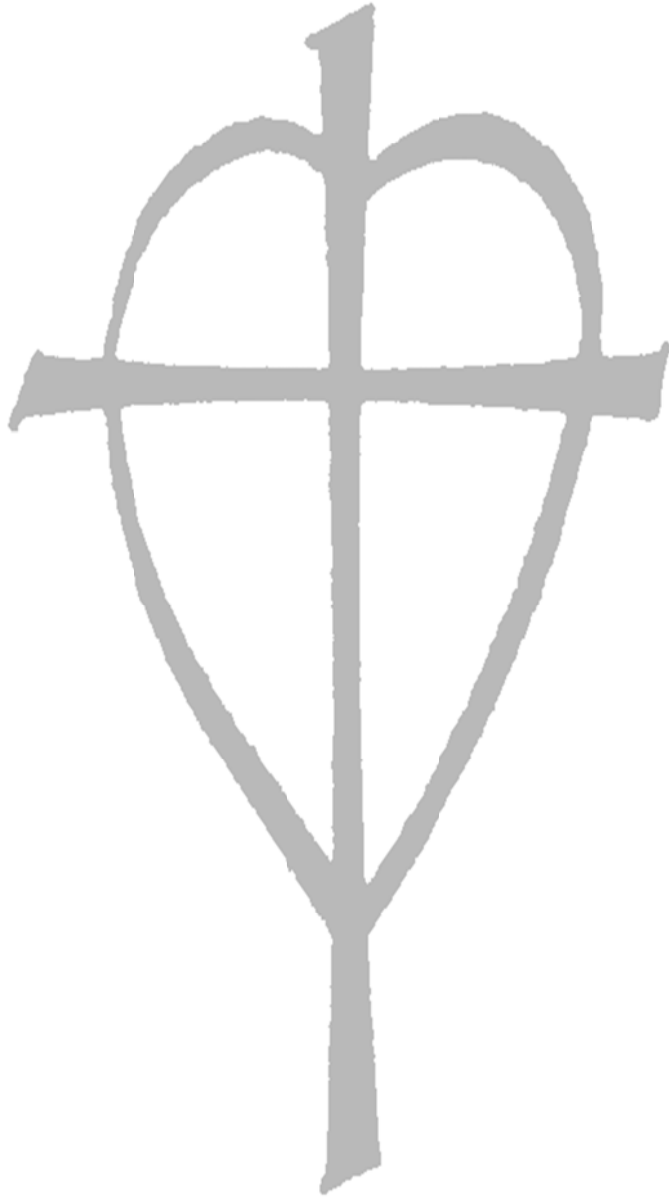


The Two Become One



A Wedding Preparations Guide

St. Paul Lutheran Church
PO BOX 490 / 7701 E. M-36
Hamburg, MI 48139
(810) 231-1033
www.stpaulhamburg.com

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations on your engagement and upcoming wedding! The people of St. Paul rejoice with you as you prepare to be united together by God in Holy Marriage. We are pleased to be a part of this exciting time in your lives.

Planning a wedding is an exciting and hectic time of life. At St. Paul Lutheran Church we are excited about the possibility and opportunity for making your wedding, and more importantly, your marriage, a wonderful blessing. In order to make that happen we are providing you with this marriage manual. Please read through it carefully.

Before you can reserve a date for your wedding and make an appointment with our pastor you must read this manual.

The purpose of this marriage manual is twofold. First, it is intended to help you more fully understand and appreciate the nature and purpose of **Christian marriage** and what a **Christian wedding ceremony** is all about. Secondly, it is intended to help you in the planning and preparation of your wedding.

Please Note: We normally expect couples to contact the church a minimum of six months in advance of the wedding. This provides enough opportunity to meet with you and properly plan and prepare for both the marriage and the wedding.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR SCHEDULING A WEDDING AT ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH?

