

## WEDDING GUIDELINES FOR ST. MARK LUTHERAN CHURCH (ELCA) Of CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

The wedding celebration is one of the most joyous occasions that you and your spouse-to-be will share. It is an act of joyful worship. It is a service wherein we ask God's blessings on you and your union. It is a reflection of your relationship with the Lord of love. The following information and guidelines have been prepared by St. Mark Lutheran Church to help couples have an orderly, worshipful wedding and to help them prepare for a life-long relationship with each other. As you prepare to become life-long partners, may God bless your preparations, your wedding, and the covenant you are making with one another.

### I. GETTING STARTED

**Setting the Date.** Your preparation for a wedding at St. Mark begins with your initial consultation with the Pastor. If you have special circumstances surrounding your impending marriage, please share this with the pastor. Final determination as to who may be married at St. Mark is left to the discretion of the pastor.

If the pastor agrees to officiate and the pastor and the facility are available on the date you have chosen, contact the church office manager to schedule your wedding and rehearsal on the church calendar. A deposit to reserve your wedding date is required and is refundable up to 30 days prior to your scheduled date. [A complete listing of fees is included at the end of this guideline.

Normally, only **ONE** wedding is scheduled per day. In the rare instance that a second wedding is scheduled, that wedding party must comply with St Mark's scheduling needs. When there are multiple weddings on a given day, it is expected that couples and photographers will cooperate with the pastor so that times and logistics unfold as smoothly as possible.

**Premarital Counseling.** Session for premarital counseling must be scheduled with the pastor. Usually, six sessions are required. Your time with the pastor will be spent not only talking about the specific details of the wedding service, but also will focus on your marital relationship within the context of the Christian faith. The pastor has been called by St. Mark to "preside at rites of the church." That means it is the responsibility of the pastor to see that your wedding service is performed in keeping with the policies of the congregation and within the traditions of the Christian church. Additional discussions will be held in instances of interfaith marriages.

**Securing the Organist.** The church organist administers use of the organ at St. Mark. Normally, the organist of St. Mark will play at all weddings where organ music is desired. We will provide you with the name of the organist and it will be your responsibility to contact the organist directly to determine if he/she is available, and to schedule an appointment to make musical selections for the wedding service. The fee for this service should be discussed directly with the organist. If the couple selects someone other than St. Mark's organist, that organist must discuss the use of our Allen organ with St. Mark's organist.

**Set-up and Clean-up.** It is the responsibility of the couple to make arrangements for set-up of the church facilities. St. Mark's sexton will provide general cleaning of the church facilities after the wedding and or/reception.

## II. THE WEDDING SERVICE

**Liturgy and Order of Service.** The liturgy and order of service will be mutually agreed upon between the pastor and the wedding couple.

**Holy Communion.** The couple may choose to include Holy Communion as part of the wedding service.

**Music.** Throughout the centuries, music has been one of the primary vehicles that the church has employed to praise and thank God. There is a vast selection of music that is particularly appropriate for wedding ceremonies. Remember that your wedding is a worship service. Therefore, it is important to choose music that emphasizes our praise of, and thanks to, God. Purely secular music is better for your reception or wedding dance. The organist has many selections and will assist you in your musical decisions.

Some couples ask to use recorded music. While there is nothing inherently wrong with recorded music, you should know that live accompaniment could head off many of the technical difficulties associated with recordings. We strongly suggest that you refrain from recorded music.

Since the wedding service is a worship service, it is appropriate for those gathered to sing together. A hymn also adds to the sense of participation in the service by those attending. Hymns may be sung in place of other vocal music or instrumental procession or recession.

**Musicians.** In addition to an organist, some couples like to incorporate a vocalist or instrumentalist within the ceremony. Their participation should be discussed with St Mark's organist at the initial meeting with the organist. Extra rehearsals may be required.

**Bulletins.** Wedding service bulletins may be ordered, typed, and copied by calling the church office. Appropriate notification is required to ensure that the church office manager will be able to accomplish this service in a timely fashion. This service is fee-based and varies with number and complexity. If the couple prefers to create their own bulletin, the pastor will be happy to provide an outline of the Order of Service and to assist with the content of this publication.

Note: The bulletin is the best place to remind wedding guests that no flash pictures should be taken during the service.

**Flowers.** Most local florists are familiar with St. Mark and can recommend floral arrangements. Two vases for the chancel are available for use—arrangements for additional vases or display mechanisms for other floral arrangements should be made with the florist. If other vases or stands are used, please make arrangements for them to be removed and returned. Flowers should be delivered to the church a minimum of one hour prior to the appointed time for the wedding. If the couple plans to leave the flowers at the church for use at the Sunday morning worship service, please notify the church office manager as soon as possible so that your gift of flowers can be acknowledged in the worship bulletin.

