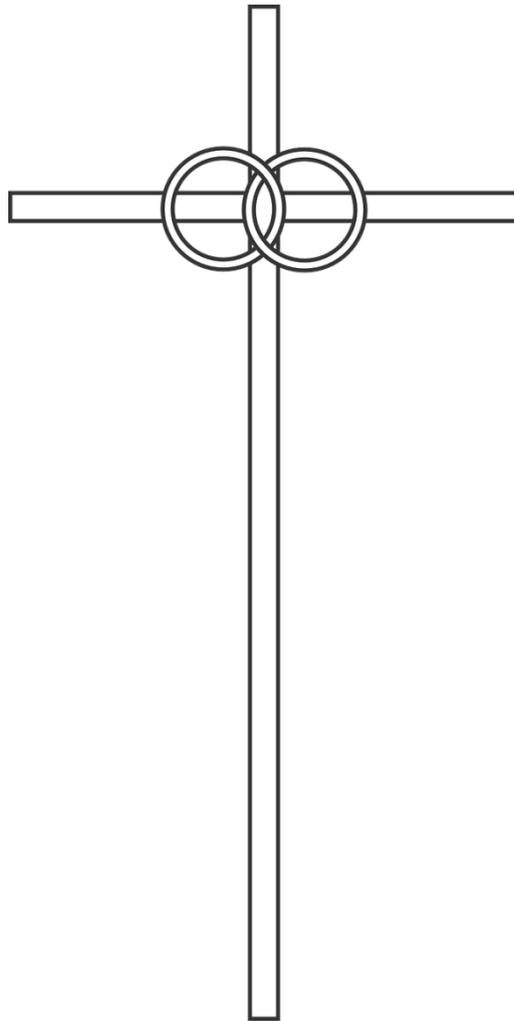


*Wedding Handbook:  
Guidelines for a Christian Wedding Ceremony*



**St. John Lutheran Church  
440 Ohio St., Sterling, NE  
402-866-6271**

**LCMC**

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother*

*and be united to his wife... Genesis 2:24*

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Dear engaged couple:

Congratulations on your engagement and may God richly bless your plans and your forthcoming marriage! A marriage is the most important earthly relationship in life for Christians. We at St. John Lutheran Church consider it a privilege to serve you and our Lord, Jesus Christ, and we are pleased you are seeking the blessing of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on your holy union. What is that blessing, what does it look like, where do you get it, and how? You receive God's blessing as you prepare to come into His sanctuary and publicly make your vows, humbly seeking His blessing and guidance from Holy Scripture.

We provide this handbook so you will better understand the guiding principles, doctrines, and policies for weddings here at St. John Lutheran. It will help you plan your wedding day and outline what you can expect from the church.

Your wedding is more than a public proclamation of vows and a pronouncement of marriage. It is an embodiment of God's love for humanity through His Son Jesus, and His bride the Church. Your wedding is an opportunity to witness to others your commitment to Jesus and to share your faith with those you love through your union.

These rules and suggestions are given so that first and foremost God will be glorified in what we do. Secondly, these are written that you may have a beautiful and sacred wedding worship service and a solid foundation for the beginning of your married life. Since the beginning of the world God has established marriage for the good of society, but also for the good of the man and the woman who plan to enter that relationship. Part of God's plan for marriage is His specific direction as to how a husband and wife are to act toward each other and toward people outside the relationship. Another part of God's plan often includes the birth and nurture of children.

As you no doubt realize, these next steps in your life will be big ones, which should not be taken lightly, and they come with many joys and blessings. In an effort to help you start your life together in Holy Matrimony, we strive to prepare couples by starting them out with a strong foundation in Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Please take the time to carefully read through and understand this handbook. It will help guide us in the preparation and planning of the special wedding ceremony where the Lord will declare you to be husband and wife. If there are questions or concerns along the way, please feel free to ask the pastor at any time.

