which you feel you want photographed, this can be re-enacted before or after the service. Video recording may be done from the balcony or from a non-conspicuous location to be discussed prior to wedding.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Premarital counseling involves taking an inventory test at the cost of \$40.00. The results will be emailed to you, at which time you would meet with the pastor for about four more times. The purpose of the inventory test is never to say if a couple should or shouldn't get married; rather it is designed to work through areas that may need some growth. Areas include: communications, conflict resolution, religion, etc. All information is kept confidential - not to be shared with anyone.

PUNCTUALITY

The wedding rehearsal and the wedding worship service will start on time if at all possible. The date and time will be posted to the church calendar, as agreed upon, by the groom, bride, and pastor.

RECEPTIONS

Receptions may be held in the Fellowship Hall. To do so, contact the president of LWML as soon as the wedding date is set.

Please give the president of LWML the following information:

- 1) The date and time of the wedding.
- 2) How you would like the hall set up.
- 3) What you are planning to serve.
- 4) When to begin serving.

The LWML will furnish the following:

- Two (2) silver coffee servers
- One (1) punch bowl
- Fostoria serving plates
- One (1) cake knife
- Candleholders and lace table clothes for the punch bowl table, bridal table, gift table, guest book table, serving tables, and cake table.

The wedding party is responsible for placing the tables as they wish and for decorating. The chairman of the wedding group serving will come to assist with locating needed tables, etc..

The bride and groom should provide the following (*as applicable*):

- All food needed for the reception, such as
 - * Hors d'oeuvres
 - * Appetizer
 - * Entrée(s)
 - * Side Dishes
 - * Sandwiches
 - * Bread & Butter
 - * Dessert
- Punch (*punch concentrate or your recipe and ingredients*)
 - * Punch cups
 - * Ice ring for punch bowl
- Nonalcoholic Drinks
- Wedding Nuts, Mints, Candy, etc
- Coffee and/or Tea
 - * Creamer or cream substitute
 - * Sugar
- Candles
- Napkins
- Party Favors

REHEARSAL DINNER AND WEDDING INVITATIONS

Should you desire to invite the pastor, organist, soloist, or any other participant to attend the wedding rehearsal dinner or wedding reception and/or dinner, an invitation should be extended in the general mailing of your wedding invitations. Please state the specifics as to whom you are inviting on the invitation.

SMOKING AND ALCOHOL

Smoking is not permitted in the church building, including the bathrooms. If there is any sign of alcohol or drugs that dull the senses of the wedding party during the wedding rehearsal or prior to the wedding, those who are abusing will not be allowed

on the church property. This may sound harsh, but to ensure that no one behaves in an unsuitable and irreverent manner, so as to keep your special day special, please inform your family and friends of this policy. It is especially important that the bride and groom are of clear and sound mind in making their vows before God and each other.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to obtain a marriage license before the wedding day. Without a license, there can be no wedding. Following the completion of the wedding, it is the responsibility of the bride and groom to file the paperwork with the necessary agencies.

WEDDING BULLETINS

Wedding bulletins will be created by the St. Paul's Administrative Secretary. You can work with the pastor on getting the details organized for the bulletin. We ask that you provide details no later than two weeks prior to the wedding.

WEDDING MUSIC

In thinking about your wedding music, please keep in mind what has been said about the nature of Christian worship as joyful and Christ-centered. Since this is a public Christian church service, and not merely a ceremony to be witnessed, the music is to reflect Christ and Christian attitudes concerning marriage and should honor Jesus as Savior and Lord. That means that the music should be Christian and not secular. You may well have a favorite secular song that is dear to you and that you would like to use at your wedding, but such music is out of place in a Christian wedding. It would be much more appropriate to include this song at the wedding reception or dance. Wedding music should either be to the praise of God or in prayer of God and His love for us rather than an expression of the love of the Bride and Groom for each other.

You may wish to use a hymn or several hymns so that the entire congregation might be involved. Talk with the pastor about some appropriate hymns that could be used from the Lutheran Service Book.

