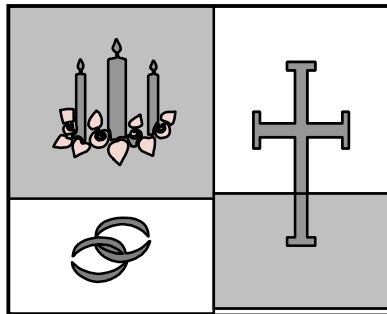


Guidelines for a Christian Wedding Service



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Approved by the Board of Lay Ministry, 2006

Congratulations on your engagement! We pray God's blessings upon you as you are about to enter into that special relationship called marriage.

Because you have contacted Trinity Lutheran Church regarding your wedding plans, we are assuming that you desire to have a **Christian Wedding**, where Christ is the center of all that we do, and that you desire His presence at your marriage service. Thus, the wedding service which you are anticipating is different from many other wedding services in that it is a **Christian** wedding.

This booklet has been prepared to answer some of the questions you may have, and to help make your wedding day more enjoyable for all participants. It contains important information and guidelines.

A Christian wedding is a service of worship, asking Christ's blessing upon the marriage. It is **not** a social event; rather, it is a spiritual worship service of the church, in which the pastor and the congregation unite in prayer with the wedding couple to share in their joy. It is also a legal act in which the pastor acts as an official of the state.

The social aspect of the marriage is to be kept separate from the marriage service. This is to take place at the reception or later.

The regulations and guidelines for a Christian wedding shall always be those of the church and the state. The music, the vows, and the service shall thus be approved by Trinity Lutheran Church and agree with the traditions and worship practices of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The "Order for Marriage" is a service of the church, just as Holy Communion, Baptism, and the Burial of the Dead are services of the church. The church, therefore, has both the right and the responsibility to oversee the marriage service so that it is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the authorized liturgy of the congregation. The marriage service is not the private option of the couple being married, their families, or friends.

The **clergy** of Trinity Lutheran Church are given the responsibility of ordering and conducting the services of the church to which they are called to serve. This responsibility applies equally to the occasional services (weddings, funerals) as well as to the regularly scheduled services of the congregational worship.

Music

In the Lutheran Church, a wedding is not a "ceremony" but a "worship service" of the congregation. Weddings are worship services to God, and therefore, the music has the same relationship to the service in these cases as it does in the ordinary Sunday Worship Service. Therefore, the use of secular music shall not be permitted in the church. "Secular" music is defined as that which is not Christ-centered. In other words, any music to be used in connection with the marriage service should be equally fitting and acceptable for use in the Sunday Worship Service.

The two necessary criteria for the selection of music for use in the wedding services are these:

1. That the text (in the case of vocal music) express the Gospel of Jesus Christ;
2. That the music provide a setting which will enforce and enhance the worship of God's people and which will serve as a worthy offering to God.

Trinity Lutheran Church has an organ, a grand piano, and an electronic keyboard that are often used in wedding services. There is the possibility of other instrumentation and you are encouraged to arrange this with the pastor.

The pastors and/or the musicians at Trinity can help to provide a selection of music to assist you.

Congregational Participation:

Congregational participation in the marriage service in the singing of hymns and praying of the Lord's Prayer should be encouraged. The singing of hymns by the congregation can be an excellent way of helping those assembled with you to share in the thanks, praise, and invoking of God's blessings upon your wedding.

Scripture Readings:

Each wedding couple will be asked to choose two or three Scripture readings that they would like to have as part of their service. A sample list can be provided by the pastor.

Vows:

The sharing of vows is an important part of the wedding service. An approved listing of vows will be provided to you by the pastor.

Wedding Bulletin/Order of Worship

You are encouraged to have a wedding bulletin/order of worship. This provides an outline of the worship service. You may also wish to list the names of those who are participating in your wedding service.

This bulletin shall be approved by the pastor before printing. The pastor also has samples of other services that can be shared to help give you ideas and/or options.

Arrangements:

The couple planning to be married is to meet with the pastor as soon as possible after setting the date for the wedding. This is necessary to work out the details regarding the wedding service, read through these guidelines together, and to help the couple plan for the marriage through pre-marital counseling.

Because of our normal worship service at 6:00 PM on Saturday evenings, Saturday afternoon weddings shall not be held later than 2:00 PM if a reception is being held in the Fellowship Hall, or no later than 3:00 PM if the reception is elsewhere. It is strongly recommended to have the pictures taken before the service.

The couple planning to be married should contact the organist (if Trinity's organist is used) after the first visit with the pastor. The couple is to meet with the organist and mutually agree on processional and recessional music and also the solos and hymns to be sung. No final selection of music, hymns, or solos is to be made without approval of the pastor.

If any family member or friend is desired to serve as a musician, this must be approved by the pastor. An organist from Trinity, who is familiar with the instrument, must meet with any guest organist. All guest organists shall follow these guidelines.

The called pastors of Trinity will arrange all weddings at Trinity Lutheran Church. If any other Lutheran clergyman, in fellowship with the LCMS is to be involved, the Senior Pastor of Trinity must be consulted for approval. Guest pastors shall follow these guidelines for the wedding worship service.

The practice of preparing a bulletin outlining the order of service is a good one. The pastor can help you in this and can show you examples. The preliminary bulletin outline should be prepared as soon as possible. The complete outline should be available **no less than three weeks prior to the wedding**. It will be typed and a proof copy will be run for your approval. A telephone number where you can be reached between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM should be included in the outline in case our church secretary has any questions.

