

WEDDING HANDBOOK

Approved by the Board of Directors on 1/23/2024



IMPORTANT WEDDING INFORMATION

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations on your upcoming wedding. We are excited to walk with you as you become husband and wife. What is more important to us, however, is your marriage. We are about lifelong marriages, not just wedding ceremonies. When we perform your wedding ceremony, we are interested in what God is doing in joining two lives together. We want your marriage to be a lifelong success, not just a beautiful ceremony. We seek to answer your questions, to talk about our community of faith, and to discuss our understanding of what constitutes a Christian approach to marriage.

CONTACT INFORMATION

St. John Lutheran

222 N. Stafford Street

Plymouth, WI 53073

www.sjplymouth.com

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DATES

The Pastor and the Church Office must approve any dates/times before you proceed with your wedding plans. There is the possibility that multiple events could be held on the same day. You will be assured of being able to get into the church three hours prior to the ceremony. This should give you enough time to have the Sanctuary decorated and/or get dressed at the Church.

Due to the Saturday worship service (4:30 PM), Saturday weddings typically need start no later than 2:00 PM.

We will not have more than one wedding per day at St. John Lutheran.

PRE-MARRIAGE CONVERSATIONS

Each couple will complete an online pre-marriage inventory through SYMBIS.com (Save Your Marriage Before It Starts). This questionnaire is designed to help identify the strengths and growth areas of your relationship. This assessment will be used to help the couple discuss and reflect on their life together as husband and wife.

After completing the online pre-marriage inventory, the pastor will meet with you several times. Together, you'll go over the assessment, study passages of the Bible in order to learn what our Lord says about marriage, plan for the wedding ceremony, and pray together.

WORSHIP

We recognize every wedding service to be a worship service. We therefore request and expect all participants and guests to maintain a respectful reverence at all times within God's house. This applies to the time before, during, and after the service, including the rehearsal. We ask the wedding participants to assist in maintaining this worshipful attitude and atmosphere. The throwing of rice or birdseed is prohibited.

A typical wedding is 35-40 minutes in length. Depending on readings, hymns, and other special elements, the length of the wedding service may increase.

REHEARSAL

A rehearsal is a practice session. All available participants are expected to rehearse. Rehearsals are usually held the day before the wedding service. Plan on the rehearsal lasting one hour. The wedding rehearsal should start on time.

The Wedding Coordinator (provided by St. John Lutheran) will be there at the rehearsal and wedding to help prepare the church and assist the bridal party. Musicians and vocalists may rehearse at the discretion of the Director of Music.

MUSIC

St. John Lutheran Church believes that the wedding service is a worship setting. Therefore, God through Jesus Christ is retained as the primary focus of all that we say and do. To this end, only sacred music shall be used in our wedding services. The Director of Music may help select appropriate music for the service. The Director of Music must approve all music at least one month before the day of the rehearsal. If not, music will be chosen for you.

The solicitation of the organist should first be offered to the Director of Music. If the desire is to solicit a family member or friend to play the organ, a special request needs to be made through the Director of Music. Members of St. John are also available for special solos, duets, and instruments. The Director of Music can share with you a list of individuals who are available for such and make the contact and arrangements for you. If you solicit an organist/pianist and/or soloist outside of St. John, it is your responsibility to make arrangements for payment, meeting times, etc.

TYPICAL ORDER OF SERVICE (WITH MUSICAL OPTIONS)

Prelude Music options
Mother's entrance/ music option
Bridal Party entrance/ music option
Bride's entrance/ music option
Introductory setting
Music option
Readings
Music option
Sermon
Music option
Wedding vows
Unity Candle/ music option
Lord's Prayer/ sometimes sung
Wedding Prayer
Benediction
Recessional Music options

GUEST PASTORS

Any wedding that takes place at St. John is viewed as being promoted and conducted by the church. Therefore, whenever other LCMS pastors are requested to be an officiant at the wedding, one of the pastors on staff at St. John Lutheran Church must be included and will be the responsible official in charge. We do not officiate with pastors other than those in fellowship with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

FLOWERS AND PARAMENTS

Flowers may be placed on the shelves above the altar and/or on flower stands if desired. The Church provides no pew bows. Special pew ribbons, bows and flowers may be provided through a florist. For safety purposes, floor runners are not permitted. Arrangements for the florist to deliver and set up flowers need to be made through the Church Office. The altar paraments are not changed for weddings. The proper liturgical color coinciding with the season remains for all worship services.