1. Read a copy of St. Paul's Wedding Preparations Guide.
2. After reviewing the guide and determining that you desire a Christian wedding through St. Paul Lutheran Church, please contact the church office and make an appointment with our pastor. At this appointment a determination will be made whether or not to schedule the wedding at St. Paul. At this time you be able to discuss any issues or ask any questions you may have regarding your choice of St. Paul for the location of your wedding. Similarly, the pastor may wish to discuss with you important matters of faith and life.
3. Bring the completed Wedding Application and security deposit to your appointment in order to reserve the church.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

Marriage is God's idea. At the beginning of time it was the Lord who said, "it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. . ." God instituted marriage for a number of reasons. Marriage is the foundation of the family and the proper place for the raising of children and for passing on the faith to them. Marriage is the proper place for the expressing of romantic love and sexual intimacy. Marriage was intended by God as the place for a man and woman to share life's deepest friendship, companionship, and togetherness. Christian marriage is intended to be a reflection of the love of Christ for us – his people (Ephesians 5:21ff). Christian couples desire to love one another as Christ has first loved them. Christian marriage expresses the deepest form of love that we can know in this life. It is a love that gives, serves, sacrifices, commits, forgives, nurtures, and cares for one's spouse until "death parts us." For that type of love to occur, Christian couples need to FIRST seek to know, love, and embrace Jesus Christ in their life and then, from the love of Christ, love one another.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN WEDDING?

A Christian wedding, therefore, is a special worship service of the church that focuses not on mere sentimentality or "warm fuzzies" but on the serious commitment of the couple to one another until

death parts them. The Christian wedding **IS NOT** only about the bride and groom, but it recognizes and emphasizes that Christ is the source of perfect love and that the bride and groom desire to love one another empowered by and centered in the love of God.

A “church” wedding is not for the purpose of having a beautiful setting for the ceremony. It is not because God will “bless us more” if the wedding is in a church. It is not “better” in God’s eyes because of where the ceremony takes place. A “church” wedding is to be **an expression of faith on the part of the bride and groom** and it is to be a reflection of the faith of the couple and their desire to honor and serve God with their lives as husband and wife.

Therefore a Christian wedding ceremony will include distinctively Christian or sacred music and not “love songs” from the popular culture. (See more about this in the section on music.) It will include the reading of God’s Word from the Bible, a wedding address that is centered in Christ but applicable to the couple, and vows that reflect the Christian teaching on marriage as a lifelong commitment of love and faithfulness.

While a Christian wedding ceremony is a time of worship, it is also a time of celebration and joy as God unites two people into “one flesh.” (Matthew 19:6) Therefore, a festive atmosphere of joy, celebration and family love is always welcome as well.

Please Note:

Couples who have not yet come to the point in their life where they wish to take their spiritual commitments seriously or do not see their wedding as a time of worship along with the celebration should consider having their wedding somewhere other than St. Paul, or they should consider a civil ceremony. (A civil ceremony is completely legitimate but does not involve the church directly when the couple is not yet ready or prepared for that type of service.) This doesn’t make you a “bad” person if you chose an option other than the church. It simply recognizes that you’re at a different place in terms of your life of faith.

Couples who may not have a great deal of religious background or experience in the Christian faith, **but are seeking a deeper more meaningful relationship with God**, and who want to include Christ in their lives as they enter into Holy Marriage are **invited and encouraged** to talk with the pastor as they consider what to do in planning their wedding.

WHO MAY BE MARRIED AT ST. PAUL?

- ❖ **MEMBERS** who are active in worship and in the life of the church.
- ❖ **NON-MEMBERS** who are worshipping at St. Paul and/or who are interested in joining St. Paul or learning more about the Christian faith.
- ❖ **INACTIVE MEMBERS** (those who are not worshipping on a regular basis) may have their wedding at St. Paul, but it should not be assumed. Inactive members need to think seriously about what their membership at St. Paul means and if they are prepared to return to regular worship. Having a wedding at St. Paul is not a right; it is a privilege and an honor.

