

## **YOUR WEDDING GUIDE**

**“AND THE TWO SHALL BE ONE”**

Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Chico, California

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### **A PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE**

O God, our heavenly father, as You have drawn our hearts together to seek a union as husband and wife, guide us as we make our marriage preparations, that we might build our life together on Jesus Christ, the Rock of our salvation, and bring glory to Your holy name. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Weddings

“Let everyone think highly of marriage...” - Hebrews 13:4

Weddings to be held at Redeemer Lutheran Church must meet all of the following:

1. The bride or groom must be a confessing and practicing Christian and a member of Redeemer Lutheran Church.
2. The Pastor officiating at the wedding must be the pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church.
3. At least (3) months and preferably (6) months notice must be given by the couple so proper counseling can be provided.
4. Only the Board of Elders in consultation with the Pastor can make an exception to this policy.

Adopted by Pastor and Board of Elders, July, 2010.

## **INTRODUCTION**

A wedding is an exciting, happy, joyous, once-in-a-lifetime event. Planning for it combines dreams, suggestions, and sound judgment. This should be a great occasion, and preparing for it should be a wonderful experience. The time you spend planning your wedding will result in many memories. These should be pleasant memories, which you will wish to recall again and again. We hope that this booklet will help your planning and foster many pleasant memories of this special time in your life.

Wedding plans begin with youthful dreams. You remember weddings you have attended. You gather ideas of what you like. What will your wedding be like? Perhaps you already have it well planned. Perhaps you have only a few sketchy ideas. This booklet has been planned to explain the basic principles and guidelines for weddings solemnized and celebrated as a Christian Service at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

## **THE BIBLICAL BASIS**

While the laws of the state regulate marriage as a civil contract, God's word demonstrates that it is much more than a legal agreement. God's Word regulates every marriage celebrated in the walls of our church. In fact, the Scriptures tell us that God himself originated marriage. "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for man to be alone. I will provide a partner for him.'" (Genesis 2:24) So God looks upon marriage as a divine institution in which He Himself joins the lives of two people into one. "Marriage is honorable in all," declares God in Hebrews 13:4. He has designed marriage for the welfare and happiness of the people whom he created.

Jesus also taught this same view of marriage, as we read in Matthew 19. He also emphasized the permanence of the marriage relationship when he said, "Man must not separate what God has joined together." (Matthew 19:6) Jesus indicated the divine character of marriage by showing that God is the Author and that marriage is for life. The New Testament also gives instruction concerning how this marriage relationship is to exist each day in the life of the husband and wife. This is found in specific detail in Ephesians 5:21-23, and in I Corinthians 7. The spirit of true love, agape love from God, is clearly taught in 1 Corinthians 13, and ought to be a part of each husband and wife's life and practice. Thus, we speak of "Christian Marriage." It is entered with God's Word and prayer (1 Timothy 4:5), and in the name of and with the blessing of the Lord.

## **WHY HAVE A CHURCH WEDDING?**

Couples have many reasons for wanting a church wedding. For some, it is because Mom and Dad always dreamed of a church wedding for their children. Others are attracted to the church building and facilities; some, because “it’s the custom.” Christians want a church wedding because they intend to build a Christian marriage.

We want to help you plan a wedding that will be a lasting pleasure for your memories. Our interest goes beyond the wedding ceremony itself to your marriage and its growth by God’s help.

A Christian wedding is the public occasion when a man and woman bind themselves by their promises to one another in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Usually a Christian wedding takes place in a house of worship, a church.

A Christian wedding and a Christian marriage are not the same thing. The wedding is a ceremony. The marriage is a complex partnership that is either nurtured or weakened by the actions and attitudes of a couple. What makes a marriage specifically Christian is not a Bible on a table, or a cross on a wall, or even church attendance. In a Christian marriage, the forgiveness of sins must be central, and the cross of Christ must be the source of forgiveness to touch, heal, and renew the bond of marriage. Worship at church and in the home, when the couple encounters Christ in the written word and in the Sacraments, where prayer is part of communicating – these are the building blocks of a Christian marriage.

