



# Guidelines for a Christian Wedding Service

## **TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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## **Congratulations on your engagement!**

We pray God's blessings upon you as you make plans to enter that special relationship that is marriage.

*You have contacted Trinity Lutheran Church regarding your wedding. By doing so, we assume that it is your desire to have a **Christian Wedding**.*

*A Christian Wedding differs from other wedding services in that Christ is the center of all that we do and that you desire His presence at your marriage service.*

*This booklet has been compiled to provide you with the guidelines used by this congregation as they pertain to a Christian Wedding held in our sanctuary.*

*When used as a reference, you will find answers to many of the questions that arise while preparing for your wedding service.*

*It is our intention to help make your wedding day enjoyable for all participants.*

# A CHRISTIAN WEDDING



...is a service of worship that asks Christ’s blessing upon the marriage. It is **not** a social event. It is, however, 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. As such, it is a matter of divine seriousness. The service must reflect God’s glory and His blessing of the holy union of a man and a woman as husband and wife, and do nothing to diminish them in the eyes of God and those present. The Holy Scriptures teach that God, in creating the world, gave marriage to be a life-long union of one man and one woman. Genesis 2:24 states, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” As a man and a woman freely commit themselves one to another, God himself joins them as one in marriage. Thus, the social aspect of the marriage is to be kept separate from the marriage service. Therefore, it is expected that the social aspect of the wedding take place at a reception or gathering following the service. The regulations and guidelines followed by this congregation for a Christian wedding shall always be those of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (“LCMS”). The music, the vows, and the service shall thus be approved by the called pastor(s) of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cedar Rapids, Iowa (“Trinity Lutheran Church” or “Trinity”) and must reflect the Scriptural worship practices of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The “*Rite of Holy Matrimony*” is a service of the church, just as the “*Service of the Sacrament*”, “*Rite of Holy Baptism*”, and the “*Funeral Service*” are services of the church. Therefore, the church has both the right and the responsibility to oversee the *Rite of Holy Matrimony*, so that it is conducted in accordance with the provisions of the authorized liturgy of this congregation. Accordingly, the general content and the conduct of the *Rite of Holy Matrimony* are neither prerogatives nor options of the couple being married, their families, or friends. This is so, even though the wedding couple’s voluntary acceptance of the requirements for a Christian wedding in accordance with the beliefs and practices

of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, will also confer rights and impose responsibilities on the bride and the groom under civil law. Consequently, the social aspect of the marriage event is to be kept separate from the marriage service itself and may take place at a reception or similar gathering of the wedding couple’s family and friends, without the necessity of Church sanction. 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.

## **Use of facilities**

It is the policy of this congregation that the use of the facilities of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church for the purposes of a worship service including the *Rite of Holy Matrimony* are limited in that either the bride or the groom must be a member in good standing of this congregation or, with the permission of the pastor and Board of Elders, a member of a sister LCMS congregation.

## **Music**



The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod considers a wedding not as a “ceremony” but as a “worship service” of the congregation. As it is a worship service to God, the music for a wedding has the same relationship to the service as does the music in the ordinary Sunday Worship Service. Consequently, 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 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 must also provide a setting which will recognize and enhance the worship of God’s people and which will serve as a worthy offering to God.

The same criteria are applied to the voluntary music, processional music, and the recessional music. Secular processionals, such as the “Lohengrin Wedding March” (“Here Comes the Bride”) are not to be used as a part of a wedding service at Trinity. Suggestions for meaningful wedding music, including processionals, recessionals, solos, and congregational hymns, may be obtained from the Director of Music for this congregation. This should be done early in the planning process. Trinity has available a pipe organ, grand piano, and electronic keyboards that are often used as a part of the wedding services. Other instrumentation may be used, and you are encouraged to arrange this with the pastor.

## **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 *Rite of Holy Matrimony*. Couples wishing to use vows that are not a part of the printed rite **MUST** meet with the pastor early in the planning process to have their alternate vows approved by him.

## **Arrangements**

The couple planning to be married should 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, to read through these guidelines together, and to help the couple plan for the marriage through pre-marital counseling. Because a regular worship service is scheduled at 6:00 PM on Saturday evenings, Saturday afternoon weddings shall not be scheduled for 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. Saturday evening weddings shall not be held before 7:30 PM. 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 should meet with the organist and mutually agree on processional and recessional music as well as any solos or hymns to be sung during the service. The

final selection of music, hymns, solos and the like require the approval of the pastor. If the wedding couple desires any family member or friend to serve as a musician, this must be approved by the pastor. Guest organists must meet with the organist from Trinity to familiarize themselves with the instrument. It is customary that the called pastor(s) of Trinity Lutheran Church oversee and conduct *Rite of Holy Matrimony*. If any other Lutheran clergyman in fellowship with the LCMS is to be involved, the Senior Pastor of Trinity must grant his approval. Guest pastors shall follow these guidelines for the wedding worship service.

## **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. Pastor has samples of other services that can be shared to help provide ideas and/or options. The preliminary bulletin outline should be prepared as soon as possible. This outline should be provided to the church secretary **no less than three weeks prior to the wedding**. After it is approved by the pastor, a proof copy will be run for your approval. A phone number where you can be reached between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM should be included in the outline should our church secretary have questions for you.

## **Fees**

The musician(s) and/or soloist are people vital to the wedding service and should receive remuneration. An honorarium should be given to the pastor, but it is up to the individual as to what the amount should be. There is an established fee for custodial services. The pastor will provide a list of fees at your first meeting.

## **Pre-marital counseling**

Each wedding couple will meet for a predetermined number of sessions with the pastor for counseling. Any materials used during this process will be at the discretion of the pastor.

## **Flowers**

The bridal couple has permission to have flowers placed on the altar, using the vases provided by the church. Additional baskets or bouquets are permitted but must 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, arrangements should be made with the church secretary.

## **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 secretary.

**Alcoholic beverages will not be served or consumed on the church premises**

**(building, parking lot, or grounds), at any time.**

## **Photographs**

Flash photography is not allowed 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 photography of the entry of the bridal party as they start down the aisle is permissible. Inform the pastor if you will be taking wedding photographs prior to the service.

## **Video Recording**

Many couples today choose to have video recording of their wedding service. If you plan to have your service recorded, your camera operator may record from the balcony or from a stationary position near the front of the sanctuary if approved by the pastor. Video recording in or near the chancel area is not permitted. Again, it is noted that the operator should not move about during the service.

## **Conduct**

While marriage is a very joyful experience, it is also a serious one. **Alcoholic beverages shall not be consumed by you or the wedding party prior to the rehearsal or wedding service.**

## **Candles**

It is assumed that the candles in the candelabras will be lit for all services, and such candles are provided by the congregation. Candles for any 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 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 (candle-lighters) for your wedding service. They should be old enough and tall enough to light the candles without difficulty. 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. They should be four years old or

older. Flower girls and/or ring bearers are not required; 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 secretary 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 will be considered, but 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 Rooms**

Dressing rooms for the wedding party are provided. One is located under the narthex at the north end of the Fellowship Hall. The library may be 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 Elders**

A member of Trinity's Board of Elders 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!