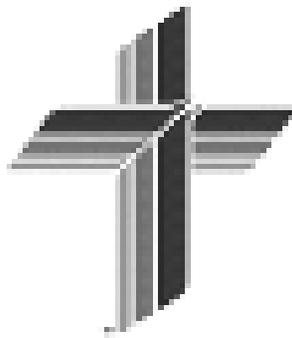


*Wedding Handbook
& Guidelines for
St. Luke Lutheran Church~Posen
Township,
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
Wood Lake, MN*



(Revised and Edited 2014)

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Introduction

Dear engaged couple:

Congratulations on your forthcoming marriage! This holy union for which you seek the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is one of the most important relationships in the life of a Christian who chooses to marry.

We at St. Luke's Lutheran Church consider it a privilege to serve you and our Lord, Jesus Christ, as you prepare to come into His sanctuary and publicly make your vows, seeking guidance and blessings from Holy Scripture.

As you no doubt realize, this next step in your life will be a big one—something which should not be taken lightly—yet one that comes with many joys and blessings.

We are concerned about you and your future life together in Holy Matrimony. That is why we strive to do our best to prepare couples seeking marriage to build a strong foundation for their marriage. That foundation, of course, is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 1:23)

May the Lord bless your preparation time, as you seek to do His will in all aspects of your life.

Please take the time to carefully read through and understand this entire handbook. It will help guide us in the preparation and planning of the special wedding ceremony where the Lord will declare you to be husband and wife. If there are questions or concerns, please feel free to ask at anytime

In Christ,

Rev. Dr. Joel G. Koepp and Elder's of St. Luke's Lutheran Church-Posen Township

The Wedding As Worship

Even though God has established the marriage relationship, there can be marriages and wedding services apart from the church that are in accordance with the will of God. This is because God has provided this relationship as something for the human race as a whole, which is not limited to the church. Therefore, the regulation and recording of marriages is the responsibility of the state and not a sacrament or exclusive right of the church.

Nevertheless, a Christian will want to have both a Christian service and marriage because of his/her relationship with Jesus Christ. As the Christian desires to follow God's will and to give glory to God in all that he/she does (2 Corinthians 5:15-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31), so also he/she will want to have God's blessings on the marriage, begin that marriage in Christ, and give witness to Christ in the wedding ceremony. **The wedding ceremony is a worship service** (much like Sunday worship!) In which the bride and groom make their commitment to live in the marriage relationship as God established it, and thus they invite their fellow Christians to join them in worship, to pray with them and for them as they begin their marriage. The object of our worship is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He alone is worthy of our worship and adoration.

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. This document represents our heartfelt desire to aid you in planning a worshipful and joyful **Christ-centered** wedding service.

Pre-Marital Preparation

The Pastor and the couple will meet to help the couple identify the strengths on which they will build and the weaknesses (growth areas) on which they will need to work. The Pastor will also provide information to the couple regarding other aspects of married life in the marriage relationship as needed or desired. This will also be a time for the Pastor to help the couple prepare the wedding ceremony.

We believe that since the beginning marriage is not something to be taken lightly. **God has established marriage for the good of society, but also for the good of man and woman who plan to enter that relationship.** Part of that good of marriage also includes specific directions as to how a husband-and-wife are to act toward each other and toward people outside the relationship.

The couple is expected to meet with Pastor a minimum of three times for 1 to 2 hours each time. Materials will be also given to take home to be read through and used at home.

Sexual Activity

God has given the gift of **the sexual relationship to people to be used in marriage** for the purpose of bringing new children into the world and for the expression of affection and pleasure between husband and wife. He forbids the misuse of this gift by using it outside of the marriage relationship, often called fornication and adultery (Genesis 39:9; Exodus 20:14). He has also encouraged all to **honor the marriage relationship and keep it pure** (Hebrews 13:4).

This marriage relationship begins when the man and woman make their public vows to commit themselves to each other as husband and wife until death parts them. In the case of a church wedding, this is done in the presence of the congregation attending the ceremony and **in the presence of the Lord**.

