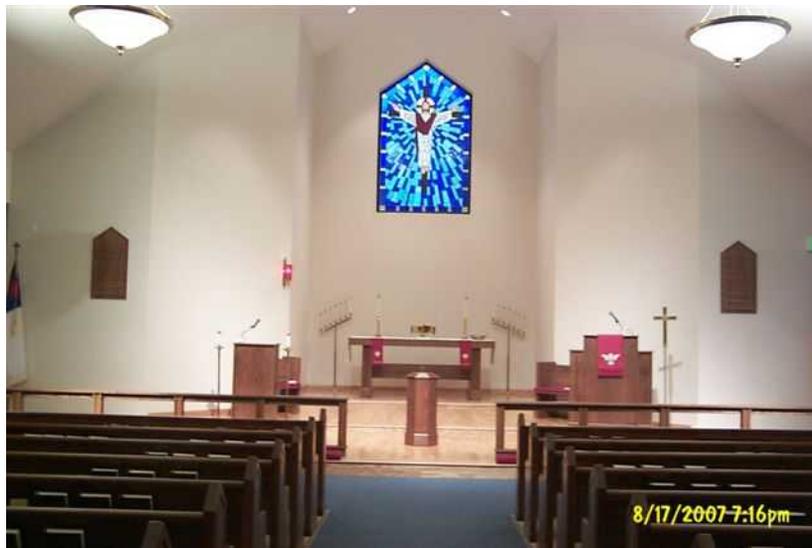


Wedding Manual

For Wedding Services of the Church
Officiated under the Auspices of
Gloria Christi Lutheran Church

Adopted by the Gloria Christi Board of Elders, 2008



GLORIA CHRISTI LUTHERAN CHURCH GREELEY, COLORADO

**For Those Who Desire a Christ-centered Service of the Church
To Begin Their Life Together as Husband and Wife Before God, the Church, and the State**

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A STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE IN THE TRIUNE GOD'S DESIGN

Marriage is instituted by God in the very creation as He created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2). It is to be between one man and one woman for a life time, until death parts them. There is no such thing as a "homosexual union or marriage." A union requires two compatible, but different beings in their gender. Marriage is to be an inviolable, life-long union of commitment, love, fidelity, servant-hood, self-sacrifice, and parenthood modeled after the union of Jesus Christ, and His Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5).

Marriage is not a small matter and is not something to be entered into lightly or as the world understands it. One is not accorded the privileges of marriage without the covenant and God-established union of marriage. Usurping and taking the privileges of marriage before the wedding is sin and bring harm to those engaged in it and dishonors God and the Church, since marriage is established by God and pictured most perfectly in the union of Christ and the Church.

Sexual activity is not wrong in its proper context. In its proper context it is a gift of God. Sexual activity, which requires modesty, is only allowed by God, as taught in His Word, within the marital union. Therefore, pre-marital or extra-marital sexual activity of any kind is out of the question for Christians. Likewise the other benefits and privileges of marriage are not to take place ("living together", procreation of children, etc.). This understanding is simply becoming increasingly rare in our society and culture. It is a temptation of the devil, the world, and our fallen nature even for Christians to fall prey to this distortion of marriage. Self-control is often lost on individuals thinking only of the moment.

Despite the fallen-ness of our culture and society, marriage of one man and one woman is a holy institution and gift of God. It should be treated as such in thought, word, and deed. Marriage services of the Church, whether in the church building or conducted by the pastor elsewhere, are a privilege and not something which may be demanded. Christian pastors should not simply "hire" themselves out to perform weddings, even if it is legal in society to do so. The wedding service is a liturgical service of the Church and the pre-marital instruction ("counseling") is a form of pastoral care and catechesis.

When a couple has been cohabiting and or taking other privileges of marriage before being wed, it is part of the pastor's responsibility (as difficult as it may be) to urge the couple to repent of this activity prior to his agreeing to perform the wedding. While he strives to work with the couple to urge them to engage into marriage in accordance with God's Word, he may finally, when there is a refusal to repent, deny the request to perform the marriage rite until such a time that there is apparent repentance.

Additionally, a pastor may not perform a wedding without a valid marriage license from the appropriate government agency. In addition to serving as a minister of the church, in the matter of marriage, the pastor also serves as an agent of the state. Furthermore, since marriage

is a public matter, there is no such thing as a “private marriage” nor one that is “only before God but not before the state.” The following passage of Holy Scripture is to be kept in mind in this regard, for those who think the license is “only a piece of paper”:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [Romans 13:1-2 (ESV)]

And later St. Paul also says:

Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. [6] For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. [7] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed. [Romans 13:5-7 (ESV)]

Furthermore it is charged of pastors in this regard: *“This is how one should regard us, as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God”* [I Corinthians 4:1]. Therefore we cannot accept the suggestion that there is marriage before God but not before the state. While the state may indeed license or allow activities that are immoral, the church also recognizes from Scripture that where that authority has not contradicted Scripture, we are obligated to obey it. Marriage or its privileges cannot be had privately or on our own terms in contradiction to God’s clear will without harm or sin. Therefore the Church or its pastors cannot condone or ignore it.