May God bless your union,

The St. John Lutheran Church Council

## What is Marriage?

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Look forward to your wedding day with eager anticipation! Your God who instituted marriage gave His promise to bless all who enter this holy estate according to His will and purpose.

The Holy Scriptures teach that God, in creating the world, gave marriage to be the life-long union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24) and a gift to be held in honor and kept pure (Hebrews 13:4; 1Thessalonians 4:2-5). As a man and woman freely commit themselves to one another, God himself joins them as one.

A Christian marriage is far more than a social or legal contract, a mere interpersonal bond, or just a piece of paper. So our Lord Jesus says in Matthew 19 (verses 4-6): “Haven’t you read that at the beginning the *Creator* made them male and female and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’?”

The Lord Jesus also says, “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate” (Matthew 19:6). The marriage vows clearly bind bride and groom together as husband and wife for the remainder of their lives. Such vows are made before God and before the witness of men. Marriage is an inseparable union.

Throughout our nation divorces occur at an annual rate of 2%, which is 20 out of 1,000 marriages. Currently 22% of women and 21% of men are ever divorced.\* That rate is lower than it has been, but it doesn’t change the fact that divorce is a painful and destructive process and has lasting negative effects, especially on children. “Being a committed, faithful believer makes a measurable difference in marriage.”\*\* At St. John Lutheran, we don’t want the vows and prayers of the ceremony to be soon forgotten and the marriage to crumble because it was not properly founded.

Marriage cannot be rightly understood apart from another gift: the gift of children. As He creates man and woman, God says, “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28). As the two “become one flesh,” the highest possible result of this marriage union, when it is God’s will, is the conception and birth of a child. The child is in every sense the “one flesh” of the mother and father and the living sign of their union. The optimal setting for the care of children is the loving marital unity of a man and woman. In such a marriage, children are nurtured within the distinctive unique differences given by God when He created male and female serving together in the family.

Marriages that have parents and children regularly attending worship services and maintaining family devotions have much better chance of surviving the trials of life. That is what we hope and pray for at St. John, and the ideal is that every marriage solemnized here be fully successful in every sense of the term, offering the happiness and fulfillment that you yourselves as a couple are looking for in marriage.

\*<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/what-is-the-actual-divorce-rate/>

\*\*<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/divorce-rate-in-the-church-as-high-as-the-world/>

## The Wedding Service as Worship

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A Christian wedding ceremony is more than a social event, a legal ceremony, a ritual, or a tradition. It is first and foremost a spiritual worship service of the church where a couple places their marriage into submission to God and asks for Christ’s blessing upon it, and in which the pastor and congregation unite in prayer with the couple to share their joy.

Even though God has established the marriage relationship, there can be marriages ceremonies apart from the church that are also in accordance with God’s will. God has provided this relationship as something for the human race as a whole, which is not limited to the church. God recognizes marriages that do not

take place in a church as well as those that do. Church marriages are also legal acts in the eyes of the State and while the pastor is acting as an official of the state, the Church sees that as merely co-incidental. The State of Nebraska has regulations concerning a wedding which we are directed by Scripture to obey, but the Church's guidelines for a Christian wedding shall always follow the Word of God first, and regulations of the State second.

Christians typically desire to be married in the Church because of their relationship with Jesus Christ, to follow God's will, and to give glory to God in all that they do (2 Corinthians 5:15-21; 1 Corinthians 10:31). They want to have God's blessing on the marriage, begin that marriage in Christ, and give witness to Christ in the wedding ceremony. So, as the Christian wedding ceremony is a worship service, the object or focus of our worship is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He alone is worthy of our worship and adoration.

What this means for Christians is that the wedding service is never the couple's alone. Even when performed privately it remains a public act which belongs to the worship life of the Church. Many weddings today are increasingly secular in nature; even many performed inside a church, but at St. John Lutheran weddings are not centered on the bride or groom, but on Christ. The wedding ceremony will reflect a distinctively Christian nature and its content will enrich and edify everyone present.