When you have a church wedding, you are in a place where many of life’s events are celebrated and prayed over: birth, baptism, confirmation, weddings, and funerals. A wedding is an important occasion for human beings to worship God and to call upon his grace and mercy. A church wedding is your witness both to the church and to the public of your faith in God and your trust in His watchfulness over your new household.

## **PASTORAL SERVICE AND PREMARITAL COUNSELING**

Our congregation provides a pastor to help you in your wedding plans and to conduct your wedding service. We follow the principal that “Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran pastors.” The unity of faith and doctrine is a vital confession of our congregation. For this reason, please do not ask that a non-Lutheran pastor participate in your wedding service.

Any clergy, including Lutheran pastors, who participate must be in full altar and pulpit fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. This is not passing judgment on the faith of another clergyman or Christian church. It is solely standing on the principle of Scripture regarding the unity of confession and practice.

One of the first arrangements you need to make is to reserve the church and set your wedding date with the pastor. Then arrangements will be made for premarital counseling. The counseling is designed to help you prepare for a Christian marriage. The pastor will use a casual,

conversational approach in his counseling with you. A measuring instrument or counseling cards will be used to help you look at the various aspects of marriage.

You will be expected to meet for counseling in several sessions of approximately one hour.

There may be more sessions in the future, even after you have been married, as the pastor sees the necessity.

The topics to be discussed include the Biblical View of Marriage, Sexual Matters, Attitudes and Expectations, Communication, and Your Wedding Service.

To avoid scheduling problems and to allow for adequate preparation and counseling, it is requested that you contact the pastor as early as possible, no later than three months before your wedding. After the initial meeting with the pastor, your reservation for the wedding will be either approved or rejected.

### **APPROVAL OF THE WEDDING**

One of the members of the marriage must be a member of the congregation.

When neither the man nor the woman is a member and a church wedding is still desired, the couple is required to attend an adult instruction course prior to the wedding. This twelve-week course teaches basic Christian doctrine. Following the classes, they may become members and thereby become eligible for consideration for a wedding.

There are reasons why a church wedding would not be approved. These are as follows:

1. When state licensing requirements are not met by the couple
2. When the couple disagrees with the church's policies as described in the guidebook
3. When the couple is living together outside of wedlock and refuses to acknowledge that such a condition is sin and separate until after the wedding
4. When obstacles to a marriage are noted by the pastor, which in his opinion are not possible at that time to be overcome, such as:
  - a. When there are valid objections by parents of either the bride or groom, especially when one or both persons is at an age requiring parental consent
  - b. When a divorced person applies to be remarried and the person is unwilling for the pastor to explore the history of the previous marriage(s), or the person is unable or unwilling to repent for his or her part in the dissolution of the previous marriage(s) or the person is unable or unwilling to correct the actions, temperament, habits, or attitudes that were thought to have contributed to marriage problems. A divorce is a serious ground for denial of a church wedding, but if counseling for remarriage demonstrates a healthy willingness to receive the forgiveness of sins, amend the sinful life, and grow in ability to provide a nurturing married relationship, then a church wedding is in order. Our church is not trying to cast judgment upon the divorced person's past or to dredge up old problems. Our purpose is to allow the pastoral counseling that precedes a remarriage to be a time for the couple to explore and experience the freeing power

of the Gospel of Christ. “When anyone is joined to Christ, he is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

5. When a woman is pregnant. Women who are pregnant at the time the couple request a wedding should receive the benefits of premarital counseling, along with their prospective husbands. The wedding plans should take her condition into consideration. If she “shows” and her pregnancy is visible to the casual viewer, the wedding should be a family ceremony without the traditional frills of a wedding.

### **THE WEDDING PARTY**

Your wedding may be as large as you desire or as small as you want. You must consider the cost of your wedding as you set your plans. Consider your financial abilities and that of your family as well. A flower girl and/or ring bearer should be old enough to accept responsibility without being a distraction to the worship service. The wise couple will select a sufficient number of ushers to make the greeting and seating of guests a smooth and pleasant experience for all. Any number of guests over 20 require the use of ushers. Besides greeting and seating the guests, ushers usually light the candles and handle other errands for the wedding party.