If a pastor were to perform a “church wedding” without a state issued marriage license, that pastor could be legally liable to the state. Pastors should not volunteer to do such nor should they be asked to perform such illicit weddings, not even for the reason of outreach, or to save someone’s “tax status.”

“Private marriages” where a man and woman claim to be married or usurp marital privileges, even with a private commitment, cannot be sanctioned as genuine marriages since marriage is always a public matter. Therefore couples engaging in this thinking and activity are urged strongly to repent in thought, word, and deed, and confessing the sin receive holy absolution. It is incumbent upon the Church, when cases are known publicly to speak God’s law and gospel faithfully and exercise the Keys (John 20). This will mean that either the couples will move to separate residences and cease and desist from all sexual activity in repentance or that all sexuality activity will cease immediately and a wedding will be scheduled and performed as soon as possible.

Sometimes couples will assert a “right” to a “private marriage” by “unique exception” because they want to maintain a certain financial status or because of difficult and hurtful situations in one’s past (i.e. divorce) and a fear of “getting burned” again either emotionally, financially, legally, or over property concerns. While one can empathize with such fears and worries, they do not justify a rejection of what God teaches of marriage and His authority in the state, nor

does it mitigate the fact that marriage is a public matter. Trusting in the Lord and fostering clear communication and trust with one's loved one, should lead one to repentance and a faithful marriage, or in some cases, to let the relationship revert simply to a friendship (without romantic overtones or usurping marital privileges) and the exercising of a "chaste and decent life in word and deed".

Again, as marriage is intended and designed by God to be a life-long union of one man and one woman, its blessings are known when entered-into in accordance with the revealed will of God. For mutual help, companionship, love, and when it is God's will, procreation, marriage is a gift given by God. Since marriage is ultimately fulfilled in the union of Christ and His Bride, the Church, any distortion of marriage ultimately confesses or denies Christ and His Church. But with this said, any marriage of fallen human beings, is a union of two sinners, since we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore not only love and commitment but also forgiveness is paramount in a Christ-centered marriage which truly reflects God's love toward us in Christ.

Husband and wife will fail one another in thought, word, and deed. But here is where the marriage of two Christians seeking God's will in His holy Word is equipped far beyond any secular helps or methods. Therefore, there is great potential benefit in seeking to be married under the auspices of the Church, although the Church, recognizes the validity of weddings conducted under the auspices only of the state, before a judge or justice of the peace or other legally recognized servant of the state.

Advice on "mixed faith" marriages: Marriage to an unbeliever (non-Christian) can be disastrous! If you are engaged to someone who is not an actively professing or practicing Christian, do not simply assume that you will "change" him or her after you are married. It often does not work that way. This does not mean that it cannot happen, but one should not make assumptions in this regard. Furthermore, the believer often ends up compromising his or her faith and sometimes even falling away. Unfortunately some couples do not even consider their life of faith or Church membership until after being married some time. Of course, nowhere does Scripture say that Lutheran believers must only marry other Lutheran believers. Nevertheless, we feel that - - after much experience -- if your spouse is of a different Christian denomination, he or she should give serious consideration to becoming a member of the Lutheran faith, thus enabling both of you to worship and commune together each Lord's Day in a common church family. At the very minimum, please encourage your future partner to join you in attending the adult catechism course with the pastor.

We pray that this guide and the pre-marital instruction will serve bride and groom well not only for their wedding service but a life-long marriage and most of all, for their faith and salvation in Christ alone.

WHO MAY BE WED AT GLORIA CHRISTI LUTHERAN CHURCH?

The persons to be married in the Church must, first of all, be baptized Christians. At least one person of the couple should be or intend to become a member of a congregation of the Lutheran

Church-Missouri Synod, or other Lutheran churches in fellowship with the LCMS. (The LCMS is not in fellowship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]). If neither the bride nor groom is a member of such a congregation, they should arrange with the pastor to take adult instruction classes (catechesis) and join the congregation prior to the wedding. Our practice is to normally expect that at least either the bride or the groom will be members of Gloria Christi Lutheran Church. The pastor of Gloria Christi does not “hire” himself out to conduct the weddings of non-Christians nor of non-members who are not interested in becoming a member of the congregation. He is under no obligation to perform weddings of non-members. Neither does Gloria Christi “rent out” the sanctuary for such purposes.

The couple requesting wedding services may neither be living together, nor have already sexually consummated the marital relationship. If either has happened, the couple must not attempt to deceive the pastor, but rather repent and cease all such activity before being wed. The Christian life is one of daily repentance and faith. Christians are sinners who are forgiven of their sins in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. So even when those come who have transgressed God’s law, we also welcome those who come in repentance desiring now to live in accordance with God’s Word. We want to reach out to those in desiring to return to the Lord while seeking to maintain the integrity of the biblical understanding of marriage.

Regardless of what the state may or may not allow in this regard, because we believe the Word of God concerning both the institution of marriage and human sexuality, only heterosexual couples may be married in the Church and only heterosexual couples are legitimately married in the eyes of God. Finally, the couple must be eligible to be married according to the laws of the land, including making arrangements regarding a marriage license, any medical, or other requirements. The pastor will not perform weddings without a state-issued license.