Every aspect of the service (the music, the vows, the order of worship, the attire, the use of facilities, etc....) must praise, honor, and glorify God. Everything in the service must flow either to God or from Him. To that end, everything in the service must be checked and approved by the pastor to assure agreement with the Bible, the Christian faith, the LCMC, and St. John Lutheran Church.

## **The Order of a Marriage Ceremony**

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A wedding ceremony is a worship service similar to a Sunday morning service. It is not a private service about the couple being married, their families, friends, or professional wedding counselors or planners. While there are areas in which a couple may request personal input (see below), the Order of Service will be created by the pastor based on Lutheran doctrine and historic liturgies. The church, therefore, has the right, the responsibility, and the authority to oversee the marriage service so that it is conducted in accordance with the respect, order, and provisions of Lutheran beliefs and traditions. The pastor can give you a copy of the traditional Lutheran service (See LBW page 202).

The wedding vows are not alterable for the wedding ceremony. There are a few places within the ceremony where personal preferences can be chosen or added. These will be songs, Scripture readings, soloists, prayers, etc. The pastor will show you the areas where you can add these personal selections or have some input. All personal choices must be approved by the pastor. Readings such as secular readings, poems, favorite quotes, or popular songs that have no place in a worship service may take place at the rehearsal dinner or reception.

The pastor of St. John will officiate at all weddings at St. John. If a family desires the participation of another clergy, the request must be made to the pastor before any commitments are made. It is the pastor's prerogative, after approval by the (Leadership Board, or Church Council, or Board of Elders), to extend an invitation to the other clergy to assist at the wedding.

Should such an invitation be sent, it must be in keeping with the congregation's policy on who can assist in worship services at St. John. Clergy who are affiliated with a church body with which St. John is not in fellowship (agreement of doctrine), the invitation will not be sent. All visiting clergy must be in agreement with St. John's statement of faith and doctrine in order to participate in a wedding service at St. John. However, with the approval of the pastor and the Church Council, clergy of a church not in fellowship with St. John may pronounce a blessing upon the bridal couple at the close of the service.

## Pre-Marital Counseling

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As marriage is a serious commitment and it is challenging when two people join their lives and beliefs, we require all couples to participate in pre-marital counseling with the pastor. Several premarital sessions may be required. No weddings will be performed without this prior consultation.

At the first meeting we will review the St. John Wedding Handbook, go over the details of the service, and set up the administration of an online marriage inventory called "Prepare-Enrich." Our current pastor is a certified Prepare-Enrich Marriage and Pre-Marriage counselor. There is a \$35 fee for the inventory which you will pay directly to the Prepare-Enrich company before taking the online inventory.

During the following sessions the inventory results will be discussed and final ceremony details will be covered. Homework exercises will be given, as well as other materials for you to read through and use at home. Everyone can improve their relationships from where they start, but not everyone starts at the same place, or moves at the same speed, therefore not all couples need the same amount of time in counseling. The number and length of the sessions varies for each couple.

With the help of the inventory, the pastor will help couples identify relationship strengths on which you can build, and areas of concern or weaknesses so that you might discuss them and develop them into strengths. The pastor may also provide practical information and Biblical counsel regarding other aspects of married life such as: Christian living in marriage, common problems and challenges in marriage, and God's directions on how to meet them.

The first appointment should be made as much in advance as possible or as soon as you choose a date. There will be an average of 8 one hour sessions, depending on the needs of the couple. It is wise to schedule them to begin about 4 months before the wedding to make sure the process is relaxed and stress free. Waiting until the last minute causes stress for everyone involved. Please call the pastor or the church office in sufficient time to arrange these meetings.

## Member Weddings

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We are happy and honored to perform marriages for members of the congregation or couples where one is a member of this congregation or another LCMC congregation with permission from that congregation's pastor. The pastor may also marry couples if one is a member and the other is a member of another Christian church, but the pastor is bound by Scripture not to marry couples if one is not a Christian or if they are currently living together (2 Corinthians 6:14-15, 1 Corinthians 7, 12, and 13). Please contact the pastor for options in you are in this situation.

