

# **Marriage and Wedding Service Manual**



**Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church  
5529 Leavenworth Street  
Omaha, NE 68106  
402-551-0244**



Dear engaged couple,

The Lord's richest blessings to both of you as you plan for your wedding and, more importantly, your married life. As the family of God here at Mt. Calvary, we join you in praying for God's strength and direction in these days before your wedding, and His guidance and protection for the years of your life together.

A Christian wedding and a Christian marriage are not the same thing. A wedding is an important occasion for us to worship God and to call upon His grace and mercy. It is your witness to those in the church and others of your faith in God and your trust in His watchfulness over your new household. A Christian marriage is a lifetime experience in which the forgiveness of sins must be central. The building blocks of a Christian marriage are worship at church and in the home as the couple encounters Christ in the written Word and in the Sacraments.

The enclosed information is gathered to assist you for both your Christian wedding and your Christian marriage. Policies and procedures for a wedding in our congregation are explained. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

Rev. Andrew Gerike, Pastor

## **OFFICIAL POLICY OF MT. CALVARY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Church weddings are conducted only for couples where at least one of the engaged is a member in good standing of Mt. Calvary, or is in the process of becoming a member (adopted Oct. 2015).

If one of the couple is not a member, both are encouraged to attend the regular catechesis class together. There are also cases, such as with university students, when a wedding at the “home” church is not feasible. In such cases, the wedding may be conducted at Mt. Calvary so long as at least one of the engaged is a member in good standing at a sister congregation, and with the home pastor’s knowledge and consent.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

Engaged couples desiring to be married at Mt. Calvary are to attend all pre-marriage catechesis sessions with the pastor. As is expected of all Christians, they are to be in worship together regularly. They are also to live chastely (i.e. refrain from sexual intimacy, not live together) as God commands in His Word.

The pastor will **NOT** conduct the wedding if there is a refusal to hear what God’s Word says, repent, and bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

### **PRE-MARRIAGE CATECHESIS**

It is the responsibility of the couple to schedule pre-marriage catechesis with the pastor. This should be done 6 months before the wedding. Sometimes circumstances will dictate a shorter period of time before the wedding. Only in rare and extreme cases will weddings be performed when the couple has not met with the pastor at least three months before the wedding date.

These sessions examine holy marriage in light of God's Word through an informal study of what Scripture says about marriage, the vocations of husband, wife, father, and mother. Normally four sessions of 1 to 1½ hours in length are scheduled. Plans for the wedding service will also be discussed at these sessions.

## **THE NATURE OF THE WEDDING SERVICE**

A Christian wedding is first and foremost a worship service. This fact governs almost every detail of planning the service. It is for this reason that we submit ourselves to the church's rite of marriage as it is contained in the *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*. This includes the marriage vows.

It is highly recommended, though not required, that the rite of marriage be set within a larger liturgical context, such as the Order of Matins (if the wedding is in the morning), or the Order of Vespers or Evening Prayer (if the wedding is in the afternoon or evening). These services are available in *Lutheran Service Book*. The Divine Service with Holy Communion is ordinarily not used due to pastoral concerns over the proper administration of the Sacrament.

The guiding question in planning the service is "Would this be appropriate in the Divine Service on Sunday morning?" Because the wedding service is a worship service being conducted at a particular congregation, the pastor of the congregation is the final authority on all matters touching the wedding service and the rite of holy matrimony itself.

## **GUEST CLERGY**

As the spiritual shepherd of the congregation, it is assumed that the pastor of Mt. Calvary will conduct the wedding service. A pastor of an LCMS congregation or of a congregation in fellowship with the LCMS may assist by special request. Such a request must be discussed with the pastor. Clergy of different confessions of faith are not permitted to participate in the worship service.

