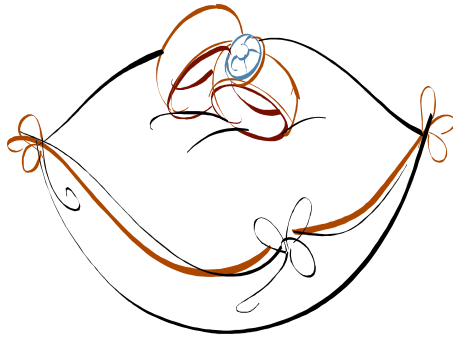


In Conclusion

Your decision about getting married is one of the most important decisions you make in your lifetime. It will be a privilege to assist you in making plans for a beautiful wedding and your life together.

St. Mark's Lutheran Church is deeply committed to assisting all persons who marry and helping them to see marriage as a lifelong relationship. The Marriage Service at St. Mark's Lutheran Church contains this blessing:

The Lord God,
who created our first parents and established them in
marriage establish and sustain you,
that you may find delight in each other
and grow in Holy Love until your life's end. Amen.



Wedding Ceremony Policies and Guidelines For St. Mark's Lutheran Church Bloomfield, Nebraska



Option #4

_____, I take you to be my wife/husband
from this time onward,
to join with you and to share all that is to come,
to give and to receive,
to speak and to listen,
to inspire and to respond,
and in all circumstances of our life together
to be loyal to you with my whole life with all my being
until death parts us.

Option #5

I, _____, give you my hand this day.
I open my mouth to declare before God, and this congregation,
That I take you, _____, to be my wife/husband.
I love you.
In bitter days and in days of sweetness,
In darkness and in light,
In life and until death,
I will walk in step with you.
Your concerns will be my concerns.
Your joys will be my joys.
We will share our struggles,
And we will share our triumphs.
I will be with you all the days of my life.
This is my vow.

Option #6

In the name of God,
I, _____, take you, _____, to be my Wife/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 to cherish, until we are parted by death.
This is my solemn vow.

Vows

Marriage is the total, unreserved commitment of two people to each other through all the years will bring. That commitment, expressed in the exchange of vows and signified in the giving of rings, is the heart of marriage and the marriage service

The bride and bridegroom have several options when choosing vows. The following are a selection of different vows to pick from or the couple may write their own vows. The vows must indicate the complete sharing which marriage implies and make clear that the promises are a lifetime commitment.

Option #1

I take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, and I promise to be faithful to you until death parts us.

Option #2

I take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband,
and these things I promise you:
I will be faithful to you and honest with you;
I will respect, trust, help, and care for you;
I will share my life with you;
I will forgive you as we have been forgiven;
And I will try with you better to understand ourselves, the world and God;
Through the best and worst of what is to come until death parts us.

Option #3

I take you, _____,
to be my wife/husband, I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful husband/wife, to share with you in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, To forgive and strengthen you, and to join with you so that together we may serve God and others as long as we both shall live.

Policies and Guidelines for Planning Your Service of Marriage

at

St. Mark's Lutheran Church

202 South 1st Street, P.O. Box 208
Bloomfield, NE 68718

Pastor's Email: lotusreaching@yahoo.com

Secretary's email: jolene_smlc@yahoo.com

Church Office 402-373-4371

Pastor's Study 402-373-4469

INTRODUCTION:

Preface:

We at St. Mark's want to extend to you every possible courtesy as you prepare yourselves for your life together. This booklet of policies and guidelines has been prepared to aid you in planning a wedding that will go smoothly in the best of Christian Traditions. We hope this booklet will be helpful in this regard.

This booklet consists of important general thoughts and suggestions for a Christian Marriage Service and specific information for the arrangements and procedures for the Wedding Service at St. Mark's.

If you choose a reception at St. Mark's, we will provide additional information to assist you in your planning.

A Church Wedding?

Every wedding conducted at St. Mark's Lutheran Church is first of all a service of worship. Like every worship service, this service must express the worship and praise of the community of faith gathered for rejoicing and it will consider God's love as the foundation and model for love and faithfulness in marriage. Also, it will express your intention to take seriously the matters of faith as you live as a married couple under the rule of God and within the fellowship of God's people, including worship, communion, prayer, study, and service.