SEXUALITY ISSUES

Since the issues of sexuality and living together are such important premarital topics in the church and society today, we offer the following Christian perspective on these issues.

I. Expressing Love

There are many good, Christian ways to express your love for each other. You have probably done many of them during your dating. You may have sent love letters, cards or notes to each other. Perhaps you have sent flowers or given gifts. Every couple seems to have their own special way of saying “I love you.”

There are also many physical ways that couples express love for each other. A special look can express much love. A gentle touch can be very loving. Of course there are such expressions as holding hands, hugging, and kissing, just to name a few.

In God’s Word we learn that one of the best ways to show love is to give of ourselves for the sake of the other. It is this kind of love that prompted our heavenly Father to sacrifice His own Son for us. (See John 3:16.) When we love someone, we seek to put them and their needs first, instead of seeking to fulfill our own selfish needs. (See Corinthians 13:4-8.)

We also learn in God’s Word that sexual intercourse between unmarried persons is **not** an appropriate way to express love. God created men and women as sexual beings and encourages them to unite sexually, but **only** inside the bonds of marriage. (See Hebrews 13:4.) God considers sexual intercourse outside marriage to be a sin against His commandments and urges us to “flee from sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Christian couples who wish to honor God in their lives will not engage in sexual intercourse prior to their wedding. They will reserve this special gift of themselves for their spouse until after they have been married. Until then they will look for other God-pleasing ways to express their love to each other.

2. Living Together

An extension of this issue is the common practice today of couples living together prior to marriage. This arrangement usually includes sexual intercourse. As has been said above, such activity is not pleasing to God.

Even if the couple is not “sleeping together” there is a strong temptation to give in to the natural desires that are present in all of us. It is much better not to put yourself in a situation where you are tempted to violate God’s will.

There are other reasons why living together before marriage is not a wise thing to do. As Christian people, when you live together before marriage you give a poor witness of your faith to those around you. You may even lead others into sin, because they see what you do and think it is therefore alright and then do it, too. (See Luke 17:1-3.)

Even from a secular, sociological perspective, living together before marriage is harmful. A recent research study of the National Marriage Project of Rutgers University (January, 1999) entitled “Should We Live Together” found that 1) living together before marriage increases the risk of breaking up after marriage, 2) living together outside of marriage increases the risk of domestic violence for women, and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children, and 3) unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and wellbeing than married couples.

For the Christian couple who is seeking to lead a God-pleasing life, living together outside of marriage should be avoided.

3. What If?

Understanding God's will concerning sexual intercourse and living together before marriage, what should you do if you are already involved in these activities?

First of all, we realize that addressing these issues can create a sense of guilt, defensiveness, shame, or embarrassment. These emotional responses, or guilty feelings, are internal signals indicating discomfort and possible disconnection from God. Our intent **IS NOT** to make people "feel bad," but to create awareness of what God wants (the very best) for His loved children, male and female.

Second, there is good news for you. The God who has said "Thou shall not," is also the God who offers love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. Confessing your sins to Him and asking for His forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ frees you from your sins. Our loving God removes your sin from you, (See Psalm 103:12.) washing you clean in Christ's blood. (See Isaiah 1:18.)

Living in God's forgiving love and grace you may wish to consider the following options:

- If you're sexually active, but not living together, consider making a promise to God and to one another that you will refrain from sexual intercourse until you are married. What an awesome gift to give one another on your wedding day as you give yourself to each other in "heart, **body**, and mind."
- If you're living together, consider getting married "sooner" rather than "later." If your goal is to honor God in your life together as husband and wife, begin now by not putting off the wedding but getting married just as quickly as possible. This might be a particularly good option if there are already children in the family.
- Another option is for one or the other of you to move out until the wedding. Perhaps you can move in with a parent, sibling, or friend. What an amazing witness you will be to your family and friends when they hear that you wish to prepare for marriage by honoring God in this way.

There may be other options as well. The pastor officiating at your wedding will be happy to discuss these issues and any other concerns you may have. Again, our goal is not to be critical or judgmental, but to assist you to have the best possible life together, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His Word.

