

MESSIAH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH ***INCLUSIVE WEDDING POLICY***

The congregation and staff of Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church (MLC) extend to you our warmest congratulations and best wishes for your wedding. As a congregation we have chosen to welcome the full participation of all persons in our life together. We delight in celebrating in weddings of everyone, regardless of gender.

The wedding ceremony is one of the most sacred of all the rituals of the church. At MLC, we consider it a holy privilege to be a part of the celebration of marriage. The service of Christian marriage is a worship experience. It is not primarily a social event but a sacred rite into which two persons pledge themselves to each other with the blessings of God and are united by God in holy wedlock.

We want to render the greatest service possible to both our members and non-members from the community. To accomplish this, the following policies of operation and procedures have been established and approved by the church, which, in its judgement, will help make your wedding a joyous and safe occasion in keeping with the spirit of Christian marriage. Every measure has been taken to make these policies as inclusive as possible. If there are any questions or concerns, please contact the church office for clarification.

WHO MAY BE MARRIED

The primary responsibility of the MLC pastor regarding weddings is to officiate at the marriages of active members of MLC. However, the congregation recognizes that weddings for those who are not members of the church are a form of hospitality, outreach and evangelism. Therefore, the pastor will officiate at weddings involving non-members of the church as they are able.

The pastor always has the final authority to determine whether they will officiate at any wedding, regardless of the membership of the persons to be married.

WHO MAY OFFICIATE

MLC is a diverse people united in Christ. As such, we embrace and welcome guest officiants as long as they have been approved by our Senior Pastor. One of MLC's pastors is not required to officiate at your ceremony; however, they stand ready and willing to serve as your officiant if needed. If you choose to have a MLC pastor serve as your officiant, the following pre-marital appointments are required.

PRE-MARITAL APPOINTMENTS

There are four planning and counseling appointments required prior to the wedding:

1. Introductory meeting with the Pastor
2. Counseling Session #1 with Pastor or Pastor's designee
3. Counseling Session #2 with Pastor or Pastor's designee
4. Wedding planning session with the Pastor

If premarital counseling is done with the pastor (rather than their designee), the Prepare-Enrich online inventory will be used. The cost is approximately \$50 and is the responsibility of the couple.

WHERE WEDDINGS MAY OCCUR

The pastors officiate weddings at the church and off-site. Non-members may be married in the church, but there is a fee for using the building (see Fees, below). A wedding can be performed anywhere the couple chooses; however the location of any off-site wedding must be approved by the pastor performing the wedding.

WHEN WEDDINGS MAY OCCUR

Wedding times and dates are at the discretion of the pastor and are scheduled with consideration of their schedule and the availability of the church. Weddings are not usually scheduled during Holy Week or the weeks preceding and

following Christmas. Please note that weddings scheduled for Saturdays must be finished in the sanctuary by 3:30pm.

HOW TO SCHEDULE YOUR WEDDING

Before any reservations are made for reception halls, caterers, etc., it is crucial to assure that the church and pastor are available for your date. The reservation is not confirmed until the couple has had an initial meeting with the pastor. That meeting may be scheduled by calling the church office, or by calling or e-mailing the pastor directly. Couples who are not members of MLC are strongly encouraged to attend at least one worship service prior to scheduling a wedding to make sure the pastors' "style" is appropriate for their plans.

It is recommended that planning begin at least 6-8 months prior to the wedding.

Initial arrangements and further planning should be done by the couple. The pastors will only deal directly with couples anticipating marriage, not parents, wedding planners, etc.

A CHURCH WEDDING SERVICE

The church wedding service is a Christian worship service celebrating God's love for and commitment to the couple, the love and commitment God has given them for each other, and the love God has for the whole world.

While many options are available to the couple to make the service rich with meaningful symbols and experiences, a few essential elements mark a wedding as a Christian wedding:

- Gathering in the name of God the Holy Trinity: Father, Son + and Holy Spirit;
- One or more readings from the Bible;
- A sermon proclaiming God's love and grace;
- Vows the couple makes to each other;
- Blessing of the couple;
- Prayers for the church, the world, and all those in need (something the church does whenever it gathers for worship);
- Benediction (ie, words of blessing at the end of the service).