If a solo or desired hymn for the wedding service is not in the Lutheran Service Book it needs to be brought to the pastor **at least a month before the wedding** to be cleared as appropriate for a Christian wedding service. The pastor will work with you to secure an organist for the service.

WEDDING SCHEDULES

We discourage weddings during Holy week and the week before Christmas. Furthermore, there is only one wedding scheduled per weekend. The time of the wedding is important, especially on Saturday if there is a reception and the janitor has to get the church "back in order" for Sunday morning services. Therefore, Saturday wedding receptions in the church will be concluded prior to 10:00 PM.

GRATUITIES AND FEES

In order to reserve a date for your wedding at St. Paul's a deposit will need to be made. Please use the following chart as a way of determining the deposit needed to reserve the wedding service.

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost:</u>
Pre-Marital Costs	\$40.00
Custodian	\$60.00
Bulletins (<i>\$0.25 per copy</i>)	_____
Accompanist (<i>\$125.00</i>)	_____
Soloist (<i>\$50.00</i>)	_____
Fellowship Hall <i>\$75.00 for 100 Guests</i> <i>\$10 for additional 25 Guests</i>	_____
Total	_____

QUICK CHECKLIST

First Things First ...

- ___ Pastor contacted (*before any plans are finalized*)
- ___ Premarital counseling arranged
- ___ Read through this booklet completely
- ___ Finalize plans with Pastor, reserve your rehearsal & wedding dates/times,
- ___ Pay deposit
- ___ Call or email St. Paul's Administrative Secretary with your rehearsal & wedding dates/times, and contact information (*bride & groom's names, address, phone, email*) as soon as possible after plans are finalized with Pastor
- ___ Contact the President of LWML if using the Fellowship Hall for your reception

At least one month prior to wedding date (as soon as possible)...

- ___ Music approved by Pastor
- ___ Secure a Marriage License at Courthouse

The month prior to your wedding ...

- ___ Bulletin information provided to St. Paul's Administrative Secretary (*at least two weeks in advance*)
- ___ Wedding bulletin proof approved by Pastor
- ___ Confirm details with the President of LWML (*if having a reception at St. Paul's*)

Day of your wedding rehearsal ...

- ___ Marriage license brought to Pastor

Other items (list here: photographer, invitations, flowers, musicians, etc.)

RECOMMENDED READINGS AND HYMNS FOR WEDDING

PSALMODY	
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 45:13-17	With joy and gladness they are led along
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 67	May God be gracious to us and bless us
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 100	The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 117	The steadfast love of the Lord is great
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 127	Unless the Lord builds the house
<input type="checkbox"/> Psalm 128	The Lord bless you from Zion
READINGS <i>Text in boldface should be given special consideration due to long standing usage.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 1:26-28	Male and female he created them
<input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 2:7, 18-24	They shall become one flesh
<input type="checkbox"/> Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9-10	A threefold cord is not quickly broken
<input type="checkbox"/> Song of Songs 2:10-13; 8:6-7	Many waters cannot quench love
<input type="checkbox"/> Isaiah 61:7-11	As a bridegroom deck himself
<input type="checkbox"/> Hosea 2:18-23	I will betroth you to me in faithfulness
<input type="checkbox"/> Romans 12:1-2	Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:4-5	Glorify God in your body
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Corinthians 12:31_13:13	The greatest of these is love
<input type="checkbox"/> Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-33	Walk in love as Christ loved us
<input type="checkbox"/> Philippians 4:4-7	Rejoice in the Lord always
<input type="checkbox"/> Colossians 3:12-17	Put on love which binds everything together
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8	God has called us in holiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 13:1-8	Let marriage be held in honor among all
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 John 4:7-12	Let us love one another
<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 19:6-9	His Bride has made herself ready
<input type="checkbox"/> Revelation 21:1-5	The holy city prepared as a bride
<input type="checkbox"/> Matthew 19:4-6	What God has joined let no one separate
<input type="checkbox"/> Mark 10:1-9 (13-16)	What God has joined let no one separate
<input type="checkbox"/> John 2:1-11	Wedding at Cana
<input type="checkbox"/> John 15:9-12	Abide in my love

