

WEDDING MANUAL

A theological explanation of Christian marriage and guidelines for weddings at Epiphany Lutheran Church



EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Approved by Epiphany's Board of Elders on November 18, 2017. As of that date, this document is in force and no wedding will be performed at Epiphany or by Epiphany's Pastor that is not in accord with this policy.

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✠ WHAT IS MARRIAGE? ✠

In the beginning, God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18). From man’s creation, God implanted within His children a willing and deliberate desire for a man and woman to live in mutual love “as long as [they] both shall live,” being joined together and becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). This gift of God is not negated by man’s fall into sin, but is all the more important since Satan and the world attempt to mar and destroy this gift.

In the Lord’s Name, the Church, through her Pastors, gives the heavenly Father’s blessing to the willing consent and solemn promise of a man and woman. In this way, the Lord’s blessing makes this more than a civil ceremony and legal marriage. Where God’s Word and promise are clearly proclaimed, there God gives the gift of Holy Matrimony, a blessed estate where husband and wife love and honor each other (Luther’s explanation of the Sixth Commandment).

Without the Holy Spirit we would not be able to faithfully keep the vows made. Martin Luther, in his *Marriage Booklet*, wrote that being married in a churchly setting is a confession that “Our help is in the Name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 124:8). He said, “For whoever desires a prayer or blessing from the Pastor or Bishop indicates thereby (even if he doesn’t actually say so with his mouth) what kind of peril and necessity is approaching and how great is his need for divine blessing and common prayer for the estate into which he is about to enter. For one daily encounters all too often the kind of misfortune the devil serves up in the estate of marriage through adultery, unfaithfulness, discord, and all kinds of misery.”

Being married in a churchly setting, especially in the context of a worship service, is a confession to God that you cannot enter into holy matrimony without His divine aid. Secondly, it is a confession to family and friends that, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalm 127:1a). You confess to the world that marriage is not something taken lightly, but something begun in the Lord’s Name. The Christian wedding service implores that family and friends pray for you, not only in the service, but in their Christian lives as they pray for those whom they know.

Clothed in Scripture reading and prayer, you will give your mutual consent and your solemn promises, employing Biblically informed words. Your words are followed by the Lord’s blessing, which declare His sturdy and unwavering protection against any evil that may threaten your marriage from without or within. The Lord also blesses you with His favor so that, in this new vocation of husband and wife, you “may please Him in both body and soul and live together in holy love” until life’s end. Relying on these

blessings, the Church prays to the Lord to strengthen the couple in faithfulness and love and to sustain and defend them in all trial and temptation. Then she remembers all families and homes before the Lord’s throne of grace and implores the Lord’s renewed blessing for all people.

✠ MARRIAGE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY ✠

God created male and female to be complimentary to one another in many ways, and one of those ways is expressed in intercourse. The man and woman complete one another. Though the world says intercourse can be had in many ways and between members of the same sex, this is far from God’s design. At Creation God declared that sexual intimacy is part of the marital union: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This verse not only speaks of the mutual support and encouragement given in a marriage, but the literal coming together of two bodies in the sexual union which results in the creation of one new flesh from what was two – the procreation of children.

That sexual intercourse is reserved for marriage is witnessed to repeatedly in the Scriptures. Though the word “marriage” is not expressly used in the passage above from Genesis 2, the image of marriage is present: man and wife leave father and mother and are joined together. This is the appropriate place for the sexual union. Moreover, in the Ten Commandments, God says: “You shall not commit adultery” (Sixth Commandment; Exodus 20:14). *Adultery* is defined as “voluntary sexual intercourse between a man and someone other than his wife” (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary). God forbids sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Another term for sexual intercourse outside of marriage is *fornication*, a term which speaks specifically to premarital sex. People who engage in adultery/fornication, which is to say any sexual contact outside of marriage, are at risk for God’s condemnation: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. But such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Sexual acts between people of the same gender are also forbidden by the Word of God. In both the Old and New Testament God makes it clear that this is a misuse of His gift of sexuality. God said through Moses: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Nor shall you mate with any animal, to defile yourself with it. Nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it. It is perversion” (Leviticus

18:22-23). Jesus also states that sexual intercourse is only to be had between married men and women when He repeats the Words of Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:4-5: “And He answered them and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Finally, the Apostle Paul reveals that homosexual behavior is not natural, but only comes as a result of God’s condemnation: “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty for their error which was due” (Romans 1:24-27).

