

## MARRIAGE GUIDELINES FOR THOSE WISHING TO BE MARRIED AT ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH PERHAM, MN

**Please Note:** This document is meant only as a ***guideline*** when it comes to a marriage ceremony performed at St. Paul's, Perham. Just because we have these ***guidelines*** in printed form does not mean it is a regulation or a law or a rule.

Your wedding day is one of the most important events in your lives. Your church and its pastor are pleased to share this happy occasion with you. It is our hope that you might remember all the events of this special day and we want to make it a most pleasing and memorable experience.

The ministry of St. Paul's Lutheran Church desires to preserve and emphasize the distinctive nature of the *Christian Wedding* as part of our worship lives. A Christian marriage asks the Triune God to be the object and center of any worship in which his Word and our prayers are included. It is our hope that the guidelines contained in this manual will be of assistance to you in planning a worshipful wedding service. The Board of Elders of our congregation will address any exceptions to these guidelines.

A wedding is a sacred service of worship and praise. Everything done during the service is for the praise and glory of God alone and must be done with reverence toward God. We gather in the presence of God to hear the vows that you will make. Man-made "traditions" will be avoided and a reason for this avoidance will be given. It is of interest that most of the "traditions" we think of when it comes to a wedding ceremony have absolutely no biblical basis. A Christian wedding ceremony is not based on man-made traditions, but on the Holy Word of God. A church wedding is from first to last a service of worship to the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Marriage was ordained by God to be a life shared by two people in joy and love. A recent study estimated that only 15% to 20% of all marriages are considered happy. The times are difficult in our society to hope for a secure and happy relationship. Yet, God has promised that he is with you in your marriage, and with Jesus Christ in your relationship there will be joy and peace and real love.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Perham, MN is here to serve the members of our congregation. It is a pleasure to be included in this life-changing event with you. We base our belief and doctrines on the Bible, which is the inspired and holy Word of God. We do not follow the changing norms or lack of values found in society. St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Perham, MN is pleased to serve any member of our congregation during the time of their marriage. St. Paul's

also allows non-members to rent our church facility for their wedding. Please contact the Wedding Coordinator for information about fees charged for members.

It is the policy of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Perham to joyfully minister to the needs of its members. We are here for the joys and sorrows and the highs and lows of the lives of the members of St. Paul's. We are here to also to serve the community where and when we can. But, the sacred ordinances and rights of the Church are for those who have committed their total lives to Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Savior. Marriage is one such ordinance. If you request to have God bless your union together, there should be the understanding that the Faith is an active part of your lives now.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Perham normally will not perform a wedding for non-members. St. Paul's will also not have anything to do with a "wedding" that refuses to use the name of Jesus or have prayers and Scripture reading in the ceremony. If you want a "godless" wedding, go to the justice of the peace!

These few pages are St. Paul's guidelines for you to use in planning your wedding. Together we will discover the wonderful institution God has given to us called marriage. Your wedding is a special day. It is important you plan your wedding according to *your* instructions and wishes. You will find that the pastor and leadership of St. Paul's are very open to suggestions to make your special day a day to remember. We do not have a lot of rules. We only ask and remind all those who wish to get married at St. Paul's to remember that the wedding ceremony is a time you ask God to join you in your new life. It is not mandatory that a couple be married in a church building or by a clergyman. Your wedding date really began the day you were engaged, the day you committed your lives together for the rest of your lives. Engagement is the biblical equivalent of marriage. Your wedding day is the legal requirement mandated by state and federal government. There is no right or wrong way to put together your wedding ceremony. Besides the vows, there are no biblical commands about the "how-tos" of the ceremony.

The pastor of St. Paul's requires a minimum of three, 1 ½ hour sessions for pre-marital counseling (Note: this requirement is for members of St. Paul's. Non-members may participate in the counseling if they choose to do so.) This is a requirement to be married at St. Paul's. It is a fact that over 50% of all first marriages fail (85% for couples who "live together"). During our counseling sessions we will explore the biblical basis for marriage. The Bible is the instruction manual for life. What better time to use it than preparing for your life together. We will talk about real faith in a real God who will make our lives real joyful.

Please refer to the copy of the marriage ceremony we use here at St. Paul's. There are many options written into this ceremony. We will talk about

the options available to you. During the first counseling session we will talk about the ceremony so you may have a head start in your planning.

### **What time should your wedding be held?**

You can pick any time for your wedding. Please speak to the pastor of St. Paul's to see that the time does not conflict with any church program that might be happening at the congregation.

