

Principles and Guidelines for Services of Marriage

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

Oaklyn, NJ

PRINCIPLES

The service of marriage is a worship service at which the gifts of God's creation – life, health, strength, sexuality, fidelity, love and the family – are celebrated with overflowing joy. It is a worship service in which

- 1) the couple marry each other through exchange of vows of faithfulness and commitment,
- 2) the minister or ministers serve as worship leader(s) and principal witness(es) to their action, and
- 3) the invited guests are not mere spectators, but participants in the service.

With this understanding of the service of marriage, it is essential that the couple enter into a series of conversations with the pastor in order to plan all aspects of the service and to understand the theological, biblical, and social aspects of marriage as witnessed to and taught by the Lutheran expression of the Christian faith. Therefore, it is expected that the couple be willing to meet with the pastor no less than three (3) times in preparation for the service. Consideration to everyone's schedule and attention to special circumstances will be of concern to the pastor. Confirmation of the date and time of the service (as far in advance as possible) should be made known to the pastor.

The service of marriage used for your wedding will be prepared in cooperation with the pastor. The service is designed to present a variety of options, suggestions and possibilities, not only to meet the various situations resulting from the interactions of a pluralistic society, but also to encourage appreciation for the liturgical heritage of the Lutheran expression of the Christian faith. All forms of the service of marriage shall require the pastor's approval and involvement.

The presiding minister of a service of marriage at St. Mark's Lutheran Church shall be the pastor of the congregation. Other ordained persons or individuals in leadership roles who a couple wishes to involve in the service shall be invited to do so by the presiding minister. Couples should take care to communicate these concerns to the pastor. Because of the importance of music and a need for familiarity with a liturgical style of worship, the Director of Music of St. Mark's Lutheran Church will be involved in approving the organist invited to serve at a particular wedding, as well as all music used. However, it is not a part of the Director's job description to provide services for all church weddings, and it is not required that the wedding organist be the Church Music Director. Others invited to be soloists or instrumentalists shall be asked to cooperate with the organist in all musical aspects of the service. Any deviation from these understandings of parish staff responsibilities shall be permitted only by permission and invitation of the pastor of the congregation with the Congregation Council's knowledge and approval.

Since the service of marriage is a worship service, careful attention must be given to the music to be chosen.

It should embody

- 1) high standards of quality, with texts reflecting the praise of God,
- 2) Christ's steadfast love for his Church as a model for fidelity and love, and
- 3) the invocation of God's presence and blessing.

Several musical options are possible before the entrance procession: solo, ensemble, or choral pieces; organ or other instrumental music; music using a combination of these media. Organ music may be based on hymn tunes used within the service. A printed bulletin helps to establish such themes and relationships for the congregation. Instrumental music may be selected from chamber music literature or similar sources and should reflect the mood of joy and celebration in the service. Voice(s) and instruments could be joined in solo or choral cantatas. Hymns appropriate to the service may be sung by the congregation.

The use of video recording equipment is permitted and is to be coordinated by the pastor with concern for discreet and non-obtrusive use. Camera flashes are not permitted during the service. Flash photos may be taken during the processional and recessional. Non-flash photos may be taken during the service, provided that it is done in a discreet and unobtrusive manner. The couple should take responsibility for communicating these concerns to the hired photographer and family members with cameras.

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GUIDELINES:

- I. There shall be no charge for the use of the facilities for a member of the congregation of St. Mark's Church. There shall be a charge of \$200 for the use of the facilities for persons who are not members of the congregation, in addition to the fees noted below. A deposit of \$100 will be required to reserve the wedding date. All remaining fees, including those noted below, will be due at the time of the rehearsal.
- II. Since the salaries paid to the organist and sexton are not intended to cover the responsibilities involved in services of marriage, payments shall be given to reimburse these members of the parish staff. The wedding party shall bear full responsibility for all payments relative to the fees noted below for the organist and sexton(s).
 - A. Organist: \$200 for playing at the wedding and rehearsal.
\$225 for playing at the wedding and rehearsal, including rehearsal with a soloist.
In recognition of the time required of the organist and the professional nature with which such services are rendered, attention should be given to see that these payments are made directly to the organist.
 - B. Sexton(s): \$50 for cleaning the sanctuary, narthex and other rooms used.
\$75 for the above areas if this is a candlelight wedding
 - C. Acolyte: \$20 for participating in the wedding
 - D. To gain an appreciation for the liturgical nature of our worship services, non-member couples will be encouraged to attend at least three (3) worship services with the community of St. Mark's before the date of the service.
- III. Gratuities may be expressed to the pastor and others (soloists, etc.) who have specified roles with the service.
- IV. If there is to be a candlelight wedding, the wedding party will provide 18 eight-inch candles.
- V. Bulletins for the service of marriage, if desired, can be printed in black and white at a cost of \$10 per hundred. In this case, bulletins will be printed by the Parish Secretary of St. Mark's Lutheran Church with paper provided by the couple
- VI. The Parish Hall may be used for receptions. Caterers and others will be informed of equipment and utensils that may be used. Kitchen facilities use guidelines will apply. Tables, chairs and tablecloths may be used. Set up of tables and chairs, as well as decorations, will be the responsibility of the caterer or other designated persons. If the church's tablecloths are to be used, please notify the church office concerning how many will be needed. They must be cleaned and returned to the church office within a week. The use of alcoholic beverages (other than a wine toast) at the wedding reception is not permitted.
- VII. Because of safety concerns and the general cleanup required, rice may not be thrown on or about the premises. Birdseed is permitted to be thrown outside the building.

All forms and requests for information shall be handled in a professional and confidential manner.

These principles and guidelines are given to assure that all aspects of each couple's marriage service will be well planned and coordinated, thus allowing for the greatest amount of enjoyment and celebration of their joyful celebration.

Approved October 2008