Even if two men or two women become “married,” their sexual intercourse is still sinful in God’s eyes because He created the estate of marriage only for heterosexual couples. This has been exhibited clearly in passages stated above, namely Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-5, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Just because the state says sin is no longer sin does not mean God’s Law is changed or negated. God’s Word stands eternally and is the true judge of right and wrong.

In the face of rampant and endorsed sins of adultery, fornication, and homosexuality, the Church preaches that marriage and sexuality are gifts of God exercised between one man and one woman. Their sexual union is a confession to the world of what God truly intends for these gifts: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2).

✠ THE PURPOSE OF SEXUAL INTERCOURSE ✠

Scripture shows that sexual intercourse has two primary purposes: receiving pleasure from one another, and the procreation of children. God gave humans the unique ability to derive pleasure from sexual intercourse. It is certainly God-pleasing to enjoy this intimate bond. “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love” (Proverbs 5:18-19). “Let a husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to the husband” (*affection* is translated from a Greek word that is used in Jewish and Christian literature that, when it is used in the

context of marriage, refers to sexual pleasure [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*]) (1 Corinthians 7:3).

Secondly, but equally, sexual intercourse naturally results in the procreation of children. This is seen in the command of God to Adam and Eve: “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). This same command is repeated to Noah and his family after God preserved them through the Flood (Genesis 9). Why is the command given to procreate? Because children are a blessing from God: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has a quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:3-5). And the Prophet Malachi also speaks to God making one of the two flesh: “But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring” (Malachi 2:15).

In our present age, children are sometimes seen as a burden or a negative outcome of sexual intercourse that should be avoided (a “punishment”). However, as has been demonstrated from Scripture and as simple biology shows, sexual intercourse is how children are conceived. God wants us to delight in children, as they are a result of a loving union between husband and wife. Scripture demonstrates that God does not look favorably upon a wholesale refusal to use sexual intercourse for its intended purposes. In one example, a man named Onan was commanded by God to impregnate his deceased brother’s wife and thus preserve the family line (so she was not left a childless widow, someone who in those days would be destitute; see Deuteronomy 25:5-10). He refused and “emitted on the ground;” he made conception impossible. For this intentional refusal to use sexual intercourse for its intended purpose Onan “displeased the Lord” and the Lord took his life as a punishment (see Genesis 38:6-10). Insistence on contraception or sterilization (tubal ligation/vasectomy) to prevent any children whatsoever is a sin in God’s eyes because it is a refusal to use sexual intercourse for its intended purpose and then sexual intercourse becomes tantamount to adultery – using it entirely for pleasure and not its intended use. While there can be necessary uses of contraception (e.g., another pregnancy would be fatal or extremely harmful for the mother, harming her vocational responsibilities towards any other children they may have), these cases are the extremely rare exception, not the norm and should be approached with much prayer, as any other difficult situation would be approached.

This does not mean that sexual intercourse for pleasure is a sin. Husband and wife should delight in this intimate union. However, we should always remember that

children are a natural result of sexual intercourse, and should not view this result as a punishment or something to be avoided at all costs, especially those that change or eliminate the function of the reproductive system.

✠ WHAT ABOUT COHABITATION (LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT MARRIAGE)? ✠

This section is adapted from "What about...Living Together Without Marriage" by the Rev. A.L. Barry, former President of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. ©2001, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Office of the President.

Living together before marriage is not appropriate. Even if the couple sleeps in separate bedrooms and are not sexually intimate, it presents too many opportunities for sin. God tells us we are to avoid opportunities for sin: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22). The Holy Spirit does not want us to give room for sin, so His will and work is that we flee from it. Deliberately placing yourself into a place where sin is possible is "quenching the Spirit," which Paul, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, forbids. Moreover, placing yourself in sexual temptation's way negates what you pray in the Lord's Prayer: "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). Cohabitation before marriage including the couple sleeping in the same bed and engaging in sexual intimacy is a sin, as has been clearly demonstrated above.