The Nature of a Christian Marriage Service:

The Christian Marriage ceremony is one where Christ's presence is not just for "show". Christ is the center of this celebration, and is the honored guest in a Marriage service which will not only reflect your personality, attitudes, and priorities, but will honor the faithfulness of our Creator and His love for us. Each part of the service should be planned, and entered into by every participant, remembering that Christ is an invited and honored guest. This means that the music, the readings, the prayers, and all other aspects of the service (from the attire and decorations to the way in which the couple enters the worship area) must reflect the meaning of our Christian faith. Secular music, extravagance of dress, lavish decorations and other details can direct the attention to the bridal couple and away from Christ, the center of a Christian Marriage Service.

Furthermore, Christian worship is marked by the participation of the gathered community of faith. It is not a spectator affair. The Service of Marriage is not a performance. Wedding guests should be given every opportunity to participate. This can take place in the singing of hymns, the reading of the lessons, participation in the prayers, as well as being directly involved in praising God, and offering thanksgiving to God. Holy Communion is encouraged as a symbol of the community nature of worship and when celebrated, it should be open to all guests.

POLICIES:

St. Mark's Wedding Policy:

St. Mark's Lutheran Church desires to extend every possible courtesy to all who participate in or attend the weddings held in our sanctuary. To this end, the following policies have been established. *It shall be the responsibility of the couple to inform the wedding party and their guests of these policies.*

1. The Service of Marriage is a Worship Service with particular meaning to the bride and groom. *The Service of Marriage shall be consistent with Lutheran Theology and practice and Holy Communion, if celebrated, shall be open to all in attendance.*
2. The Pastor shall be given advance notification (at least 6 months, if possible) of wedding intentions to provide adequate time for scheduling, preparation, counseling, and related matters.

Initially, the wedding date shall be entered in pencil. The wedding may be removed from the calendar if: 1) the couple has not begun the pre-marital counseling process within one month of setting the date; 2). The couple fails to substantially complete the pre-marital counseling process by three months prior to the date set; and or 3). The couple fails to meet the time table for counsel-

Scripture

The reading of Holy Scripture is a vital part of the Christian wedding. The couple is invited to select their own scripture. Two or three readings are used, with one of them being from the Gospels.

Here is a list of possible texts:

Psalms

Psalms 33, 100, 117, 127, 128, 136, 150

Old Testament

Genesis 1: 26-31

Genesis 2: 18-24

Song of Solomon 2: 10-13

Song of Solomon 8: 7

Isaiah 43: 1-7

Isaiah 63: 7-9

New Testament

Romans 12:1-2

1 Corinthians 12: 31—13:3

Ephesians 5: 21-33

1 John 4: 7-12

Gospel

Matthew 19: 4-6

John 2: 1-10

John 10: 1-10

John 15: 9-12

Planning the Ceremony

Order of Service

The order for marriage used for weddings at St. Mark's Lutheran Church is printed beginning on page 286 in the front of the "red" *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* hymnal. This is not a rigid form. The rite is characterized by variety and flexibility, so that it may be adapted for a variety of situations and preferences. The liturgy, like marriage itself, is meant to open doors to possibilities, not to exclude creativity. As you plan your wedding, you will want to discuss the liturgical options with the pastor.

Music

In planning the ceremony, it is good to keep in mind what has already been said about the nature of the Christian wedding as a joyful, Christ-centered experience. Due to the sacred nature of the service, the music must be carefully chosen. It should be of good quality and the words should reflect the praise of God, the steadfast love of Christ for His church as the foundation and model of love and fidelity in marriage, with the invocation of God's presence and blessing.

In addition to the organ and/or piano, voices and other instruments may provide music. The service may include vocal solos, choral numbers, and chamber literature. There are many sacred musical selections available for the Christian wedding service. Certain love ballads, popular songs, and movie themes may not be appropriate because they are sentimental rather than sacred and may not give glory to our God. This type of music may not be used in the ceremony, but reserved for the reception instead.

The pastor is willing to aid the couple in making their selections and reserve the right of final approval on all music selected.

As previously stated the congregation should have an active part in the service. One way to accomplish this is by having the people sing one or more hymns. This may be done either in place of, or in addition to, solo music. Hymns may also be used for the processional and recessional. The couple is invited to consider choosing hymns from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship, With One Voice and Best of the Best*. The pastor of St. Mark's may assist you with the appropriate selections, if requested.

