

General Wedding Guidelines of St. Mark Lutheran Church



If you are contemplating being married at St. Mark Lutheran Church, this information will help answer many preliminary questions. It is NOT a substitute for pastoral interviews prior to the wedding. This information deals with the logistics of the service and is not an interpretation of the marriage relationship.

The use of St. Mark Lutheran Church for weddings is governed and executed by the senior pastor, as set forth in the following guidelines.

Getting Started

PLACE - Weddings will be conducted in the church sanctuary in the St. Mark Worship Center at 1115 Grand Avenue or other places where arrangements conform to practices in accord with Christian custom. The sanctuary has seating for approximately 280 people.

DATES AND PRIORITIES - Weddings are not ordinarily held on Sunday, church holidays or during Holy Week. Members of St. Mark naturally have priority of dates over non-members. Dates and times must be approved by the senior pastor and a deposit must be paid before your wedding is committed to the church calendar.

DEPOSIT - A \$100.00 deposit for members and a \$225.00 deposit for non-members is required to confirm your selected date for a wedding. Please submit your payment with the "Wedding Contact Information" form in this packet.

MINISTER - All plans for the service need to be made in consultation with the senior pastor. It is expected that he or his representative will officiate at each wedding; however, he schedules no more than nine months in advance. (The church can be booked further ahead.) If a couple desires another minister, this should be made known to the senior pastor, who will extend an invitation to any guest clergy.

PRE-MARITAL COUNSELING - Marriage is the most important commitment to another person that you will ever make. The decision to share yourself with one other person at the very deepest level, will change and shape your life for as long as you live. The importance of arriving at this decision under God's guidance with all your being - not just feelings - but spirit and intellect as well, cannot be over-emphasized. Therefore, the pastor requires at least three pre-wedding consultations with the bride and groom in order that the Christian meaning and obligations of marriage can be discussed. Attendance at the Lutheran Services of Iowa Pre-Marriage Workshop is an appropriate alternative.

WEDDING COORDINATOR - Every wedding at St. Mark requires using a St. Mark wedding coordinator for a fee. One will be assigned to you to work with you on the details of your wedding. Please schedule your initial meeting with the wedding coordinator at least three months prior to the wedding. They will review the policies and procedures and will be present at the rehearsal and at the wedding ceremony to assist you. If you have an outside wedding consultant, this person MUST contact the senior pastor and the St. Mark wedding

coordinator prior to making any arrangements. The pastor and coordinator have the final say concerning weddings.

Planning Notes

MUSIC - The St. Mark church organist shall have the right of first refusal to play organ/piano for all weddings at St. Mark. If our organist is not available, an agreed-upon substitute will perform the music. Your musicians should be consulted at least one month in advance concerning the selection of appropriate music. The use of recorded music for weddings at St. Mark is discouraged.

The guiding factor in the choice of music is that a wedding is a worship service. Therefore, all music should focus on God and be suitable for His praise and worship. Since the wedding service is a celebration of the entire church, the singing of hymns by the worshipers is encouraged. This is an excellent way of helping those assembled to share in the thanks, praise, and involving of God's blessing upon the marriage.

DECORATIONS - Any questions regarding decorations or altar furnishings should be directed to the wedding coordinator. The church and the chancel are attractive in themselves and add beauty to every occasion.

- Floral arrangements should fit the setting and be in good taste.
- The church candelabra may be used, but we ask that they not be moved by photographers or others either for decorative or picture-taking purposes.
- A center aisle runner may be used. St. Mark does not have a runner; they are usually rented from the florist. The center aisle at St. Mark is 65 feet long.
- Nails, tacks, staples, etc., should not be used on furniture or woodwork. Most florists can supply plastic clips which fit on the ends of the pews if you decide to decorate the pews with bows or small flower arrangements.
- The bride will determine what is to be done with the flowers after the service. They should be removed promptly. If flowers are to be left for worship the following Sunday, please arrange this at the church office a week prior to the wedding. Remember that the color of the paraments is determined by the season of the church year.
- Candles and holders for the Unity Candle, if used, are to be purchased by the wedding party. Candles needed for this include a 3" diameter wedding candle and two 1" diameter side candles with holders for the three candles.