Though many claim that living together before marriage is better than divorcing because of "incompatibility," or because it makes more sense financially, secular studies have repeatedly proven that cohabitation before marriage is never a good thing. Large-scale studies have been conducted over the last 30+ years at the University of Wisconsin, Rutgers University, Yale University, Pennsylvania State University, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Michigan, as well as several schools in Great Britain and Sweden. Overwhelmingly each study has found that living together before marriage is almost always an indicator that the marriage will fail in one of several ways. They followed couples for years and found that the divorce rate for couples who live together before marriage is over 80%. The couples also report having lower levels of happiness, sexual satisfaction, and well-being in their marriage. They are also more likely to have affairs because they are less committed to the success and longevity of the marriage. But these relationships outside of marriage aren't only harmful to the man and woman; any children who are brought in are subject to trauma. Children who live with cohabitating parents are 20 times more likely to be victims of abuse. Children who live with their mother and their mother's

boyfriend are 33 times more likely to face physical and sexual abuse. Please note: this research is coming from *secular* universities! These are not Christian schools that have an "agenda" to prove. These statistics come from universities who are more than happy to fall in line with what the world thinks is right.

Christian couples who cohabit and are sexually active are at risk for God's condemnation. They engage in an action clearly prohibited by Scripture, since the coming together into one flesh is reserved for a marriage which God has blessed. Any sexual activity before this marital blessing is fornication and adultery. People who persist in behavior that God rejects and condemns as sin are choosing a course that may lead to eternal punishment. God's Word is clear: "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment" (Hebrews 10:26-27). Again, we read: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God...For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

When the Pastor tells couples to either stop cohabitating or get married immediately, he is not being judgmental. He is simply seeking the spiritual best for the couple because their current behavior is contrary to God's clear Word. It is his job to watch over the souls of those entrusted to his pastoral care, because he must give an account for their souls, especially if he turned a blind eye to their sin (Hebrews 13:17). Even if this gives offense to the couple and their family, this is not the intention. The Church and her ministers do not confront sin only for the sake of confrontation, but to the end that it is confessed, ended, and forgiven. The proclamation of the Gospel is the Church's highest priority. The Church proclaims the Law so that people are able to hear the Good News that "the Blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

The ultimate solution for the spiritual wellbeing of the cohabiting couple is one of three options:

- 1) If not engaged and there is no intention to marry, the couple moves out and separates.
- 2) If the couple is engaged and has plans for a wedding, they move out and do not live together before the marriage date.
- 3) If the couple is engaged and has plans for a wedding, they receive a civil marriage immediately and on their chosen wedding date hold a ceremony blessing a civil marriage.

Couples that recognize their sin need to hear God’s comforting Word of promise: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). If they repent of their sin, change course, and choose to be married, they should do so with joyful confidence in God’s forgiveness and His blessing on their marriage.

✠ CAN I BE MARRIED AT EPIPHANY IF WE ARE COHABITATING? ✠

The answer depends on the action of the cohabitating couple. As outlined above, there are two God-pleasing options for the cohabitating but engaged couple. **If you desire to be married at Epiphany and/or by Epiphany’s Pastor, you must either move out, repent, and keep your desired wedding date, or continue living together but receive a civil marriage at the courthouse as soon as possible and have your marriage blessed in a church service. The couple who refuses both options will neither be married at Epiphany nor by Epiphany’s Pastor.**

If the option of a civil marriage is chosen, you may keep your originally chosen wedding date and the ceremony performed at the church will be the Rite for the Blessing of a Civil Marriage as found in *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda* (a copy is available from the Pastor upon request). This helps preserve the sought after prayers of family and friends combined with God’s blessing, as well as the celebratory nature of the wedding reception.

Regardless of the path chosen, before the marriage or blessing can be performed, both parties must present themselves to the Pastor for private Confession and Absolution. They will confess their sin of fornication and receive absolution for that and all sins. Then the Pastor can marry them or bless their civil union in good conscience, knowing that they have repented of their sinful behavior, because God does not bless sin.

✠ CAN A HOMOSEXUAL COUPLE BE MARRIED AT EPIPHANY? ✠

No. Under no circumstances may a homosexual couple be married at Epiphany or by Epiphany’s Pastor. Homosexuality is a sin in God’s eyes and cannot be blessed by God, nor a union created by His Word, regardless of what the laws of our nation say.

The marriage policy of Epiphany Lutheran Church, a member congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, is and always has been consistent with the Synod’s beliefs on marriage. We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one

woman (Genesis 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:32). 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 both the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 18:22, 24; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:9-10) as contrary to the Creator’s design (Romans 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 inconsistent with our beliefs and this policy.