4. Weddings for couples where either the bride or groom, or their parents, are members of St. Mark's or Good Shepherd of Lindy shall incur no fee for the use of the church space. However, a Custodial fee of \$50.00 for Rehearsal and Wedding or \$100.00 for Rehearsal, Wedding and Reception shall incur to compensate the Custodian **which is to be paid directly to the Church Custodian at least one week prior to the wedding.**
5. *Weddings for couples where neither bride or groom, or their parents, are members of St. Mark's or Good Shepherd of Lindy, must be scheduled at least 6 months in advance, and require the approval of the Congregational Council. In these cases, use of the Worship Space will incur a \$75.00 fee and use of the whole building will incur a \$150.00 fee. In addition, a fee of \$50.00 for use of the Worship Space and \$100.00 for the use of the whole building shall be imposed to compensate the Custodian.*
6. The Pastor of St. Mark's, (or his/her designee), shall officiate at each wedding held at St. Mark's. Another Pastor may be invited to be part of your wedding service. All invitations of this nature are to be extended by St. Mark's Pastor and accepted with the consent of both clergy persons. **St. Mark's Pastor will make all final decisions in the wedding arrangements.**
7. All couples married by St. Mark's Pastor will participate in at least four (4) sessions of pre-marital counseling and, *at their own expense*, facilitate the counseling by completing the PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory. (10/11/95) This counseling shall be substantially completed three (3) months prior to the wedding. *The cost for this inventory is \$40.00 and should be made payable to St. Mark's Lutheran Church by the date of the couples' 1st session for premarital counseling.*
8. Any plans for the use of the building before/after the rehearsal/wedding (i.e. for decorating, dressing, etc.) are to be scheduled with the Pastor and/or office.
9. **St. Mark's wedding planners** will be used for any weddings that anticipate a guest attendance of more than 100 persons, and two or more attendants per bride and groom. *There is a fee of \$50.00 and should be paid directly to the wedding coordinators one week prior to the wedding.* The wedding facilitator will be engaged to expedite the church's side of the details and administrative issues of the wedding plans. In addition, the wedding planner will help the wedding itself go as smoothly as possible.

10. **No smoking is permitted within the St. Mark's Church building. If you feel you must smoke, you may use the designated area outside in the back of the building away from all doors and windows. Do not throw your cigarette butts on the ground, please dispose of properly in the container provided.**
11. **No alcoholic beverages, or other intoxicants, are permitted upon St. Mark's Campus. If, in the judgment of the Pastor, this policy is being abused, the Church Council authorizes the Pastor to refuse to perform the marriage. The Pastor is also authorized to deny anyone participation in the Wedding Party if they appear to be "under the influence".**
12. No rice, birdseed, confetti or other grain is to be thrown in or near the church building, parking lot, sidewalks, or hall. Any balloons used shall be kept outside of the nave and worship space.
13. Arrangements for musicians and music are to be made in consultation with the Pastor and the Wedding Coordinators. *Organists/musicians not familiar with St. Mark's Pipe Organ or instruments must be approved by St. Mark's Worship/Music Team.*
14. All instrumental and vocal music will reflect the sacred character of the Marriage Service. The Pastor shall have the authority to make final decisions regarding the music chosen for the ceremony. Music shall be provided for approval in a timely manner to give time for alternate selections, if necessary.
15. The Flower Chairperson of the Alter Guild should be consulted as to the placement of flowers on the Altar or the flower stands. *The brass vases may not be removed from the church. The brass vases are to be used with the proper "liners."* When flowers are left for Sunday worship service, arrangements should be made with a member of the Altar Guild Flower Committee for the disposition of the flowers. Bows are not to be used on the altar.
16. Candles are only permitted in the chancel area. *Candles may be placed on the pews or in any of the windows only with the express approval of the pastor and/or wedding planners.*
17. You may use the Church Altar/Chancel Candles: the candelabra, and Altar Candles. *These candles are **not** to be decorated in any way.* You may be permitted to bring in your own/rented candelabras (through prior approval of the wedding coordinators), these may be "simply" decorated.

arrangement. The pen should be one that writes well. It is also helpful if the guests book has removable pages so that two lines can be formed. In order to speed the seating, some guests may be asked to register following the Service of Marriage.

Receiving Line Suggestions:

The bridal couple usually receive congratulations in the Narthex following the recessional. If weather permits, receiving lines may be formed outside. The formal order for the receiving line is: brides mother, groom's father, bride, groom, brides father, groom's mother, (thus people can be introduced to each other).

However, the line may also be formed: bride's parents, bride and groom, the groom's parents, or in a more informal setting the bride and groom alone with their parents mingling with guests. Sometimes, when all in attendance are invited to the reception, the receiving line may be formed at the entrance of the reception area.