Christian couples are to exercise self-control during the dating and engagement period. This time should be considered a special time of anticipation-getting to know each other's interests, going to church and receiving God's gift of forgiveness together, attending social events, spending time with each other's families and friends, and also self-preparation and prayer for your future life together.

Couples who are struggling, like all sins, should repent, seek forgiveness from God and one another, and by God's grace amend their life into conformity of God's will. Rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and with a clean heart, couples should then look forward to their wedding day and their future together as husband and wife.

Living Together

St. Luke's Lutheran Church does not condone couples "living together" before marriage. In cases in which couples have been living together, **special living arrangements must be made to resolve this situation before wedding plans proceed.**

Normally these arrangements would include the following:

- 1) Recognition of this type of premarital cohabitation as sin, repentance shown for that sin by the couple, forgiveness from God for this sin, living arrangements changed and the wedding plans continue with a pure heart
- 2) Another option would be for the couple to separate for a short period and get married immediately (within a month) in a small, simple ceremony. A Blessing Of Marriage Ceremony (which is very similar to a wedding ceremony) may then take place on a future date chosen by the couple that could include all of the festivities of a traditional wedding ceremony. This would allow couples that had already made arrangements for a specific date to follow through with preplanned festivities.

3) Another option would be to seek a wedding from a state official

A University of Wisconsin study of 12,000 couples shows that couples living together have an 85% relationship failure rate and their divorce rate doubles to 75%. Our first and ultimate responsibility as a church is to hold true to what Scriptures tell us (mentioned above). We also want to help you build a strong and fulfilling marriage with the greatest chance of success possible.

Who Can Be Married At St. Luke's?

A wedding at St. Luke's is normally a privilege reserved for members of the congregation, or for those seeking to commit to a regular and active membership in the congregation. In this regard, ultimately, it is at the discretion of the Pastor of St. Luke's in consultation with the elders whether a wedding will take place in our church. Holy Scriptures speak only of heterosexual marriage unions; therefore, St. Luke's Lutheran Church will not solemnize, officiate, recognize, or bless same-sex partnerships or unions.

Wedding Date

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please call the church office before you make reservations for reception, etc. The dates of your wedding service and rehearsal must be approved by the Pastor. In most cases, an appointment with the officiating Pastor is necessary before the date will be reserved on the church calendar. The date and time available for a wedding will depend on what other activities the congregation has previously scheduled.

No weddings may be scheduled:

- December 23-25
- Palm Sunday-Easter Sunday

Decorations

To maintain proper reverence for the Lord's house, the decorations may be as simple or elaborate as the couple chooses, as long as they conform to the policies given in this document.

No decorations may be placed on or attached to the altar, communion rails, or baptismal font. Flowers may be placed on the altar, only on the designated spots, and must be live (plants or cut flowers/floral arrangements). The church has stands for flowers that may be placed on either side of the altar. If it is the desire of the couple that the flowers be used for worship services following the wedding, notice should be given in writing to the church office so that the appropriate acknowledgment can be made in the church bulletin.

The color of the altar cloths (Paraments) will depend on the season of the church year. All Paraments remain in place during wedding ceremonies.

Marriage/unity candles can be used. The church does have one available with the stand for use, or the couple may purchase their own candles.

White center aisle runners may be rented from outside sources. If bows, ropes, or ribbons are to be attached to pews, wire/metal fasteners and tape are not to be used (they damage the pews). Please ask your florist for special plastic pew clips designed for this purpose.

All decorations should be removed from the church the day of the wedding so that the custodian may clean the church for any upcoming worship services.

Wedding Bulletins

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have printed bulletins to inform guests of the order of service and the names of the participants in the wedding. If desired, the church may print a standard wedding bulletin. If desired, special bulletin covers may also be purchased through the church office and the bulletin can be printed on the special cover, or this can be done by an outside printer in consultation with the Pastor.

Photographs And Videos

We recognize the value pictures and videotapes hold for a couple. Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary or on the church grounds with flash/special lighting equipment either before or after the service and during the processional and recessional.

Because flash photography is disruptive in the worship service, **no flash photography is permitted during the service itself.** Photographs may be taken during the ceremony without a flash if taken discretely from the back or the balcony. Video cameras may be operated quietly from the balcony. The church also has available the equipment to videotape your service. No photographer (professional, friend, or family) is allowed to disrupt the worship ceremony. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform their guests of St. Luke's policy.