✠ CHURCH POLICIES ON THE WEDDING SERVICE AND DECORUM ✠

HOW TO SCHEDULE YOUR WEDDING AT EPIPHANY

Before any reservations are made for reception halls, caterers, etc., you must meet with the Pastor. He reserves the right to decline performing your wedding if any of the statements above regarding cohabitation, premarital sexual activity, etc. are being violated and you will not repent and stop the un-Christian behavior. This is not a wedding chapel, nor is the Pastor simply “for hire.” Scripture governs who the Pastor may marry and the Pastor will not violate his vows made to God to conduct himself according to the Scriptures.

Dates and times for the wedding and wedding rehearsal should be made well in advance and at times convenient for the bridal party, organist and other musicians, and Pastor. The wedding is not “officially” on the church calendar until an initial meeting has been scheduled with the Pastor and he has approved the wedding.

Ordinarily weddings are not scheduled during the penitential seasons of the Church Year: Advent and Lent. Under no circumstances will a wedding be performed in Holy Week.

Weddings may be scheduled on Sunday morning as part of the regular Divine Service. However, be aware that Epiphany practices Closed Communion (those who are not Baptized, not Lutheran, and/or do not confess that the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ are present in the Holy Communion may not receive Communion), and we celebrate

Holy Communion every week. Sunday morning weddings will be different in other ways, but one can hardly ask for a more Christ-centered wedding.

PREMARITAL CATECHESIS

All couples married at Epiphany and/or by Epiphany's Pastor are required to participate in premarital catechesis ("counseling"). Couples should plan on meeting at least six hours, divided over several sessions. In addition, anyone who is not a member of a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is required to receive training in the faith so they are aware of the faith into which they are marrying. Ordinarily this means attending a 15-week adult information class. It is strongly encouraged that the LCMS party attend the course with the other for encouragement and to open the lines of communication regarding spiritual matters. Adult information sessions are typically offered *at least* once a year (September through January). However, special arrangements may be made for couples who need to attend the class another time.

MUSIC

First and foremost, the Christian wedding is a worship service. Because of that, certain principles will govern your planning of the service itself. The notes for the Rite of Holy Matrimony in *Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, say it quite well: "As in all worship in the house of God, the Rite of Holy Matrimony invokes the presence and blessing of God. Therefore, it should avoid triteness and empty sentimentality." This also means that the same principles that govern the Sunday Divine Service will govern your wedding service. Again, from the *Agenda*: "Music selected for this Rite should embody the high standards of quality and be within the ability of the performers. The music should reflect the praise of God and His steadfast love in Christ as the foundation and model for marriage." Hymns sung by the congregation should be from an approved hymnal of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but exceptions may be made for hymns or songs from other sources so long as they do not contain any false doctrine and are churchly in nature. See below for a list of hymns especially suitable for a wedding service.

The music throughout the wedding is to be Christian and "churchly." Two popular procession and recession marches—Wagner's "Bridal Chorus" from the opera *Lohengrin*, and Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—are inappropriate because of the non-Christian nature of the operatic stories. Music chosen should not sound like something one would hear on the radio, even if it is "Christian."

It must be liturgical and contribute to the overall focus of the service, which is Christ present in His Word to bless and sustain your marriage.

Epiphany's organist will ordinarily play for all weddings. He/she has first right of refusal. If you have someone else you would like to have play the organ, you must ask the Epiphany organist for his/her permission. Additionally, if you would like to employ the services of other musicians (vocalists, instrumentalists, etc.), please discuss that with the organist *before* contracting the other musicians. Several members of Epiphany are talented musicians who would be excellent choices for adding to the music at your wedding. **Should you select an organist who is not a part of Epiphany, please ensure they know that Epiphany's Pastor has final approval of all music.**

As you select your music, the Epiphany organist would be glad to meet with you to help you select acceptable, liturgical, Christian music for your wedding. Or, if you have no specific requests, the organist will choose appropriate music. **All music must be approved by the Pastor.**

Below is a short list of music appropriate for processions and recessions. Recordings of these pieces are easily found on Internet sources such as YouTube.