The most contemporary and effective way of greeting guests after the wedding involves the Bride and Groom dismissing their guests by rows. Parents (who are usually dismissed first) may form a secondary reception line at the back of the sanctuary, or, weather permitting, outside of the church's entryway.

Bulletins:

Bulletins should be used to communicate the order of service and ceremony participants. Here at St. Mark's, we print up the entire wedding liturgy so that all guests may fully participate in the worship experience. Appropriate covers can be ordered through a variety of sources. Printing of the bulletins should be discussed with the Pastor or wedding planners and can be arranged through the church office. An administrative fee of \$15.00 will be assessed for the printing of the bulletins. This may be paid to St. Mark's

Host(s)/Hostess(es):

While not necessary, Host(s) and Hostess(es) are usually chosen because they are close friends of the family. Their function is to greet people, help direct people, receive gifts and cards, and to provide helpful assistance to the wedding guests. They may be asked to make sure that all gifts and personal belongings are removed following the service.

Gift Table:

Arrangements should be made for a gift table, whether or not the reception is held at the church. There will be those who will bring gifts and cards if they are unable to attend the reception. In this case, the rooms by the overflow work well.

Courtesies:

It is not expected that soloist, organist, and the Pastor and their spouses be invited to the rehearsal dinner and/or wedding and reception/dinner. However, if you wish them to be in attendance, you should make that wish clear by extending a written invitation at least 2 weeks in advance.

In order for your soloist, organist, and the Pastor, to be clear about the date, time, and place of the ceremony it is wise to send them an invitation. If you do not expect them to attending the Wedding Reception/ Dinner you may mark the invitation with the phrase, "For Your Information."

When planning the seating, please note that if you seat the soloist, organist, and/or Pastor at the head table, their spouses should be included in the seating arrangement. Often these persons, unless close personal friends, are more comfortable finding a seat among the wedding guests, and would prefer to not be seated at the head table.

Certificates-Remembrances:

Following the ceremony, the Pastor will present you with a certificate of Marriage from the church and a "keepsake" Copy of your Marriage License, both of which will be properly signed and embossed with the seal of the church. "Certified" copies of the Marriage Certificate can be obtained through the County Clerk's Office. This is an official legal document which should be kept in a safe place. As a keepsake, you will also be presented with a copy of your marriage ceremony and a copy of the Pastor's message.

Honoraria:

Monetary gifts are usually given in thankfulness and recognition of ministries provided. If the soloist or organist is a close friend, you may choose a nice gift as an expression of your thanks. Otherwise, the following honoraria are suggested: Organist and soloist \$50.00 each (depending upon the extent of rehearsal time and preparation).

The Pastor charges no "fee" for weddings but normally an honoraria is given as thanks for ministry provided. Most couples give in the neighborhood of \$100.00.

All honoraria and fees should be presented and paid at the time of the rehearsal. This prevents forgetting them in the excitement of the Marriage Ceremony.

Registration of Guests:

Guests normally register in the Church Entryway. For this purpose, the church has a table that can be decorated with a nice cloth and flower

18. The Altar Guild has responsibility for the care and arrangement of the Altar and Chancel area, *Nothing on the Altar, or within the chancel area, may be removed or rearranged in any manner, for any reason.*
19. Nothing shall be **attached** in any manner to the pews, furniture or any woodwork within the building. No tape, staples, tacks or adhesives of any kind are allowed.
20. Flash pictures are **not** permitted during the ceremony—that is, between the processional and the beginning of the recessional. Professional photographers may take "natural light" pictures from the balcony or of the rear of the church only.
21. Video recording of your marriage ceremony is permitted. If video recordings are to be made, they may only be done with natural light and the placement of the recorders must be approved by either the Pastor or wedding planners. St. Mark's Pastor has final authority in matters related to video recording.
22. All fees, honoraria, offerings are to be given to the Pastor/Wedding Coordinators/church office by the time of the rehearsal. These fees, honoraria, and offerings are to be in cash.
23. The Wedding Party/Personal Attendant is responsible for removal of all their things and bagging of all "garbage" **immediately following the ceremony.**
24. Responsibility for repair or replacement of broken or damaged property shall be the responsibility of the Bride/Groom. Any major breakage of property or damage shall be billed to the wedding participants.

Building Use Policy:

Social Room, Social Room Overflow and Kitchen:

Decisions regarding the use of St. Mark's Social Room, Social Room Overflow and Kitchen Facilities (non-carpeted areas) shall be governed by these general policies:

St. Mark's Social Room, Social Room Overflow and Kitchen are available for use for meetings, seminars, funeral lunches, wedding receptions, showers, anniversary celebrations, family reunions, and other special occasions providing they do not conflict with events and activities already scheduled on the Church Calendar.