Order Of Service

All wedding ceremonies at St. Luke's Lutheran Church and by St. Luke's Lutheran Church Pastors are to follow the order of service as revised from the hymnal (pg. 275 of Lutheran Service Book and/or Agenda). This includes weddings done at other locations. Only LCMS Pastors may preach and officiate. The wedding vows are not alterable for the wedding ceremony.

Special vows, poems, “our song”, etc.. Are to be done elsewhere, such as in private or the wedding reception.

The order of service is as follows:

**Prelude*

**Seating of Honored Guests*

**Processional*

**Invocation and Opening Address*

P. In the name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C. Amen.

P. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God and before His Church to witness the union of this man and this woman in holy matrimony. This is an honorable estate instituted and blessed by God in Paradise, before humanity’s fall into sin.

In marriage, we see a picture of the communion between Christ and His bride, the Church. Our Lord blessed and honored marriage with His presence and first miracle at Cana in Galilee. This estate is also commended to us by the apostle Paul as good and honorable. Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into inadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for the mutual companionship, help, and support that each person ought to receive from the other, both in prosperity and adversity. Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another. Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness. God also established marriage for the procreation of children who are to be brought up in the fear and instruction of the Lord so that they may offer Him their praise.

For these reasons God has established the holy estate that *Groom* and *Bride* wish to enter. They desire our prayers as they begin their marriage in the Lord’s name and with His blessing.

**Confession and Absolution*

P. With the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, you have come to understand, and have acknowledged the truthfulness of God’s Holy Word regarding our relationship with Him and others, where we have failed to keep His commands. The Lord has given you the conviction that despite the many earthly reasons we may give for all of our sins, there is no godly reason or approval for such actions.

Furthermore, our good and gracious God has brought you to faith and belief in His Son, Jesus Christ. God has granted you His grace, through the merits of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection in order that your sins and the sins of the whole world would be paid for, and that those who live in Christ's forgiveness no longer live for themselves but for Christ, who for their sake died and was raised.

So that you may give public testimony to these truths, receive the strength to live your lives anew, and begin this marriage with a clean slate, I now ask you: Do you confess that you have sinned in thought, word, and deed and that you justly deserve His temporal and eternal punishment? If so, then answer: "I do so confess."

Do you believe that our Lord Jesus Christ died for you and shed His blood for you on the cross of the forgiveness of all of your sins? If so, then answer: "I do so believe."

Do you pray to God, for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of His beloved Son to be gracious and merciful to you? If so, then answer: "I do so pray."

Do you believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? If so, then answer: "I do so believe."

Let it be done for you as you believe. In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Vows and Exchanges of Rings*

P. *Groom*, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the Church, giving Himself up for her? Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and , forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

Groom: I will.

P. *Bride*, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you submit to him as the Church submits to Christ? Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.

Bride: I will.

The bridegroom will repeat after the Pastor.

Groom: I, Groom, Take you, Bride, To be my wedded wife, To have and to hold from this day forward, For better, for worse, For richer, for poorer, In sickness and in health, To

love and to cherish, Till death us do part, According to God's will; And I pledge to you my faithfulness.

The bride will repeat after the Pastor.

Bride: I, Bride, Take you, Groom, To be my wedded husband, To have and to hold from this day forward, For better, for worse, For richer, for poorer, In sickness and in health, To love and cherish, Till death us do part, According to God's holy will; And I pledge to you my faithfulness.

The rings are presented.

P. Let us pray. Almighty Father, You have generously created all things to serve us for our good. Send Your blessing upon this couple who shall wear these + rings as a constant reminder of their marital fidelity. Grant that by Your mercy they may live gladly and faithfully in this holy estate; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

C. Amen.

While giving the ring, each says after the Pastor these words:

Receive this ring As a pledge and token Of wedded love and faithfulness. In the name of the Father And of the Son And of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

**Pronouncement of Marriage- The couple may kneel.*

**Couple may rise.*

**Scripture Readings:*

** Wedding Party Seated???*

**Hymn???*

**Homily*

**Lighting of the Unity Candle???*

**The Prayers*

**Lord's Prayer*

**Blessing of the Couple*

**Benediction*

**Introduction of the Couple*

**Recessional*

**Postlude*

Wedding music

The couple should consult the Pastor regarding arrangements for an organist, accompanist, soloist, or other desired musicians. All use of musicians from outside the congregation and music to be included in the ceremony must be cleared through the Pastor.