Armsdorf, Andreas	<i>Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord</i>
Bach, Johann Sebastian	<i>Air</i> <i>If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee</i> <i>Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring</i> <i>Jesus, Priceless Treasure</i>
Barnaby, Joseph	<i>O Perfect Love</i>
Beethoven, Ludwig	<i>Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee</i>
Buxtehude, Dietrich	<i>We Thank Thee, Jesus, Dearest Friend</i>
Dunstable, John	<i>Agincourt Hymn</i>
Handel, George Frederic	<i>Solemn Processional</i> <i>March</i>
Karg-Elert, Siegfried	<i>Now Thank We All Our God</i>
Pachelbel, Johann	<i>Canon in D</i> <i>Toccatina in B Minor, Fantasia</i>
Paxton, David	<i>Fanfare and Trumpeting</i>
Peterson, Gerald	<i>Postlude in G</i>
Purcell, Richard	<i>Call of the Trumpets</i> <i>Trumpet Tune in D Minor</i> <i>Trumpet Voluntary in D Major</i>
Stanley, John	<i>Trumpet Voluntary</i>
Young, Gordon	<i>Prelude in Classic Style</i>

When in doubt, anything by J.S. Bach is always acceptable. Bach was a Lutheran church musician with a thorough understanding of orthodox Lutheran theology and worship.

Below is a short list of hymns appropriate for congregational singing. *Lutheran Service Book* contains several more hymns appropriate for a marriage. This list is just a short list to help you consider hymnody for your wedding. Recordings of these hymns are easily found on Internet sources such as YouTube. All numbers refer to the hymn's page in *Lutheran Service Book*.

- 656 *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*
- 947 *All Glory Be to God on High*
- 649 *Blest Be the Tie that Binds*
- 861 *Christ Be My Leader*
- 497 *Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord*
- 922 *Go, My Children, with My Blessing* (includes a special stanza for weddings)
- 860 *Gracious Savior, Grant Your Blessing*
- 773 *Hear Us, Father, When We Pray*
- 940 *Holy God, We Praise Thy Name*
- 685 *Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus*
- 902 *Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now*
- 859 *Lord, When You Came as Welcome Guest*
- 700 *Love Divine, All Love Excelling*
- 823 *May God Bestow on Us His Grace*
- 895 *Now Thank We All Our God*
- 858 *O Father, All Creating*
- 913 *O Holy Spirit, Enter In*
- 862 *Oh, Blest the House*
- 790 *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*
- 845 *Where Charity and Love Prevail*

FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS

Under no circumstances will the Altar, Pulpit or Lectern be moved, nor will they be hidden with flowers or other decorations. Flowers should not be so numerous as to take attention away from the Altar, which is the focal point of the chancel.

If you desire, you may leave two arrangements of flowers for the Sunday service so long as no one has already signed up to provide flowers for that Sunday. If you plan to do this, please sign up on the calendar outside of the Church Office.

Paraments, banners, and vestments will remain the liturgical color appropriate to the day or season of the Church Year.

Please see "Flowers and Decorations" in the Planning Guide section of this booklet, pages 16-17, for additional information on flowers and decorations, including a guide to share with your florist.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is not permitted during the service. If someone is proving to be a distraction to the wedding by taking excessive pictures with their camera or phone (especially if it uses flash or makes too much noise) an Epiphany elder or usher may ask them to refrain from photographing the wedding. Because this is a worship service, all behavior must be appropriate for such an occasion.

Please see "Photography" in the Planning Guide section of this booklet, pages 17-18, for additional information on photography, including a guide to share with your photographer.

RICE/CONFETTI

Neither rice, confetti, nor any favor may be thrown inside the church building or on its premises. Bubbles may be used, but only outside.

WEDDING PLANNER

Should you employ the services of a wedding planner, they must meet with the Pastor prior to the rehearsal. The wedding planner shall not dictate to the Pastor how the service will be conducted. Frequently secular wedding planners are unaccustomed to Christian weddings and make inappropriate demands in the Lord's house. The Pastor conducts the rehearsal and wedding according to the rites of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and will not alter anything in the service for the sake of "pictures" or what the wedding planner deems more appropriate. If the wedding planner cannot abide by this, they will be asked to leave.

DECORUM

A service of Christian marriage is at its core a worship service. Everyone involved, particularly members of the wedding party, is expected to guide their actions and attitudes with this in mind. Some celebrations are better left for the reception. **The Pastor reserves the right to exclude from participation any member of the wedding party who is under or appears to be under the influence of alcohol or other**

substances. The Pastor also has the authority to refuse to preside at the wedding in which either bride or groom is also under such influence.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

The legal paperwork will be signed immediately after the service (**before pictures!**) in the Pastor's study. The license and other paperwork must be given to the Pastor at the rehearsal. **There will be no wedding ceremony until the license is in the Pastor's possession.** Those whose presence is needed at the time of signing include the Pastor, bride and groom, best man, and maid/matron of honor. Pictures of the signing may be taken by the photographer.

