
PLANNING YOUR WEDDING

A CHRISTIAN WEDDING GUIDE DESIGNED FOR THE BRIDE AND GROOM.



A MARRIAGE PRAYER

Gracious Lord and Heavenly Father, You created marriage when You observed it was not good for man to be alone. We thank You for the wonderful blessing of shared love and ask Your favor upon our wedding preparations. We desire to establish a lasting and faithful life guided by Your Word and blessed by Your presence.

Bless also the day of our wedding in the same way that Your Son once favored the celebration of the wedding in Cana. Multiply our joy and help us to establish attitudes and practices that are a reflection of Your love and acceptance of us. As we begin the formal plans for the occasion of our wedding, please remove all worries and stress from our minds. Fill our hearts with Your love; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. **Amen**

TO THOSE ABOUT TO BE MARRIED

Your wedding day is one of the most important dates in your lives. And St. John is pleased to share this happy occasion with you. It is our prayer that your wedding be both beautiful and meaningful. Our intention is to maintain a worshipful atmosphere that glorifies God and centers on Jesus Christ. The guidelines contained within this booklet will help insure the reverence and devotion which is to surround the persons, actions, all preparations and rehearsal of the wedding service.

YOUR WEDDING PLANS

We know a lot about weddings. As you begin the planning process we want you to make use of all the years of experience we have so that your wedding is as stress-free as possible.

The Bible gives few directions regarding the details of the ceremony. In conversations with our staff, you will discover an openness to various ways of conducting your service. We welcome your suggestions, respect your opinions, and will strive always to maintain the reverence and Christcenteredness of the ceremony. We ask that all music in the ceremony honor a Christian understanding of love that is based on Christ. Other favorite love songs are best reserved for the reception. Some non-Christian selections may be suitable with staff approval. Please remember that the ceremony is first and foremost a worship service. We are thankful that Christians want the blessing of Christ in every aspect of their lives, and that you are coming before His altar to ask Him to be a witness of your vows. It is a wonderful and awesome moment, a time of worship and celebration and one that we hope you will treasure for the rest of your life.

SETTING THE DATE OF YOUR WEDDING

Due to special programs and activities in our sanctuary, on-site weddings are discouraged for the weeks around Easter, the month of Christmas as well as the week before and after Vacation Bible School. Special permission can be sought from the Wedding Coordinator and additional fees added.

Please call the Wedding Coordinator who will be able to give a list of available dates. Only one wedding may be booked per weekend.

SETTING THE TIME OF YOUR WEDDING

Because there may be other events or worship services scheduled to precede or follow your service, the use of the church from start to finish may not exceed 3.5 hours. An average service lasts 30 minutes, but may last longer if a number of solos are included.

A list of reserved dates and times is kept in the church calendar. This list is maintained purely on a first-come, first-served basis. Your date and time will be secured when payment is received.

THE PASTORS

We have great pastors at St. John who are honored to be a part of your wedding. You may list a preferred pastor on your forms, but note that due to other scheduling, your first choice might not be available. When your premarital counseling sessions are complete, you should make an appointment with the pastor who will be officiating your wedding. Please plan to discuss any special requests or suggestions you may have regarding the service. Don't be afraid to seek his counsel about how to handle difficult family situations involving fathers/mothers, relatives, seating arrangements or any unique circumstances that may require special sensitivity.

Outside pastors are welcome to officiate at your wedding as well. They need to send their credentials (i.e. where they went to seminary, where they currently are practicing ministry) to the wedding coordinator.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

Premarital counseling is strongly suggested for all couples married at St. John. Premarital counseling offers the opportunity to explore relationship issues (or potential issues) prior to marriage and set the stage for a thriving marriage. During premarital counseling, you will learn better communication skills and ways to resolve differences in a way that strengthens your relationship. To register or learn more about premarital counseling options available at St. John go to stjstl.net/premarital-mentoring.

THE WEDDING COORDINATOR

All weddings taking place at St. John require the use of St. John's Wedding Coordinator. The role of the Wedding Coordinator is two-fold. Primarily, she will review this booklet with the wedding couple prior to the wedding, serve as a liaison between the church and the couple, discuss church guidelines and answer questions. Secondly, she will attend the rehearsal and the wedding to oversee wedding activities as they relate to use of the church facilities.

Your personal coordinator will be assigned to you after you have made your payment and decide to proceed with your wedding plans. Normally, she will call you for a meeting approximately one month prior to your wedding. If you do not hear from her, please call the office to find out the assigned coordinator for your wedding.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF GUIDELINES

The following guidelines apply to all weddings in our church. We list them here to inform you, so you may inform the members of your families, your wedding party, and your guests, as needed.