**Wedding fees:** Note: These fees have been approved by the Church Council of St. Paul's Lutheran Church.

- Sanctuary/Church: \$100.00 (Paid to St. Paul's Lutheran Church)
- Wedding Coordinator: \$150.00 (Paid to Diana Saenger)
- Pastoral Honorarium: \$150.00 (Paid to Pastor Andrew Ratcliffe)

**Please note: Fees must be paid when you secure your date for the wedding.**

### **What if we are living together? Can we get married at St. Paul's?**

A pastor is often asked if a couple that is "living together" can be married in the church. If you find yourself in this non-biblical lifestyle, we will talk about it during our pre-marriage counseling sessions. Simply put, "living together" is a sinful lifestyle and is not a sign of people's commitment to Jesus Christ. If you are a Christian, then follow Christ's commands. 85% of "living together" couples have failed marriages. The situation is something that will be talked about and dealt with from a biblical perspective, not from a sociological perspective.

The fact that you are inquiring about a wedding leads one to hope there is a commitment within the relationship. It is the hope of the Church that this commitment is biblically based and will grow into a healthy marriage in the future. To make this type of marriage a success will require the invitation of Jesus Christ into your lives to cement both of you together in love. If this does not take place, I would ask you to seriously consider if your marriage has a future.

Yes, you may be married if you are living together, but the pastor of St. Paul's wants you to realize that we will confront this sinful lifestyle in our counseling. There will be no judging or pointing the finger at you, but we will deal with the situation.

A special informational paper will be given to you for you both to read and think about the problems associated with cohabitation of a couple before their marriage.

### **Will we have a wedding rehearsal?**

It is customary and a good idea to rehearse the details of the wedding service before the actual event. Most of the time this wedding rehearsal is the evening before the wedding date. The rehearsal will ensure that everyone involved knows what is expected so that the wedding service flows smoothly. It is important that the members of the wedding party arrive on time for the wedding rehearsal. **Please have those in your wedding party come to the rehearsal on time.** If everyone is on time the rehearsal lasts about 45 minutes to an hour.

### **Are natural, real flowers only allowed for our wedding?**

Simply put, the answer is, "No". Silk flowers are not only beautiful but are also made of "natural material". The only type of flowers that would not be allowed is plastic, paper, or wax type flowers. Only real, natural flowers or silk flowers are allowed in the altar area of St. Paul's.

When you think of it, the amount of money a young couple spends on real flowers is astounding for a wedding. Silk flowers are not only less costly but will remain with you for the rest of your life! The decision is up to you as a couple.

### **Are pictures allowed to be taken during the service? Can we video tape the service?**

The pastor of St. Paul's will talk to the person taking the pictures for your wedding. I give the photographer a wide allowance for picture taking during your wedding service. The only thing I do not allow are flash pictures *up in the chancel area during the service.*

As far as video taping your service, it is a wonderful idea. You can have a family or friend in the balcony and have a video camera set up for self-operation by the altar to get a front view of the ceremony. *You will not be allowed to use the camera set-up in the balcony; you must have your own camera.*

We will talk about this during the rehearsal the evening before the wedding.

### **What about music for the wedding?**

We have members at St. Paul's who play the organ or piano and the pastor will give you their information if you desire to have them play for your wedding. You may use a friend or family member to play your music if you so

desire. The choice is up to you. ***If you use our church organist, it is your responsibility to speak to her/him about her/his fee for presenting the music for your wedding ceremony.***

There are many good older songs or music, but there are many good newer, contemporary songs and music as well. There is just one guideline when picking out your music: *The music should be religious in nature, asking God to bless your marriage together. Secular “love songs”, no matter how beautiful, will not be used during the wedding ceremony itself. They may be used for pre-service music, however.* Many popular and modern songs heard over the radio might not be appropriate for a Christian wedding service, even though they may be good music. The Christian wedding ceremony is centered on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and his redeeming love for us. In the ceremony you are asking Jesus Christ to enter into your relationship. Therefore, songs about a pagan idea of love would not be appropriate for a wedding service here at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church of Perham.

Many couples desire to choose their own organist. That is not a problem here at St. Paul’s as long as the organist respects these guidelines. It is assumed that the organist has the skills needed to play the pipe organ in the sanctuary of St. Paul’s.

### **Non-Lutheran Clergy involvement in your wedding:**

It is a fact of life that most marriages include the touchy issue of “inter-religious” couples. If your marriage is an inter-religious marriage, we can talk about how your priest or pastor might be involved in your ceremony. Only Christian clergy will be allowed to participate in your marriage ceremony.

### **OTHER INFORMATION:**

I am sure you will have many different questions between now and your wedding. Feel free to call Pastor Andrew Ratcliffe at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. We all want you to have a wonderful, Christ-centered experience for your wedding. Remember that your wedding day is not the important thing – it is the rest of your lives together that really counts.

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