Membership at St. John or having a family member who holds membership at St. John does not guarantee a wedding will be approved. Those who are under church discipline, who are living in defiance of His will, or whose membership has not shown love for our Savior and His Word or a willingness to take part in His work cannot assume the church is obliged to marry them. The pastor and the church council have the final authority to approve or disapprove any wedding request.

## Non-Member Weddings

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A church is not just another wedding venue. It is a place where God dwells and His people come to worship Him; showing Him honor and respect. Therefore, those who are not members are asked to participate in our *Adult Instruction Class* as well as the pre-marital classes with the pastor. Those who

choose not to seek to commit to a regular and active membership in the congregation may not be married at St. John.

Scripture forbids believers to marry unbelievers. (See Deuteronomy 7:1-6, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, Malachi 2:15, 1 Corinthians 7:39 (and whole chapter), 1 Kings 11:4; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 5:7 (and whole chapter))

If you feel you have legitimate reasons for exception with anything in this section, please speak with the pastor or the Church Council.

## Qualifying Conditions

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The purpose of the Christian Church is to glorify God and proclaim forgiveness through Jesus. However, where persons do not exhibit repentance for sin, forgiveness cannot be assured. Accordingly, where mistakes have been made by the couple and repentance is indicated, the marriage will not be hindered. Divorces and pregnancies outside marriage will be candidly discussed with the pastor before permission is granted for a church wedding, as will the sin of living together.

### Pre-marital Sexual Activity and Cohabitation

God has given the gift of the sexual relationship to people to be used in marriage for the purpose of bringing children into the world and for the expression of affection and pleasure between husband and wife. He forbids the misuse of this gift by using it outside of the marriage relationship, often called fornication and adultery (Genesis 39:9; Exodus 20:14). He has also encouraged all to honor the marriage relationship and keep it pure (Hebrews 13:4).

This marriage relationship begins when the man and woman make their public vows to commit themselves to each other as husband and wife until death parts them. In the case of a church wedding, this is done in the presence of the congregation attending the ceremony and in the presence of the Lord.

Christian couples are to exercise self-control during the dating and engagement period. This time should be considered a special time of anticipation: getting to know each other's interests, going to church and receiving God's gift of forgiveness together, attending social events, spending time with each other's families and friends, and also in self-preparation and prayer for your future life together.

Couples who are struggling, as with all sins, should repent, seek forgiveness from God and one another, and by God's grace amend their life into conformity of God's will. Rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins and with a clean heart, couples should then look forward to their wedding day and their future together as husband and wife. In cases in which couples have been living together, special living arrangements must be made to resolve this situation before wedding plans proceed.

Suggested arrangements for addressing this situation would include one of the following:

- 1) Recognition of this type of premarital cohabitation as sin, repentance shown for that sin by the couple, forgiveness from God for this sin, living arrangements changed and wedding plans continue with a pure heart.
- 2) The couple separates for a short period and gets married within a month in a small, simple ceremony. Later, a *Blessing of Marriage Ceremony* (which in appearance is nearly identical to a wedding ceremony) may then take place on a future date chosen by the couple that could include all of the festivities of a traditional wedding ceremony. This would allow couples that had already made arrangements for a specific date to follow through with preplanned festivities.

People have come up with a myriad of reasons why it is acceptable or even necessary for them to live together before marriage. While it may seem acceptable or even expected by society, the reasons or excuses for this sin are the acceptance of Satan's lie that it is okay or beneficial to their relationship. In reality, it is the view of accepting sin as okay that invites the church to compromise with the world and drives God out of the church. When a church compromises its commitment to Scripture it invites God's judgment and risks losing its lampstand (Revelation 2&3). If you feel you have legitimate reasons for exception, please speak with the pastor.

## Same-Sex Marriage

Holy Scriptures speak only of heterosexual marriage unions; therefore, St. John Lutheran Church will not solemnize, officiate, recognize, or bless **same-sex** partnerships or unions.

