

# **Wedding Manual**

**for**

**Trinity Lutheran Church  
Hanceville, AL**

## **THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL**

Trinity Lutheran congregation desires to preserve and emphasize the distinctive nature of the Christian wedding as worship, a church service in which the Triune God is the object and the center of worship and in which His Word and prayer retain their proper place. There is an ever-increasing temptation to bring worldly practices into the church which detract from the atmosphere of worship. It is our hope that the policies contained in this manual will be of assistance to you in planning a worshipful wedding service. Any exceptions to these policies must be submitted to the Board of Elders for consideration. Any questions that remain may be discussed with the pastor. God bless you as you begin and continue your life together in His name.

Board of Elders  
Trinity Lutheran Church

### **Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church Marriage Policy**

The marriage policy of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hanceville, Alabama, a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is and always has been consistent with the Synod's beliefs on marriage. We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32). The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 ("To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions"), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and "marriage." Our pastor(s) will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church properties may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

THE  
WEDDING  
AS  
WORSHIP

Marriage is not a Sacrament, nor is the marriage setting a time for mindless frivolity. The Christian wedding service is an act of worship, one of the occasional worship services of the Church. The object of our worship is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He above is worthy of our worship and adoration. As we worship, our attention will be drawn to Him for it is an evidence of His grace that we are capable of worshiping Him at all. It is very easy for things other than God to take over the most important place at your wedding. You may find it an effort to keep God uppermost in your wedding worship. At such times it is helpful to remember that you seek His blessings. Keep that thought in mind, seek to honor Him, and you will find what you desire.

The Christian wedding service has its center in Jesus Christ. There is no contradiction between the Triune God as the object of our worship and Christ as the center of our worship. "No man comes to the Father but by Me," our Lord tells us. As God incarnate, Jesus Christ is the only way that we are able to approach God. This includes our worship.

All elements of any service of worship will praise, honor, and glorify God. What this means for Christians is that the wedding service is never theirs alone. It is a public act (even though it may be performed privately) which belongs to the worship life of the church. As such, you will want your wedding service to reflect a distinctively Christian content so that not only you but everyone present will be enriched and edified. The policies that follow represent our heartfelt desire to aid you in planning a worshipful, joyful wedding service.

WHO MAY BE  
MARRIED AT  
TRINITY

St. Paul (Ephesians 5:2 1ff) points God's people to a model for marriage in that love which exists between the Heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church. Consequently, those who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and profess Him as Lord of their lives may apply to be married in this Christian congregation.

WHEN AND  
HOW DO  
WE APPLY?

- a) You may apply at the time of your engagement. This is an excellent opportunity to advise the pastor of your future plans. He will also be ready to provide you with counseling so your engagement may become a time of mutual growth and deepened understanding.
- b) Please be sure to talk with the pastor when you have set a tentative date to see if the date and time are agreeable and if the facilities are available. At least thirty days notice is expected and 45 days in advance is certainly not too soon to prepare for such an important event. The earlier the better. You will then have ample time to get everything in order, as well as complete the required pre-marital counseling sessions. The date and time of the wedding

will remain tentative until completion of the counseling. No wedding will be scheduled during Holy Week, or after 7:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

## WHY COUNSELING?

The word "wedding" means "pledge." A pledge is a binding promise. Binding promises between husband and wife are made and broken in our society with hardly a second thought. This is an affront to God and a tragedy for the people involved. We have a high regard for God's gift of marriage and for those seeking to be married. Marriage is one of the most important steps you will take in your entire life. Yet few people are prepared. We are confident you want to be prepared, so we will provide you with an opportunity to explore joys and problem areas common to married people. In the process you will get to know each other better. Our intent is to help you understand stresses in your relationship and how to come to grips with them so your marriage can be strengthened. For this reason we require six one hour and fifteen minute sessions with our pastor, or his designate, prior to your wedding. All dates and arrangements will remain tentative until these sessions are complete. It is good to remember that the result of effective pre-marital counseling may be a postponement or cancellation of the wedding, though this rarely happens.

## WEDDING SERVICE PARTICULARS

- a) The Wedding Service. The wedding service used at Trinity is from the Lutheran Service Book. There will be no variations to this. The couple may suggest Scripture verses that are meaningful to them but it will be the decision of the pastor what verses will be used in the service. The pastor will also prepare and deliver a wedding message. The pastor has the final word on all service arrangements and the content of the service.
- b) Clergy participants. The pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church will be in charge of all weddings held here and only clergymen of church bodies in official fellowship with the Lutheran-Missouri Synod will participate with him. Any invitations to other such clergy participants will be extended by the pastor of Trinity at the request of the couple. Considering the amount of time and preparation the pastor has given to make your wedding day special and pleasing to God, an honorarium comparable to his service is an appropriate and faithful gesture. (See 1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- c) Wedding coordinators. While such individuals are extremely helpful in working out all the details of the wedding day they play a secondary role in the actual wedding service. For good order please inform your wedding coordinator that the pastor is the final authority on any plans they might wish to make regarding the service or the church.

