

A Guide for Weddings at St. John's Lutheran Church Waltz

Congratulations! By now you are thinking about all the plans that have to be made for the perfect wedding day. As you consider those plans as well as think about where your wedding will take place, the following guide will assist you in understanding the wedding customs, procedures and policies here at St. John's. The elders and pastor of St. John's have discussed all of the matters listed here and believe them to be of high importance in having a wedding that is both worshipful for you and pleasing to God.

- **God's View of Marriage**

- The Holy Bible teaches that marriage belongs to God; He alone created marriage as the basis for the human community. He alone sent His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, to pay the debt for the sins that destroy the joys of marriage. He alone can empower us through His Holy Spirit working through His Word and His Sacraments to live lives of love and forgiveness.
- The purpose of a Christian wedding is to praise God for the blessing of a Christ-centered marriage where faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is the heart and power of the new life and family that is about to begin.
- With this understanding, the facilities of St. John's Lutheran Church and the services of St. John's pastoral staff are available to those members of St. John's who are actively exercising their faith-commitment to Jesus Christ in regular worship and Bible study.

- **Living Together Before Marriage**

- As the practices of living together and becoming sexually active before marriage become more common among couples today, it is important to understand our congregation's policy on these issues. We believe neither of these practices are in accordance with God's will. It is therefore necessary for a couple in these circumstances to deal with this problem before the wedding takes place. If a couple is living together it is necessary for them to separate, that is, no longer live together until after the wedding. If sexually active, it is necessary for this to cease until after the wedding. This would be an indication of repentance and a desire to live according to God's will. If this is done, the wedding service will take place at a date of their choice.
- Another option for the couple living together is that a private wedding take place immediately with the larger wedding celebration, including all family and attendants taking place at a later date of their choice. Once again, this would be done in order that God's will would be adhered to. The immediate private wedding would consist of the couple, two witnesses, the pastor and a marriage license. Such an act would be performed so that the couple could end the practice of living together before marriage and yet remain together in marriage while preparing for the regular wedding celebration. The larger wedding celebration later would consist of all the family and

attendants and everything else a wedding involves. Especially, this option might be appropriate for couples who already have children in their care.

- Even though neither of these arrangements might seem convenient nor ideal for the couple living together, we believe that they will find great spiritual satisfaction in knowing that they have done the right thing and have acted according to God's will. If you are in this situation, please continue to speak with the pastor about the arrangements you wish to make.

- **Couples From Different Churches**

- Often, a member of St. John's desires to marry a person from a different religious denomination. It is our encouragement that the couple seriously consider being members of the same church. There is tremendous benefit in a married couple being able to worship together, hear the Word of God together, and take communion together, not only for personal benefit, but also the strengthening of their marriage. Classes are offered regularly at St. John's, as needed, for people outside of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to become members of this congregation. Speak with the pastor about getting into one of these classes or for individual instruction.
- Having said this, it is not necessary that both be members of St. John's in order for the wedding to take place.

- **The Minister Performing the Ceremony**

- It is the practice of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod that only pastors from the LCMS would officiate at a wedding in an LCMS church. Therefore you should plan for the pastor of St. John's to perform the wedding, preach the sermon, read the lessons, and administer the vows. If there is another Missouri Synod pastor that you would like to have participate in the wedding, this would normally be fine. Please speak with the pastor about such an arrangement. As far as soloists, instrumentalists, organists, ushers, attendants etc. you may choose whomever you'd like.

- **Pre-Marital Sessions**

- Under most circumstances, there will be three sessions involving the couple and the pastor prior to the wedding. These sessions should take place beginning three months before the wedding day. During those sessions, the Biblical basis of marriage will be discussed along with opportunities for the couple to learn more about one another. Also it is during these sessions that the wedding service will be planned.

- **The Marriage Process At St. John's**

1. Those who desire marriage are to contact the pastor who schedules all weddings. This contact should be made as far in advance of the desired wedding date as possible.

Wedding dates and times are reserved on a first come, first served basis. At present we will only celebrate one wedding per day. Please note Saturday weddings should begin no later than 4:00 p.m. because of our Saturday evening service schedule.

2. After contact has been made with the pastor and a date and time have been reserved, it is the responsibility of the couple desiring marriage to contact one of the designated church organists to secure his/her services and to meet to have the musical portion of the wedding worship service arranged and approved. Please note, only certain approved music selections are appropriate for and will be used in any worship service.