## **WEDDING MUSIC**

Music is an integral part of the Church's worship. The music you select should express Christ's love for us and give glory to God. Preludes, postludes, processional, and recessional music will need to be selected. For your convenience, pre-approved pieces that fit the holy occasion and setting of a wedding service are

listed in Appendix 1. Please note that the Wedding Marches of Wagner and Mendelssohn (“Here Comes the Bride”) may NOT be used due to their pagan origins.

Many couples desire to have a soloist sing, at some point in the service. Secular love songs are inappropriate for church use. For vocal music, only hymns in the approved hymnals of the LCMS, or sacred classical pieces with prior approval of the pastor may be used. Please do not ask the pastor to make exceptions.

As a public worship service of the congregation, congregational singing is an integral part of the service. At least one hymn will be sung. As many as three or four hymns may be sung. The hymns listed in Appendix 2 are particularly appropriate for weddings.

### **ORGANIST or OTHER MUSICIANS**

The organist can be from Mount Calvary, if available, or an organist of your choice may be selected. Instruments other than the organ, especially strings, trumpet, and other brass instruments may be used with the prior approval of the pastor. It is the responsibility of the couple to contact the musician(s) in the process of wedding preparations. The pastor can give you the name(s) and phone number(s) of organists. Any musician(s) must be present for the rehearsal.

### **WITNESSES and OTHERS IN THE WEDDING PARTY**

Witnesses, as well as ushers and attendants, are to be helpers to you. The participation of very young children as ring bearers and flower girls can sometimes distract from the dignity of the wedding service. You are encouraged to think of children only four years of age or older if you wish to include these roles.

One usher for every 50 guests is ideal. The ushers should attend the rehearsal. The ushers should be in the narthex one hour prior to the beginning of the service. They are to usher people to their seat as they arrive, in order to avoid congestion in the entry way. In the absence of candle-lighters, they may light the candles.

## **MARRIAGE LICENSE**

Nebraska law requires that applicants wishing to apply for a marriage license must go together to the office of the County Clerk in the county courthouse of their choice and convenience to apply. Information on obtaining a marriage license is available from the pastor.

The pastor must have the marriage license prior to the wedding service so that he can fully comply with the laws of the State of Nebraska. The marriage license is to be given to him no later than the rehearsal.

Immediately after the wedding, it is the responsibility of the best man and maid/matron of honor to come to the Pastor's study to sign the marriage license.

## **WEDDING COORDINATOR**

You may choose to use the congregation's wedding coordinator, Pat Koch, to assist you in planning the details of your wedding. This is suggested particularly in the cases of elaborate or large weddings. She can be contacted by phone at the church office: (402)551-0244. She has information on such items as parking variances, use of candles and other decorations, use of the church's social hall, and related issues.

She needs to know details such as delivery of flowers, etc., so that she will be available to have the church open. The church will normally be unlocked ½ hour before the start of the rehearsal and 2 hours before the ceremony. If additional time is needed, please contact her.

At the rehearsal and the wedding, she can work with the musician(s) regarding signals for the entrance of the parents, members of the wedding party including the bride, among other helpful things.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Flash photography may be taken during the processions. No flash photographs are to be taken after the bride and groom approach the altar until they leave following the benediction. The videographer and photographer may take photos/video during the ceremony in the choir loft or balcony (not using flash). The videographer and the photographer are to remain stationary during the ceremony. When worship folders are used, it is also a good idea to include a reminder on the back covers concerning the limitation of photographs during the worship service.

Formal wedding pictures may be taken before or immediately after the ceremony. After the ceremony, all parts of the ceremony may be reenacted for photography and video recording. After the ceremony, there are no restrictions on the use of flash photography or supplemental lighting.

The pastor is to be informed of any pictures that involve him. Out of respect for the house of God, excessive informality is to be avoided, and individual members of the wedding party are asked to remain outside the chancel except when they are involved in a picture.

## **ATTIRE**

Due to the nature of the occasion, and because the setting is that of a worship service in the house of God, formal and modest clothing should be worn. Dresses should not be too short or plunge too deep in the front or in the back. Under no circumstances may costumes be worn by the wedding party (e.g. Hawaiian shirts, cowboy or medieval outfits, togas, etc.).