All members of St. Mark's Congregation shall have the privilege of using these areas of the church without fees (donations accepted).

Wedding receptions and funeral lunches involving families who are not members of St. Mark's will abide by the use/fee schedule published in policies specific to these uses. Other celebrations involving families who are not members of St. Mark's are asked to pay a use fee of \$50.00. The fee is payable to St. Mark's Treasurer.

The social room and adjoining facilities may also be made available to community organizations/groups, providing some organization of St. Mark's has been secured to serve a meal in connection with the proposed gathering. These groups may then use the social room for meetings/activities connected with the meal.

The social room and adjoining facilities will not be made available to any gathering which is to be held primarily as a public sales promotion of a product.

In situations when the social room and adjoining facilities are to be used by individuals/groups which are not familiar with its equipment (such as special serving groups for funerals, receptions, or open houses)

arrangements must be made to assure that a representative of the St. Mark's W/ELCA Kitchen Committee will be present during the event. This representative is present to give quick guidance and assistance as to the use, care, and replacement of all equipment, and use of St. Mark's special occasion valuables. In cases of a question as to the person to be contacted, the person(s) involved are to contact Pastor or the wedding coordinators or church office for specific information/directions.

Wedding Day Snacks:

Most people who faint at weddings do so because their bodies do not have sufficient energy (sugar) reserves to meet the demand of the excitement and stress. Therefore, the couple is asked to provide a light snack (juice, cheese, crackers, fruit, and candy) between pictures and the beginning of the ceremony. These high energy foods provide necessary energy reserves. These snacks need not be fancy or elaborate.

Aisle Runner:

The aisle runner no longer serves a useful purpose. It became "tradition" in the days when it was used to protect the brides dress from dirt and snags on the hardwood floors. If an aisle runner is necessary, St. Mark's owns a nice, cloth, aisle runner which is available for use. The wedding party is responsible for having the runner professionally cleaned and rolled, other options are: bringing in your own runner; if desired.

Dressing Rooms:

Members of the wedding party may use rooms within the church for dressing. Currently it seems to work to use the conference room and chapel in the addition. St. Mark's has a coat tree for dresses to hang on but keep in mind that dress hooks are limited.

Photography:

All pictures should be taken prior to the marriage ceremony. This allows your day to flow more smoothly and for you to fully participate in the events of the day. Your pictures should begin no later than 2 hours prior to your marriage ceremony. If you desire the Pastor in your pictures, please alert him/her in advance.

Most area professional photographers are familiar with St. Mark's policies and procedures. However, please ask your photographer to talk to your wedding coordinators before the ceremony. Photographers generally welcome others taking pictures of the same groupings they have just photographed, however, they want to finish their shots before others begin. And, please, request your friends and relatives not to take photographs during the ceremony, and that all poses are in good taste.

A friend or relative who is good with the camera can take many candid shots in the kitchen, outdoors, behind the scenes, or in areas where the professional photographer may not be. Make a list of what you'd like (waitresses, kitchen ladies, organists, soloist, wedding cake, etc.). Many of these can be snapped prior to the ceremony, before the people are congested in public areas.

In selecting a vocalist, special care should be taken to select an individual who can handle the responsibility of public singing. They must be able to work with the accompanist. Music chosen should match the vocalist's range and abilities. Overly dramatic vocalists are to be avoided.

During the ceremony, background music on the organ is not desirable or in good taste.

Marriage License from State License Laws:

In the state of Nebraska, the marriage license can be applied for in the office of the County Clerk. Both the bride and groom must appear in person. There is no waiting period to for receipt of license. Individuals who are divorced may not apply for a Marriage License until 6 months after the divorce is decreed. It is necessary to have proof of age (birth certificate or drivers license) and the Clerk will require knowing the town and state of their parents' birth. It is no longer necessary for the female to have a blood test. The license may be obtained up to one year in advance, however, it is generally advisable to obtain it 2—4 months in advance. In Nebraska the legal age for marriage is 19. Persons under 19 must have parental consent. In Nebraska persons must have attained the age of 17 to be married.

When the license is obtained it may be given to the Pastor or the church secretary for safekeeping, and completion of the Church records.

Ushers:

A minimum of two ushers are suggested with one usher recommended for every 50-75 guests, in order to quickly and effectively seat your guests. Since most guests arrive in the 10-15 minutes prior to the ceremony, it is very important to be able to seat them so that when the ceremony can begin on time. A groomsman can double as an usher where the family and friendship circles suggest.