PRE-MARITAL INSTRUCTION (OFTEN CALLED “COUNSELING”)

The pastor requires that *at least* four one-hour sessions of pre-marriage instruction be held with the couple. During these sessions, the couple will work through several of the important Biblical passages and the Catechism concerning marriage; examine the marriage vows, the couple will study excerpts from several important works by Christian authors concerning marriage; the couple will have opportunity for confession and absolution if necessary or desired; and the couple will work out the details of the service with the pastor. More sessions will be arranged if, following the fourth session, the pastor feels that additional instruction or counsel is needed.

You are about to promise before the holy God, His Church, your friends and family a **life-long**, sincere, commitment to one another with all of the joys and sorrows. With the temptations and troubles that afflict the family today it is vital that marriage begins and continues with the best possible preparation and study. In this process you will learn about marriage from God’s Word, the Catechism, and the marriage rite itself. While the pastor is not called to be a “counselor” or a “psychiatrist” he will encourage you in good communication. However, you are encouraged to pursue this skill further as well as to take time to discuss household finances

and so forth. The pastor will concentrate on what the Scriptures teach. There will be assigned reading and discussion.

If a couple has not already done so, it is important that they discuss important matters such as:

- + where they will regularly attend church and study God's Word
- + financial management of the household
- + family time, couple time, and personal time and their relation to work
- + children and parenting – setting an example in word and deed, prayer, discipline, morality, safety
- + behavior and language in front of children
- + dealing with personal psychological and physical health problems from one's past
- + regular devotions as a couple and as individuals
- + household chores, safety, and duties between husband and wife

WHEN AND HOW TO BEGIN PLANNING

The sooner the better! Anytime after your engagement (or even before, if you wish), you should contact the church to check dates for both the church availability and the pastor's personal availability. Please call to set up your first appointment. Bride and groom to be must both be present for all sessions. It is strongly preferred that weddings not be held during the season of Lent or during Holy Week.

THE MARRIAGE SERVICE AS A LITURGICAL SERVICE AND WORSHIP

The Marriage Service, when conducted in a church or under the auspices of the church (regardless of location), is first and foremost a liturgical service of worship. It is an opportunity not only for the couple to be joined in marriage, but also for the congregation to pray for the couple, to thank and praise God for their union, and especially for the Church to celebrate her marriage to Christ. Moreover, through the liturgy, readings and sermon, it is an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work faith in people's hearts through the hearing of the Word of God.

Therefore the joy of marriage is focused and cannot be mindless frivolity nor lewd. The wedding service is just as much a service of the Church as is a Sunday morning Divine Service. For this reason the wedding service does not belong to the bride and groom alone or even the family, but it is a public service (even when celebrated privately) which belongs to God primarily and also to the church, as well as our congregation. As such your wedding service will reflect a distinctively Christian content, form, and "style" in agreement with the Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions and the orders of our church. The policies and guidelines in this booklet will help you receive the gift of marriage and the wedding service in this way so that God will be glorified and His grace in Christ will be at the center of all given and proclaimed. Television soap operas and movies are not the standard or model of good wedding practice.

In planning, the couple will need to always ask the question "*would this be appropriate in the Divine Service on Sunday morning?*" If the answer is "no", then that item should probably be discarded. ***Because the wedding service is a liturgical service being held at a particular congregation or under auspices of the congregation, the pastor of that congregation is the final authority on all matters touching the wedding worship service and the rite of holy matrimony***

itself. The pastor reserves the right to refuse to marry any couple who will not submit themselves to the principles in this area.

THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF THE MARRIAGE SERVICE

Because the marriage service is first and foremost a service of worship, the wedding will normally take place within the liturgy of the Church. These liturgies have been handed down from the earliest Christian times and are the Church's voice through the ages. The rite of marriage itself will be performed according to the *Lutheran Service Book* hymnal and *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The vows will not be written by the couple, but will be spoken as they are written in the rite of the church. The pastor will give a brief sermon or homily during the marriage service.

The rite of marriage may also be set within a larger liturgical context but does not have to be. The choice of liturgy depends upon the time of day that the ceremony is to take place. If the marriage is in the morning the liturgy will be a form of the Order of Matins or the Order of Morning Prayer. If the marriage is in the late afternoon or evening, the liturgy will be the Order of Vespers or the Order of Evening Prayer. These settings will come from our hymnal, *Lutheran Service Book*. The Order of Holy Communion (Divine Service) will not ordinarily be used due to pastoral concerns over the proper administration of the Sacrament but could be used under some circumstances.

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

Music is an integral part of the Church's worship. Music not only serves to accompany the message of the text of song, but also carries a message all its own. It is a powerful tool that can be used either to enhance the meaning and purpose of words, or detract from those words. Likewise, music can either enhance our reverence in worship, or it can detract from that reverence. *Great care must therefore be taken when choosing the music of the wedding service. Top 40 pop, country, rock, soft-rock song are not appropriate for the service.*

The choice of music in your wedding service is already largely determined by your coming to God's House to be married or by having the pastor officiate your service. In this spirit you in consultation with the pastor and musicians will select music that gives glory to God, proclaims the gospel of Christ, and which is suitable for a liturgical service of the Church. *Romantic popular music may be suitable at a reception or dance afterwards but is not suitable for the wedding service or as prelude or postlude music.* Christian sacred and not secular (pop) music will be used. Although you may have heard some music used at other churches, even other LCMS churches, the reasons stated define what we at Gloria Christi expect for music in wedding services here. Both text and tune will need to be considered in this regard.