### **THE WEDDING SERVICE**

A wedding service is as much a worship service as is the Sunday morning service. This is the basic principle that guides the planning of all weddings at our church. All of our worship services seek to honor and praise our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For this reason, your wedding service deserves careful and God-pleasing planning with the counsel of the pastor.

The rite for Holy Matrimony is on page 275 of Lutheran Service Book. Only vows and promises from this rite are used in the service. Only readings from the Bible are used and the pastor will serve as the reader of the scripture.

If Holy Communion is offered, it will be given according to our fellowship doctrine for those in the LCMS who are catechized and confirmed, and to those in church fellowship with the LCMS.

A typical service will follow this outline:

- The Pre-Service Music
- The Procession
- The Invocation
- The Scripture Lessons
- Wedding Address
- The Hymn
- The Declaration of Mutual Intent
- The Exchange of Vows and Rings
- The Marriage Declaration and Blessing
- The Marriage Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer
- The Benediction
- The Recessional

## The Post - Service Music

This is merely an outline of the basic elements of the service. There are options, such as soloists, choral music, or hymns by the congregation. The pastor will assist you in the planning of your wedding service.

### WEDDING MUSIC

The music for the wedding should be selected carefully in consultation with the pastor. Since this is a public worship service, and not merely a ceremony to be witnessed, the music is to reflect Christian attitudes toward marriage. The music should honor Jesus as Savior and Lord, the Author and Head of marriage. The guidelines following may help you make your selections:

1. Processionals and recessionals:

Jesus, Joy of Man's Desiring – Bach  
 Trumpet Tune in D Major – Clarke  
 Trumpet Voluntary in D Major – Purcell  
 Tocatta in F Major – Buxtehude  
 Suite Gothique – Boellmann (esp. Part II)  
 Aria in G Major – Handel  
 Postlude in G Major – Handel  
 Postlude (from Judas Maccabeus) – Handel  
 Solemn Processional (from Water Music) – Handel  
 Psalm XIX or Psalm XX – Marcello  
 Processional in G Major – Stanley  
 Cantilena – Rheinberger

2. It is good Christian custom for the congregation to sing hymns in the wedding service. Some suggested hymns follow.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty 790  
 Beautiful Savior 537  
 Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus 685  
 Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest 859  
 Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing 860  
 O Father, All Creating 858

3. Some solo suggestions are:

The Greatest Of These Is Love –Bitgood  
 Wedding Prayer – Dunlap  
 Wedding Prayer – Clayton

The Pledge – Black  
 Love is of God – Charles  
 Entreat Me Not To Leave Thee – Gounod  
 A Wedding Benediction – Lovelace  
 Whither Thou Goest – Singer  
 The Lord’s Prayer – Malotte  
 Today, O Lord, We at Thine Altar Stand – Pollack  
 O Perfect Love – Barnby  
 Love, in Christ – Schultz  
 O Lord Most Holy – Franck  
 Thou Wilt Keep Him in Perfect Peace – Kretz & Clayton  
 Lord, Who at Cana’s Wedding Feast – Fink  
 Prayer For Love Like Christ’s – Clayton  
 Psalm 23 – Malotte

4. WE CANNOT APPROVE the following for use in a Christian wedding service:

“Annie’s Song” – it leaves out Jesus Christ.  
 “Because” – it makes the reason for marriage purely the emotions of the couple and leaves God out of the picture.  
 “Sunrise, Sunset” – while it points out the realities of life – happiness and tears – it does not point to Christ, the One who bears our tears and gives eternal joy.  
 “We’ve Only Just Begun” – it leaves the future success of the marriage uncertain (“for all we know...”), rather than being based on our confidence in Christ.  
 “If” – points to the couple as the source of all strength in marriage and speaks of a distinctly un-Christian view of the end of the world and eternal life.  
 “You Are the Sunshine of My Life” – glorifies a person and not Christ  
 “Hawaiian Wedding Song” – leaves out Jesus Christ  
 “The Wedding Song” – leaves out Jesus Christ  
 “The Way We Were” – glorifies a marriage that has been broken up by sin, but without any solution in Christ  
 “The Second Time Around” – glorifies divorce and remarriage  
 “Follow Me” – unless this is Christ speaking, you are following the wrong person  
 “You Light Up My Life” – gives glory to persons, rather than to Christ, the light of the world  
 “Love Story” – in Christian marriage, persons need to say “I’m sorry. Forgive me.” The song says just the opposite.  
 “Wedding March” – this song, used at many weddings as a processional, was written by Richard Wagner and is not allowed due to its secular origins, rooted in a scene which degrades and scandalizes marriage.