Rehearsal:

A rehearsal of about 45 minutes is usually necessary to rehearse the logistics of the marriage ceremony. The musician, parents, ushers, and attendants should be present for this rehearsal. The couple should finalize, with the Pastor and the musician, the date and time of the rehearsal well in advance. If a groom's dinner is planned, it should begin about 1 hour after the rehearsal, if local; 1 1/2 hours if out of town.

No smoking is permitted within the St. Mark's Church building. No alcoholic beverages, or other intoxicants, are permitted upon St. Mark's Church Campus.

Users of these spaces are responsible for setting up and taking down tables, chairs and equipment *IN CONSULTATION with the Custodian*. Generally these areas are to be left like they were found including:

- Tables are to be damp wiped with a damp cloth and dried before and after use.
- ALL garbage is to be bagged and put in the dumpster for disposal.
- NO food is to be left in the refrigerators.
- Dish towels and cloths are to be taken, laundered, and returned within 3 days.

Where young children are involved in the gathering, it is expected that proper supervision will be provided by facility users to assure that young children are not permitted to run throughout the building.

Compensation will be required for damages to the facilities or property of St. Mark's while being used for any of the above purposes.

In special cases, the Congregational Council may make adjustments to these policies.

Building Use Policy:

Chapel, Conference Room, and Classrooms:

Decisions regarding the use of St. Mark's Chapel Conference Room, and Classrooms (carpeted areas) shall be governed by these general policies.

The Chapel Conference Room and Classrooms of St. Mark's are available for meetings, seminars, and gatherings providing they do not conflict with events and activities already on the Church Calendar. *The Chapel has a capacity of 55 persons, the Conference Room 15 and the Classrooms 10.*

All members of St. Mark's Congregation shall have the privilege of using these areas of the church without fees (donations accepted).

Non-Members are asked to pay a fee of \$50.00 for their use. The fee is payable to St. Mark's Treasurer.

The specific areas may be made available without fee to community organizations and groups, providing their purposes are consistent with principles of ministry and service. The Church Staff is authorized to deal with these requests. The Chapel and Conference Room will not be made available to any gathering which is to be held primarily as a public sales promotion of a product.

These areas are not intended to be used as areas for serving food. However, beverages and snacks may be prepared and served in these spaces with the equipment available. No equipment is to be brought to the area from the kitchen.

No smoking is permitted within the St. Mark's Church building. No alcoholic beverages, or other intoxicants, are permitted upon St. Mark's Church Campus.

Users of these spaces are responsible for setting up and taking down tables, chairs and equipment IN CONSULTATION with the Custodian. Generally these areas are to be left like they were found including:

- Tables are to be damp wiped with a damp cloth and dried before and after use.
- ALL garbage is to be bagged and put in the dumpster for disposal.

Where young children are involved in the gathering, it is expected that proper supervision will be provided by facility users to assure that young children are not permitted to run throughout the building.

Music for a Christian Wedding:

The music for the Service of Marriage is an important, and essential, means of communicating the worshipful attitude of the Marriage Service. Music is not to be thought of as entertainment for the guests, or as a means of getting members of the bridal party from one place to the next. The music chosen for the Service of Marriage must meet the test of offering praise and thanks to God. The guidelines for the Service of Marriage state: "The use of secular music shall not be permitted in the Service of Marriage." The problem presented here is that our selections of music often come from the secular media, rather than our religious traditions. There are many wonderful pieces of music, both contemporary and traditional, which are appropriate for the Service of Marriage. The Pastor, Organist, and soloist will work together in helping you select your music.

When selecting music for the processional and recessional, one does not need to pay particular attention to the "march music" since the church processions are not marched and never hurried, but are simply walked-naturally, slowly, with short steps and in a dignified, reverent manner without attempting to keep to the music. In addition, the "traditional" marches [particularly Wagner's "Bridal Chorus" ("Here Comes the Bride") and Mendelsohn's "Recessional"] have been so over-used that they are no longer unique. Couples are encouraged to select other appropriate instrumental selections which will make their Service of Marriage unique and special. When selecting these instrumental selections, be especially careful of selections where well known lyrics may detract from the meaning and mood of worship.

When selecting the vocal selections, one needs to pay particular attention to the words and message of the music. The basic criteria is, "Does it appropriately reflect the Christian understanding of life, love, and marriage?" Sentimental, human-centered, romantic songs are to be ruled out. Favorite selections which do not meet this criterion can be appropriately used during the reception.