1. The marriage ceremony is a sacred service of worship and celebration. We wish for it to be a joyous and meaningful occasion for everyone present.
2. Arrangements for weddings (and receptions) should be made as far ahead of the proposed date of the service as possible. When making arrangements, please consider the regularly scheduled services and activities of this church.
3. The taking of flash pictures by anyone during the formal/worship part of services is not appropriate. Please notify your family and friends accordingly. The processional and recessional, as well as poses before or after the service, provide the opportunities for a variety of pictures to be taken. Please review the section on photographs for more details.
4. The scattering of confetti, rice, birdseed, etc. is prohibited. Please tell this to your friends and relatives. Rice on concrete and hard surfaces is especially dangerous. Other scattered materials pose special cleanup problems for our facilities team.
5. Our buildings are smoke-free.
6. No alcohol is allowed on our campus during the rehearsal or the wedding.
7. Inappropriate signs should not be placed in or on the buildings, or on the cars of visitors, guests, or members of the wedding party. Please advise friends and relatives of this policy.
8. The wedding party and guests are allowed access to only those parts of the building associated with the ceremony and reception, if held onsite.
9. The church cannot be responsible for any lost or stolen articles. We urge you to place valuables in secure areas.
10. No pets allowed. Service dogs are welcome and are required to be leashed or harnessed.

REHEARSAL GUIDELINES

Wedding parties should remember that the church is God's house. Proper respect is always maintained. While we understand this is a time of celebration with life-long friends, please make every effort to maintain appropriate behavior during the rehearsal. A detailed rehearsal helps assure a dignified and beautiful ceremony. Schedule your rehearsal with the Wedding Coordinator. Please impress upon the wedding party that attendance and punctuality are vital. The rehearsal will begin promptly at the designated time and will be conducted by the wedding coordinator assigned to the wedding. Quiet observance of the coordinator's instructions will help the rehearsal to go quickly and smoothly. Rehearsals are set to a one-hour time limit.

ARRIVING FOR THE WEDDING

The Church will be reserved for two hours before the ceremony. The bride and her attendants are encouraged to arrive one hour before the wedding. The Bride's Room may be used as the dressing room for the bride and her attendants. Ushers are encouraged to arrive 45 minutes before the service, and the groom and groomsmen should arrive at the designated room at least 30 minutes prior to the wedding.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

The wedding service is rather brief. The longest form of the actual service requires less than one-half hour, except those services that include Holy Communion.

The Pre-Service Music is played by the musician or instrumentalist and usually begins 15 minutes before the service starts. A vocal solo could also be sung after the bride's mother is seated.

The Processional begins after the bride's mother is seated. No one should be ushered in after the processional has begun. The congregation remains seated when the attendants and bride enter the church. As the bridal party enters, walk naturally and slowly. When floor length gowns are worn, be careful to lift gowns free of the chancel steps.

The Scripture Reading is typically a compilation of various passages regarding the role of husband and wife and the establishment of a Christian home. It may be one that is special to you, which you may choose. If you wish to pick your own verse, please inform the pastor and he will accommodate your request. You may pick a favorite Bible text for the message as well; otherwise, the pastor will use Bible selections of his own choosing. The message will be short.

A Solo or Song is optional. In addition to music by a soloist, you may wish to consider the use of hymns. It is entirely appropriate to provide an opportunity for your guests to actively participate in this joyous service by singing.

The Vows are spoken by the pastor and then repeated by the bride and groom. Additional lines by the bride and groom may also be considered as long as the pastor has been so informed. The pastor will indicate when the bride and groom are to kneel.

The Lord's Prayer may be said by all or sung by the soloist.

The Recessional closes the service and the bridal party proceeds to the lobby at a normal pace. Selected ushers return to escort the immediate families of the bride and groom from the sanctuary. It is urged that all receiving lines be formed at the reception hall. A receiving line may be formed in the lobby of the church if time permits.

MUSIC FOR YOUR WEDDING

Music is an important part of worship, especially in Lutheran worship. In thinking about your wedding, keep in mind that Christian worship is joyful, Christ-centered, praises God, and confesses our faith in His Son. We acknowledge His grace as our enabling power in all of life and throughout all eternity.

Naturally, all music will reflect the nature of Christian worship. The music should be in keeping with the reverence that is observed upon entering the House of the Lord. It should reflect the values of a Christian marriage. The Director of Music will be happy to discuss music for your wedding which meets the criteria of Christian worship. While there is room for personal taste, the Director of Music will have final approval in all instances.

If there is to be a soloist or an additional musician, such as a trumpeter or violinist, it is the responsibility of the bride to see that the soloist contacts the musician. Soloists are to arrange a separate rehearsal with the musician, who does not generally attend the wedding rehearsal.

Many Christians are reviving the tradition of congregational songs during the wedding service. The singing of songs by the congregation can be an excellent way of helping those assembled to share in the thanks, praise and invoking of God's blessing upon your marriage. All music, processional, recessional, congregational songs, solos, etc., will reflect the Christian character of the wedding service. Music for the processional and recessional should be consistent with the solemn, joyful dignity of the marriage itself. The availability of fine Christian music is very abundant.