In this respect it is safe to assume that our hymnal is a good place to start. While a selection may not be right or appropriate for the wedding service we are not necessarily implying that such a song is sinful, just that it doesn't suit a worship service of the Church. Furthermore we encourage the use of one or two congregational hymns that are sung by the entire congregation and not only solos or

duets. Again, anything used in the service needs to be approved by the pastor. Please note that the Wedding Marches of Wagner (“Here Comes the Bride”) and Mendelssohn may not be used due to their pagan origins. “Tocata and Fugue in D minor” by Bach also may not be used because it does not fit the occasion of a wedding. Other pieces by Bach are very appropriate, such as, Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring.

Oft-requested pop, country or other secular songs that may not be used include (*not exhaustive*):

- + “Wedding March” by Wagner (*Here Comes the Bride...*)
- + “Keeper of the Stars” by Tracy Byrd
- + “From a Distance” or “the Wind Beneath My Wings” by Bette Midler
- + “You’re My Hero” by Bette Midler
- + “I Swear”
- + “Endless Love”
- + “Love Can Build a Bridge”
- + “Speak Softly, Love”
- + “In the Mood”
- + “Amazed”
- + “In the Arms of the Angels”
- + “The Power of Love”

While the church organists will guide your music selection, the pastor, not the organists, is the final authority for approval of musical selections. Again selections for the Service will differ greatly from what you might select for the wedding reception/dance or even for your personal listening in daily life. Even some Christian music is not yet suitable as liturgical music for the service. Again, simply because a piece of music is not suitable for the services does not necessarily mean it is wrong for other times or places.

DATE AND TIME

If your Service is held on a Saturday, it will begin no later than 4:00 pm. This allows our building to be readied by the custodian and altar guild for Sunday Divine Service and out of courtesy for the pastor’s preparations and rest for Sunday morning. If your Service is held on another day it may be held at other times in consultation with the pastor and others involved. It is *strongly preferred* that weddings not be held during the season of Lent and shall not be allowed during the sacred occasion of Holy Week.

CLERGY PARTICIPANTS

The pastor of Gloria Christi will be in charge of all Marriage Services conducted here. Another clergyman of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod or of another Lutheran synod with whom we are in fellowship may also participate in the service, and in exceptional circumstances officiate by permission of the pastor of Gloria Christi, provided he has appropriate credentials with the church and this state and agrees to follow these guidelines. Since a wedding service is a liturgical service of the Church, only pastors of our Synodical fellowship may co-officiate in the service, including serving as lector. You must also be sure that a guest pastor is qualified with the state government to perform a wedding in Colorado.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

You may invite others to sing, serve as organist, light the candles, or serve as ushers in the wedding service. Please consult with the pastor first on these aspects of the service. The pastor himself will read the Scripture lessons in the Service.

ORGANISTS AND MUSICIANS

You may request one of Gloria Christi organists to play for your wedding service. If they are not available and you ask someone who is not a member of our congregation to play, we ask that they read and abide by the musical sections of this manual. It is customary that organists receive a financial gift or honorarium for their playing and preparation. The same principles apply to other musicians. We would strongly prefer the use of the organ or piano for the service.

ATTENDANTS

Since your attendants are being invited not only to witness your vows but to worship God with you and pray with you, it is fitting for you to choose from your friends and relatives those who are able to worship God with you in Spirit and Truth. Any members of the wedding party who arrive drunk or intoxicated on drugs will be relieved of their duties and will be excused from the wedding service. Foul or vulgar language should be kept outside the church at the very least. "Sanctuary" means holy place and those in it should be on their best behavior. Any surprise additions to the service that are not approved by the pastor may result in those involved being relieved of their duties or the pastor declining to conduct the service.

When considering flower girls or ring bearers please keep in mind that while very young children may certainly appear "cute," a marriage service can be stressful and frightening and there is a different atmosphere between the rehearsal and the actual service. Please do not allow children to play at the altar or the pulpit even during the rehearsal. The sanctuary is set apart as sacred space at all times.

All ushers should arrive at least 45 minutes prior to the wedding. It is not necessary to ask those entering if they are "friends of the bride" or "friends of the groom". Places are designated for the immediate members of the families involved. For the rest there is no special "side".

If the ushers know of those who might be inclined to use flash cameras during the ceremony, such individuals are to be asked to leave their equipment in the narthex. Opportunity will be given them later to take appropriate pictures. If someone comes in using a cell phone, they should be asked to turn it off while in the sanctuary. Besides this we ask that there be no smoking or use of chewing tobacco in the church building. We also ask that gum be disposed of properly and not on the pews or other furniture. Gum chewing is not allowed during the wedding service by those who will be "up front" in the wedding.

NUMBER OF ATTENDANTS

Given the amount of space in the front of the church at Gloria Christi and to avoid confusion, disorder, and other problems, we ask that the number of attendants be kept to a reasonable number. The pastor reserves the right to ask the bride and groom to cut the number of attendants to a reasonable number.