✠ PLANNING GUIDE AND PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS ✠

THE SERVICE

Epiphany is a confessional and liturgical congregation. All services at Epiphany, including the wedding service, reflect this rich confessional and liturgical heritage. In the wedding service, the Word of God concerning Holy Matrimony is given first place. Through this Word, God imparts His Holy Spirit and blesses and effects the union of husband and wife. For this reason, reverence and godliness mark the participants and actions of the service, as well as all preparations and rehearsals. In contrast to secular weddings where the bride and groom are center of attention, the Christian wedding directs our full attention to Jesus Christ and His holy Word.

The participants in the wedding party should not detract from the wedding's focus. Be very careful about who you choose to participate in your wedding party. They are not only witnesses to the marriage vows (a sacred duty with legal consequences), but they also worship and pray with you. *Children (ages 6 and under) as participants are discouraged.* They are usually unable to handle the nervous tension well and may create a distraction. If children younger than 6 are used as flower girls or ring bearers, they should be sent to sit with their parents or another adult after the procession.

The wedding service itself is brief. It may be performed in one of three ways: on its own as an independent service; as a rite in the context of one of the historic prayer offices of the Church (Matins or Vespers); or within the context of a Divine Service including the reception of Holy Communion. If you choose to have your wedding in a Divine Service, the wedding rite occurs first, and then the Divine Service begins with the Introit and continues along its normal order. If the wedding takes place within the Divine Service with the distribution of Holy Communion, Holy Communion is offered to all eligible communicants and is not to be limited to the bride and groom or to the wedding party.

Additionally, a statement of closed communion must be included in the invitations. You may use the wording which follows, or make adaptations.

A note about the Wedding Service

Saint Paul teaches us that marriage is a picture of Christ and His Bride, the Church. In the marriage vows the groom vows to love his bride with his whole self, just as Christ loved His Bride unto death. However, we are poor, miserable sinners who cannot make or keep these vows on our own. Christ Himself gives us the power to both make and keep them, and forgives us when we fail. He does this through His holy Word and Sacraments. Because of this, [Groom] and [Bride] feel it is very important to begin their married life on the foundation of Word and Sacrament, so the wedding will be in a Divine Service including the reception of Holy Communion, the Feast of Christ's holy Body and precious Blood. Through this Sacrament Christ forgives and strengthens us and prepares us to endure the unknowns which undoubtedly lie ahead. Finally, this Feast prepares us for the Heavenly Feast to come.

Regardless of your denominational affiliation you are encouraged to attend and participate in the Service as Christ feeds you with His Word. However, only those who confess the Evangelical-Lutheran faith and are members in good standing of congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are invited to the Altar to receive Christ's Body and Blood. If you do not confess the Evangelical-Lutheran faith we encourage you to find a congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod near you and be instructed in the faith so you may also receive Christ's gifts in this Sacrament.

In a premarital catechesis session the Pastor will provide you the order of service typically used at Epiphany, along with commentary on each part of the service. The liturgical Lutheran wedding service will be used for all weddings performed at Epiphany and/or by Epiphany's Pastor. Under no circumstances will novelties such as writing one's own vows be allowed.

Some couples wish to "seal" their vows with a kiss at the Altar, while others feel that the joining of hands is a sufficient sign of their commitment to each other. We recommend that you discuss your feelings on this topic with the Pastor. Should the couple decide to kiss, the kiss should be brief and appropriate for a church service.

THE REHEARSAL

Prior to the rehearsal all decisions will have been made to help the rehearsal be as quick and clear as possible. The Pastor will direct the rehearsal. It will begin promptly at the designated time, and will last about one hour. **Before the rehearsal may begin the marriage license must be given to the Pastor.**

Any checks or money for honoraria (see the fee schedule later in this guide) should be distributed after the rehearsal.

DRESSING ROOMS

Epiphany's classrooms are available to you for use as dressing rooms as well as for hair and makeup. However, please take note that these rooms do not have hanging racks or mirrors. Please bring those things if you need them. Also, all the doors have windows, so please bring something to cover the windows to preserve your modesty while dressing.