- d) Organist and soloist. The organist must be approved by the pastor of Trinity. If any of Trinity's church organists or accompanists are to be used, an expected honorarium no less than \$50 shall be paid prior to the service. Soloists should be able to worship with you and be familiar with our music policy.
- e) Attendants. Since your attendants are being invited not only to witness your vows but to worship with you and pray with you and for you, it would be fitting for you to choose from your friends and relatives those who are able to worship with you in spirit and in truth. Since this is a worship service, the attendants will face the altar at all times. **An attendant who arrives intoxicated will be relieved of his or her duties.**
- f) Candles and holders. The congregation will furnish the candles used in the sanctuary candelabra. Additional holders may be used outside the chancel area, for which you are asked to furnish your own candles. If they are to be attached to the pews in any way, our custodian will supervise their installation in order that the pews are not marred or scratched in any way. Also, be certain to furnish and use drip collectors so wax will not drip on the floor, the carpet, or the pews.
- g) Unity candle. Some couples wish to use a unity candle. This is permissible. The couple will provide the unity candle. Please take time to think through the symbolism of the unity candle.
- h) Altar paraments. The colored hangings on the altar, lectern, and pulpit will not be changed specifically for the wedding service. Their color is determined by the current season of the church year. The only exception is that white may be replaced for use during the wedding service.
- i) Decorations. Decorations should be simple and kept to a minimum. They are to be in place at least one hour prior to the wedding to avoid disturbance. At no time will chancel furnishings be removed, concealed, or changed in any way. Pew ribbons will be attached only under the supervision of our custodian.
- j) Aisle runner. Since the center aisle of our church is carpeted, an aisle runner is not necessary. If one is to be used anyway, it may be rented from a florist.
- k) Flowers. Flowers are to be in place at least one hour before the wedding. At no time will chancel furnishings be removed, concealed, or changed in any way for arrangements of flowers.

- l) Pictures. Reverence and decorum are to be maintained at all times. Pictures may be taken in any quantity either before or after the wedding service. Pictures taken before the service are to be completed at least one hour prior to the service. Excessive informality is to be avoided, and no one is to enter the sanctuary, that area of the chancel behind the communion rail.

**In order to preserve the atmosphere of worship, no pictures are to be taken during the wedding service by guests.** No pictures are to be taken during the wedding service under any circumstances by anyone other than your professional photographer. Your professional photographer is permitted to take flash pictures during the processional and recessional only. He may also take an existing light picture during the service. These pictures will be taken from the rear of the sanctuary only.

Video recording follows the same conditions as picture taking.

- m) Facilities. There is no charge for the use of the church. However, be sure to schedule your wedding service well in advance of the actual date so that alternatives may be discussed if the church is already spoken for. No weddings will be scheduled during Holy Week or after 7:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings. Preparations for a Sunday afternoon wedding may begin after the morning worship service is dismissed.

If you plan to use the parish hall for a reception, please be sure to schedule its availability also. There is no charge for the use of the parish hall. You may wish to make a donation to the congregation for utilities usage. This is certainly appropriate although it is neither required or expected. Any decorations for the parish hall reception are to be installed under the supervision of our custodian and are to be in place at least one hour before the wedding service begins. The parish hall is not to be set up or decorated for a Sunday afternoon reception until all the normal Sunday morning activities are completed. The caterer will be under the supervision of the LWML.

Rice-throwing is strictly prohibited in the church, at the entrance to the narthex, and in the parish hall. This is a pagan fertility custom and is therefore inappropriate for a Christian wedding.

Our facilities are kept locked. Anyone helping to prepare for your wedding is asked to arrange a mutually agreeable schedule with our custodian.

BEFORE  
THE  
SERVICE

- n) Custodian. Minimum charge by the custodian is \$20.00 payable in advance or at the rehearsal. The custodian will be able to answer additional questions about the facilities and will supervise their proper use.
- a) Candles. All candles are normally lighted twenty minutes before the service begins. This will be done by the designated persons according to procedures explained at the rehearsal.
- b) Ushers. Ushers are asked to be on duty at least thirty minutes before the service begins. One usher, preferably one having previous ushering experience, should be asked to assume responsibility for distributing assignments.

As guests arrive, the ushers will show them to their seats. At times the relative of the bride and groom are seated on separate sides of the nave. Intermingling the worshipers is a good custom and is symbolic of the bond which makes them one in Christ, as well as of the fact that this marriage ties them all more closely together as families.

The groom's parents will be seated in the second pew on the pulpit side of the nave five minutes before the service is to begin.

The bride's parents or mother will be seated in the second pew on the lectern side of the nave two minutes before the service is to begin.

The front pews on each side are kept open for the use of the bridal party if necessary. If an aisle runner is to be used, it will be unrolled during the two minutes remaining before the service begins.

Ushers are asked to seat themselves in the rear pew and be alert for any possible opportunities to be of help to the worshipers.