Many other elements may be part of the wedding service in a variety of ways, and are not strictly defined by the church. Such details, including any of the following, should be discussed with the pastor in advance, so that we can be sure to be clear about expectations for what the service will look like. Such details include:

- how the bridal party, family members, and couple enters and leaves the sanctuary;
- on which side of the church the families sit;
- other symbols or rituals of marriage that might be used (such as the giving of rings, use of a unity candle, jumping the broom, etc.);
- the use of solo, instrumental, or congregational song (music used in church services is intended to give praise to God; give expression to Christian faith; and/or act as a sung prayer. Songs that are romantic in nature and which cannot be reasonably interpreted as sacred are not generally appropriate for church. Such music might best be shared at a wedding reception.);
- the reading of non-Biblical texts (such as poetry);
- the type of clothing or flowers that are used;
- the “first kiss;”
- introduction of the couple; and so forth.

It is also very traditional for the wedding service to resemble a Sunday morning worship service, using the full liturgy complete with hymns and Holy Communion, Kyrie and Hymn of Praise, and so forth. The pastor will work with the couple to develop a meaningful service that gives praise to God and gives expression to their love for and commitment to one another.

Many good and wonderful gestures or traditions help a couple celebrate their wedding commitments. However, not all such gestures or traditions are appropriate for the church service. As the couple decides how to celebrate their commitment to each other, they should be prepared to discern with the pastor what rituals, symbols, and celebrations happen at the church wedding service, and what rituals, symbols, and celebrations take place at a wedding reception, a rehearsal dinner, and so forth. *At all times the Pastor has discretion in determining what elements are appropriate or not for a church wedding worship service.*

MUSIC

Music that is part of a service of Christian marriage is understood to be an act of worship, offered to God in devotion, thanksgiving and praise. This does not mean that only “religious” music may be used, but all music must reflect this understanding and not detract from the worship nature of the service. Some music is simply better for receptions than worship. The pastor must approve all music selections (for the wedding service, NOT the reception!).

Unless the MLC organist/pianist is unavailable, they will normally play for weddings in the church. Please consult with the organist/pianist regarding music choices. The MLC organist/pianist or the pastor must approve additional or alternative musicians and soloists.

For away weddings, it is essential that the pastor be “in the loop” for discussions with musicians and DJ’s. Not only is the pastor’s approval necessary for music selections, but it will be helpful if those providing music are aware of the music needs and cues for the particular service.

USE OF SCREENS

If the use of screens is desired for worship, there may be additional costs. Audio Visual services that are available are:

- Video projection and PowerPoint, microphones for worship leaders, and live band support.

Requirements for A/V are:

- Outside groups are required to supply their own musical instruments; we will supply only appropriate microphones and input points.
- Outside parties are responsible for bringing their own source media (i.e. videos, music compilations)
- Media to be used by outside parties must be in the following formats only:
Audio – Finalized/Closed CD, mp3 Player

Video – MPEG file, AVI file, Finalized/Closed DVD, Microsoft PowerPoint (.ppt)

Only in-house A/V personnel may run the sound system or screens. All media content shall be approved by the church office for appropriateness of content. All Media Files must be given to the church office 4 weeks before the wedding. Changes may NOT be made one (1) week before the wedding.

REHEARSAL

Rehearsals normally take place the evening before the wedding and will be facilitated by the pastor. It is vital that all members of the wedding party be present and on time – this includes any Bride's people, Groom's people, Flower carriers/throwers, Ringbearers, parents, etc. The rehearsal is for the benefit of the wedding party, so that they can get comfortable with the service and with the space. For weddings at the church, the organist/pianist will attend rehearsals. It is strongly encouraged that other musicians and/or DJs (in the case of away weddings) be present at the rehearsal.

PLEASE consult with the pastor before scheduling your rehearsal, especially if it will deviate from the normal evening-before scheduling.

The wedding license should be brought to the rehearsal and given to the pastor. The church will be kept open a maximum of 3 hours for the rehearsal.

CANDLES

The church has two altar candles that will be lit for the wedding service. Any additional candles used must be provided by the couple and approved of by the pastor.

BULLETIN

Our Church Office can prepare a simple bulletin, similar to our Sunday service ones, for a small fee. If you desire to do something else, the pastor will provide

you with an outline of the service. The creation of the bulletin is at the discretion of the Church Office's schedule and all content must be approved by the pastor.

