

## LUTHERAN UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is God's gift to a man and a woman for their happiness, mutual growth and support. It is a commitment of one person to another and is expected to last a lifetime. The love of a married man and woman is a reflection of the relationship that God has with us and finds strength and encouragement in the example of Jesus self-giving love for the church.

An engaged couple seeks a church wedding for several reasons:

1. Their Christian faith is an important part of their lives.
2. The church is an important place in their lives.
3. They desire that their sisters and brothers in Christ witness the promises that they make to each other.

Lutherans teach that the couple marries themselves. The pastor officiates. In other words, the pastor is an official witness to the marriage and asks God to bless it. The state grants "ministers of the Gospel" the authority to officiate at weddings because it recognizes the importance of the church for Christian couples at this significant point in their lives.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

1. People who desire to be married at St. John's should consult with the pastor to discuss marriage plans and should not announce a wedding date until after such consultation. Normally the pastor should be contacted at least 6 months prior to the anticipated wedding date.
2. The pastor loci (the elected and called pastor of this congregation) of St. John's officiates at weddings at St. John's. Guest pastors may participate with the approval of the pastor.
3. Premarital conferences are required and appointments should be made with the pastor. At these conferences wedding details are discussed and counseling offered. Both the bride and groom are expected to attend all sessions.
4. A wedding rehearsal date and time should be arranged with the pastor. A rehearsal usually lasts about an hour. The whole wedding party should be present and are expected to arrive on time.
5. Both persons must be baptized. At least one of the people to be married must be a member of St. John's, or either parent or grandparent must be a member. If not, the council of St. John's must give their approval for the wedding to be held in the church and non-member fees will be charged.
6. The marriage license should be given to the pastor at rehearsal. If there is no marriage license, there will be no wedding. To do otherwise is a violation of Pennsylvania law. (See information on how to obtain a marriage license)

## PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING

Couples planning their wedding at St. John's shall meet with the pastor for counseling. The number and length of the sessions will vary in accordance with the couple's age, plans, experience, education etc., and shall be determined by the pastor. A general guideline is to plan for 3-4 sessions plus the rehearsal.

Counseling is appropriate and necessary for all, regardless of the number of previous marriages or age of the couple. This is in accordance with the long-standing policy of the Lutheran church.

The counseling sessions are designed to afford the pastor and the couple opportunities to share, in an informal atmosphere, the significant meaning of Christian marriage. Do not hesitate to ask any questions you may have.

It should be stressed that the pastor is available for counseling after the wedding. Should any difficulties arise which may be resolved through discussion with a counselor, please do not hesitate to call the pastor.

Fees will be discussed at a premarital conference. The suggested amounts will be given to the couple in writing. All fees should be placed in separate envelopes and given to the pastor at the rehearsal.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE DETAILS

1. You may select your own florist. Floral decorations should be completed at least one hour before the wedding begins.

You must find out what time the florist plans to deliver the flowers and inform the church office so that the building will be open. Flowers may be taken after the ceremony or left for use in Sunday worship and/or distribution to the sick and homebound.

2. Because our aisles are carpeted and narrower than most church aisles a runner is not recommended.
3. The photographer should be informed that no flash photographs may be taken during the wedding with the exception of the processional and recessional. Photographs may be posed after the wedding. Video photography is permitted if it is done from beyond the view of the congregation.
4. The use of the wedding candle (or unity candle) is optional. The church does not own one so if you desire to have the lighting of the unity candle as part of your wedding, you must provide your own. This must be brought to the wedding rehearsal so that the logistics of lighting the candle can be practiced.
5. The wedding may include Holy Communion. If included, communion will be open to all Christians present who desire to receive.
6. If desired, bulletins will be prepared by the church office. The couple should select, purchase and bring to the church office an appropriate number of bulletin covers at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

7. Ushers should arrive 30 minutes before the wedding begins and be involved in greeting and seating the guests. Every wedding should have at least two ushers even if they are not in the wedding party.
8. Wedding guests are expected to show reverence in the church before, during and after the wedding. Guests may not take photographs during the wedding service, but may stay when the wedding party returns for the posed photographs.
9. No confetti or rice may be thrown inside or outside the building.
10. No alcoholic beverages or mind-altering illegal drugs may be consumed on the church premises (building or grounds) at any time. This rule applies to everyone. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the church building at anytime. Smoking is permitted outside the building with ashes and butts disposed of appropriately. It is the responsibility of the ushers to enforce the drinking and smoking policies.
11. The Pastor reserves the right to deny access to the service if anyone is obviously intoxicated. This includes members of the wedding party including the bride and groom.
12. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make certain that these regulations are made know to the members of the wedding party and guests prior to the wedding.

## INVITATIONS

When ordering invitations, the suggested form for the name and address of the church is:

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
910 Allentown Road  
Sellersville, PA 18960

The Pastor and the organist will not consider themselves invited to a wedding reception unless a formal invitation is given to them as with other guests. The same applies to invitations to the Pastor for the rehearsal dinner or gathering. Please do not wait until the night of the rehearsal to offer such invitations.