ATTIRE AT WEDDING AND REHEARSAL

Due to the solemn nature of this occasion, formal attire should be worn. Because these will be worn at a worship service in the sight of all, certain accommodations must be made for modesty's sake. Dresses may not be too short or plunge too deep in the front or in the back. The groom and his groomsmen should ordinarily wear a conservative suit or a tuxedo. Under no circumstances may costumes be worn by the wedding party (e.g. Hawaiian shirts and Bermuda shorts, medieval outfits, togas, etc.) Excessive informality or lewdness will not be tolerated (e.g. "garter shots", etc.). Men are asked to **not wear hats** inside the church building, especially the sanctuary. Military uniforms are allowed by members of the armed forces, but weapons should not be brought into the sanctuary.

CANDLES

The candelabra will be lit for the service (and the Paschal Candle in the Easter season). You may provide additional suitable candles if you wish. Please avoid candles which will drip wax on the carpeting or altar cloths unnecessarily.

ALTAR PARAMENTS

The colors of the altar, lectern, and pulpit paraments (cloths) are determined by the day and season in the Church Year and not by decoration color schemes.

DECORATIONS

Decorating must be completed at least 90 minutes before the wedding service. Around the altar we ask that decorations be simple and kept to a minimum. *At no time will the altar, pulpit, lectern, baptismal font, paschal candle, processional crucifix, be moved, changed, or obscured.*

Decorations must be removed after the wedding as soon as possible. The wedding party may wish to keep in mind the colors of the day in the Church Year when planning decoration colors.

Colors of the Church Year

GREEN - All days apart from those below.

BLUE/PURPLE - Season of Advent

PURPLE - Season of Lent

WHITE - Season of Christmas, Season of Easter, Feasts of Our Lord and certain Saint's Days

RED - Week of Pentecost, Reformation Day, Martyrs' Days, Evangelists' Days, most Apostles' Days.

FLOWERS

In all our services the altar and cross are to remain the focal point in the Church. No more than two vases of cut flowers may be placed on the altar itself. Other flowers may be placed

elsewhere where they do not obscure altar, pulpit, baptismal font, paschal candle, or processional crucifix. Do not place flowers or decorations on the baptismal font, pulpit, lectern, piano or organ. Flowers *may* be placed *around* the pulpit, font, lectern, and candles or at the end of the seating rows.

AISLE RUNNER

Aisle runners were originally intended to keep the bride's dress clean when churches had bare wooden floors. The florist or someone else may provide a runner if desired.

RICE/CONFETTI/BIRD SEED/CEREAL/ETC.

Rice, confetti, bird seed, or cereal may not be thrown on Gloria Christi property, as this is troublesome for cleaning and has historic origins in pagan fertility cults. Bubbles are allowed.

MARRIAGE LICENSE REQUIREMENT

The marriage license must be at the church for the rehearsal at least one day before the wedding service with the names of the official witnesses. The marriage license must be completed before the bride and groom leave after their wedding service. Make sure you understand the laws of the county and of the state in which the wedding is to be celebrated. Where do you have to get the license? What are the time limits involved? How long is the license valid? Ask these and other specific questions about local ordinances that will affect your wedding or the participants you may desire to invite. If you want a guest pastor to share in any way (assuming it's agreeable with the pastor), determine what qualifications and standards the congregation requires in order to participate in a wedding service in our and your church. It's not the same everywhere.

VARIOUS CUSTOMS OR TRADITIONS

There are various traditions or customs, such as the bride being "given away" by her father or another standing in his stead which may be included in your wedding service. Please discuss them with the pastor. All these must be approved by the pastor in advance. Old Lutheran custom has the bride and groom approach the altar together - because rightful betrothal is a marriage in the sight of God. If the bride approaches the altar alone or at the right side of her father or some other male relative, she shall be given to the groom at the foot of the chancel steps, at the head of the center aisle.

PICTURES AND VIDEO

During pictures reverence and good behavior is to be maintained. Pictures may be taken before and/or after the Service. It is a good idea to complete taking pictures at least 30 minutes before the Service time. *Flash pictures are not allowed during the Service.* You may videotape the service from the rear of the sanctuary. Excessive informality, lewdness (such as garter shots), or misuse of the liturgical furnishings will not be permitted. No sitting on the altar rail is allowed. Photographers and videographers should be asked to respect that they are in sacred space in God's House. If pictures are desired during the ceremony, they must be taken from the back of the chapel without a flash and may not under any circumstances be taken in the chancel proper (at the pulpit, altar, lectern, etc.). *Roaming cameramen during the service are not permitted.* The

pastor is to be informed of any pictures that involve him and these are to be taken first, in case of other events or emergencies.

LECTORS/READERS

The pastor will read the Scripture lessons during the service.

THE COST OF YOUR WEDDING

There seems to be no limit to the amount of money that can be spent on a wedding. Your wedding can be as expensive or as inexpensive as you choose it to be. We encourage every couple to set a realistic budget limit for their wedding and stick to it. Thoroughly discuss your budget and your plans with anyone who will be bearing any portion of your wedding's cost before you begin signing contracts or making reservations. Your friends are coming to your wedding to celebrate the commitment you are making to each other. They do not expect you to overextend yourselves financially for their entertainment. Don't try to 'out-do' others. Remember, as important as your wedding day is, your marriage is more important.