A few things to keep in mind about alternative bulletins:

- Choose a bulletin that will be easy to open (Ribbons, seals, and stapling are not)
- Choose a font that will be easy for all to read . . . consider older guests!
- Choose how much text to include. It is often helpful to print the words that will be spoken by the congregation, especially the Lord's Prayer.
- Choose content appropriate for a worship service. Biographies, photographs, etc. may be best saved for the reception.
- You may want to include directions to the reception on the back or in an insert.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Flash photography is only allowed during the processional and recessional. Guests will be asked to refrain from any photography during the rest of the service, and professional photographers will be asked to use only available light. Photographers are asked to stay in the side aisles or the back of the church and to never enter the chancel area. The pastor must approve video photography and placement of equipment. Videos may be taken from a fixed position in the back or side aisle of the church. The pastor would like to meet or talk by e-mail or phone with your photographer and/or videographer before they set up their equipment. It is ideal if they are able to attend the rehearsal. Please share the appropriate Addendum at the end of this policy with your photographer and videographer.

Note: if there is no professional photographer, guests will still asked to refrain from any photography during the service (beyond the processional and recessional). If photos are desired, the service can be staged either prior or following the service. Guests will be asked to silence their phones and also to refrain from photography.

RICE, BIRDSEED, BUBBLES

Due to safety and environmental concerns, no birdseed, rice, or other thrown items are permitted. BUBBLES are fun and look pretty in photographs and videos. Another alternative is to give guests small bells to ring to greet the couple as they depart the church (they also make a nice remembrance of the day).

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 the influence of alcohol or other substances. The pastor also has the authority to refuse to preside at the wedding in which either of the couple is under such influence. Also, firearms and other weapons are not permitted in the church, with the exception of active duty law enforcement personnel.

MARRIAGE LICENSE

It is the responsibility of the couple to obtain a marriage license from the county in which the wedding will take place which is valid for their wedding day. The pastor cannot legally perform a marriage for which a Marriage License is not physically present. For weddings at the church, the Marriage License may be given to the pastor at the rehearsal.

USE OF FACILITIES

Use of MLC facilities is subject to the policies developed by the MLC Church Council.

Use of the church is scheduled through the Church Office. Decorations are to be minimal and subject to the pastor's approval. Nothing is to be taped or otherwise affixed to the pews or other furnishings. Hooks which do not leave a mark and poster putty are acceptable alternatives to tape. No flowers – or any other decoration - may be placed on the altar. The color of paraments is typically the

color of the season in which the wedding takes place (i.e. White for Easter, Red for Pentecost, etc.)

Decorating of the facilities may begin no more than two (2) hours before the time of the ceremony. Arrangements by the wedding party must be made for the immediate removal of all decorations following the ceremony. Additionally, leaves, stems, petals (including those distributed in the center aisle) and other pieces of floral decorations should be removed so that general cleaning may occur immediately following the ceremony. Failure to comply may result in the loss of the deposit. Items not removed by the florist or wedding party will be discarded by church staff to allow preparations for other services. There are NO storage areas available for gifts, clothing, decorations, candelabras, or floral arrangements. MLC cannot be held responsible for any items left after the approved timeline

Magnuson Hall may be reserved for a reception. Those spaces are scheduled through the MLC office.

No smoking or alcohol* on church premises.

If an outside wedding consultant is used by the family, that person shall be provided with a copy of this policy and shall be expected to work within its guidelines.

** Exceptions are wine for Communion and a small amount of champagne for a reception toast (if reception is held on the premises).*

RECEPTION

Inviting the pastor to the reception and/or rehearsal dinner is not an expectation. If you do extend an invitation, the pastor (and spouse) will attend if time and circumstances allow. Please let the pastor know in advance if you desire them to offer grace a prayer before the reception and/or rehearsal meal. Invitations to the pastor may be mailed to the church address.

FEES

Use of the Sanctuary

Active Member: No fee (optional donation)

Inactive/Non-member: \$750

Check made out to MLC [non-refundable deposit of \$100 due upon reserving the space, \$250 due two months prior the wedding date]

Pastor

Member & Non-member: \$500

Check made out to the presiding pastor [due 4 weeks prior the ceremony]

This does not include the additional ~\$50 for the per-marital counseling survey

Pianist/Organist

Member & Non-member: \$200

Add \$50 for each rehearsal, if working with soloists.

Soloist, choir director, or additional musicians: \$100 each

Check made out to the musician(s) [due 4 weeks prior the ceremony]

Custodial Services

Member & Non-member: \$75, check made out to Kevin McGrath

Magnuson Hall (and kitchen)

Active Member: No fee (optional donation)

Inactive/Non-member: \$500

Check made out to MLC

Bulletins

Active Member/Inactive/Non-member: \$50

Check made out to MLC [due 4 weeks prior the ceremony]. All materials for the bulletin must be turned into the church office 2 weeks prior the ceremony.