UNITY CANDLE RITE

If you plan on using a unity candle, make sure the set you purchase has a stand for both the unity candles and the side taper candles. Other unity rites (such as sand, knot, etc.) should be discussed with the pastor early in the pre-marriage conversations.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Please encourage your photographer to introduce themselves to the wedding coordinator and the pastor when they arrive to the church on the day of the wedding. Flash pictures are not allowed during the wedding service itself. A photographer may take pictures of the wedding party as they process and recess. Non-flash pictures may be taken during the service from the balcony. Pictures of the wedding party may be taken prior and/or immediately after the service. *Out of courtesy to the Pastor who may have other ministry responsibilities that day, it is requested that any pictures that include the pastor(s) be taken immediately after the service.*

WEDDING COORDINATOR & DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

To serve you well, it is mandatory that the Wedding Coordinator and the Director of Music be included in your wedding. (Exceptions are only provided through the pastor)

FLOWER GIRLS AND RINGBEARERS

The use of participants under the age of 5 is discouraged. The inclusion of those younger than 5 often results in embarrassing disturbances and takes away from the nature of the worship service. However, we understand the desire to have little ones in the wedding and encourage that after they walk down the aisle, they sit with a relative in the pews.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

Apply and receive a marriage license through the Wisconsin County of the location that your marriage ceremony will take place. This marriage license should be turned in to the church office one week prior to the wedding date. St. John Lutheran will mail the official copy of your license to the county. The county will process your license and send you a typed official copy for your records.

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE WEDDING

A check for all wedding fees and gratuities should be dropped off at the church office along with your marriage license one week prior to the wedding date.

FEE SCHEDULE

PRE-MARRIAGE INVENTORY

Cost: None

St. John Lutheran provides the online pre-marriage inventory to each couple. The pastor will provide information on how access and complete this assessment tool.

FACILITY USE

Cost: None

The wedding couple is responsible for the removal of all wedding decorations and personal items immediately upon leaving the Church after the wedding.

PRINTED WEDDING BULLETINS

Cost: None

If the wedding takes place at St. John, the Church Office will create printed wedding bulletins which include the scripture readings, hymns, liturgy, and attendants.

OFFICIATING PASTOR

Cost: \$150

Any wedding at St. John Lutheran, must include one of the pastors on staff at St. John Lutheran Church. Includes pre-marriage conversations, rehearsal, and wedding.

NON-OFFICIATING PASTOR

Not, required, however, if a non-officiating pastor is used, consideration of the specialized time involved would suggest a gratuity.

ORGANIST/PIANO

Cost: \$150

This fee is required if an organist/pianist from St. John is used. Fees may vary if using someone other than our organist/pianist. Includes helping with the selection of music, rehearsals (if necessary) and wedding.

If the wedding does not take place at St. John Lutheran, no organist/piano fee is required.

SOLOISTS, INSTRUMENTALISTS, ETC.

Cost: Determined by Individuals

WEDDING COORDINATOR

Cost: \$150

Includes assisting with decorations, coordinating sound and video operators, musicians, soloists, unlocking and locking the buildings and all details of the rehearsal and wedding.

If the wedding does not take place at St. John Lutheran, no Wedding Coordinator fee is required.

TRADITIONAL WEDDING TEXTS

The readings at a worship service where a wedding is conducted are designed to point the couple and those in attendance to the heart of love, which is none other than Jesus. The wedding service normally has 2 or 3 readings. Usually there is one from the Old Testament or Epistle and one from the Gospel. They need to be selected with care to be both a clear confession of Christ and the faith of the couple. There are a number of great texts and this list is designed to be a starting point, not limitation. If there are other texts that you would like to use in your wedding service, please consult the Pastor.

If you choose to use readers for the service, you will need to apply the following criteria:

1. They need to be Christian. We can't ask someone who does not hold to the Christian faith to take a leadership role in a Christian service.
2. They should be able to read well in public. Your wedding day is a big day. Your readers should be comfortable reading in front of a crowd. Stammering and stuttering doesn't bring glory to God or help your wedding memories.