Finally, as we believe God created us male and female and the only Biblical model for marriage is between one man and one woman, we will not perform homosexual weddings at St. Paul.

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR WEDDING PLANS

PRE-MARRIAGE PREPARATION

All couples who are married at St. Paul need to participate in pre-marriage preparation. We consider this an important part of our caring ministry to couples and families at St. Paul. **We know that preparation for the marriage is more important than preparation for the wedding.** You can discuss this with one of our pastors when you meet with him.

WHO MAY OFFICIATE AT YOUR WEDDING?

The pastor of St. Paul will officiate at all weddings conducted at St. Paul for several reasons. A Christian wedding ceremony is a worship service of the church and not just a private ceremony of the couple. The pastor of the congregation is responsible to God for the ongoing spiritual life and health of the congregation and its members. The pastor is responsible for the preaching and teaching that takes place at St. Paul.

Are there any exceptions? Couples who would like to include clergy other than St. Paul's pastor may do so with the permission of St. Paul's pastor under the following conditions: a) Clergy from our

denomination, (The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod) are welcome to conduct a wedding ceremony in conjunction with St. Paul's pastor. b) Christian clergy from outside of our denomination are welcome to participate, with St. Paul's pastor, as our guest in support of the bride and groom. This support may take the form of reading a piece of Scripture or offering a prayer. They may not, however, preach the wedding message or formally receive the vows of the bride and groom.

The organist serving in the wedding ceremony should ordinarily be from St. Paul Lutheran Church. Any exception to this policy should be presented as an inquiry to the Director of Music at St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Occasionally, couples will engage a wedding coordinator or other wedding consultant. St. Paul Lutheran Church provides a wedding coordinator for the purposes of the rehearsal and the wedding service. An outside coordinator must be understanding of the role of our congregation's wedding coordinator.

Note: The officiating pastor is in charge of conducting the wedding rehearsal and also the wedding itself.

WEDDING MUSIC AND CEREMONY

The Wedding Music

Wedding music in all aspects shall serve the congregation at worship. The Rite of Holy Marriage brings bride and groom, their families and friends, "...in the presence of God." Among the myriad choices of music, the pastor and musicians at St. Paul Lutheran Church request that wedding music be appropriate for a service of public worship, honoring the Triune God, and expressive of Christian faith in God. When choosing a wedding solo please keep in mind that in a Christian marriage, our Lord is the unifying factor in the marriage and true love comes from God. Therefore, the solos sung should be either in praise of God or in prayer to God.

In this regard, couples should consult with the organist at St. Paul before making final selections of wedding music. When planning music for the Christian wedding, consider the rich heritage of music from the Lutheran tradition. A sample of selections for processional and recessional, solo pieces, and works for instrumentals are available from the organist. You may also include singing of appropriate hymns. Prerecorded music is discouraged for use in weddings at St. Paul.

It is suggested that you pick three selections of music for the wedding ceremony. One will be used for the procession of the bridesmaids, another for the bride, and the third for the recessional when everyone leaves the altar area. In addition to this, you may choose to have one or two selections for a soloist. In this event, it is your responsibility to make arrangements with the soloist. You may also want a musical selection during the Unity Candle lighting.

THE CEREMONY

Couples should become acquainted with the wedding ceremony of the Lutheran church. What follows is a description of a wedding service as it is celebrated at St. Paul. Optional parts of the service are indicated with **. Other additions and changes to the service are possible. Please speak with the pastor about these.

Pre-Service Music

Organ, vocal, or other instrumental music is appropriate. Organ music is most often used.

Processional

This is the piece of music during which time the wedding party enters the church and comes to their

places at the front. Sometimes the bridesmaids come in during one piece of music, the bride to another.

Welcome

The pastor can and will (at your request) speak a word of welcome prior to the beginning of the actual worship service, once all have arrived at their places.