If you are on a very limited budget, you could consider: a reception, catered by friends and family members in Gloria Christi's Parish Hall, the Agape Center; newer suits and ties for the men instead of rented tuxedos; home grown floral arrangements and self-made bouquets. Couples who insist that members of their wedding party spend unreasonable amounts of money for the privilege of being 'in the wedding' may be placing undue burdens on their friends. Your friends will rejoice with you just as much no matter how much or how little you spend.

Wedding couples should be made aware from the beginning that the preparations necessary on the part of the musicians involved in the wedding service involve considerable time and effort. It should be made clear that preparations for a wedding service, the rehearsal, and the service itself involve a considerable extra expenditure of time and effort and should be recognized in a tangible way. A worker is worth his wages. Wedding couples should realize that musical skills--like those of any professional--are acquired through years of training and should be compensated adequately.

Wedding couples need to understand that any fees or honoraria offered to participating musicians do not constitute a license to insist on particular selections simply to suit themselves and their own wishes. ("After all, we are paying for it")! Decisions regarding the service and its music must finally be determined by the pastor and church musician--always in consultation with the wedding couple--as part of their responsibility to carry out the congregation's concern for decency, order, propriety, and faithfulness in the worship life entrusted to their care.

Keep in mind that it would be disproportionate for a bride to spend several hundred dollars on a dress or for a groom to rent a \$75 tuxedo for a few hours, and then to expend hundreds or thousands of additional dollars on cakes, photographers, hall rentals, food, drinks, etc., while deciding to "cut costs" by giving inadequate honoraria to those people who contribute most to

making their wedding day a memorable and worshipful experience. It is always advisable to put people before things.

Be Caring About the Costs to Your Parents

This is the time when mothers and fathers can really be on the spot. They are usually more than willing to go far beyond the second mile, to a third and fourth of expending effort, money, and caring. Be sensitive to the costs of the wedding as it affects your parents. Even if they're willing to go hog-wild, keep the wedding in focus and proportioned to your normal style of life. Ultimately this should be more about your marriage than simply its beginning at the wedding ceremony. You may even want to discuss with your parents a desire to cut back on some of the costs of the wedding, the rehearsal, and the reception, and with the "saved" money, give a thank offering to a worthy cause. What better way to begin your marriage than in the attitude of sharing! Then again, your parents may give you a choice of a less costly wedding as a trade-off for helping you purchase necessary items for your home or a car. No matter what, keep your head and be sensitive to your parents' circumstance. You could be very demanding and get away with it. Parents often worry about whether they have done enough for their children, and can be made to make up for real or imagined shortcomings at a time like this. The way you handle your parents now can bless your relationship with them for years to come. A lot of money won't guarantee a splendid wedding experience. On the other hand, creative and meaningful Christian weddings are not necessarily expensive. Be a good steward of what it took your parents a long time to earn and save. In Hollywood tabloids and soap operas, once sees celebrities spending a lot on the wedding only to put little effort into the actual marriage.

LOSS OF PERSONAL ARTICLES

The church cannot assume responsibility for the loss or theft of articles belonging to members of the bridal party or the wedding guests. We suggest that you designate someone who doesn't have any other responsibilities to check all the church pews and dressing rooms after the wedding for any items that may have been inadvertently left behind by your guests.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

Neither the florist, nor a wedding consultant if one is engaged, plays any part in the directing of the rehearsal or wedding. As a courtesy to the pastor and organist, the rehearsal is to begin promptly. Please inform the wedding party that they are to be present on time. When a rehearsal dinner is planned, the rehearsal dinner schedule should be realistic in allowing enough time for the wedding party to run through rehearsal and still reach the place of the rehearsal dinner on time. Please do not enter inside the communion rail unless necessary. Please bow when entering and leaving the altar. No sitting on the altar rail is allowed.

THE PROCESSIONAL

Processionals at Gloria Christi may follow one of two traditions - the formal *Liturgical (European) Tradition* or the somewhat more familiar *American Tradition*. Please carefully read the descriptions of each before you make your choice.

The Liturgical (European) Tradition

The *Liturgical Tradition* emphasizes the centrality of Christ in the worship service, the processional consists of the Crucifer (the vested processional crucifix bearer), two Acolytes (vested candle lighters), and the Pastor; then an usher leading the parents of the Groom and other significant members of the Groom's family, who are to sit in front with the family, e.g. grandparents. Then an usher leading the parents of the Bride and other significant members of the Bride's family; then, the Bridesmaids and Groomsmen as couples; then the Maid of Honor and the Best Man as a couple; then the Bride and Groom as a couple. (*An acceptable variation is to have the Groom enter with the Pastor, or with his parents, and the Bride is escorted by her father.*)

Another impressive addition to this procession would be a wedding banner carried in the processional by an additional vested Acolyte. The banner would have the Christian marriage symbol, which should appear on your wedding service folder, along with the names of the Bride and Groom and the date of the ceremony. The purpose of this procession is to express reverence, a worshipful atmosphere, and a Christ-centered service.

The American Tradition

Patterned after a particular high society wedding of the 1920's, the *American Tradition* is often spoken of as the 'traditional wedding' even though its origin is fairly recent.