OLD TESTAMENT READINGS

Genesis 1:26-28	Male and Female He created them
Genesis 2:7, 18-24	They shall become one flesh
Psalms 67	May God be gracious to us and bless us
Psalms 100	The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever
Psalms 127	Unless the Lord builds the house
Psalms 128	The Lord bless you from Zion
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	A Three Fold Cord is not quickly broken
Song of Songs 2:10-13	Many waters cannot quench love
Isaiah 61:7-11	As a bridegroom decks himself
Hosea 2:18-23	I will betroth you to me in faithfulness

EPISTLE READINGS

Romans 12:1-2	Present your bodies as a living sacrifice
1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:4-5	Glorify God in your body
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13	The greatest of these is love
Ephesians 5:1-2, 22-33	Walk in love as Christ loved us
Philippians 4:4-7	Rejoice in the Lord always
Colossians 3:12-17	Put on love which binds everything together
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8	God has called us in holiness
Hebrews 13:1-8	Let marriage be held in honor among all
1 John 4:7-12	Let us love one another
Revelation 19:6-9	His Bride has made herself ready
Revelation 21:1-5	The holy city prepared as a bride

GOSPEL READINGS

Matthew 19:4-6	What God has joined together let no one separate
Mark 10:1-9	What God has joined together let no one separate
John 2:1-11	The Wedding at Cana
John 15:9-12	Abide in My love

HYMNS

The use of congregational hymns in the wedding is very appropriate. It allows your guests to participate in the service. The following is a list of hymns in Lutheran Service Book that are appropriate for weddings. This list is not exhaustive; many others are also appropriate.

START OF THE SERVICE

- 902 "Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now"
- 812 "Come, Let Us Join Our Cheerful Song"
- 907 "God Himself is Present"
- 869 "With the Lord Begin Your Task"

DURING THE SERVICE

- 858 "O Father, All Creating"
- 859 "Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest"
- 527 "O Savior, Precious Savior"
- 861 "Christ Be My Leader"
- 702 "My Faith Looks Up to Thee"
- 685 "Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus"
- 707 "Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways"
- 729 "I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus"
- 709 "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"
- 710 "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want"
- 818 "In Thee Is Gladness"
- 895 "Now Thank We All Our God"
- 790 "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"
- 862 "Oh, Blest the House"
- 537 "Beautiful Savior"
- 722 "Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me"
- 770 "What A Friend We Have in Jesus"

END OF THE SERVICE

- 924 "Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing"
- 643 "Sent Forth by God's Blessing"
- 649 "Blest Be the Tie That Binds"
- 655 "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word"

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ABOUT MARRIAGE?

Marriage is an institution ordained by God which He designed for our pleasure and fulfillment. God created the institution of marriage between one man and one woman at the very beginning of time. He created man in His own image and then made a companion for him in life. He brought the woman to the man and declared, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall be united with his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Jesus Christ also honored marriage by His attendance at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-12). In His ministry, Jesus confirmed marriage as a divine ordinance, an honorable relationship, and a lasting bond when he said, "What God has joined together let no man separate" (Matthew 19:6). The Apostle Paul highlighted the significance of marriage when he called marriage a symbol of the union of the Savior and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-33). The Bible tells us that Christians who marry confirm that marriage is a permanent relationship based on commitment. It is also an exclusive relationship, which holds within itself certain privileges that are not to be experienced outside of marriage. The Bible spells out clearly that mutual submission and respect are essential to the marriage relationship and that adultery or sex outside the marriage relationship is sinful and thereby damaging to our relationship with God and with one another.

The marriage policy of St. John Lutheran Church & School, a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is and always has been consistent with the Synod's beliefs on marriage. The official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, as set forth in 1998 Res. 3-21 ("To Affirm the Sanctity of Marriage and to Reject Same-Sex Unions"), is that homosexual unions come under categorical prohibition in the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator's design (Rom. 1:26-27). These positions and beliefs can be found on the LCMS website, along with other statements, papers and reports on the subject of homosexuality and same-sex civil unions and "marriage." Our pastors will not officiate over any marriages inconsistent with these beliefs, and our church property may not be used for any marriage ceremony, reception or other activity that would be inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A CHURCH THAT WILL MARRY US. DO WE HAVE TO BE MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN OR A REGULAR ATTENDEE?

We only marry couples that are members of St. John Lutheran or individuals who are under the spiritual care of the pastors of St. John Lutheran. We ask couples to make us their church home during the time of their engagement. Before making your decision, attend services for a few weeks. Ask yourself some questions. Is this the kind of church you would feel comfortable attending week in and week out? Are the messages helping you to deal with the spiritual issues in your life? Do the people feel welcoming?