MARRIAGE LICENSE - To be married in Iowa, a wedding license must be secured from the Clerk of Court in any county before the wedding can take place. A phone call to the court house is advisable to confirm wedding license procedure and court house hours (ph. 515-286-3771).

- Applications for a wedding license must be made in person accompanied by a witness of legal age, or by mail using an application available at the Clerk of Court office.
- This application must be signed in the presence of a NOTARY PUBLIC.
- A three-day period (not including weekends and holidays) between application and picking up the license is required. The day of application is not counted in the three-day waiting period but the day of receiving the license is. (Example: if application is on Monday, the license may be received and used on Thursday.)
- Bring your marriage license to the church office one week prior to your wedding, so that the pastor will have it before your ceremony.

BULLETINS – Purchasing and preparing the wedding bulletins is the responsibility of the bridal couple and should be completed at least a week before the wedding. The church's bulletin supply is limited, so we encourage the couple to purchase bulletins or cardstock from retailers. The church does not endorse any particular retailer, but some options for purchase and/or printing may include Concordia Supply, Augsburg Fortress, Amazon.com, Office Depot, Office Max, Staples, The UPS Store, etc.

At the Church

AUDIO/ VISUAL TECHNICIAN St Mark has a multi-media system which is pre-set for our organ, grand piano and permanent microphones. Arrangements can be made to have the ceremony live-streamed if the couple wishes for no additional fee. If the couple have a special audio or visual request, it will be necessary for our audio/visual technician to be present for the wedding and the rehearsal.

CUSTODIAN – A custodian will be on the premises for the duration of the rehearsal and the wedding to unlock and monitor the facility, set up the gathering space, and to assist the family with any facility needs or questions.

REHEARSAL - A rehearsal should be scheduled, preferably on the evening preceding the wedding. The bride, groom, attendants, the bride's parents, ushers, flower girl, ring bearer, organist/musicians and soloist should be present at the rehearsal. The groom's parents may also wish to attend.

At St. Mark it is the norm for our wedding coordinator to conduct the rehearsal. They will instruct all participants in their parts of the service. Decisions concerning the conduct of the wedding will be made prior to rehearsal by the bride and groom in consultation with the pastor and the St. Mark wedding coordinator, unless the St. Mark senior pastor is present.

The rehearsal and the wedding will be conducted in a Christian spirit and with dignity. It is expected that members of the wedding party will refrain from the use of alcohol immediately prior to both the rehearsal and the wedding, and alcoholic beverages are not permitted on church property. Participants in the wedding party are expected to be respectful of church property. Parents of children in the wedding party are asked to closely supervise their children at all times.

ARRIVAL TIMES - The ushers should be at the church at least one-half hour before the wedding to start their ushering duties as soon as guests arrive. The groom, best man, and other groomsmen should arrive at the church thirty minutes before the set time. The bride and her attendants should be dressed and ready fifteen minutes before. This means that, if they wish to dress at church, they must arrive at the church in sufficient time for that purpose.

If the wedding party intends to dress at the church and take photos prior to the ceremony they may wish to bring food, water and soda. You are welcome to keep them in the refrigerators in the kitchen and use the kitchen and fellowship hall for eating. Food and beverages other than water are not allowed in other areas of the building and the bridal party is asked to leave the kitchen and fellowship hall in the same condition as when they arrived. The bridal procession will enter the church promptly at the time the wedding has been set. This means that all prelude music will be heard during the twenty minutes before the announced time of the wedding.

The wedding coordinator will assist with wedding details. He or she should arrive at least one-half hour before the ceremony. This person should know who is going to deliver the flowers, check to see if they have arrived, are in order and that each person in the wedding party receives the proper flowers. This individual will also assist with lining up the processional, the receiving line and so forth.

PHOTOGRAPHS – Flash photographs may be taken during the processional and immediately following the benediction. No "flash" pictures or movies are allowed during the wedding service. Time-lapse, or infrared photographs may be taken from the rear of the nave during the wedding. Ushers will explain this to guests with cameras. Activities of the photographer before, during and after the service should be as unobtrusive as possible. We encourage formal wedding pictures be taken prior to the wedding. Please be certain that picture taking is finished 45 minutes prior to the time of the ceremony. The photographer is expected to seek out the St. Mark pastor before the ceremony to go over details.

