

Weddings at St. Paul's

Saint Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church

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MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH

In the earliest days of the church, all marriages were civil ceremonies only. In later centuries, it became common for Christians who had been married in civil ceremonies to come, subsequently, to the church for their marriage to be blessed. In the medieval tradition it was customary for the clergy of the church not only to bless existing marriages, but also to officiate at the marriage ceremony itself, a custom which is often continued today. A church wedding is a public witness to the Christian understanding of what marriage is **all about. By choosing to be married in the church, the couple says, “We recognize marriage to be a gift from God, and we implore God’s blessings and continued support to sustain that gift.”**

Those who are married at St. Paul’s are therefore expected to continue worshipping at St. Paul’s or at another Christian congregation on a regular basis.

Who may be married in St. Paul's Church?

Those who intend to enter into a Christian marriage may be married in St. Paul's Church. Both parties should have been baptized. Normally, at least one of the parties will be a member of the parish or, if not a member, regularly worshiping here. A couple will be expected to be at worship weekly in the six weeks preceding their first premarital meeting with a pastor, and will be expected to establish a regular discipline of attendance during the entire period of preparation prior to their marriage.

How do we begin?

If you believe you want to be married at St. Paul's, begin participating in worship regularly. (If you live away from Newark, begin to worship regularly where you are.) Then, call the church office ((302) 368-0064) and make an appointment to see a pastor. At that initial meeting the premarital conference time will be set, further information about the wedding will be provided, and dates for the rehearsal and wedding may be set.

No dates are set before a pastor meets with both parties to a marriage!

Premarital conferences

You will be asked to schedule several sessions with one of the pastors. These sessions are designed to assist you in clarifying the similarities and differences in your individual value systems, and in helping you understand the implications for your life together. This is an opportunity for you to share your hopes and dreams for your wedding and discuss the details concerning the service itself.

Who officiates?

The wedding ceremony and the rehearsal are normally conducted by one of the pastors of St. Paul's Church. Ministers of other churches may participate and assist should the couple so request.

How soon before the wedding are the arrangements made?

Six or eight months before the wedding is not too soon to see the pastor and to begin premarital counseling. Weddings are not scheduled during Lent or Holy Week, both of which precede Easter.

What about music?

Music is a joyful component of most wedding ceremonies. Schedule permitting, the organist at St. Paul's will serve as the organist and music coordinator at your wedding. The organist will help you to select music that is appropriate for a worship service and will approve and supervise the work of any soloists that you may wish to use.

May we have Holy Communion at our wedding?

Holy Communion enriches any Christian wedding service. The Bible describes how Jesus enlivened the wedding feast at Cana by turning water into wine. In the same manner, the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion enlivens the celebration of a Christian marriage. If you choose to have Communion at your wedding, all baptized Christians will be invited to commune. It is fitting that the bride and groom furnish the gifts of bread and wine for use in their marriage service.

What about flowers and decorations in the church?

Flowers may be ordered from any area florist. You will need to make arrangements well ahead of time for them to be delivered to the church. Please contact the church office ((302) 368-0064) during office hours in order to make arrangements.

The Flower Guild at St. Paul's Church is available to provide flowers placed in the church. Please contact Karen Saylor ((302) 834-4074) if you have any questions about this option. If you wish to leave your flowers for a future worship service, please contact Karen Saylor ((302) 834-4074).

Other items:

Pew bows and pew candles, if desired, must be obtained from a florist and secured with elastic only. They must be removed immediately following the wedding service.

The ring is the symbol of unity in a marriage. The use of a "unity candle" detracts from the importance of the ring and adds extraneous elements to the worship service. The pastors therefore strongly discourage the use of a "unity candle" during the wedding service and will place restrictions on such a candle's use should a couple insist on having one.

For safety reasons, aisle runners are never permitted.

St. Paul's permits those attending the wedding to give the bride and groom a fun "send-off" by blowing bubbles at the couple or by throwing flower petals on the driveway (but not in the church or on the sidewalk). Because they are difficult to clean up, rice, confetti, and bird-seed may not be used.

Photography during the wedding service

As the wedding service is a time of worship, flash photographs may not be taken during the ceremony. This applies to wedding guests as well as to professional photographers. Photographers who consult with the pastor before the ceremony may be allowed to take flash photos during the procession and recession. Likewise, videotaping of the service may be allowed provided that a stationary camera is set up in one of the side aisles or in the rear of the sanctuary.

On the use of bulletins

St. Paul's does not provide wedding bulletins. The pastor will be happy to help you determine the contents of a bulletin, however, and the church office may have examples of past bulletins for you to examine. Blank bulletins are readily available at variety of stores.

What are the costs for a wedding at St. Paul's?

The Marriage Tithe: As a sign that a couple's love for one another necessarily spills out into the wider community and as a symbol of stewardship, there is the expectation that a Christian couple will want to make a contribution— as a thank offering— to the parish and its work. For example, a couple may consider offering a tithe of the total cost of the wedding. A minimum fee of \$125 is expected to cover maintenance and usage costs.

Music: The standard fee to the organist is \$125. This honorarium is increased by \$50 when rehearsals are required with vocal soloists or other musicians.

The Pastor's Honorarium: Any funds offered to the pastor are used to feed the hungry and assist those in need. In this way your marriage becomes a gift to the whole community. As with the organist, the standard offering amount is \$125.

Flowers: The fee per one large stand of flowers arranged by Saint Paul's Flower Guild is \$60. Other decorations may be arranged for an appropriate fee.

Individual checks are requested for the Pastor, Organist, Marriage Tithe, and Flower Guild (if used). Fees should be delivered no later than the Monday preceding the wedding.

Please note: In case of genuine financial hardship, all fees are negotiable. Speak to a pastor well in advance if you are unable to pay the fees described in this booklet. No one should be discouraged from planning a wedding at Saint Paul's for financial reasons.

What about the marriage license?

The State of Delaware marriage license must be obtained from the Office of the Clerk of the Peace ((302) 395-7780) in the City and County Building, 8th and French Streets, Wilmington. Delaware statutes require that the wedding license be obtained not more than 30 days nor less than 4 days (out-of-state residents) or 1 day (both parties residents of Delaware) before the ceremony. The pastor who handles your wedding may ask to have the license delivered to the church office the week before the wedding or may request that you bring all copies of the license to the wedding rehearsal.

Bible readings for your wedding—

In consultation with a pastor, you will be asked to pick scriptures to be read at your wedding. For your reference, a list of suggested readings is provided on the following page.

Couples-- Pick one from each category except for the Gospel-- the Pastor will pick that one.

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

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*
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*