## Parental Approval

No person under the age of 18 will be married without written approval of parents or guardians. If you feel you have legitimate reasons for exception, please speak with the pastor.

# Wedding Scheduling

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Church calendars can be complicated during the wedding (late spring/summer) season and around holidays. Because of this, the dates of your wedding ceremony and rehearsal must be approved by the church administrator and the pastor, and will depend on what other activities are going on at the church. To avoid scheduling conflicts, please call the church office or the pastor as far in advance as possible before you choose a date, reserve a reception venue, announce your date, send save the date cards, or invitations. If possible, set the start date for pre-marital counseling at the same time.

Weddings are discouraged during the following times:

- The seasons of Advent and Lent
- After Christmas through the first week of January
- Major holidays or holiday weekends

**No weddings** may be scheduled:

- December 23-25
- Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday

Weddings will not be held later than 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. On Sundays, weddings should begin between 1:00 and 5:00 p.m. This allows our custodian and altar guild time to set up and prepare for the Sunday service.

Reservations for church facilities are made through the church office using the **Facilities Request form** in this handbook or in the church office and are made on a first come basis.

## Wedding Rehearsal

The purpose of a rehearsal is to acquaint the wedding party with the flow and movement of the service and to assist the couple in having a smooth service. Rehearsals can accomplish that goal in approximately an hour or less, if all members of the wedding party are punctual and cooperative. Please plan to have your rehearsal at a time when the complete wedding party and participants can be at the church **ON TIME**.

The rehearsal will be conducted by the pastor. If the pastor is called away for an emergency during the rehearsal, he will have to leave. Different arrangements will be made before he leaves the rehearsal. If using a unity candle, please bring it to the rehearsal.

All attempts are made to please the couple and their parents, however, even at the time of the wedding rehearsal, the church is the House of God and should be treated with reverence and respect. Expectations outlined in this handbook for the wedding ceremony also apply to the rehearsal.

## Marriage Licenses

The state of Nebraska requires a marriage license for couples to be married. Contact the Johnson county clerk's office (402-335-6300) or visit the county website for forms, costs, and times (<https://johnsoncounty.ne.gov/clerk-links.html>). Your license must be in the church office one week before the ceremony. Please note that in the state of Nebraska witnesses must be at least 16 years old.

## Wedding Bulletins

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have printed bulletins to inform guests of the order of service as well as the names of the participants in the wedding, any special thank you notes, or instructions (like where and when to go for the reception). If desired, the church may print a standard wedding bulletin or special bulletin covers may be purchased through the church office. Programs may also be done by an outside printer in consultation with the pastor to make sure there is agreement on content.

## Wedding Music

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Music is an important part of the wedding ceremony. It conveys a tone for the ceremony and a message to family and friends. As the wedding ceremony is a worship service, the music (pre-service, processional, hymns, solos, instrumental solos, and recessional) should be chosen with that in mind.

In every area of the worship service music should glorify God. For this reason, we discourage the use of wedding marches from Wagner and Mendelssohn, *Ave Maria*, the popular *Here Comes the Bride*, pop music, movie themes, or other unsuitable music. The proper place for such music is at the reception.

There is considerable beautiful and appropriate music available for the wedding. It would be appropriate to set up a meeting with the pastor and organist to talk about your song choices. As with other areas of the ceremony, the pastor has the final say in whether or not music is appropriate.

## Music Choice Guidelines

While hymns are not required, music selections must be sacred music. The couple should consult the pastor regarding arrangements for an organist, accompanist, soloist, or other desired musicians. All use of musicians from outside the congregation and music to be included in the ceremony must be cleared through the pastor.

The pastor uses the following criteria regarding the approval of submitted music:

- The text should be Christ-centered.
- The theology of the text shall be in concert with the theology of the LCMC.
- The music should not be associated with any secular, social, political, or cultural event or function which will detract from the sacredness of Christian worship in a wedding ceremony.
- The timbre, structure, and general *sound* of the proposed music should be appropriate for a Christian church wedding.