The musician(s) and/or soloist are very vital people in the wedding service, and should receive remuneration. A table of fees is given elsewhere in this booklet. An honorarium should be given to the pastor, but it is up to the individual as to what the amount should be. There is also a fee for custodial services.

Pre-marital counseling:

Each wedding couple will meet for a pre-determined number of sessions with the pastor to do pre-marital counseling. The pastors use the PREPARE inventory which assists couples in looking at a variety of areas in their life, both as individuals and as a couple. The fee for PREPARE is \$35. These materials will be used throughout the sessions prior to the wedding

Flowers:

The bridal couple has permission to have altar flowers, using the vases of the church. Additional baskets or bouquets are permitted but should be placed elsewhere in the chancel. No flowers shall be placed directly on the altar (the fair linen). Candelabra bouquets and/or pew ribbons will be permitted only if attached with cloth-covered wire. No tape or bare wire is to be used. If you desire to leave flowers for the weekend service, arrangements should be made with the church's administrative assistant.

Reception:

If the reception is to be held in the Fellowship Hall of the church, arrangements are to be made in advance with the church. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the persons to be contacted, and the fees for serving the reception, may be obtained by calling the church's administrative assistant. **Alcoholic beverages will not be served or permitted on the church premises at any time.**

Photographs:

No flash photos may be taken during the worship service. Arrangements for posed photos before or after the service can be made if requested. Please ask friends and relatives not to take flash photos during the service. A time exposure of the bridal couple may be taken from the rear of the church during the service. Flash pictures of the entry of the bridal party as they start down the aisle are also permissible. Be sure to inform the pastor if you will be taking pictures before the service.

Video Taping:

Many couples today have their wedding service video taped. If you plan to have your service taped, we ask that you inform your camera operator that the taping can be done from either the balcony or from a position near the baptismal font. Video taping in or near the chancel area is not permitted. Also, the operator should not move about during the service.

Recording the Service:

Your wedding service may be recorded on cassette tape. The bridal couple should furnish a cassette tape, which can be used on the equipment provided by the church. A 90-minute tape is recommended.

Conduct:

Marriage is a very joyful experience. It is also a serious one. You and your wedding party are requested **not** to partake of any alcoholic beverages before the rehearsal or the wedding service.

Candles:

It is assumed that the altar candles will be lit for all services, and such candles are provided by the congregation. Candles for additional candelabra will be at the expense of the couple. They must have wax shields to protect the chancel area, or the candelabra must stand on protective plastic. The wedding couple may desire to use the unity candles as a part of the wedding service. A base and stand for this can be provided by the church. The wedding couple is responsible for supplying the unity candle(s).

Acolytes:

Care should be exercised in selecting the acolytes (candlelighters) for your wedding service. They should be old enough and tall enough so there is no difficulty in lighting the altar candles. It is recommended that they wear the acolyte robes provided by the church, or they may wear special formal attire as designated by the bride.

Flower Girl and Ring Bearer:

Care should be exercised in the selection of the flower girl and/or ring bearer. They should be old enough to stand in formal posture, be attentive to the wedding service, and contribute to the overall worship experience. Flower girls and/or ring bearers are not necessary. It would be better not to have them than to have a small child who takes away from the beauty and the solemnity of your wedding worship service.

License:

The wedding couple will make arrangements for their marriage license in plenty of time prior to the day of the ceremony, and they should be certain to have the license brought to the church's administrative assistant in plenty of time for her to make the necessary inclusions on the documents that are required by the state. Please bring the license into the church office at least a full week before the wedding.

Rehearsal:

Please instruct the wedding party to arrive on time for the wedding rehearsal. All members of the wedding party, including the ushers, musician(s), and parents should be present for the rehearsal. In view of the fact that the rehearsal takes place in the house of God, fitting attire should be worn. The rehearsal should take less than an hour. It will be designed to assist you in a smooth service. Special requests by the wedding couple shall be considered, by the pastor and the regulations of Trinity Lutheran Church shall prevail.

Rehearsal Dinner:

If you desire the attendance by the pastor and his wife and the organist and his/her spouse, please send an invitation so their schedule may be arranged.

Colors:

The liturgical color for the day will be the color used on the altar and worn by the pastor.

Dressing Room:

Dressing rooms for the wedding party are provided. One is located under the narthex at the north end of the Fellowship Hall. The library is often used as well.

Order of Procession:

The grandparents are ushered down the center aisle, then the groom's parents, then the bride's mother. The seating of the bride's mother is the signal for the wedding to begin. The bride's mother is the last one down the aisle before the wedding party, and the bride's parents are the first ones to leave after the wedding service is over.

As the wedding party assembles before the altar, the order for entry is: acolytes (if used), the groomsmen and bridesmaids, best man and maid (or matron) of honor, then the groom and the bride. If a ring bearer and/or flower girl is used, they enter just preceding the bride.

Board of Lay Ministry:

A member of Trinity's Board of Lay Ministry will be available one hour before the scheduled start of the wedding service. It is his job to assist members of the wedding party, guests, and the pastor so that your wedding will run smoothly. He is there to help you.

We are overjoyed to share with you on this special day. We give thanks to our Lord Jesus and pray His blessings on your wedded life together!