Invocation and Explanation of Marriage

The pastor speaks the following to begin the worship, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” With these words God’s presence is called upon, and our Christian faith declared. Then the pastor explains why we have gathered in the sight of God and before His church, namely to witness the union of a man and a woman in holy matrimony.

Giving of the Bride – Parental Blessing**

Historically, this began when women were considered property. Now when used, this question indicates the family’s role in marriage.

The pastor asks, “Who gives this woman to be married to this man?” The bride’s father (or mother or brother or sister or another family member) answers, “I do / We do / Her mother and I do,” etc.

Question to the parent(s) or families may be used instead (or in addition). Example: “In order to give witness to the spirit of this marriage, I now ask your families: Will you wholeheartedly support this marriage, will you support and encourage _____ and _____ in their life together as husband and wife. Do you promise to pray for them and do you give your children your blessing? If so, answer, We will & We do” (family then answers).

Hymn/Solo**

As an option, the congregation may sing a hymn of praise to God.

Scripture Readings

Usually two readings from the Bible are read at this time. The pastor or another designated person may do this. See the list of suggested readings that follows. You may choose from this list or, if you wish, choose other readings from the Bible, or the pastor will choose the readings.

- Old Testament: Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-24
Ruth 1:16-17
Psalm 33, 100, 117, 127, 128, 136 150
Isaiah 63:7-9
Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:7
- New Testament: Matthew 7:24-27; 19:4-6
John 2:1-10; 15:9-12
1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13 (or a portion of this)
2 Corinthians 5:14-17
Ephesians 3:14-19; 5:21-33
Philippians 2:1-5
Colossians 3:12-17
1 John 4:7-12

Wedding Address

The pastor will have a brief wedding address to the bride and groom based on the readings chosen for the wedding or other Scripture selected by the pastor.

Marriage Vows

1) Questions of Intent and Life-Long Faithfulness

- a) “(Name of bridegroom), will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the church, giving Himself up for her? Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.”

“(Name of bride), will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? Will you submit to him as the church submits to Christ? Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? Then say: I will.”

2) Vows (Usually repeated phrase by phrase after the pastor. They can be memorized or read). What follows are a few options.

- a) “I, (Name), take you, (name), to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy will; and I pledge to you my faithfulness.”
- b) “I, (Name), in the presence of God and these witnesses, take thee, (Name), to be my wedded wife/husband and plight thee my troth till death us do part.”
- c) “I take you, (Name) to be my wife/husband from this day forward, to join with you and share all that is to come, until death parts us.”
- d) “I take you, (Name) to be my wife/husband, and these things I promise you: I will be faithful to you and honest with you; I will respect, trust, help, and care for you; I will share my life with you; I will forgive you as we have been forgiven, and I will try with you to better understand ourselves, the world, and God through the best and worst of what is to come until death part us.”
- e) “I take you, (Name), to be my wife/husband. I promise before God and these witnesses to be your faithful wife/husband, to share with you in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, to forgive and strengthen you, and to join with you so that together we may serve God and others as long as we both shall live.”
- f) “(Name), I take you to be my wife/husband from this time onward, to join with you and to share all that is to come, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to inspire and to respond, and in all circumstances of our life together to be loyal to you with my whole life and with all my being until death parts us.”
- g) You may write your own vows, using the above for ideas, or simply expressing your own thoughts. If you compose your own vows, you will want to include promises of life-long love and faithfulness. The pastor will review the vows with you.

Exchange of Rings**

Rings are not necessary, but the bride, groom, or both may exchange a ring as a symbol of their marriage. If a ring/rings are used, one of the following is said:

- A) “Receive this ring as a pledge and token of wedded love and faithfulness. In the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

- B) “With this ring I marry you, my worldly goods I give to you, and with my body I honor you. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Pronouncement of Marriage

The Pastor declares: “Now that (Name) and (Name) have committed themselves to each other in holy matrimony, have given themselves to each other by their solemn pledges, and have declared the same before God and these witnesses, I pronounce them to be husband and wife, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. What God has joined together, let no one put asunder.”