Ushers will look for guests carrying cameras and inform them of the picture taking policy.

DURING  
THE  
SERVICE

- a) Processional. During the processional the wedding party approaches the chancel and stands at the foot of the chancel steps facing the altar.

It is good Lutheran custom for the bride and groom to approach the altar together. However, if the bride will walk in alone or at the right of her father or another relative, she will be given to the

groom at the head of the aisle. Since your preference will affect the processional, please discuss this with the pastor so he can guide the rehearsal.

The attendants are to walk in a relaxed and natural manner. The so-called "Hesitation step" is not used.

- b) Invocation. The pastor invokes the name of the Triune God in whose name this service will be conducted.
- c) Solos. Depending upon the number of solos, if any, they will be interspersed throughout the service at appropriate points.
- d) Congregation Singing. It is certainly a good custom for the worshipers to join in singing a hymn appropriate to the occasion.
- e) Wedding Sermon. The pastor will select an appropriate passage of Scripture and prepare a meditation for the couple and the congregation.
- f) Scriptures. Appointed selections of Scripture pertinent to the wedding service will be read.
- g) Question. At the option of the couple, a question may be addressed to the parents of the bride. "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" Her father will say, "Her mother and I do," and be seated.
- h) Exchange of vows. The bride and groom will commit themselves to each other in a God-pleasing marriage.
- i) Before the altar. The bride, groom, maid of honor and best man will enter the chancel and go to the sanctuary entrance. If the bride is wearing a veil, it will be turned back by the maid of honor who will also take the bride's bouquet.
- j) Exchange of promises. The bride and groom will exchange their promises of lifelong faithfulness.
- k) Ring ceremony. Ring(s) are exchanged, explained, and God's blessings are prayed upon the couple. The couple joins hands and their marriage is announced. If a unity candle is used, it will be lighted at this point.
- l) The Blessing and the Prayers. The couple will kneel and the pastor pronounces a blessing upon them. If no congregational

hymn is sung, they remain kneeling for the prayers and the benediction.

- m) The Benediction. The Aaronic benediction is spoken by the pastor as the worshippers are reminded of the Lord's blessings and care, not the least of which is peace. This peace exists between the believer and God by virtue of God's grace shown us in the person and work of Jesus Christ and given to us through faith in Him. No more does the warfare of sin separate us from God. We are at peace with Him and this peace is manifested in the lives of believers. This is a beautiful way to leave the altar and assume your marital responsibilities. Go, indeed, in peace.
- n) The Recessional. The members of the wedding party will leave the church in a manner practiced at the rehearsal.
- a) Ushers. The designated ushers will come forward to lead, first of all, the brides parents and, secondly, the grooms parents from the church.

AFTER  
THE  
SERVICE

If a receiving line is to be established, this will be done as soon as possible. When the receiving line is established, two ushers will return to the nave and proceed to dismiss the worshippers pew by pew, alternating sides, until the nave is empty.

- b) Candles. If the pictures have already been taken, the candles will be extinguished after all the worshippers have been dismissed. They may be left burning if pictures are yet to be taken, and extinguished when picture taking is completed.
- c) Wedding Certificate. The wedding certificate will have been given to the pastor along with the marriage license either at the rehearsal or before the wedding. He will fill out the certificate. The bride, groom, and two witnesses over the age of 18 must be present at the signing. Please do this as quickly as possible after the service. The pastor will return the appropriate copies to you to file with the County Clerk.

THE  
REHEARSAL

The pastor or his designate will conduct a rehearsal prior to the wedding at a time agreeable to him and the wedding party. All participants are asked to be present so that each person is aware of his responsibilities.

A rehearsal need not last longer than thirty minutes. It will begin with prayer and brief explanation of the service. The participants will walk through the service with music. Ushers will be instructed and final questions will be answered.

If a rehearsal dinner will be held, and if the pastor and his wife are expected to attend, please notify them in advance of the rehearsal. Also please specify whether or not their children are included.

WEDDING  
MUSIC  
AND  
WORSHIP  
FORMS

An understanding of the wedding as worship will necessitate a discriminating choice of music to be used. "Music," said Dr. Luther, "is second only to the Word of God in moving human hearts." In order that the hearts of our worshipers may be moved to adore, thank, and praise the Triune God, Christian themes and moods are to prevail in the music chosen for your wedding. This eliminates secular songs, no matter how popular they may be, both as instrumental and vocal selections. The pastor will be happy to discuss appropriate wedding music with you and will approve your solo selections. Its worshipful nature is the criterion for wedding music, not its commonness.

This understanding of the Christian wedding as worship, however, does not necessarily eliminate the use of contemporary hymns and worship forms, or other musical instruments, so long as their content meets the standard of Christian worship. Those who plan to be married at Trinity are expected to work out the form and music of the wedding service in consultation with the pastor and within the framework of these policies so that an appropriate service of worship and praise to God will edify this solemn and joyous occasion.