USHERS

If you choose to have family and/or friends as ushers to help seat guests, please have them arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the wedding (earlier if pictures are to be taken before the wedding).

If desired, the groom's family and guests are seated on the right side of the church, and the bride's family and guests are seated on the left side of the church. Although this is tradition, it is not a requirement. Parents of the bride and groom should be seated just before the procession begins.

Following the recessional, selected ushers are to return at once to escort the parents (bride's first) from the church, and then the congregation, beginning at the front.

UNITY CANDLE

You may choose to have a unity candle, but it is not required. If you choose to have this ceremony, please let the Pastor know so it can be incorporated into the service at the appropriate time. The unity candle may not be placed on the Altar. A side table may be used and decorated appropriately.

FLOWERS

Note: Please allow your florist/decorator to read this section, or please provide a copy for his/her records.

Neither the florist/decorator nor a wedding consultant (if one is engaged) directs the rehearsal or the wedding, nor do they have permission to move any furniture in the church.

All decorations should be in place **at least one hour before the wedding is scheduled to begin.**

Corsages and boutonnieres may be placed in the kitchen refrigerator off the Founders Hall.

Church decorating is ordinarily done on the day of the wedding. However, it may be done on the day before the wedding if the church is not in use (please verify this with the church calendar and the Pastor *before* you begin to decorate). Decorations are not to be attached to the woodwork by means of staples, nails, glue, etc.

The florist should speak with the Pastor about the location of flowers, candelabras, etc. Bouquets or floral arrangements are **not** placed on the Altar. Floor arrangements or flower stands may be used, as well as Epiphany's flower tables. None of the church's furnishings should be blocked or moved/removed for decorations.

Following the wedding there is to be no undecorating activity (removing decorations, flowers, etc.) until all the guests have left the church.

All decorations, flowers, flower stands, etc. that are provided by the florist must be removed from the church as soon as all guests have left. Please designate someone to take care of this, or arrange for the florist to do so.

Epiphany has two Altar candles which are to remain in place on the Altar and will be lit for the wedding. You are responsible for providing any additional candles (unity candles, candelabra, etc.).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Note: Please allow your photographer to read this section, or please provide a copy for his/her records.

At no time during the ceremony should the photographer be conspicuous or in any way cause a distraction during the service. The wedding service is not about pictures, but about the Lord giving His blessing to your marriage. *If there are moments during the service which the photographer wishes to capture and cannot do so without disruption, he/she is encouraged to make notes and these photos will be posed for after the service.*

Flash photography is **not** permitted during the service. They may use flash during the procession and recession only, but this still should be done with minimal intrusion or distraction because the service has already started.

Pictures after the ceremony are permitted and encouraged. Please inform the Pastor if he is needed for any pictures, and kindly take those pictures first.

Normally no one should go behind the communion rail during pictures, and all involved should keep in mind that we are in God's house and our behavior must be in line with the holy place we are occupying.

Videotaping is allowed, but the Pastor, couple, and videographer must agree before the service on the location of the camera and operator. Videographers must follow the same rules outlined above that apply to photography.

Photographs may be taken prior to the wedding service. In fact, many couples find taking pictures before the wedding reduces the stress of timing afterwards and may even allow for more casual and fun pictures at different locations afterwards if the church pictures are already out of the way. If you choose to do this, please discuss this with the Pastor so he is aware. Though some may discourage this because of "bad luck" that comes from the bride and groom seeing one another before the wedding, remember that we are Christians and do not believe in superstitious ideas about "bad luck."

RECEIVING LINE

If there is to be a receiving line at the church, it is encouraged that the greeting line be directly outside the sanctuary door so the guests are directed towards the exit (or towards Founders Hall if the reception is held at the church). Immediately after guests are greeted, the bride and groom and best man and maid/matron of honor proceed to the Pastor's study to sign the marriage license. **This must be done before any pictures are taken.**

INVITING THE PASTOR

You are under no obligation to invite the Pastor and/or his family to your rehearsal or reception. However, if you would like him and/or his family to be present, please let him know in advance. If you want the Pastor to offer a blessing for the meal at the reception, please let him know that as well.

MISCELLANEOUS, BUT PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

- Make sure someone is given charge over the rings to make sure they are brought to the church on the day of the wedding.
- All participants are encouraged to try on their clothing ahead of time, especially anything rented (eg., tuxedos). It is not uncommon for mistakes to be made, and you would not want someone left without clothing that fits!
- Make lists of makeup, hair styling items, and clothing items you want brought to the church so nothing is forgotten. Do this early so nerves and rushing on the day of the wedding do not lead to forgotten items.