The *American Tradition* tends to emphasize the Bride and her Bridesmaids. The processional begins after the bride's mother is seated and the aisle runner (if one is used) is put in place. The congregation remains seated when the attendants of the bride enter the church. The processional consists of the Bridesmaids entering singly, then the Maid of Honor, ring bearer, flower girl, the Bride escorted by her father. As the Bridesmaids, Maid of Honor, and the Bride approach the chancel area, they are met by the Groomsmen, the Best Man, and the Groom who have all entered the sanctuary, unobtrusively, through a side aisle door. The Pastor enters the chancel from another side door. The congregation may stand when the bride enters.

As the members of the wedding party enter the church and take their places in the front of the chancel, they reverently face the altar at all times. For the greatest dignity and reverence, bridesmaids never walk into church or leave it arm in arm. Anything which savors of the theatrical either in walking or posturing should be studiously avoided in the House of God. The "hesitation step" is not used.

When the *Processional* ends, the Bridesmaids and Groomsmen will be in the chancel of the church facing the congregation; the Bride and Groom, and the Maid of Honor and Best Man, will be at the bottom of the chancel steps facing the Pastor; and the Pastor will be at the top of the chancel steps facing the couple.

There are some variations and simplifications to the American processional tradition. Very often at the recessional today, after the Bride and Groom exit the sanctuary, they will return to greet and "usher" out the guests.

SERVICE FOLDERS/BULLETINS

The content and format of the Service Folder must be approved by the pastor to make sure the service is listed properly. Either the church office or the family may put together the service folder (bulletin). If you wish that the church would take care of this please allow ample time for ordering, printing, proof-reading, and assembly. Regardless of who assembles the bulletin/service folder the bride and groom are responsible for the costs of the bulletins and printing.

“CHURCH WEDDINGS ARE NOT FOR EVERYONE”

By Rev. Stewart Crown,
Trinity Lutheran Church, Palo Alto, California

Ephesians 5:21 *“Submit yourselves to one another, because of your reverence for Christ.”*

What if you suddenly discovered that your new pastor was suffering from delusions of grandeur? What if, one Sunday, I bounced into this pulpit and casually announced that from now on, no matter who you are - a Buddhist monk or Mormon - you could now go to Holy Communion, whether you understood the Sacrament and were committed to Christ or not? What if I announced that from now on, this congregation will take anyone as a church member, no matter what he thinks about the doctrines of God's Word or about Jesus Christ?

The Elders would probably strap me into a white jacket and carry me away! What Christian in his right mind would have such a loose regard for God's Word or for our Lord and Savior?

Is it any less hypocritical to willfully let unbelievers join a Christian congregation and partake of the Sacrament than it is to perform marriages for people in the House of the Lord when those people haven't committed their lives to the Lord? Is it any less hypocritical to say public prayers for two people who don't pray? Or to read Bible passages to a bride and groom who have no intention of building their home on that Bible? To ask these two people to utter conscience-binding vows in the presence of Jesus when they don't regard Jesus as the Lord of their lives?

Someone once said that the church is basically set aside to hatch, match, and dispatch. In other words, to baptize, marry, and bury. By now, however, most of us realize there's a little more to it than that -- especially when it comes to Christian marriage.

But unfortunately, the sad fact of the matter is that many times in the past, God, His Church, and His ministers have been "used." What the couple really wanted out of it all was the beauty of the sanctuary, the noble sound of the organ, the dignified image of the clergyman, and the respectability of the "church wedding."

Therefore, I come to you, this morning, emphasizing that church weddings are not for everyone. And since this is the month for "June brides," it's not a bad time to point that out, so we'll know where the Bible stands on this issue, and thus, where we stand as a Christian congregation, so we can spare ourselves any needless grief in the future.

First of all, I feel convicted to begin with a confession - one which I've already brought before God's throne and of which He has graciously granted me forgiveness.

In the first two years of my ministry, I conducted several wedding services in which I felt very uncomfortable, mostly because I felt there was no real commitment to Jesus Christ and to a Christian family lifestyle on the part of the couples. Now obviously, as a representative of Christ, I have no right conducting any kind of ceremony that doesn't bring honor to our Lord.

Together, as a group of God's people (with me as the chief of sinners), I'm not about to sit in judgment of all the other churches this morning who don't follow through with the specifics of God's Word. Our legitimate concern is with THIS congregation. What kind of witness will we be giving when we conduct Christian marriages?

As I searched the Scriptures for this morning's message, I made a discovery. Nowhere did I find God telling His Church or His ministers that they must conduct weddings. What God has ordained is that we, under the power of the Holy Spirit, nurture Christian marriages. In other words, we're to take care of our people in such a way that they might have a truly Christian married relationship.

Obviously, one of those caring procedures is to begin that Christian marriage with a Christian worship service, a wedding, (provided, of course, everything else seems to be in line with God's will.)

So in case you're wondering, the answer is, "Yes," we'll still continue to conduct wedding ceremonies at Trinity church consisting of any two compatible children of God who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ and who are willing to follow through with a Christian family lifestyle.

Thus, before it ever happens, I'm asking you as members of this congregation, never to purposely pressure me or any Christian pastor to conduct the weddings of friends or relatives who aren't willing to follow our Lord Jesus Christ. I'm asking you to help us as a family of God to give witness to what Christ wants, and not to what people want. Furthermore, I'm asking for your trust in the decision of your elders and your pastors concerning whom this church will marry and will not marry.