VIDEOGRAPHY - The use of video recording is allowed as long as it is done with little or no movement and without flash. A standing video camera will be allowed in the chancel area without a videographer

ATTENDANCE - Because the Marriage Service is a worship service of the congregation, it is open to members of the church.

RICE - Rice and confetti are not allowed for use after the wedding ceremony. However, bird seed may be thrown by the wedding guests outside the building. For the comfort of the wedding party, bird seed should not be thrown until after the pictures are taken.

RECEPTIONS - St. Mark Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall and Discipleship Center are available for wedding receptions on a limited basis. Fees for receptions are negotiated on an individual basis and based on the number of guests and required services. St. Mark does not provide or serve food, but our kitchen facilities are available for receptions. It is the responsibility of the bride and/or groom to provide food, servers, caterers, etc. For more information, you may contact the Facilities Manager in the church office at 515-223-4208.

If the senior pastor's presence is desired at your reception, a written invitation should be sent to him and his wife at their home address.



The Wedding Service

The following items need to be arranged in consultation between the wedding couple and the pastor, and are subject to approval by St. Mark's senior pastor.

Scripture/Readings: There are many scriptures that are appropriate for a wedding service. The pastor will offer a list of suggestions, which you will review during your planning sessions together. We encourage you to ask special people to be readers for scripture or other passages with the senior pastor's approval.

Suggested Music: Our pastor and organist will be able to suggest appropriate hymns for your ceremony. Please note that our St. Mark organist has the right of first refusal to play the organ/piano for your wedding. If you would like to have a soloist or family member help provide music, please discuss this with the pastor.

Vows and Promises: The promises you make to one another on your wedding day are among the most profound words you will ever share with each other. Great care and thought need to go into what you say as you make public your declaration of love and commitment. You are encouraged to give some thought to writing your own promises to one another. In your planning with the pastor, you will have the opportunity to work out what you wish to say.

The Exchange of Rings: The circle has long been a symbol for marriage. These circles are made of precious metal to represent the enduring and precious nature of your relationship. Being unbroken circles, each represents unending love. The exchange of rings is a long-held tradition in the marriage ceremony.

Holy Communion: Holy Communion is offered for weddings either by the pastor sharing with the bride and groom, or by inviting all members of the congregation to receive.

Prayers: Special prayers can be included during your ceremony with the senior pastor's approval. The prayers of the people for a wedding include a place to recognize family members who have died. Please provide the pastor with the names of any family members the couple would like recognized.

Unity Candle: Candles and holders for the Unity Candle, if used, are to be purchased by the wedding party. Candles needed for this include a 3" diameter wedding candle and two 1" diameter side candles and candle holders for the three candles.

Fees for Weddings

Effective: January 2019

The following fees apply for couples getting married at St. Mark Lutheran Church, based on membership status. **Payment of fees is expected one week prior to your wedding (along with your marriage license), except for the deposit, which is due at the time the wedding date is confirmed.**

Mandatory fees cover the use of the facilities, payment for the pastor, wedding coordinator, audio/visual technician, and custodian. The deposit is credited toward the mandatory fees.

Non-Members

The following fees apply for couples who are not members of St. Mark Lutheran Church.

Mandatory Fees = \$1,100

Deposit = \$225 - required at the time the wedding is scheduled

Additional Fees (based on your use and preferences):

Musicians = TBD (payable to each musician)

Candles and use of candelabra = \$35

Communing/Contributing Members

The following fees apply for couples who are members and have communed and contributed regularly at least 6 months prior to the date of the marriage.

Mandatory Fees = \$600

Deposit = \$100 - required at the time the wedding is scheduled

Additional Fees (based on your use and preferences):

Musicians = TBD (payable to each musician)

Candles and use of candelabra = \$35



Ready to talk to us about your wedding?

If you have questions, or would like to schedule an appointment with our senior pastor, contact the church office. Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8am-4pm.

Phone: (515) 223-4208

Email: office@stmarkwdm.org.