The Pastor uses the following criteria regarding the approval of submitted music:

1. The text should be Christ-centered
2. The theology of the text shall be in concert with the theology of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
3. The music should not be associated with any secular, social, political, or cultural event or function which will detract from the sacredness of Christian worship in a wedding service.
4. The timbre, structure, and general “sound” of the proposed music should be appropriate for a Christian church wedding.

The Pastor will be happy to provide insight and ideas. The musicians playing for your wedding may also be willing to meet with you to give you samples of appropriate choices.

Why not “Ave Maria”?

“Ave Maria” was Charles Gounod’s most famous song. It was originally titled, “Meditation sur le premier Prelude de Piano de J.S.Bach” and was first published for violin and piano in 1853. Gounod added the Latin words in 1859. “Ave Maria” is an arrangement of the “C Major Prelude” from J.S. Bach’s “Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I” (1722), in which Gounod’s original melody is cleverly superimposed over Bach’s Prelude. The text for “Ave Maria” is based on the well-known “Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin.”

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nuc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Few would disagree that the music to “Ave Maria” is very beautiful. However, the lyrics are not in line with what we believe as Lutheran Christians. Our Lord tells us that “No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6) As God incarnate, Jesus Christ is the only way that we approach God. There are several other beautiful musical options from the same time. That may be used in place of “Ave Maria.”

Why not “Bridal Chorus”?

The “Bridal Chorus” March, sometimes requested by bridal couples as a wedding processional, is from an opera by Richard Wagner. The opera takes place in the court of King Henry I (10th Century). The lead soprano, Elsa, is accused of murdering her brother, Gottfried. She is defended from this accusation in a victorious combat by a knight who arrives for the combat in a boat drawn by a swine. This knight is Lohengrin, who successfully defends Elsa’s innocence.

Elsa and Lohengrin make plans to marry. At the beginning of the wedding, (where the bridal chorus march appears in the opera), an evil heathen magician appears, and tells Elsa that Lohengrin is also a magician, and is concealing his true identity from her for evil reasons.

Elsa and Lohengrin marry anyway, even though Lohengrin tells Elsa she is not to inquire about his true identity. The marriage is consummated. Curiosity leads Elsa to ask Lohengrin his true identity, and he reveals to her that he is her brother who had been transformed by the evil magician who had appeared at the beginning of the wedding scene. Evil prevails, Lohengrin is taken away in the boat drawn by the swine, and Elsa is left to die in despair.

It is generally wise to avoid the use of any opera music in connection with Christian worship. Many operas, while containing music which is beautiful, certainly virtuosic, and often extraordinarily demanding on the skills of the musician, are built on plots which contain murder, suicide, illicit sex, and often have heathen influences as well. There are exceptions, but caution must be practiced in the selection of music from operas for use in worship.

An additional note of interest regarding the use of “Bridal Chorus” March for wedding processions: many people, regardless of church affiliation or cultural viewpoints regard the use of this music as boorish and in poor taste (as the not so popular words have been added to the tune).

It is the responsibility of the couple to make sure all musicians have the sheet music needed for the wedding or to place the order and purchase music that is not on hand. Sheet music should be in the hands of the musicians at least one month in advance to assure they have ample time to practice and prepare for your wedding.

Open/Close Of Church

The opening and closing of the church will depend on the schedule of church events around the time of your wedding and needs to be coordinated with the Pastor.

Wedding Rehearsal

The purpose of a wedding rehearsal is to acquaint the wedding party with the flow and movement of the service. Rehearsals can accomplish that goal in approximately one hour or less if all members of the wedding party are punctual and cooperative.

The church is the House of God also at the time of the wedding rehearsal and should be treated with reverence and respect.