My promise to you is that such a decision will always be made in light of God's Word, after diligent prayer, and in counsel with God's people. I also assure you that the decision to marry someone will not be made just because someone is pregnant or feels they "love" another person or because someone wants to get away from their parents. (Those are causes of many divorces, more than they are reasons for marriage.)

Our place in God's wedding plan is to nurture marriages and to help them become strong in Christ, rather than just to conduct ceremonies. By agreeing to conduct weddings only of people who are committed to Christ, we'll be able to strengthen the family relationships within our own Christian congregation and to be a better witness to the outside community.

When asked to marry a couple, I'll invite them to my office for a friendly chat. During the process of that conversation, I'll share with them the forgiveness and new life found only in Christ Jesus, asking if each of them is willing to make such a commitment to the Lord. If they respond negatively, I'll be unable to marry them, because my first obligation is to see that they're saved. If they refuse salvation, I can't in good conscience proceed with the wedding, although I can with counseling sessions.

But if they respond positively, then I'll congratulate them, inform them of the next series of sessions, pray for them, give them a marked Bible and assign some Christian literature for homework, share with them the various Bible study opportunities and the times of our worship services, and then invite them to participate. I'll also tell them that in two months or more, I'll be honored to perform their Christian wedding if they're still living daily for Christ, active in worship, and spending time in prayer and Bible Study by the day of their wedding.

We have to realize that the divorce rate has spread like the plague. Nearly one out of three marriages in this country end in divorce. (2 out of 3 in California). But according to a recent survey that Billy Graham quoted, as few as one out of 40 marriages end in divorce when parents attend church regularly. And only one out of 400 ends in divorce when both parents attend Church regularly with their children and maintain family devotions!

Consequently, I'm convinced we're on the right track -- the right Biblical track. What I'm really offering here is some basic Biblical guidelines which you may want to think about and go home with today to talk about.

On several occasions I've asked prospective married couples, who've come to see me about wedding arrangements, if they know of any married couple they'd like to pattern their marriage after. Most couldn't answer the question, simply because they didn't know any couple who had a healthy Christian marriage. But given the opportunity, the Holy Spirit can produce such healthy marriages if we only realize a few basic things.

First of all, healthy marriages are [usually] "caught" rather than "taught." That means people catch the pattern of a healthy marriage within the home that they grow up in. People learn about marriage as a child. The Ephesians passage says that a father and mother should submit or give themselves to each other because of Christ, and when a child sees that love and respect and forgiveness and submission exercised by his parents, that is what he'll, one day, bring into his own marriage. He finds out quickly that marriage is like buying a phonograph record - you get the song you want on one side, but you have to take the other side along with it. You take the good and the bad, but if Christ is the head of the household, everything will work out.

Secondly, it's important that we guide our children into Christian dating experiences. Under no circumstances should a Christian teen be seriously dating a non-Christian because, by definition, he'd be dating someone who is a direct contradiction to everything our Lord stands for. Dating is generally not a very good evangelism method. In fact, very often teens become emotionally involved and think they're in love and end up marrying someone who isn't a Christian (which is against Scripture). Instead, they should feel at ease in bringing their date into their Christian home and into their Christian Church. That means, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, parents AND teens should always be in agreement about WHO should be dated and where the dating should take place. If that's not there, it shows a lack of trust, and Christians are supposed to trust each other. Probably the best way to establish that trust is simply to learn how to pray together with your teen. It'll eliminate a lot of tension and conflict.

And finally, a third guideline to keep in mind is that when the time comes, engagement is a very healthy step prior to a healthy marriage. It shows a couple's commitment to each other and provides an opportunity to receive their parents blessing. It's also a time when the church family can be informed of their intended plans, so the church can rejoice and pray along with the couple. In addition to that, it's the time when they make their appointment with the pastor, (at least THREE months in advance of their wedding date) for pre-marital counseling, when we'll talk about the Biblical understanding of marriage, money management, sexual understanding, Christian family commitment, and how everything in the wedding will bring honor to Christ.

No longer will we be part of a marriage situation where at least one person says, "I don't know if I'm ready to become an active part of God's Church." My answer will be, "Then you certainly aren't ready to become married in God's Church."

Although that response may "turn off" some people, my concern is that I don't turn off Jesus Christ and give a bad witness to Him. After all, the Bible says, I'm answerable on the Last Day for what I teach to the flock entrusted to my care! That's why I felt I had to share these words with you this morning, as well as for the second pastor we'll soon be calling.

As a Christian Church we're in the business of forgiveness, and this forgiveness comes through the person of Jesus Christ. As that forgiveness enters into a man and Woman, then their lives can work...then their marriage can work. There can be healing and peace. If we can't work with this forgiveness, then we have no right working. If we can't stand before the altar of God with two forgiven people in Christ, willing to help each other live a life under Christ, then we have no right in the Church business.

But all of us are in the business, so let's do it right -- with Christ. Let's realize that our task here is to strengthen and nurture Christian marriage, not just to conduct weddings. Once and for all, let us be about the Father's business.

After all, church weddings AREN'T for everyone - they're for Christians! AMEN