We have worship services at 222 N. Stafford St., Plymouth, WI 53073.

Saturday @ 4:30 PM

Sunday @ 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Monday @ 6:30 PM

IS IT REALLY NECESSARY TO GO THROUGH ALL THE PRE-MARRIAGE CONVERSATIONS?

Yes. We believe it's important to equip couples with the tools to look at their relationship realistically. There is a growing body of evidence that pre-marriage conversations enhance marital satisfaction and stability. We want what's best for the married couple!

WE'RE OLDER. WHY DO WE NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PRE-MARRIAGE CONVERSATIONS?

We've had couples of all ages and backgrounds participate in our pre-marriage conversations. Without exception everyone walks away with some information or insight that helps the relationship. We believe that when you stop learning – you stop growing. Marriages thrive when people continue to grow together.

I WAS DIVORCED SEVERAL YEARS AGO. SHOULD I TAKE A DIVORCE RECOVERY PROGRAM?

If you've been married before, we encourage you attend a *DivorceCare* class. This divorce recovery program help clarify issues, facilitate continued healing, and draw people closer to Jesus. Sometimes people go and find that they are used by God to encourage others. The pastor will be able to assist you in finding an upcoming class to attend.

WE'RE LIVING TOGETHER. IS THAT A PROBLEM?

First of all, we are thrilled that you want to be married. We believe marriage is what God wants for every couple that falls in love and see themselves in a permanent relationship. Secondly, we want to meet every couple where they are without compromising our role as God's church. That can be tricky. You see, it's our understanding that when a couple approaches our church for marriage that both the man and the woman will agree with both Christian belief and practice. It makes little sense to be married in the name of God but not to live in accord with his promises and commands. Living together is very prevalent in today's society. Even though the culture as a whole accommodates this practice the Christian church has held strongly to the sanctity of marriage and the accompanying rights and privileges given to husbands and wives exclusively. We are also concerned that there is a higher incidence of divorce among couples who live together prior to marriage.

If you are living together, we will work with you in examining what all this means and explore with you some possible adjustments that will help you to both honor God and prepare well for your married life together.

WE HAVEN'T ATTENDED WORSHIP SERVICES FOR A LONG TIME. WE'RE NOT VERY RELIGIOUS. IS THIS A PROBLEM?

We know that getting married is one of those turning point events that can point us to new possibilities. We don't believe God magically shows up to bless weddings. God wants to walk with you daily in your marriage. Many people, for a variety of reasons haven't had an opportunity to discuss issues of faith within a caring and nurturing environment. Many people come to St. John Lutheran with questions and concerns about faith. We try to answer those questions and deal with those concerns honestly. It's important that matters of faith be explored. We don't want you to make wedding vows in the name of a God you don't know or follow. Our pastors want you to find a rich and vibrant life of faith. We believe that following Jesus is the ultimate calling for any person. That's why we'll want you to examine the role the Lord plays in your life. The pastor working with you will review the basics of the Christian faith and invite you to walk with Jesus on a daily basis. We want you to be open and willing to learn, grow and experience the life of faith. If you're not open to exploring what a life with Jesus might look like then we're probably not a good fit for you.

WE DON'T WANT TO CONNECT WITH ST. JOHN LUTHERAN. WE SIMPLY WANT A CHURCH WEDDING. WILL YOU RENT US YOUR FACILITIES AND PROVIDE A PASTOR?

No. St. John Lutheran is not a wedding chapel.

REQUEST FOR CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT ST. JOHN LUTHERAN

DATES, TIMES & LOCATIONS

Requested Wedding Date: _____ Time: _____

Proposed Wedding Location: _____

Requested Rehearsal Date: _____ Time: _____

Requested Officiating Pastor: _____

GROOM TO BE

Full Name: _____
First Middle Last

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____

BRIDE TO BE

Full Name: _____
First Middle Last (Maiden Name)

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip code: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____

AGREEMENT

We agree to the requirements found in the St. John Lutheran Wedding Handbook. We understand that our wedding date is not reserved with St. John Lutheran until it has been approved by the Officiating Pastor and the Administrative Assistant (Publications and Events).

Signature of Groom To Be: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Bride To Be: _____ Date: _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

APPROVED BY

Administrative Assistant | Publications & Events

Initial: _____

Date: _____

Officiating Pastor

Initial: _____

Date: _____