- It's a good idea to have sewing equipment (needle, scissors, thread, buttons, safety pins, etc.) available in case of an emergency.
- Designate a reliable friend or family member to pick up your personal items after the wedding. You want to be able to enjoy your day, not worrying about picking up clothes, hair accessories, etc.
- Designate someone to ensure the church building is left in good order after the wedding.
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✘ RECEPTION PLANS ✘

Of course, you can have your reception anywhere. One option available to you is Epiphany's Founders Hall. You can use the Hall and have your food catered or provided by family and friends. There is a chance that Epiphany's LWML (Lutheran Women's Missionary League) group might be willing to help, but the couple should inquire directly with the church's LWML president. The tables and chairs in Founders Hall and the kitchen equipment may be used, but both should be thoroughly cleaned and put back in the condition in which it was found. **If you use Founders Hall and the kitchen, there are additional requirements/guidelines which are furnished to you separately from this booklet. Additionally, use of the kitchen requires approval by the Church Council before your request can be approved.**

It is the bridal party's responsibility to furnish all food items, including coffee, tea, punch, nuts, mints, etc. Alcohol is allowed, but is limited to one glass of champagne for a toast (provided by the bridal party), and the champagne may only be given to guests over age 21. **Under no circumstances may a bar be operated at a wedding reception held in Founders Hall.**

Whoever is in charge of the reception is encouraged to meet with an authorized member of the congregation who will familiarize them with the kitchen equipment and the location of Epiphany's kitchen tools.

All decorations for tables, etc. are provided by the bridal party. Nothing is to be attached to the walls or woodwork with tape, nails, tacks, staples, etc.

✧ FEE SCHEDULE ✧

Your financial responsibilities are as follows:

Person/Space	To whom check is written	Epiphany Member	Non-Member
Church	Epiphany Lutheran Church	No charge	\$100
Founders Hall	Epiphany Lutheran Church	No charge	\$100
Organist	Individual	At least \$100	At least \$150
Soloist	Individual	At least \$50	At least \$50
Ensemble	Individuals	At least \$50 per person	At least \$50 per person
Janitor	Individual	\$65 (no reception) \$100 (reception)	\$85 (no reception) \$125 (reception)
Pastor	Individual	<i>At the discretion of the couple.</i>	<i>At the discretion of the couple.</i>

Though no fee is required for members of Epiphany for use of the church or Founders Hall, a donation is always appropriate.

Wedding bulletins: Special bulletin covers may be ordered from Concordia Publishing House or another suitable Christian publisher. The Pastor will show the couple what designs are available. If the couple chooses one of these, the church will place the order, but it is the couple's responsibility to reimburse the church for this expense. Otherwise bulletins will be provided by the church, but the couple may want to make a donation of \$25 per 100 bulletins to help defray the cost.

✠ CHECKLIST ✠

- _____ Set up your initial meeting with the Pastor to set the wedding date as early as possible (at least 6-8 months prior).
- _____ After your initial interview, and after you have read this entire packet, you may begin planning the non-service details of your wedding. All service planning, however, will be done in conjunction with the Pastor.
- _____ Schedule the premarital catechesis sessions with the Pastor.
- _____ If applicable, ensure that the non-Lutheran fiancé/fiancée is signed up for adult instruction classes.
- _____ Contact the organist and any other musicians.
- _____ Contact your florist and notify him/her about our flower and decoration stipulations (pages 16-17).
- _____ Contact your photographer/videographer and notify him/her about our photography/videography stipulations (pages 17-18).
- _____ If the reception will be held at Epiphany, make necessary arrangements.
- _____ Decide on a wedding bulletin cover (plain paper featuring Christian art or full color covers ordered from Concordia Publishing House).
- _____ Set the rehearsal date and time with the Pastor and church office. Encourage everyone to be prompt. Bring your marriage license and all fees/honoraria to the rehearsal for distribution.
- _____ Advise your entire wedding party on our policies for decorum, throwing rice/confetti, etc.
- _____ If applicable, advise your ushers on our policies and instructions for seating guests.
- _____ Appoint someone to remove your personal articles from the dressing rooms and look for lost items after your wedding.
- _____ Arrange to have necessary items in place at the church if the reception is held in Founders Hall.