The Unity/Marriage Candle**

You may light a special candle to symbolize the marriage. A three candle arrangement is used: the center (larger) candle represents the marriage unity/couple, and it may depict oneness in Christ. It is lit by the couple with two smaller candles (representing them or their families), which are previously lit. These two candles are lit before the service either by the usher(s) or by a representative of each family.

If you choose to do this, such special candle kits are available for purchase, or you may simply use other white candles.

Sometimes a solo is sung at this time.

Prayers

Prayers are offered for the bridal couple, for all who are married, for families, and for others, upon request.

The Lord’s Prayer

This prayer is spoken by all or sung by a soloist, if present. We use the traditional text:

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

For clarity, the words are usually printed in the service folder, if one is used.

Benediction

The worship concludes with the blessing: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with His favor and give you peace. Amen.”

Introduction of the Newly Married**

The pastor may introduce the bridal couple in a way that is agreeable with them. For example: “Family and friends, it is my pleasure and delight by the power of Almighty God who makes the two into one flesh to introduce to you . . . Mr. and Mrs. Tom Smith / Tom and Sally Smith / Tom and Sally Johnson-Smith.”

Kiss**

The couple may kiss. It should be a brief kiss, appropriate for the church.

Recessional

This is the piece of music that is played as the bridal couple and the attendants exit the sanctuary.

Exit

The parents of the bridal couple leave first, usually escorted by an usher. Afterwards, the wedding guests leave, with or without the direction of the ushers. They may be ushered out row by row, however, either by the ushers or (in small assemblies) by the wedding couple.

It is preferred that the receiving line be done at the reception hall so the wedding party can have their pictures taken immediately following the service.

A wedding service usually lasts between 20 and 40 minutes, depending upon which options are used.

BEFORE THE WEDDING

The church will be open for your use one hour before the time of the service, earlier if it is a week day and the church office is open. If you must have access to the church more than an hour before the service, please make arrangements with the wedding coordinator.

Reflections on the Wedding Ceremony

Though some variation is permitted in the service, especially with respect to placement of musical portions, couples married at St. Paul will want to follow the general order outlined above. Sources from wedding guides or consultants should be scrutinized for their Christian content. Please discuss these matters early with the officiating pastor and with the organist.

Ordinarily, readings are kept to the Scripture selections. Poems, biographical selections, etc. are discouraged. Readings other than the Scriptures may be shared at the reception.

Couples may wish to have a printed Order for the Marriage Service but printing of a program for the service is optional. To secure samples of former wedding service programs, contact the church secretary at St. Paul. The secretary will also help you select and order a wedding service bulletin. Before printing a wedding service program, please discuss the Order of the Marriage Service with the officiating pastor. Printing may be done at the church or at a local print shop in the community.

A recording of the wedding ceremony is provided to the couple. It will be presented with the marriage certificate and given to the best man immediately following the ceremony.

The Wedding Rehearsal

The date and time of the rehearsal will be set when making application to be married at St. Paul. Please set the hour when all parties can arrive comfortably on time. In general, rehearsals are held the evening prior to the day of the wedding ceremony.

The rehearsal is preparation for the wedding as a worship service. Practice for soloists with the organist should be scheduled for another time. Other participants to be present at the rehearsal are: bride and groom, attendants, ring bearer and flower girl, ushers and parents from both sides of the wedding party. Wedding rehearsals go more smoothly when those attending are limited to people cited above.

Rehearsals last from twenty-five to forty-five minutes. The officiating pastor will conduct the rehearsal with the assistance of the wedding coordinator. Participants will be asked to gather initially in the front pews of the church sanctuary. The pastor will share some preliminary remarks. Then the bridal party will walk through the service, the recessional, and the processional. The pastor will have suggestions for forming a receiving line in the narthex, and share instructions for the ushers. As a last detail, the pastor will direct participants to areas on the premises reserved for members of the bridal party.