**Candles.** Altar candles are furnished by St. Mark. Additional candles are not supplied by St. Mark. A member of the Altar Guild should be contacted to arrange for the use of other candleholders that may be available. Additional candelabras or a white aisle cloth (63' 7") should be secured from the florist. As with the flowers, candelabras, aisle cloth and any borrowed items must be removed at the end of the wedding ceremony.

The Unity candle is an option some people choose. Lighting the candle visually symbolizes the joining of two lives in marriage. The pastor will discuss the most

appropriate methods of lighting the candle and the messages these methods denote to the congregation. The couple must provide the Unity candle and tapers.

**Paraments.** Paraments of the church season will be in place and will not be changed to coordinate with the colors of the wedding party.

**Photographs.** St. Mark has developed a set of standards for photographing and/or videotaping the wedding.

Dress. As is befitting the dignity and beauty of a worship service and wedding, all photographers and videographers should wear attire that is professional.

Limits. At no time during the service is the photographer or videographer permitted any further than the tenth row of pews in the sanctuary. This will allow ample room for taking pictures or filming as guests and wedding party enter and leave the sanctuary. All photos taken during the wedding service (excluding the processional and recessional) must be taken with available light. No flashes are allowed during the wedding service.

Videotaping is permissible, but must be done in an unobtrusive manner. The pastor should be consulted for appropriate placement of the equipment. Wedding guests should be instructed to refrain from taking flash pictures during the service. A simple reminder in the bulletin is appropriate. Following the service, the photographers are welcome to pose any portion of the wedding rite. If the schedule at the church permits, pictures can be taken prior to the wedding service, but must be concluded at least 30 minutes prior to the starting time of the wedding.

**Invited Pastor.** If the couple would like to invite another pastor to participate in the wedding service, remember that the pastor of St. Mark is the officiant and will coordinate the extent of participation by the guest pastor. If possible, it is recommended that guest clergy be present for the rehearsal.

**Readers.** You are encouraged to have laypersons read the scripture lessons during the service. Readers need to be present at the wedding rehearsal to receive instructions from the pastor.

Ring Bearers, Flower Girls, Junior Bridesmaids. The service can seem long to very young children, so we ask that you keep that in mind when selecting youngsters for a role in the wedding. We suggest that a caregiver be at the ready to usher children out of the service if becomes too taxing for them.

**Ushers.** A minimum of two ushers is suggested for up to 150 guests in order to seat and dismiss the wedding guests.

### III. ADDITIONAL NOTES

**Rehearsal.** The rehearsal is usually held the evening prior to the day of the wedding and will take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. All persons involved in the wedding should be present and on time: ushers, readers, bridal party, etc., should be present to learn of their special responsibilities. Parents should also attend so they know escorting procedures and seating placement. All arrangements for the wedding service should have been made prior to the rehearsal; rehearsals are not the time for last minute changes to the service.

**The License.** Couples must secure a license to marry from the state of Virginia and it must be brought to the wedding rehearsal and given to the pastor. If there is no license, there will be no rehearsal. If there is no rehearsal, there will be no wedding.

**Rice or Bird Seed.** Throwing rice or bird seed is not permitted. If the couple wishes to be showered with something, please consider grass seed or bubbles.

**Reception.** St. Mark's Fellowship Hall is available for wedding receptions and if needed should be reserved when setting the wedding date. Contact the church office to arrange a time to see the facility. Place settings, silverware, glassware, and other kitchen items are available for use by congregation members. If you decide you would like to use these items, please discuss this with the pastor. The bridal couple must supply paper and plastic products, coffee products, and other supplies.

**Alcoholic Beverages.** St. Mark does not permit wine or beer to be consumed at receptions held in the Fellowship Hall due to issues of legal liability.

**Invitations to the Pastor.** If the couple would like the pastor and his/her spouse to attend the rehearsal dinner or the wedding reception, please remember to invite them at the same time as other guests.

**Financial.** There are a variety of possible fee for services or suggested donations for professional and other services. At the time you reserve the wedding and rehearsal dates, a \$100 deposit is required. This deposit is waived for members of the congregation. The balance is due no later than the day of the rehearsal. Checks should be made payable to St. Mark Lutheran Church. The organist, soloists, and instrumentalist remunerations are paid directly to those individuals.

<b>Wedding Service and Church Facility Use Fees</b>	
Church Proper *	\$500
Fellowship Hall (if reception)	\$50
Kitchen *	\$75
<b>Services</b>	
Bulletin Preparation (time and supplies)	Varies with number and complexity
Organist	Determined by organist
Custodian	\$100 (\$200 with reception)
Premarital Counseling and rehearsal	\$500
Pastor's Honorarium	\$500