5. Themes from the following:

Romeo and Juliet, Dr. Zhivago, The Godfather, and others – by association and message presented a view of marriage strictly from a human and social point of view, leaving Christ completely out of the picture.

FOR THESE REASONS, MOST SONGS OF SECULAR ORIGIN WHICH DO NOT MENTION OR GLORIFY OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST ARE NOT PERMISSIBLE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE WEDDING CEREMONY. They may, of course, be appropriately used at the reception.

6. The selection of music should be done at an early date and in consultation with the pastor. The rule should be followed that if the song is not on our approved list, then check with the pastor. You are asked to bring both music and words of a song not on our list to the pastor for any approval.
7. An organist of Redeemer Lutheran Church should be used. If our organist is not available, an outside organist may be secured, with the pastor's approval.
8. All soloists or instrumentalists will perform from the balcony of the church.

### **DECORATIONS**

Decorations may be as simple or as elaborate as the couple chooses, following the principle of good taste. Candles for the altar are furnished. A unity candle is available, if desired.

### **PHOTOGRAPHERS**

In order to preserve the dignity of the worship service, **NO FLASH PICTURES MAY BE TAKEN DURING THE WEDDING SERVICE, INCLUDING THE PROCESSIONAL AND RECESSIONAL.** Still pictures without flash may be taken during the service by the **PHOTOGRAPHER ONLY**, as long as there is no interference with the service.

The service may be videotaped from the back of the church or from the balcony.

All other pictures may be taken either before or immediately following the service.

Please inform your friends, relatives and wedding guests of this policy.

### **RECEPTION**

If the wedding reception is to be held at the church and the ladies are to serve, arrangements are to be made to the chairman of the ladies' organization. They will explain the costs. If you so choose, you may have the recession catered. No alcoholic beverages are allowed on the church property.

Rice is not to be thrown anywhere on our church property, due to the difficulty in cleaning up the rice after the service. Bird seed may be used.

## **FEES**

There are no fees charged by the congregation for a wedding conducted for our members. However, you may want to remember those who served you with a love gift. The organist and the custodian who cleans the church for your wedding and afterwards are individuals who are helping you and you may want to remember them. Some guidelines:

\$50 suggested donation to janitor  
\$150 suggested donation to organist  
\$150 suggested donation to Pastor

## **FINAL AUTHORITY**

Final authority for all that occurs during the rehearsal and wedding service shall be with the pastor.

## **LEGAL MATTERS**

You should consult the Marriage License Bureau of any county in our state for information regarding a marriage license. You must have a valid license, and the license must be in the possession of the pastor before the wedding can take place. If you leave the license at home, then you must delay the wedding service until the license can be picked up and given to the pastor.

It is suggested that you give the pastor your license at your wedding rehearsal.

## **SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

You may wish to purchase one or two of the following books that deal with matters pertaining to the Christian view of sex. They are books that may prove helpful throughout your married life.

THE ACT OF MARRIAGE, Rev. and Mrs. Timothy LaHaye, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

INTENDED FOR PLEASURE, Dr. Ed Wheat, M.D. and Gaye Wheat, Revell Publishing, Old Tappan, New Jersey.

MAKE YOURS A HAPPY MARRIAGE, O. A. Geiseman, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri.

STRAIGHT TALK TO MEN AND THEIR WIVES, Dr. James C. Dobson, Word Books, Waco, Texas.

WHAT WIVES WISHED THEIR HUSBANDS KNEW ABOUT WOMEN, Dr. James C. Dobson, Tyndale Press, Wheaton, Illinois.

UNDERSTANDING THE MALE TEMPERAMENT, Tim LaHaye, Revell Publishing, Old Tappan, New Jersey.