## **FLOWERS**

Flowers may be placed tastefully throughout the church. They may not, however, be placed in such a way that they interfere with the liturgical space and the necessary movements of the pastor and wedding party. Flowers may not be placed directly on the mensa (top) of the altar itself or on the communion rail.

## **RINGS**

The rings are normally the responsibility of the best man to hold until the pastor indicates, at which time he places them on the book held by the pastor.

## **WORSHIP FOLDERS**

Worship folders are encouraged. You may provide your own, or Mt. Calvary can provide them. If you provide your own, the pastor needs to be shown a sample copy to be proofread and approved at least three weeks in advance. If Mt. Calvary provides the bulletin, a donation of \$25.00 per 100 folders is suggested.

## **WEDDING REHEARSAL**

The wedding rehearsal is held the evening before the wedding. Be sure to schedule a suitable time with the pastor. All participants in the wedding should be present for the one-hour rehearsal. Please request that only those who are participants in the wedding be present at the church for the rehearsal. Additional people can easily cause distraction and unnecessary delay.

The pastor conducts the rehearsal. As a courtesy to him and the organist, the rehearsal is to begin promptly. If a rehearsal dinner is planned, the schedule should be realistic in allowing enough time for the wedding party to run through rehearsal and still reach the place of the rehearsal dinner on time. If the pastor is to be included among those at the rehearsal dinner (which is not obligatory), be sure that he receives a written invitation in advance. This also goes for the wedding reception.

## **THE WEDDING DAY**

The wedding party is to be at the church at least one hour before the ceremony. The groom and attendants may dress in the overflow room, where they will wait until the time of the wedding. The bride and attendants may use an area in the back of the fellowship hall.

The groom's relatives and friends may be seated on the right (west) side of the sanctuary. The bride's relatives and friends may be seated on the left (east).

Ushers are to seat grandparents (optional), mother of the bride, and parents of the groom (use reverse order after the service).

The Processional may follow one of two traditions:

A. The Liturgical (European) Tradition

This tradition emphasizes the centrality of Christ in the worship service. The processional consists of:

the crucifer  
acolytes (if desired)  
the pastor  
the parents of the Groom  
the parents of the Bride  
the Bridesmaids and Groomsmen as couples  
the Maid of Honor and the Best Man as a couple  
the Bride and Groom as a couple

An acceptable variation is to have the Groom enter with the pastor, or with his parents, and the Bride is escorted by her father.

B. The American Tradition

Patterned after high society weddings of the 1920's, this is often spoken of as the 'traditional wedding' even though its origin is fairly recent.

The groom and groomsmen walk out from the overflow room into the sanctuary, lining up at the first step, standing sideways.

The bridesmaids walk slowly down the aisle, one by one, lining up at the first step standing sideways.

Sometimes the groomsmen and bridesmaids walk in together. Then the best man and groom would enter from the side and stand in front of the church before anyone begins to enter from the back.

The maid/matron of honor follows the bridesmaids.

The ring bearer and/or flower girl, may enter together and stand at their appointed spot (or sit with parents).

The bride is escorted in by her father. Usually the congregation stands.

### **HONORARIA**

Pastor: There is no fee for the services of the pastor. Any gift of appreciation is left up to the generosity of the couple.

Organist: \$100-\$350 for the service, \$50-\$100 per hour of the rehearsal.

Soloist: \$50 - \$100, depending upon number of songs.

Wedding Coordinator (if used): \$60

Facility: There is no fee for the use of the church for the wedding service. If the social hall is used for the reception, a donation of \$200 for use and cleaning is suggested.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

Weddings should not be a competitive display of wealth. Keep in mind wise practices of stewardship when planning your wedding, and be considerate of your parents.

The Church's doors are open to all and so everyone has the right to enter the church and be present throughout the wedding ceremony. The Church will not become involved in family feuds and no one may be barred from attending the wedding.