- **Significant Considerations**

1. It is important to understand that a wedding is a worship service. There is no other reason to assemble in God's house except to praise and glorify Him and to learn more about His grace for us in Christ Jesus.
 - a. The wedding service is not to glorify the bride and groom or to praise the beautiful gowns and decorations.
 - b. Those involved in the wedding service are there to join with the bride and groom and share in their joy over the blessings God has provided. The decorations are to be approved by the Wedding Coordinator.
 - c. It is, then, the responsibility of the bride and groom, with the help of the pastor and Wedding Coordinator, to make sure that those in the wedding group who are participating with them in the worship service understand that all due respect to God and the church be shown.
 - d. No alcoholic beverages are to be served or consumed before or during the time at the church. If someone gives evidence of intoxication, he/she will not be permitted to participate in the marriage worship service.
 - e. No pranks or gags of any kind will be permitted during the worship service.
2. It is the responsibility of the couple desiring marriage to contact the designated church organist to secure his/her services and to meet with the organist to arrange the musical portion of the wedding worship service.
 - a. Only organists so designated by the Board of Elders shall play for services at St. John's.
 - b. The Board of Elders of St. John's has determined that The Bridal Chorus & The Wedding March, because of its secular intent and wording, shall not be played at any worship service at St. John's. There are a number of other beautiful

processional and recessional compositions that have been approved for use. The organist and the bride and groom will meet to select the appropriate music.

3. Additional decorations for the inside of the church are the responsibility of the bride and groom. It should be noted that the church has little need for ornate decorations since it has a beauty all its own.
 - a. Fresh flowers, the work of God's hand, are always in good taste. Flowers may be placed on the stands behind or in front of the altar.
 - b. Ribbons may be placed on the ends of the center pews. Rubber bands and ribbons, etc. have been used in the past to safe guard the finish on the pews.
 - c. If a unity candle is desired the couple should plan to find and purchase one on their own. The church does have a stand which supports most unity candles. The candles should be brought in prior to the wedding date to verify size.
 - d. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to purchase an aisle runner if they so desire. The length should be a runner of 75 feet. It is also the responsibility of the couple to be sure the aisle runner is pinned in place before the worship service begins.
4. It is suggested that the bride and groom consider the use of service folders for the congregation during the worship service. These bulletins allow those attending to participate in and follow the order of the worship service.
 - a. The couple is encouraged to meet with the church secretary to select and order the service folders of their choice at least two weeks prior to the wedding. There is a charge of \$10 per one hundred of these folders; this fee is payable to the church secretary at the time of ordering. The church secretary may be reached at 654-6366.
 - b. Service folders make a beautiful keepsake of the wedding day. The bride and groom may also elect to list the names of parents, grandparents, sponsors, etc., along with the names of those in the wedding party, in the service folder.
5. It is the responsibility of the couple to instruct the photographer(s) to meet with the pastor before the service begins.
 - a. **NO** flash pictures are permitted in the church during the wedding worship service. There is to be nothing to interrupt the dignity and the beauty of the service.

- b. Time exposures may be taken during the worship service from the back of the church, from the balcony, or from the side doors in front of the church as long as the photographer & camera are out of view.
 - c. Pictures of the wedding party may be taken in the area outside the church before the service or in the church following the service. Photographers are asked to limit the time taking pictures following the service to thirty minutes if there is another evening worship service scheduled.
 - d. Video recording is allowed from the balcony or the side doors in front of the church as long as the camera is out of view, using only the natural light in the church; no extra lighting is to be used.
 - e. Pictures must be completed 1 hour prior to service.
6. The bride and groom must obtain a legal marriage license and present to the church secretary the week of the wedding. No wedding service will be performed at St. John's without a marriage license. Following the wedding worship service the maid/matron of honor and the best man, as witnesses, must sign the marriage license. This should be done before the photographer begins taking post-service pictures.
7. There are certain fees associated with the wedding service that are the responsibility of the bride and groom. All fees are to be remitted to the Wedding Coordinator the night of the rehearsal.
 - a. The Use of the Church - No Charge
 - b. The Wedding Coordinator -\$50.00
 - c. The Organist - \$50.00
 - d. The Soloist - \$25.00
 - e. Material for Pre-Marital Sessions - \$40.00

Conclusion

- If all of these details are agreeable to you, we will be more than happy to have your wedding at St. John's. Please call the pastor to schedule a date. And God's blessings to you both as you seek to serve and praise Him with your wedding service and upcoming marriage.