Since the music is not for "entertainment", congregational singing is strongly encouraged. Congregational singing heightens the sense of offering praise to God, and gives your guests a means of expressing their faith in God, and their love to the bride and groom. Your Pastor can suggest several selections which is appropriate for congregational singing. It is for this reason that the use of the Lord's Prayer as a solo is discouraged. The Service of Marriage involves the congregation and an important way to do this is to involve them in saying the Lord's Prayer in unison. If it is strongly desired that the Lord's Prayer be used as a vocal selection in the Service of Marriage, it shall not substitute for the Con-

-The chancel paramants shall be the liturgical color of white for a wedding.

-Large floral arrangements may be placed along side the alter, artificial flowers are not allowed on the alter. The Bible or Cross may not be removed from the alter.

-Real rose petals shall only be dropped on the center aisle if there is a floor runner.

-Only non-drip, mechanical and/or oil candles are permitted for use in the sanctuary.

-Use care when decorating the pews. Decorations shall not be attached to the pews that will potentially leave a mark or scratch, this includes the use of scotch tape, tacks or nails.

-The use of white or ivory candles is preferred in the sanctuary.

Flowers and Decorations:

There is an increased desire to use silk flowers for the marriage ceremony. While we can appreciate their sentimental value, such flower are not consistent with the Christian witness. Flowers are symbolic of the beauty of God's creations and our human frailty. They represent our belief in an ever-loving God who deserves our best.

Flowers and decorations have a way of detracting from the focus of Worship (God) and drawing undue attention to the bridal couple or their families. Therefore, all decorations should be chosen with this in mind. Your Wedding Coordinators would be happy to discuss the appropriateness of your decorations and the ways in which they can be incorporated into your Service of Marriage.

In choosing decorations, colors are very symbolic. These colors, often chosen, are symbolic as follows:

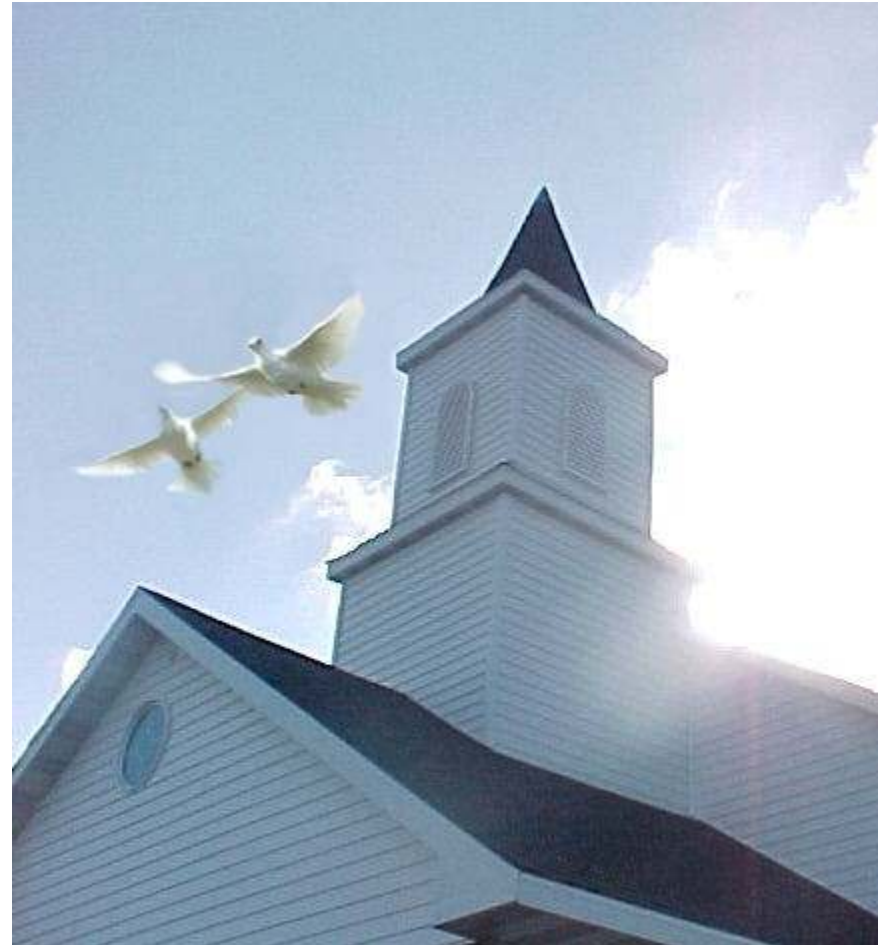
White	Purity and truth
Red	Love
Purple	Kingdom of God
Green	Life and Renewal of life
Blue	Hope and eternity
Yellow	Greatest treasure, light

Ring Bearer, Flower Girl and Junior Attendants:

Individuals who are selected to be in the wedding in these capacities should be at least 4 years of age. Younger children, cute as they are, detract from the mood of the ceremony. In most cases, these individuals are seated near the front with their parents during the Marriage Ceremony.

