



Wedding Handbook

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Congratulations on Your Engagement!

Your wedding day is one of the most important days of your life. That's because your marriage is one of the most important relationships in life! Without a doubt, you will do a great deal of planning and work as you prepare for your big day.

We are thrilled you have decided to have Jesus Christ be the focus of your wedding service and of your marriage. We know that God is the source of all good gifts in this world. He created you, and He created your fiancé. He brought you together, and He will fill your lives with blessings as you give your lives to one another through Him.

As you seek to create a joy-filled day, this document provides the useful information you will need to have your wedding at Messiah Lutheran Church.

Marriage Statement

God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church, Eph. 5:32.

The Scriptures teach that in the beginning the blessed Trinity instituted marriage to be the life-long union of one man and one woman (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6), to be held in honor by all and kept pure (Heb 13:4; 1 Thess 4:2-5). God's Word assures us that each time one man and one woman join themselves together in the union of the marriage commitment and relationship, God himself has joined them as one. Mark 10:7-9 says, *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

Beliefs

God has intended Christians to only marry Christians, so we require that both the bride and groom confirm commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The marriage policy of Messiah Lutheran Church, a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is and always has been consistent with the Synod's beliefs on marriage. We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship

between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32). The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 (“To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions”), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator’s design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and “marriage.” Our pastors will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

Faithfulness

The church is God’s primary tool for building strong marriages, so we encourage you to find a place to serve within the church and pursue a lifestyle of faithfulness to your church family.

Prayer for Your Marriage

May the Lord bless you and keep you and your marriage. May the Lord make His face to shine on you and your marriage. May the Lord lift up His face to you and give your marriage the peace that passes all human understanding. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Who May be Married at Messiah

Typically our pastors perform wedding ceremonies where at least one person is a member of Messiah Lutheran Church. However, there may be a time when Messiah Lutheran Church will be willing to assess the situation and make an exception.

- † Both Bride and Groom must have established a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and be open to biblical principles for guiding their marriage. This important relationship with the Lord is the foundation for pre-marriage counseling and for a successful marriage.
- † All pre-marriage counseling sessions must be completed prior to the wedding.

Pastor Availability

When choosing your wedding date, a specific pastor may be requested, but may not always be available.

- † Offsite ceremony requests will be handled on a case by case basis. Travel expenses may apply, and should be discussed with the Ministry Assistant well in advance of the scheduled date.

Suggested offsite locations:

Zion, Immanuel, Messiah (Downtown St. Louis), Conservatory (Downtown St. Charles) Note: *We will not participate at a non-LCMS church.*

- † Other LCMS guest pastors are welcome to participate in the wedding, but Messiah Lutheran Church will not allow co-officiating from any other denomination.
- † Please do not be offended if the pastors are unable to attend your wedding reception.
- † Rehearsals must be held the day prior to the wedding and should last no longer than one hour.

Services and Fee Schedule

A \$100 facility deposit must be submitted with your Wedding Application and is non-refundable. The balance of the facility fee must be paid in full one month before your wedding date. Make checks payable to Messiah Lutheran Church. All other fees are paid on the day of the wedding directly to the person providing the service(s). The wedding coordinator will collect these fees and distribute them accordingly. Fees include:

Services and Fee Schedule:	Members	Nonmembers	Required
Facility Fee*	\$300.00	\$500.00	X
Sound Tech (1.5 hrs. minimum)	\$75.00/hr	\$75.00/hr	X
Pre-Marital Counseling (3 sessions)**	\$320.00	\$320.00	X
Pre-Marital Pastoral Counseling (one session)	N/A	N/A	X
Musicians/Vocalists	Refer to Music & Ceremony section on p.6-7		
Customary Honorarium Pastoral Gift (this is not a set fee, but \$200 is a typical gift).			

*These fees are charged to cover our costs. However, no couple will be denied a wedding at Messiah for financial reasons. Please discuss this issue with the Ministry Assistant.

**Pre-Marriage Counseling is offered by Counselor Kate, LLC. Prices subject to change and do not include assessment scoring.

Scheduling Process

1. Determine the date and time for the wedding ceremony.
2. Please contact our Ministry Assistant to schedule a date and time.
3. Dates to be avoided: Due to special programming and activities in our sanctuary, on-site weddings are discouraged in the weeks around Easter and Christmas, the first weekend in August, and the weekend before and after Vacation Bible School. Exceptions may be discussed with the Ministry Assistant and additional fees may be added to accommodate those dates.
4. Submit a Wedding Application and deposit (for on-site weddings) to our Ministry Assistant.

5. Your reservation will be confirmed as soon as the date has been scheduled on the church calendar, and a Pastor has been confirmed to officiate the ceremony.
6. After reservation confirmation, you may start the Marriage Preparation process with our wedding coordinator
7. Marriage Licenses should be submitted to the church office 1 week prior to the ceremony.

Building Use and Guidelines

- † Birdseed, rice, and confetti are not to be used in or near the building.
- † Bubbles are welcome as outdoor post ceremony celebrations.
- † The wedding party and guests must refrain from drinking prior to the ceremony. No smoking or alcoholic beverages are allowed in or on church property.
- † Messiah Lutheran Church will have final authority over placement of cameras/personnel and will be the final word on all requests from the wedding party or outside vendors.
- † Dressing Rooms: Classrooms may be used by the bridal party upon request, for no more than two hours prior to the service. Please be sure to remove all items after the ceremony.
- † You will assume all financial liability for any damage to the building or church equipment caused by you or your guests. This is in addition to the basic wedding fee. It is understood and agreed that in consideration of the use of facilities, you hold the church harmless for any liability or property damage. Please ensure that all wedding party members and guests only use the designated areas of the building.
- † Because our facility is also home to our day school, the sanctuary is not accessible before 3:15 on Friday afternoons.

Ceremony and Music

- † All music will be approved by the Music Assistant when you meet regarding your ceremony 4-6 weeks before the wedding. *In keeping with our Christ-centered mission and worship, the majority of music selections should be Christ-centered. Secular songs should be appropriate for a place of worship. The Music Assistant is available to help you with selections.*

- † Messiah maintains a list of musicians and vocalists available to hire for your wedding ceremony. The Music Assistant will schedule the musicians and vocalists, but the fees are to be paid directly to the musicians on the day of the wedding. Please refer to the fee schedule below:

Piano/Service Planning Session	\$200
*If also rehearsing soloist/instrumentalist	\$250
Vocalist	\$100
Instrumentalist (flute, violin, trumpet)	\$125

**Additional musicians/instrumentalists may be available. You may also provide your own musicians/vocalists if you prefer. Please discuss this with the Music Assistant when you meet.

- † The order of the wedding ceremony and scripture readings will be discussed with you by the officiating pastor.
- † A trained board operator will be present for the ceremony.
- † Unity Candles may be lit as part of ceremonial tradition. Candles may be purchased at most Christian book stores.

Flowers/Decorations and Photographer

1. Pictures may be taken before and after the ceremony. In keeping with our Christ-centered mission and worship, we ask that your photographer refrain from taking pictures during the ceremony except for non-flash pictures from the back of the sanctuary. A stationary unmanned video camera may be positioned in the front of the sanctuary; however, manned video camera is restricted to the back.
*Please ask the photographer to briefly visit with the wedding coordinator prior to the ceremony.
2. Flowers: Your florist is free to decorate the church with bows, flowers, candles, etc. At certain times of the year, seasonal sanctuary decorations are unable to be removed. Please keep this in mind when scheduling the wedding.

3. Aisle runners are not recommended at Messiah as they are not able to be affixed to the floor. If you want to use a runner, they should be ordered through the florist. Silk flower petals may be used.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is held the night before the ceremony and led by the wedding officiant. Most rehearsals last 45-60 minutes. Please arrive promptly for the rehearsal. Please ask ushers and groomsmen to attend the rehearsal as well. Parents are welcome to attend.

Wedding Party

It is expected that members of the wedding party will understand that the church is a house of God and will conduct themselves in a manner befitting a place of worship. Host families are legally responsible for the conduct and safety of their guests. Messiah Lutheran Church will not be held legally responsible for the misconduct of any wedding guests.

Pre-Marriage Counseling

First Step: Schedule a pastoral counseling session by contacting our Ministry Assistant. Meetings are held during business hours between 8 am and 4 pm.

Second Step: Schedule Counselor Kate, LLC for 3 sessions of Christian Marriage Counseling

Service Planning

Messiah Lutheran Church exists to help people know and share the love of Jesus Christ. A wedding ceremony is a great opportunity for Messiah to carry out its mission, and we are pleased to share in this very special moment in your life. We want your wedding service to be one that is filled with joy, for you personally, as well as gives all praise and glory to Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Because Messiah's public ministry is one that is committed to the beliefs and teachings of the Christian faith and the Lutheran Church, it is important that the public wedding ceremony be reflective of our public ministry.

Bible Passages for Couples

The most important part of your wedding vows is the commitment to “live in holy marriage according to the word of God.” Because God created mankind with marriage as a vital part of life, God knows how marriage works best.

Please take time to do the following prior to meeting with the Pastor:

- † Read over the following **wedding vows** and reflect on the meaning of the words. Discuss them with your future spouse and pray for God to help you better understand what they mean.

I, _____, in the presence of God and these witnesses, take you, _____, to be my wife, 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 death parts us, and I pledge you my faithfulness.

I, _____, in the presence of God and these witnesses, take you, _____, to be my 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 death parts us, and I pledge you my faithfulness.

- † Read the following Bible passages and discuss how they will apply to your marriage.

Matthew 19:4-6

1. What will be some of the emotional challenges of “leaving your father and mother?” (Both for each of you and for your parents?)
2. What is the meaning of a “one-flesh” relationship (emotionally, physically, and spiritually)?
3. How does a life-long commitment help to nurture a deeper trusting relationship?

Ephesians 5:22-23

1. Men: List as many similarities as you can between how Jesus loves the Church and how you are to love your wife.
2. Women: List as many similarities as you can between how the Church loves Jesus, and how you are to love your husband.

- † Take time to pray together. Ask God to open your hearts to better understand His plan for your marriage.

Standard Order of Service

Procession

Welcome and Invocation

Bible Readings

Message

Vows

Exchange of Rings

Pronouncement of Marriage

Unity Candle

Prayers—Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Recessional