## MUSIC AT WEDDINGS

1. A couple may or may not choose to have music at their wedding.
2. The organist from St. John's is expected to play at all church weddings. If a guest organist is desired, approval must be obtained from St. John's for the substitution. St. John's Worship and Music committee, an organist from St. John's or the pastor must vouch for the skills of the individual.
3. You should plan to meet with the organist at a reasonable time before the wedding in order to select music.
4. If you would like a vocalist to take part in the wedding, the vocalist should meet and rehearse with the organist and if at all possible should be at the wedding rehearsal so that logistics and time can be coordinated.
5. The pastor or the organist of St. John's must approve all wedding music. Wedding music must be of high quality and should reflect the nature of the service. A church wedding is a worship service and due reverence is expected.
6. Appropriate hymns may be sung by the congregation during the wedding service and will be published as an insert. Again, the nature of the service should be kept in mind when making hymn selections. The pastor and/or organist of St. John's must also approve all hymns.

## HOW TO OBTAIN A MARRIAGE LICENSE

1. Apply for a marriage license at the Bucks County Courthouse in Doylestown orphan's court on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The courthouse is also open till 7:30 p.m. the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month.
2. Both must apply together and in person for a license. Bring a valid photo ID. (driver's license, passport). The parents or a court appointed guardian of anyone under 18 must be present to give consent.
3. If either applicant was previously married, a certified copy of the divorce, annulment or the death certificate of a deceased spouse must be presented at the time of application.
4. The marriage license fee is \$50.00 cash or money order. There is a three-day waiting period before the license is issued. Once the license is issued it is good for 60 days in the state of Pennsylvania only.
5. For further information you may call the Bucks County Courthouse at 215-348-6271.



## YOUR WEDDING SERVICE

With the publication of a new service resource there are many choices for you to make in designing the marriage service. The general outline of the service is a gathering time that explains why we are here, the word of God which includes readings and the sermon, the vows and exchange of rings, prayers and sending which includes a blessing. The outline is:

### 1. *Gathering*

- ◆ Processional
- ◆ Greeting
- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Declaration of Intention
- ◆ Prayer of the Day

### 2. *The Word*

- ◆ Readings
- ◆ Sermon

### 3. *Marriage*

- ◆ Vows
- ◆ Exchange of Rings
- ◆ Acclamation and Blessing
- ◆ Prayers

### 4. *Communion (if you wish)*

### 5. *Sending*

- ◆ Blessing
- ◆ Recessional

See the attached service for the particulars of each part of the service. In each section you have many choices. They are lettered A, B, C etc. in each section. Please select the choice that best speaks to you. In each section if you like part of one and part of another you may combine them as you choose. We will review



your choices at our first meeting. If you have any questions, please call.

For your vows you again have many choices. Again these are suggestions. You may combine several or write your own. If you choose to write your own remember that it is in your vows that you marry each other and therefore the promises made one to another should be the same.

## SUGGESTED BIBLE PASSAGES

In the Word portion of the service we are reminded that it is God who blesses marriage. Below are suggested passages for the service. If you are having family or friends serve as readers at your wedding you should pick one passage from each section below (Old Testament, a Psalm, the New Testament and a Gospel reading). The pastor will be reading the gospel lesson. If no family member or friend will be serving as a reader, please select a Gospel reading for the pastor to read and only one other lesson. This lesson may be from either the Old Testament or the New Testament suggestions listed below. The following passages are just suggestions, if there is any passage in the Bible that has special meaning to you, please bring it with you and we will discuss it. The church uses the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for its readings. Please look at the complete texts of these readings in the NRSV version.

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:26-28 *Woman and man created in the image of God*

Genesis 2:18-24 *Companionship rather than loneliness*

Proverbs 3:3-6 *Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart*

Song of Solomon 2:10-13 *The voice of the beloved*

Song of Solomon 8:6-7 *Many waters cannot quench love*

Isaiah 63:7-9 *God's steadfast love lifts up the people*

Jeremiah 31:31-34 *The new covenant of the people of God*

### PSALM

33 *Rejoice in the Lord, our soul waits for the Lord*

67 *May God be merciful to us and bless us*

100 *We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture*

117 *The steadfast love of the Lord*

121 *The Lord keeps watch over you*

127 *Unless the Lord builds the house*

128 *Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's ways*

136 *God's steadfast love endures forever*

150 *Let everything that breathes praise the Lord*

### NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 *If God is for us, who is against us*

Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 *A living sacrifice and genuine love*

1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13 *The greatest gift is love*

Ephesians 3:14-19 *The breadth, length,  
height and depth of Christ's love*

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 *Walk in love, as Christ loved us*

Philippians 4:4-9 *Rejoice in the Lord always*

Colossians 3:12-17 *Clothed in compassion, kindness  
meekness and patience*

1 John 3:18-24 *Let us love in truth and action*

1 John 4:7-16 *Let us love one another for love is of God*

### GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-10 *The beatitudes*

Matthew 5:14-16 *You are the light, let your light shine*

Matthew 7:21, 24-29 *A wise person builds upon the rock*

Matthew 19:3-6 *What God has united must not be divided*

Matthew 22:35-40 *Love, the greatest commandment*

Mark 10:6-9 *They are no longer two but one*

John 2:1-11 *The wedding at Cana*

John 15:9-17 *Love one another as I have loved you*

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

WEDDING HANDBOOK