No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the church property at any time. Anyone seen in possession or under the influence of alcohol will be asked to leave the premises immediately. No exceptions.

At no time are suggestive or lewd slogans, signs, etc., permitted in or on the building or on the cars of visitors, guests, or members of the wedding party.

If something must be thrown at the couple as they leave the church it must be done outside only and only birdseed may be used – no rice, confetti, silly string, etc. Consider using small bells or bubbles as these leave no unsightly mess and will not get in anyone's eyes.

If the Pastor is invited to the rehearsal dinner and/or the reception, please indicate this to him. He will not automatically assume he is to be present.

## **MASTER CHECKLIST**

1. Read this Wedding Manual from cover to cover.
2. Return completed Wedding Information Form (available in the church office) to the pastor at least six months before the wedding.
3. Schedule and attend first pre-marriage catechesis session.
4. Return completed Facility Use Form to the church office.
5. Schedule and attend remaining pre-marriage catechesis sessions.
6. Contact organist and any other musicians for meeting at least two months before ceremony.
7. Contact the church's wedding coordinator (if needed) with the information regarding flower delivery, etc, four weeks before ceremony.
8. Inform photographers/videographers of the photo/video policy.
9. Inform members of the wedding party and friends of the prohibition of alcohol and consequences of alcohol use.
10. Bring marriage license to the wedding rehearsal along with any honoraria or fees to be paid.

## APPENDIX 1

### Preludes and Postludes (for pre-service music):

Purcell, "Trumpet Tune and Air"

Bach, "*Wachet Auf*"

### Processionals:

Charpentier, Prelude from "*Te Deum*"

Bach, "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring," "Sheep May Safely Graze"

Clarke, "Trumpet Voluntary"

Frecobaldi, "*Canzona I*"

Pachelbel, "Canon and Gigue in G minor," "Canon in D"

Handel, "Minuet from Music for the Royal Fireworks"

### Recessionals:

Bach, "*Nun danket Alle Gott*"

Handel, "*La Rejouissance* from Music for the Royal Fireworks,"

"*Alla Hornpipe* from Water Music Suite"

Most music by Bach, Buxtehude, Byrd, Charpentier, Handel, Howells, Purcell, and Praetorius is appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2

Hymns which emphasize God's love and sustenance throughout life's good and bad times (asterisked hymns are more difficult, but still very appropriate):

557 Seek Where You May to Find a Way

589 Speak, O Lord, Your Servant Listens

656 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

683 Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me

696 O God, My Faithful God

708 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

714 Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode\*

719 I Leave All Things to God's Direction

732 All Depends on Our Possessing

737 Rejoice, My Heart, Be Glad and Sing

750 If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

760 What God Ordains Is Always Good

790 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty  
794 The Lord, My God Be Praised  
797 Praise the Almighty, My Soul, Adore Him  
819 Sing Praise to God the Highest Good\*  
820 My Soul, Now Bless Thy Maker\*  
869 With the Lord Begin Your Task  
874 O Splendor of God's Glory Bright\*  
876 O Blessed Holy Trinity  
895 Now Thank We All Our God  
919 Abide, O Dearest Jesus  
947 All Glory Be to God on High  
948 All Glory Be to God Alone  
977 I Will Sing My Maker's Praises\*

Hymns which invoke the Holy Spirit to sustain us in love:

497 Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord!  
500 Creator Spirit, By Whose Aid  
768 To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray  
913 O Holy Spirit, Enter In

Hymns which use the biblical metaphor of the heavenly  
Bridegroom and His Bride to describe our preparation for the  
heavenly wedding feast:

335 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice  
395 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star  
514 The Bridegroom Soon Will Call Us  
515 Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers  
516 Wake, Awake, for Night is Flying  
644 The Church's One Foundation  
822 Alleluia! Let Praises Ring

Finally, there is an excellent Christian family hymn:

862 Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall