

A MANUAL FOR ENGAGED COUPLES

Desiring to be Married at

St. Paul Lutheran Church

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Dear Couple:

Congratulations on your engagement! The people of St. Paul and I want your wedding day to be meaningful and beautiful. We consider it a privilege to serve you as you prepare for this special day and for your lifelong union as husband and wife. For this reason, we have developed the following manual for engaged couples desiring to be married at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Kalkaska. ***Please take the time to carefully read through and understand this manual.*** May the Lord bless your preparation time.

In Christ,
Pastor Hoover

Prerequisites to Marriage at St. Paul

1. A wedding at St. Paul is normally a privilege reserved for members of the congregation, or for those working towards a regular and active membership. In this regard, it is the pastor's discretion whether or not a wedding will take place in the church.
2. Both the bride and groom must be Christians. If one or the other is not a member of a Missouri Synod Lutheran congregation, he or she will undergo confirmation training. If desired, this training would lead to confirmation and membership at St. Paul.
3. By God's definition, marriage is the lifelong union of one man and one woman; therefore, the pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church will not solemnize, officiate, recognize, or bless same sex partnerships or unions. Where one or both of the parties to the wedding are divorced, the marriage will be allowed only under the circumstances permitted by Scripture.
4. All pre-marital couples must promise to keep "the marriage bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4) and remain celibate until they are married. Couples who have struggled or continue to struggle with this temptation and have broken the 6th Commandment should repent of their sin, seek forgiveness from God, and by His grace receive absolution. For the sake of Christ, we believe that our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. Therefore, we are compelled to conform to God's will in all aspects of life (cf. Romans 6:1-2).
5. Accordingly, St. Paul Lutheran Church does not condone couples living together before marriage. It is unwise and in most cases sinful. In such cases, premarital couples should seek other living arrangements until after the wedding. When certain circumstances make other living arrangements impossible (such as children in the home), it is the recommendation of the pastor that the couple get married in a small, simple ceremony as soon as a marriage license can be obtained. At a later time, a *Service of Affirmation of Holy Matrimony* may take place where the couple can celebrate their wedding publicly with all the traditional elements of a standard wedding. Whatever the solution, the promise of celibacy is still expected of all premarital couples.
6. A valid marriage license must be obtained by the couple and turned into the church office at least *one week* before the wedding.
7. To ensure that there are no surprises on your wedding day, St. Paul Lutheran Church will make wedding plans only with the bride and groom. Families of the wedding couple will kindly make their requests and concerns known through the bride or groom.

Premarital Pastoral Care

Research shows that marriage preparation will decrease the likelihood of divorce and increase your marriage satisfaction. All couples married at St. Paul Lutheran Church will use Zoe, a simple, internet-based inventory created to help you prepare for your marriage.

Zoe consists of approximately 350 questions designed to assess your strengths and weaknesses as a couple. Zoe covers virtually all areas of relationships and life that are known to affect the success of a marriage. It is important to know as much as possible about your strengths and weaknesses as a couple before you get married. The more you know about yourselves, the greater your success will be as a married couple.

The pastor will send you an invitation via e-mail to register for Zoe and chose him as your advisor. Since your premarital counseling is based upon *your* Zoe Score, it is catered specifically to your needs. For this reason, the number of sessions will vary from couple to couple.

There is a \$40 cost for Zoe which is to be paid by the couple directly to Zoe.

The Wedding Service

A Christian wedding is a worship service, conducted according to the standards of a worship service. As such, weddings at St. Paul will be distinctively Christian in content so that not only you but everyone present will be enriched and edified. This understanding (that a Christian wedding is a worship service) will govern almost every detail of service planning. All the elements of any service of worship must praise, honor, and glorify God.

Although a standard order of service is used for all weddings at St. Paul, the pastor will be happy to discuss minor changes, additions, or omissions to this service. However, these modifications and all other aspects of the service will be subject to the pastor's discretion as the called representative of Christ in this church.

The couple has the opportunity to choose the following elements or options for the wedding ceremony:

1. **Date/Time for the Wedding**

To avoid scheduling conflicts, please check with the pastor before you *set* the date for your wedding, book a reception hall, and send out invitations. The date and time available for a wedding will depend on what other activities the congregation has previously scheduled. No weddings will be scheduled during Holy Week, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, or Easter Sunday. Saturday weddings must start by 2:30 p.m. (as we have a 5:30 p.m. service).

Wedding rehearsals are typically set for the evening before the wedding at 6:00 p.m. Please make every effort to have your entire wedding party and all musicians present for the rehearsal.

2. **Readings**

The service typically has 3 readings: an Old Testament reading, an Epistle reading, and a Gospel reading. The pastor may read all three readings. However, if you'd like someone special (like a favorite uncle or your fathers) to read for the service that would be fine. However, it is the practice of the congregation for the pastor to read the Gospel.

Ultimately, the choice of texts used for the service is yours. Here are some suggestions for you to consider:

OLD TESTAMENT

✘ Genesis 2:7, 18-24
Genesis 1:26-28
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 9:9-10
Song of Songs 2:10-13
Song of Songs 8:6-7
Isaiah 61:7-11
Hosea 2:18-23

EPISTLE

✘ Epheisians 5:1-2, 21-33
Romans 12:1-2
I Corinthians 6:19-20, 7:4-5
I Corinthians 12:31-13:13
Philippians 4:4-7
Colossians 3:12-17
I Thessalonians 4:1-8
Hebrews 13:1-8
I John 4:7-12

GOSPEL

✘ Matthew 19:4-6
Mark 10:1-9, 13-16
John 2:1-11
John 15:9-12

Passages marked with ✘ are the traditional readings used for wedding ceremonies.

3. Music

The couple will be responsible for enlisting the services of any musicians desired for the service. The organ is the most common instrument used in our worship, but for this special service you may wish to include other instruments as well; such as, stringed or brass instruments. As noted above, it will be important for all musicians to be present for the wedding rehearsal.

For the service, the couple will need to choose prelude music, processional music, hymns (*optional*), solo pieces (*optional*), recessional music, and postlude music. Please note that, although they may be beautiful, secular songs have no place in Christian worship. The pastor reserves the right to exclude any music that does not reflect St. Paul Lutheran Church's confession of faith. For your convenience, the following list is an example of pieces that fit nicely into the wedding service and have the pastor's pre-approval. Please allow the pastor to approve all other music that you've considered using in the service.

Prelude, Processional, Recessional, Postlude:

- Bach, "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"
- Bach, "Kommst du nun, Jesu"
- Bach, "Sheep May Safely Graze"
- Bach, "Wachet Auf, ruft uns die Stimme"
- Clarke, "Trumpet Voluntary"
- Frescobaldi, "Canzona I"
- Pachelbel, "Canon in D"
- Purcell, "Trumpet Tune and Air"

Hymns (all from The Lutheran Service Book):

- "Blest be the Tie that Binds" LSB 649
- "Children of the Heavenly Father" LSB 725
(A stanza specific to marriage is available for this hymn)
- "If Thou But Trust in God to Guide Thee" LSB 750
- "Alleluia! Let Praises Ring" LSB 822
- "O Father, All Creating" LSB 858
- "Lord, Who at Cana's Wedding Feast" LSB 859
- "Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing" LSB 860
- "Oh, Blest the House, Whate'er Befall" LSB 862

4. **Bulletins**

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have printed bulletins for the ceremony. If desired, the couple must provide these bulletins. Please allow the pastor to approve the bulletin before sending it off to the printer. It would be best to have a proof submitted to the pastor as soon as possible but no later than one week before the wedding.

5. **Clergy**

It is assumed that the pastor of St. Paul will preside over all weddings. There is opportunity for you to invite other clergymen to be part of the ceremony. However, any participating pastor must be a member of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Please speak with the pastor before inviting other clergy to participate in the wedding service.

The Church and Sanctuary

Please remember when using the church building (whether for pictures, wedding ceremony, decorating, dressing, etc.) that this is a sacred space and should be treated as such.

- There may be no use of profanity.
- No alcoholic beverages on the premises
- No smoking in the building
- Children should not be allowed free reign within the nave and should not be allowed to play in the chancel/altar area.
- The wedding party should wear appropriate attire suitable for worship in God's house.
- All decorations must be in good taste and suitable for a worship service. Nothing that leaves marks, holes or otherwise mars the building or furnishings of the church is permitted.
- No flash photography is permitted during the service. Professional photographers and videographers are asked to speak with the pastor before the ceremony if they have any questions about maintaining proper reverence during the service.
- Throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc. is not permitted in the building or on the church grounds. Tiny bubbles have become the norm for the celebratory send-off of bride and groom.

The bride and groom are responsible to insure that the church building is clean and presentable for the next service of God's house following their wedding. They are also responsible for appropriately communicating this wedding policy to those who will be involved in the wedding and its planning.