## Why not *Ave Maria*?

*Ave Maria* was Charles Gounod's most famous song. It was originally titled, *Meditation sur le premier Prelude de Piano de J.S.Bach* and was first published for violin and piano in 1853. Gounod added the Latin words in 1859. *Ave Maria* is an arrangement of the *C Major Prelude* from J.S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I* (1722), in which Gounod's original melody is cleverly superimposed over Bach's Prelude. The text for *Ave Maria* is based on the well-known *Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin*.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.

(Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.)

Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus

(Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus)

Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis peccatoribus, nuc et in hora mortis nostrae. Amen.

(Holy Mary, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.)

The music to *Ave Maria* is very beautiful, however, the lyrics are not in line with what we believe as Lutheran Christians. Our Lord tells us that "No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) As God incarnate, Jesus Christ is the only way that we approach God. There are several other beautiful musical options from the same time that may be used in place of *Ave Maria*.

## Why not the *Bridal Chorus*?

The *Bridal Chorus* or *Here Comes the Bride*, is a popular wedding march sometimes requested as a wedding processional. It is from the opera, *Lohengrin*, by Richard Wagner. The plot of the opera includes evil magic and a woman ends up marrying her brother and consummating the marriage. Evil prevails. Nothing about this is appropriate for a Christian wedding.

While many operas contain beautiful music, they are built on plots which contain murder, suicide, illicit sex, and often have heathen influences. There are exceptions, but caution must be practiced in the selection of music from operas for use in worship.

The pastor will be happy to provide insight, ideas, and will point you to resources. The musicians playing for your wedding may also have insight and be willing to help with song selection.

## Organists

We recommend that you schedule a meeting with your organist to discuss possible music for the service. If you wish to use a different organist, the music selected still will have to come under the approval of the pastor. The guest organist will need to contact our organist to receive instructions regarding the use of St. John's organ, piano, or other instruments.

Normally, only organists who are regularly employed by St. John Lutheran will be used for weddings. If you have what you feel is a legitimate reason for requesting another, consult with the pastor well in advance. Contact the church office for contact information for our organists.

It is the responsibility of the couple to make sure the organist has the sheet music needed for the wedding, or to purchase music that is not on hand at least one month in advance to assure the musicians have ample time to practice and prepare for the wedding.

## Soloists

Instrumental or vocal soloists may be used in the service as desired, but their musical selections must be in keeping with the character of the service. Sentimental or romantic songs that glorify love, marriage, the bride or groom, or any human institution cannot be used. The best solo selections are appropriate hymns of the church. Remember the purpose of the wedding service is to thank, praise and worship God.

Soloists can be family members or friends, or if a soloist is desired and the couple doesn't know one, the organist may be able to furnish names of competent and experienced soloists. The couple or the soloist is responsible for seeing to it that arrangements are made with the organist for adequate rehearsal.

It is the responsibility of the couple to make sure that all soloists and special musicians have the sheet music needed for the wedding or to purchase music that is not on hand. Sheet music should be in the hands of the musicians at least one month in advance to assure they have ample time to practice and prepare for the wedding.

## Remuneration

The organist and/or soloist or other musicians are very vital people in the wedding ceremony. An honorarium should be given to each of them, but it is up to the individual as to what the amount should be (suggestion?). Consideration should be given if extra rehearsals are necessary for the organist and soloist, how much music they are expected to prepare, etc.

## Use of Facilities

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### Church Wedding Coordinator

The church is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. If you need access other than those hours, desire to have a cake reception in the fellowship hall, need to use rooms other than those set aside for your wedding, or need to use sanctuary sound equipment, please talk to the pastor and he will put you in touch with the appropriate people.