Fees compensate the church staff for the amount of time spent with the couple in preparation sessions, at the wedding rehearsal and wedding day, and time spent in other planning work (such as selecting and rehearsing music, preparing worship materials, coordinating logistics, cleaning, sermon preparation, and so forth). If these fees are not possible, please speak with the pastor.

Off-site Marriage Fees

Because of time and responsibilities, the pastors at MLC can only consider local (Marquette County) off-site marriage locations. The above fees do not apply. When an off-site marriage is agreed upon the fees for active members, inactive members and non-members are \$500.

ADDENDUMS:

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER

A Christian marriage service is a worship celebration, and therefore photographers should be as inconspicuous as possible to preserve the sacred nature of the gathering.

Flash photography is only allowed during the processional and recessional. Guests will be asked to refrain from any photography during the rest of the service, and professional photographers will be asked to use only available light. When taking pictures at times other than the processional/recessional, photographers are asked to stay in the aisles or the back of the church and to never enter space immediately in front of or beyond the altar rail.

Photographers must be in communication with the pastor prior to setting up any equipment. Ideally this is done prior to the wedding day and can be accomplished in person if the photographer attends the rehearsal. If this is impossible, contact by e-mail (office@messiahlutheranmqt.org) or phone (906-225-1119) are alternatives.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH INSTRUCTIONS FOR VIDEOGRAPHER

A Christian marriage service is a worship celebration, and therefore videographers should be as inconspicuous as possible to preserve the sacred nature of the gathering.

Videos may be taken from a fixed position in the back or side aisle of the church. The Pastor must approve the placement of videography equipment.

Videographers must be in communication with the pastor prior to setting up any equipment. Ideally this is done prior to the wedding day and can be accomplished in person if the videographer attends the rehearsal. If this is impossible, contact by email (office@messiahlutheranmqt.org) or phone (906-225-1119) are alternatives.

SCRIPTURE AND OTHER READINGS

Typically, two or three Bible passages are read during the wedding service. You may choose to include an appropriate poem or other reading, as well. Please share any additional reading(s) with the pastor for approval. You may choose to have a person or persons to serve as your reader(s) during the service, or you may request that the pastor do so. If you intend to have a reader, they should be present at the wedding rehearsal to receive instructions, to practice reading, and to become familiar with the sound system.

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE READINGS:

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:26-28	<i>Woman and man created in the image of God</i>
Genesis 2:18-24	<i>Companionship rather than loneliness</i>
Proverbs 3:3-6	<i>Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart</i>
Song of Solomon 2:10-13	<i>The voice of the beloved</i>
Song of Solomon 8:6-7	<i>Many waters cannot quench love</i>
Isaiah 63:7-9	<i>God's steadfast love lifts up the people</i>
Jeremiah 31:31-34	<i>The new covenant of the people of God</i>

PSALMS

Psalms 67	<i>May God be merciful to us and bless us</i>
Psalms 100	<i>We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture</i>
Psalms 117	<i>The steadfast love of the Lord</i>
Psalms 121	<i>The Lord keeps watch over you</i>
Psalms 127	<i>Unless the Lord builds the house</i>
Psalms 128	<i>Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's ways</i>
Psalms 150	<i>Let everything that breathes praise the Lord</i>

NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39	<i>If God is for us, who is against us</i>
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18	<i>A living sacrifice and genuine love</i>
1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13	<i>The greatest gift is love</i>
Ephesians 3:14-19	<i>The breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love</i>
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33	<i>Walk in love, as Christ loved us</i>
Philippians 4:4-9	<i>Rejoice in the Lord always</i>

Colossians 3:12-17

*Clothed in compassion, kindness, meekness and
patience*

1 John 3:18-24

Let us love in truth and action

John 4:7-16

Let us love one another for love is of God

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-10

The beatitudes

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light, let your light shine

Matthew 7:21, 24-29

A wise person builds upon the rock

Matthew 19:3-6

What God has united must not be divided

Matthew 22:35-40

Love, the greatest commandment

Mark 10:6-9

They are no longer two but one

John 2:1-11

The wedding at Cana

John 15:9-17

Love one another as I have loved you

Is there a passage that speaks to your relationship and your hopes for the future? Does a particular scriptural passage communicate your shared commitment? Is there a passage that speaks to you about God's blessing and activity in your life together? These are questions to consider as you are making scripture selections. Please share your thoughts with the pastor