The Marriage License

Obtaining a marriage license is the responsibility of the couple. The marriage license must be brought to the wedding and presented to the pastor before the ceremony begins. Preferably it should be given to the pastor at the rehearsal.

The Wedding Party and Participants

With regard to photography, we ask that each couple counsel with their photographer and share the following information:

1. Posed Photographs may be taken before or after the wedding ceremony.
2. Center aisle shots are permitted for the parents and the bridal party during the processional and recessional.
3. **No flashes or strobe lights are permitted in the sanctuary during the wedding ceremony, from the close of the processional to the beginning of the recessional.**
4. A time exposure or still picture may be taken from the balcony during the ceremony.
5. Video cameras are permitted in the balcony and a stationery tripod placed at the side aisle, organ side, no further than the front pew. Video equipment is not permitted near the chancel or in the chancel itself during the ceremony. **Roving video picture taking is not permitted in the sanctuary!**
6. All parties taking photographs or using video equipment at the request of the bride and groom should counsel with the officiating pastor prior to the ceremony.
7. The photographer should inform the pastor if he will be needed to pose for photographs following the wedding ceremony. Note: Photographs including the pastor should be taken immediately following the ceremony or possibly beforehand.

CUSTOMS AND ACCESSORIES

Flowers

The couple shall share their plan for floral decorations with the officiating pastor. The pews along the center of the aisle may be decorated. Do not use nails, screws, wire or any other fasteners which may damage the varnish of church furniture! Note: Consult with the trustees of St. Paul before placing any unusual decorations in the church.

Flower petals may be used along the path of the runner down the aisle, usually thrown by the flower girl. The runner must be procured from a florist. We suggest a cloth runner. The aisle measures 55 feet. It is advisable to procure a good quality plastic runner if cloth is not used.

When making floral arrangements, urge the florist to work in the sanctuary well in advance of the wedding service. Also, the florist should gather up his accessories and take them from the sanctuary immediately following the wedding. St. Paul Lutheran Church is not responsible for wedding accessories brought by the florist or other parties engaged by the wedding couple.

Candles

The candles on the wall are lighted for every worship service. A Unity Candle may be used. A florist or St. Paul may provide this fixture. The center wedding candle and side candles must be provided by the couple.

We have aisle candles available for placement along the aisle. They may be used, upon request. Please speak to the secretary of St. Paul about the fee and use of the aisle candles.

Flowers for the Mothers

Two single flowers (fresh cut) may be placed on the center railing of the chancel. The flowers may either be presented following the lighting of the Unity Candle, or following the benediction at the close of the ceremony, the bride and groom may carry the flowers to their mothers seated on either side of the aisle in the front pews. Thereafter, they regroup in the center for the recessional.

Guestbook

The couple shall provide their own guestbook. A stand in the narthex may be used for this book. We suggest placing the stand near the main entrance of the church so that guests may sign the book when arriving for the ceremony. It is proper to have an attendant at the guestbook.

DECORUM

Conduct in the Church

Couples married at St. Paul are urged to select members of their bridal party who have profound respect for the church as the House of God. In this place the Gospel of the Lord is proclaimed and shared in the Sacraments. It is expected that everyone conduct themselves appropriately in the house of the Lord!

Tobacco and Alcohol

Every couple will understand that alcohol has no place even at a distance for both wedding rehearsal and ceremony. Any person who violates this regulation with respect to prohibition of the use of alcoholic beverages will be asked to leave the church premises. The bride and groom should inform their friends and acquaintances of this policy.

Smoking is not permitted in any area of the church. Guests may smoke outdoors, being careful to dispose of butts properly when finished smoking.

Wedding Attire and Wardrobe

With respect to dress, let good taste and propriety be the rule.

For the wedding, the women in the bridal party may dress at the church. Normally, men in the party will dress at their homes and arrive at the church in their suits or tuxedos.