Rehearsal Dinner/Wedding Reception

If the officiating Pastor (and his wife/family) is expected at the rehearsal dinner and/or reception, a written invitation should be given in advance. Pastors do not automatically assume they are invited to these functions.

Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the building, parking lot, or on the church grounds. If members of the wedding party show up under the influence of intoxicants at the rehearsal or wedding ceremony, the Pastor may call off the ceremony because the members of the wedding party are not in a state of preparedness for worship.

Kissing

Extended kissing at the altar is not in good taste. Some couples wish to seal their marriage at the close of the service with a kiss. If this is desired, it should be remembered that this kiss is symbolic of the sacred union which is just taken place. It should be light and brief (G rated). It is never to be a display of intense affection (save for the honeymoon!) placed on public display.

Receptions at St. Luke's

Please speak with the Pastor for information on receptions in St. Luke's Fellowship Hall.

Rice and confetti

The use of these items following the wedding is not permitted.

License

Minnesota State law requires couples to secure a license to marry. The bride and groom must go to the county clerk's office together and bring photo identification. Other information needed is as follows:

Marriage Licenses:

\$115 (without 12 hours of premarital counseling)

\$40 (with 12 hours of premarital counseling. Must present educator's statement as per statutory requirements at the time of application)

There is a 5 day waiting period for marriage license issuance.

Effective August 1, 2009, both applicants must apply for the marriage license ~ if one party is unable to apply in person, the absentee applicant will need to complete a 'Supplemental Application form. The 5-day waiting period does not start until the 'Supplemental Application' form has been correctly completed & returned, along with the correct fee.

If there has been a felony conviction by either applicant, on or after August 1, 2000, & the marriage application involves a name change by either party, additional forms are required, along with an additional waiting period before the license is issued.

A Marriage License is valid for a period of six months from the date issued.

Request for wedding at St. Luke's Lutheran Church

Name of Groom: _____ Name of Bride _____

Requested date of ceremony: _____ Time: _____

Write at least a couple of sentences or short phrases that complete the following statement and that reflect YOUR feelings:

“We want to be married in the church because...”

We hereby acknowledge that we have read the Wedding Handbook in its entirety and agree to abide by it in any subsequent planning of our wedding at St. Luke's Lutheran Church.

(Signature of Groom)

(Signature of Bride)

If your desire is to be married at St. Luke's, please return this form to the church office in person or by mail as soon as possible.

A session with the Pastor to confirm your request cannot be scheduled without it.

Wedding Information Sheet

To be filled out by the couple and return to the Pastor ASAP

Groom: _____

Bride: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ (Home)

Phone: _____ (Home)

_____ (Cell) _____ (Work)

_____ (Cell) _____ (Work)

Previously married: Yes ___ No ___

Previously married: Yes ___ No ___

Age _____

Age _____

Address after marriage (if known): _____

Wedding: Date _____ Hour _____

Rehearsal: Date: _____ Hour _____

Reception: Yes ___ No ___ Place: _____

Approximate number of guests: _____

Best Man: _____ Maid/Matron of Honor _____

Groomsmen _____

Bridesmaids _____

Ushers _____

Ringbearer? _____ Flower Girl? _____

Important guests: (grandparents, parents, baptismal sponsors, etc.) _____

Unity Candle: Yes ___ No ___ If Yes: Church's ___ Buying own _____

Couples Checklist

- _____ Read through the entire Wedding Handbook
- _____ Fill out the “Wedding Information Sheet” and “Request For Wedding” sheet and return to the church office. At the same time, make an appointment to meet with the Pastor.
- _____ After meeting with the Pastor, call the church office to finalize your request for the wedding/rehearsal dates.
- _____ Meet with the Pastor about music for your wedding. Request musicians from St. Luke’s, if desired.
- _____ Purchase sheet music, if necessary
- _____ Share St. Luke’s decorating guidelines with your florist.
- _____ Share St. Luke’s photography guidelines with your photographer.
- _____ Secure a marriage license.
- _____ Purchase unity candle, if desired.
- _____ Coordinate open/close of church with Pastor.
- _____ Pay any fees by wedding date.

May God richly bless your planning, wedding day, and married lives together!