Compensation will be required for damages to the facilities or property of St. Mark's while being used for any of the above purposes.

In special cases, the Congregational Council may make adjustments to these policies.



WEDDING GUIDELINES:

Meeting With Your Pastor:

Preferably, before your wedding date is set, you should meet with your Pastor to begin the planning for your Service of Marriage. This will help eliminate scheduling conflicts, allow you to know the guidelines for Services of Marriage in the congregation, and allow sufficient time for necessary counseling sessions.

In helping you to prepare for your Service of Marriage, your Pastor will meet with you at least four (4) times to discuss matters pertaining to your relationship and your intentions to make marriage vows. To facilitate these sessions, you will, at your own expense, complete the PREPARE premarital inventory, an instrument used to assess your relationship and point you in the direction of growth and deeper fulfillment in marriage. You should be prepared at the first session to complete this inventory and pay the required scoring fee of \$40.00.

The four sessions will be structured as follows:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Session I | Information gathering; Complete PREPARE. |
| Session II | Review PREPARE feedback |
| Session III | Continue review of PREPARE feedback |
| Session IV | Review the information for your Service of Marriage. |

Both persons should be present for these sessions. You should allow an hour and one half for each session. It may be necessary to schedule additional sessions.

Some Suggestions:

- Forget trying to impress anyone!! 48 hours after the wedding is over, most guests will be hard-pressed to remember even the color of the dresses. Enter your wedding preparations with the idea that you're going to enjoy this experience and that it's going to be a time when you will be comfortable and not exhausted from trying to meet some unknown and impossible expectations.
- Try to save some money!! Why break the bank? The simple truth is that your wedding guests want to join with you in celebration. No one is bring along a calculator or keeping score to see who is out-doing whom. And the thousands of dollars saved could be put to better use by the couple when the reality of living begins.
- Your wedding will not be perfect!! We are imperfect people, worshipping a perfect God. Why not except the fact that we're not putting on a Broadway production, but a celebration of two people who have...

- fallen in love, who are seeking the blessing of God and their friends upon their future.
- In short, Have fun! Lighten up! Enjoy the day. Don't end up feeling tired and broke.

Church Capacity:

St. Mark's comfortably seats 250 people, with a maximum capacity of about 350 using the balcony and chairs in the overflow. Groups larger than 350 place a strain on the building and the people helping with your wedding; ie; heating and cooling, etc . We ask that you keep this in mind when preparing your guest list. If you anticipate more guests than the church comfortably seats, we urge you to consider adding a second guest list for reception only.

The Wedding Candle:

Candles most commonly remind us that Jesus is the "light of the world—the light no darkness can overcome." However, the Wedding Candle can have many meanings. If you choose to use his symbol, think carefully about the symbolism you intend. Use a spoken interpretation, write an interpretation in your bulletin, or use music during the lighting to communicate meaning. (The Marriage Ceremony Workbook has some suggestions.) Many couples finding it meaningful to have the outside candles symbolize each family (and to have the parents light them before the ceremony) and the center candle to represent the new family. This also provides a special opportunity for parents to be involved in the ceremony.

St. Mark's owns a "Wedding Candle" holder and may be used upon request or the couple may use their own. The couple is responsible for purchasing the candles for the Wedding Candle. The center candle should be between 1 1/2 inches and 3 inches in diameter and at least 8 inches tall. Many decorated candles are available but plain candles work as well. The outside candles should be 10 inches tall, 7/8 inch in diameter, with "self fitting" ends. "Dripless" candles are preferred.

Decorating Guidelines

Couples are welcome to decorate the sanctuary for their wedding. As you make your decoration plans, please observe the following requests:

- The couple shall contact the wedding planners to make necessary arrangements for decorating the sanctuary prior to the wedding.
- Due to the use of the facility and space limitations, the couple shall make appropriate arrangements for someone to remove all wedding decorations and other miscellaneous items from the church immediately following the wedding.