Post-Ceremony Celebration – Throwing of Rice

We do not allow the throwing of rice, birdseed or confetti. First, the rice or birdseed in such quantity cannot be good for the birds who ingest a fatal amount of the substance. Then, the throwing of rice is a pagan custom, a sign of fertility, part of worship and celebration before the pagan deities. It is inappropriate on the premises of a Christian church. Then, other factors must be considered. The rice, birdseed or confetti, even when thrown outdoors, gets into hair and clothing and is brought back into the church building. If the bride and groom are to be showered as they leave the doors of the church building, let it be with flower petals. Another alternative to rice and bird seed may be bubbles.

FEES AND HONORARIUMS

Expenses for a wedding service can vary greatly depending on what each couple desires to include in their service and the number of people serving them. We are aware of the numerous costs incurred by couples and their parents in planning and celebrating a wedding. We believe that the heart and center of your wedding day is the commitment that you make to one another before God's altar. Therefore the church tries to keep its costs to a minimum and work with each couple to focus on the very special and holy nature of your wedding.

You should, however, expect and plan to reimburse those who provide services for your wedding in proportion to their time, expertise and the expenses they incur on your behalf.

A current list with suggested minimum donations is provided. They vary for couples who are members of St. Paul and those who are not members of the congregation. They are the following:

	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
<u>Base Fees</u>		
Security Deposit	\$100	\$100
Building Use		\$200
Coordinator	\$50	\$50
Premarital Instruction	\$40	\$40
Pastor's Honorarium	Free will	Free will
<u>Optional Fees</u>		
Organist	\$100	\$100
(\$25 additional for each ½ hour of rehearsal time required to work with guest soloists)		
Aisle Candles		\$35
Bulletin Paper and Printing		\$20 per 100 copies
Audio support		\$25

*The Security Deposit is required at the time of application. The wedding coordinator fee and security deposit are nonrefundable. The deposit is required in case of damage to the church building, or additional custodial/assistant work. The security deposit is fully refundable after the wedding if not needed.

Checks for use of the church should be written to St. Paul Lutheran Church. Checks for the organist, coordinator, and pastor should be made out to each person individually and must be presented no later than the wedding rehearsal.

*The coordinator is an assistant to the pastor and the bridal couple. They will work with the bride and groom, ensuring that everything is correct and in order for their wedding day. Some of the assistance your coordinator provides includes:

- Answering any questions you have throughout your planning.
- Ensuring all information is correct and all names are spelled correctly on your application for your marriage certificate and for the production of your service folder.
- Collecting all fees ahead of time and distribute fees to appropriate people.
- Collecting and prepare marriage license, unity candle, etc.
- Ensuring sanctuary is set up appropriately.
- Ensuring that the building is open ahead of time on your wedding day for changing and/or picture taking.
- Providing assistance to the wedding party on the wedding day.

INVITATION TO THE PASTOR

If the bridal couple wishes to invite the officiating pastor to either the rehearsal dinner or the wedding reception, or both, they should notify him at least a month in advance of the wedding. This courtesy is appreciated.

PRAYERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Unless there are reasons for variation, prayers for the couple will be spoken in the worship of the congregation in Sunday services preceding the ceremony. Families and participants in the wedding will find it uplifting to be present, if at all possible, in this larger context of God's gathered people.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Yes, planning a wedding is an exciting and hectic time of life. There is a great deal to think about and to consider. The order of service for Holy Marriage says, “**therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.**”

Our goal is to do all we can to help and assist couples not only to have a beautiful wedding day, but more importantly, to have a great life together as husband and wife.

To that end we want to encourage you to:

- ❖ Invest in your spiritual life and take it seriously.
- ❖ Take your time getting to know one another. Don't rush into marriage. Love takes time to develop and deepen.
- ❖ Resist the urge to be sexually active or to live together before marriage. It's important to build your relationship primarily on a spiritual and emotional level rather than a physical one.
- ❖ Prepare for the marriage and not just the wedding by getting involved in meaningful pre-marriage preparation.

God's blessings to you as we plan and prepare for your life together as husband and wife!