The Director of Music can serve as musician or recommend another musician for your wedding service. When the couple chooses not to utilize one of the above, approval must be obtained from the Director of Music. Final approval of any vocalist's selections and all organ and instrumental music played at the ceremony must be in the hands of the Director of Music of St. John's four weeks in advance of the wedding. He will have the ultimate authority in deciding the appropriateness of selections chosen.

PHOTOGRAPHY & SOUND

Since your wedding is a worship experience, all photographers, amateur and professional, are asked to reverence the ceremony and the church by following the policies outlined. It is true when they say, "A picture is worth a thousand words!" You will certainly want a lasting remembrance of this occasion recorded on film.

It is best to take as many pictures as possible prior to the actual ceremony. Because of custom, many pictures featuring both bride and groom will be taken after the actual worship service. An actual list of these pictures should be predetermined to make the most efficient use of time.

Pictures involving the pastor should be taken first so that he may be free to carry on other functions. There is often a limit on the time allowed for weddings because of another wedding, worship service, or pre-arranged cleaning schedule. You should ask about that limit and make sure the photographer honors it. Please express to your photographer that there are rules by which to abide.

Pictures with flash are permitted during both the processional and recessional portion of the ceremony. It is not unusual for attendants to stop for a brief pose as they enter. Flash pictures should be avoided during the actual service due to their disruptive nature. Time-lapsed photography without flash is acceptable, provided the photographer remains unobtrusive throughout the service.

Video cameras are a wonderful way to obtain a lasting and special record of the service. We welcome their use so long as they are not used in a disruptive manner. Any camera in the sanctuary area should be mounted on a tripod that is not moved during the service. Preferably it should be unmanned and be able to function with remote control. If a cameraman will be present, he should be suitably dressed and be given clear direction prior to the service. Questions about what might be appropriate may be asked of the Wedding Coordinator prior to the service.

St. John provides a qualified person to monitor the sanctuary sound system. The use of a sound technician is required for weddings at St. John.

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

The following guidelines will assist you with your floral and decorative arrangements::

1. The St. John Wedding Coordinator will have the ultimate authority on appropriate decorations for the church.
2. Flowers should be placed on the day of the wedding and well in advance of the service, before any guests arrive (at least one hour prior to the service). Please show your respect for the church by refraining from the use of anything damaging to the building or furnishings: tacks, nails, sticky tape, etc. The premises will be inspected after the decorations are removed. The cost of any damage will be incurred by the wedding party.
3. The church does not provide an aisle runner. You may obtain one from your florist who is responsible for placing it in readiness to later be unrolled by the ushers.
4. Following the wedding, there should be no activity in the Sanctuary (removal of decorations, flowers, etc.) until the guests have been ushered out.
5. After the guests have been ushered out and the photography sessions are completed, please see that flower stands, the runner, etc., are removed from the church. If you intend on leaving your flowers, please notify the Wedding Coordinator.

RECEPTIONS

St. John is available for wedding hosting receptions. Arrangements for its use must be made separately with St. John. Scheduling a wedding does not automatically book a reception. The facility is available at a very reasonable rate.

USHERS

All ushers should be at the rehearsal since critical instructions concerning the conduct of the ceremony pertain to them. The lighting of the candles and any other duties of the ushers will also be discussed at the rehearsal.

Ushers escort the guests to their seats. Traditionally, the left side of the church (as you face the altar) is reserved for the family and friends of the bride, the right side for the family and friends of the groom. However, if friends and relatives of either bride or groom far outnumber the other, you will probably prefer to equalize the seating.

At the start of the service, the ushers will escort the grandparents of the couple to their seats. An usher then takes the groom's mother down the aisle and seats her in the first pew on the right; the father of the groom follows and takes his place beside his wife. The mother of the bride is the last one to be ushered in. She is escorted to her seat by the usher who then returns to the lobby.

The ushers then may usher the people out of the church by rows. They come down the aisle and stand at the end of the second pew, letting people out from the front to the back of the church.

In case of any emergency during the service, the ushers should be prepared to take charge as needed

THE UNITY CHRIST CANDLE

If you are including the Ceremony of the Candle in your service, you will need to buy your own keepsake.

GUEST BOOK ATTENDANT

It is suggested that a guest book attendant invite the guests to sign the book in the Sanctuary Lobby. The book should be closed several minutes prior to the start of the processional; latecomers may sign the book after the service or at the reception.

FEES

Payment in full is required two weeks prior to the wedding date. No couple will be denied pastoral care due to financial inability. The St. John Wedding Coordinator will discuss the fee schedule with you.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

The marriage license is due two weeks prior to the wedding date. The assigned Wedding Coordinator will insure the license is signed by the pastor and witnesses. The licenses will be returned to the church office following the wedding and mailed directly to county offices.

For off-site weddings please give your marriage license to the Pastor at your ceremony.

CLOSING REMARKS

St. John offers these guidelines in the hopes they will be helpful to you in prayerfully planning your important day. Please feel free to call should you have any questions. God bless you as you prepare for your wedding and the establishment of your Christian home.

PASTORS

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