### Photography and Video Taping

We recognize the value that pictures and videotapes hold for a couple. Pictures may be taken in the sanctuary or on the church grounds with flash/special lighting equipment either before or after the service and during the processional and recessional. **No flash photos may be taken during the worship service.**

**Photographs:** Professional photographers generally know that they aren't to take flash pictures after the processional. The processional and recessional are not regarded as part of the solemn service, and flash pictures are permitted at that time. Your photographer, wedding participants and guests are not permitted to take flash pictures during the ceremony. The couple is to make certain that the photographer understands this before the ceremony starts, and if you have wedding bulletins, it can be stated there.

Arrangements for posed photos before or after the service can be made if requested. Pictures of the entry of the bridal party as they start down the aisle are permissible, but please ask your friends and relatives not to take photos during the ceremony.

Time exposure, "available light" photographs, and video recordings of the ceremony may be taken from the rear of nave or from the balcony, provided it does not cause a disturbance.

Be sure to inform the pastor if you plan to have your pictures taken before the service and if he will be needed for photos following the wedding ceremony. The pastor will be happy to recreate various parts of the ceremony for you. Please understand that we will not honor any prior contract or agreement that

forbids guests to take photographs individually. If your contracted photographer objects to others taking pictures, guests will be given the opportunity to take their shots before he begins and then will be asked not to shoot after he starts. Photographers should not climb over or stand on church furnishings, enter behind the altar rail, or take it upon themselves to rearrange things for their convenience. We also expect that no discarded materials be thrown onto the floor or pews.

**Video:** The use of video equipment, with the camera appropriately placed, is acceptable.

## Sanctuary Decorations

The sanctuary is set-up for the following Sunday or the season of the church year. The color of the altar cloths will depend on the season. All paraments (colored altar cloths) remain in place during wedding ceremonies and are worn by the pastor. These paraments may not be changed as they are used symbolically to remind us of God and His attributes and change only with our liturgical church year. They may be white, green, violet, blue, or red for your wedding depending on the date. No decorations may be placed on or attached to the altar or baptismal font. Sanctuary fixtures such as crosses, candelabras, etc. should not be moved. Altar furnishings should not be changed or removed. Floral arrangements and banners in the church that are present before the couple sets up for the wedding, should not be taken down. If you have a problem with the placement of any sanctuary furnishings, please let the pastor know and he will do what he can to address the issue.

## Flowers

It is the responsibility of the couple to make arrangements for flowers with a florist. Flowers may be placed on the altar, only on the designated spots and must be live plants or cut flowers or floral arrangements. The bridal couple has permission to use the vases of the church for their altar flowers. Additional baskets or candelabra bouquets are permitted in addition to the altar flowers, but these should be placed elsewhere in the chancel. Basket bouquets should not be placed directly on the altar. If you desire to leave flowers for the following Sunday, arrangements should be made with the Altar Guild or the church secretary.

## Wedding Decorations

The couple is responsible for all wedding decorations. Remember to maintain proper reverence for the Lord's house and protection of the property. Bows, ribbon, rope, or simple flower arrangements may be used to mark pews, but pew decorations are not mandatory. Care must be taken not to deface the surface of the pews, which means that tape, sticky adhesives, masking tape, or plain wire should not be used for securing decorations to the pews. Please use pipe cleaners, plastic-coated wire or transparent fishing line to attach decorations, or ask your florist for special plastic pew clips designed for this purpose.

All decorations should be removed from the church the day of the wedding so that the custodian may prepare the church for any upcoming worship services. Decorations not in keeping with Christian principles will not be allowed. Some brides like to use a white aisle runner. You need to make your own arrangements for this item.

**Unity Candle:** A special candle is often used to signify oneness in marriage. The couple is responsible for providing this candle. Some couples also do a mingling of sand. This must also be provided by the couple.

**Tribute to the Parents:** Some couples like to present a rose or other flower to each set of parents as a way of thanking them for their support and help. Again make arrangements with your florist to provide the appropriate flowers for your use.

**Other items:** Your florist may be able to provide such things as an aisle runner, unity candle, a flower tribute to parents, or decorations for the ends of the pews.

## Church Reception

If you are interested in having a church reception, please keep in mind that it is your responsibility to leave the facility in the same shape that you found it, especially as there will be Bible classes in the fellowship hall the following day (Sunday). Be sure to include that information on the **Facility Use form** in this handbook or available in the church office.

## Alcoholic Beverages

**Alcoholic beverages are not permitted** to be served or consumed in the building, or on the church grounds. This includes: sidewalks, parking lot, fellowship hall, and restrooms. If members of the wedding party arrive under the influence of intoxicants at either the rehearsal or wedding ceremony, they will be allowed to sit with the congregation, but they will not be allowed to participate in the wedding as a witness or an usher because they are not in a state of preparedness for worship. If the bride or groom is under the influence of intoxicants, the pastor will call off the ceremony. It should go without saying that under no circumstances will the pastor marry someone who is not completely sober.

## Smoking

Smoking is strictly forbidden on church property. This means that smoking is not allowed anywhere in the building, including restrooms. No cigarette butts should be found on the grounds around the building, and please move away from the entrances where people must pass.

## Food and Beverages

Food and beverages are not allowed in the church proper or sanctuary. Food is only allowed in the basement fellowship hall, Sunday school rooms, or tiled area at the entrance to the education wing. **Beverages are not allowed in the sanctuary.** Open (non-alcoholic) drinks are only allowed in the fellowship hall, or rooms with tile floors.

## Throwing of Rice/Birdseed/Confetti/Flower Petals, etc.

Rice and confetti: The use of these items following the wedding is not permitted.

## Remuneration

As the wedding coordinator and church custodian take time out of their personal schedules, it is appropriate to give each of them an honorarium. Talk to the pastor about an appropriate amount based on your needs of their services.

# Request for Wedding at St. John Lutheran Church

Please return this form as soon as possible. Premarital counseling cannot be scheduled without it.

Name of Groom		Name of Bride	
Groom Address		Bride Address	
Groom Phone		Bride Phone	
Previously Married? (Circle One)      Yes   No   Age:		Previously Married? (Circle One)      Yes   No   Age:	
Children?		Children?	
<b>Ceremony Details</b>	Requested Date:	Requested Time:	Approximate Number of Guests:
Write a couple of sentences or short phrases that complete the following statement and that reflect your feelings: "We want to be married <i>in the church</i> because..."			
Best Man		Maid/Matron of Honor	
Groomsmen		Bridesmaids	
Ring Bearer		Flower Girl	
Reception:   Yes   No   Place:		Program:   Yes   No   Outside Printer	
We hereby acknowledge that we have read the Wedding Handbook in its entirety and agree to abide by it in any subsequent planning of our wedding at St. John Lutheran Church.			
(Signature of Groom)		(Signature of Bride)	

## St. John Lutheran Church Facility Use Agreement

St. John Lutheran Church is available for family events, but it is important that people treat the Lord's house with respect and leave it the way they found it.

If you take it out of a cupboard or closet, return it to where you found it.

If you dirty it, clean it.

If you break it, let somebody know.

If you make a mess, clean it up.

If you move it, put it back.

If it doesn't concern you, leave it alone.

If you don't know or are unsure, ask.

Name	
Address	City, State, Zip
Phone	Alternate Phone
Event	Day/Date Needed
Group size or Number of Guests	Time
<p>Our facility is a smoke-free environment. No smoking is allowed anywhere in the building including restrooms. No cigarette butts should be found around the building. The use of alcoholic beverages on church grounds inside or outside the building is inappropriate and not allowed. Park vehicles in appropriate places.</p> <p>I agree to abide with these policies and the facility use deposit, which may be returned after the event.</p>	
Signature	Date
<p>Return this form with your deposit. Make checks payable to: St. John Lutheran Church. Questions? Call the church office at 402-866-6271, or email at <a href="mailto:stjohnsterling@windstream.net">stjohnsterling@windstream.net</a></p>	