

CHRIST'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

STANLEY, NORTH CAROLINA

Guiding Principles for  
The Rite of Holy Matrimony  
(revised 2016)



ICON OF THE HOLY FAMILY

## Introduction

<sup>8</sup>Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”...

<sup>22</sup>And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.”

<sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. +Genesis 2

“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup>and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” +Matthew 19

“You should carefully note, first, how highly God honors and praises this walk of life, endorsing and protecting it by his Commandment [the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment]... For the following reasons he also wishes us to honor, maintain and cherish it as a divine and blessed walk of life. He has established it before all others as the first of all institutions, and he created man and woman differently, as is evident, not for indecency but that they should live together, be fruitful and beget children, and nourish and bring them up to the glory of God. God has therefore blessed this walk of life most richly, above all others, and, in addition, has supplied and endowed it with everything in the world in order that this walk of life might be richly provided for.” +The Large Catechism: *The Sixth Commandment; 206-208*

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

+Since a wedding is a worship service, all planning should be done with this reality in mind. It is the Pastor’s responsibility to insure that all services of the church are done faithfully and in accordance with the Holy Scriptures as well as the historical and accepted traditions for weddings at Christ’s Church. Therefore, the Pastor will need to approve all aspects of the service whether it be conducted in the Nave of the church or elsewhere.

+As soon as you, in consultation with the Pastor, decide on a date for the service please call the church office and speak with the Administrative Assistant about being put on the church calendar to reserve the Nave and Family Life Center (FLC) if so desired. If you plan to have a rehearsal or reception or both at the church please make sure that you reserve the date and time for those as well.

+ It was at one time the normative practice within the Christian Church for the bride and groom to be married and have the Church bestow God’s blessing upon their union during the Sunday morning Divine Service—the primary worship service of the church. In our culture we have gradually moved away from this practice, however if this is

something you might be interested in please know that CELC encourages this salutary tradition and invites you to speak more about it with the Pastor.

There are times during the Church Year when weddings are not liturgically or practically appropriate. For example, no wedding should be performed during Holy Week because 1.) this is a time of deep penitence and spiritual reflection in the Christian life and 2.) the Pastor likely has many services to plan and preside over during this time.

+Public announcement of the wedding date and the ordering of invitations should not be done until the date is cleared and confirmed with the Pastor and the Church Office.

+The Pastor of CELC will preside over all weddings and the historic Christian liturgical order for weddings will be used. If you wish to have another Pastor assist with the wedding rite he must be from the Lutheran Tradition and you must have prior approval from the Pastor of CELC. With that said, anyone may serve as a lector during the Service.

+There is no charge for the use of the church facilities if either the bride or the groom is an active church member. (Active church membership is defined in the Constitution of CELC and its Bylaws.)

+Unfortunately non-members cannot be married at CELC. In a Christian wedding the bride and groom are asking God to bless their union together as husband and wife, it therefore does not logically follow to allow people who are not members (and thus whose confession of the Faith we cannot be certain about) to rent out our sacred space for their purposes. It is true that our worship space at CELC is very beautiful, however this does not constitute a valid reason for having one's wedding in the Nave without the intention of being a part of this community of believers gathered together by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We live in a progressively consumeristic culture. The result of this is that many people believe they are entitled to whatever they desire simply by virtue of having enough money to pay for it. This however is not the way the Holy Church of Jesus Christ operates. Jesus works in precisely the opposite way—bestowing grace and mercy upon those who have in no way earned it! Holy Matrimony is not a right but rather an honor and privilege and as such, is not sold to the highest bidder. (see Acts 8.18-20) Therefore, marriage is reserved for active members of CELC and the marriage of two non-members is not allowed. It is a joy to discover that a couple desires God's blessing upon their marriage. Such a couple should be praised for such a noble desire and if they are not members of CELC, should be encouraged to seek this blessing within the Christian community which they will be living out their marriage vows in.

+Please make sure that church facilities and grounds are left as, or better than, you found them. Please check the air conditioning, heating, that the lights are all turned off and the doors are locked.

### Music

+Because the Rite of Holy Matrimony is a worship service, the music must therefore be carefully and discriminately chosen so as to honor and glorify God. Also, because music is such an important aspect of worship at your wedding, arrangements for the music will need to be finalized one month before the date of the wedding. Our organist or Pastor will be happy to meet with you to help you in the musical discernment process. The Pastor of CELC must approve the music to be used during the worship service. In addition, please consider the following:

-Secular music is discouraged during the wedding service. Please remember that the Order for Holy Matrimony is primarily a worship service meant to glorify and praise Jesus Christ whether it be on church grounds or at a location of your choosing.

-Pre-recorded music is not allowed.

-Soloists must meet with the organist or pianist of CELC at least one month prior to the date of the wedding in order to go over the special music.

-The organist of CELC is familiar with the organ and is also highly trained and skilled at interpreting and presenting music for the worship services of the church. Therefore, the use of an organist or pianist other than CELC's must have prior approval.

\*There is no set fee for the service of our church musicians. However, it is customary in our part of the country to give a love offering of some sort. The amount of this gift should take into account how many days are required of the musician for the wedding service and the going rate for a supply musician for a general Sunday morning worship service. To help you discern what may be an appropriate gift you may check the American Guild of Organists website provided here:

[https://www.agohq.org/careers\\_trashed/salary-guide/](https://www.agohq.org/careers_trashed/salary-guide/)

### Decorations

+We take great pride in the beauty of our worship space. Because we have worked hard to have and maintain a worship space that is beautiful and glorifies the Lord, little is needed in the way of extra decoration. Many couples who have their wedding here merely use only live flower arrangements on each side of the Altar. In the Sanctuary (that is, the area immediately surrounding the Altar within the Altar rail), only fresh flowers and greenery may be used. The use of artificial flowers is not permitted in the Sanctuary.

+If you would like to leave the flowers from your wedding on either side of the Altar for the Sunday Divine Service, please make the appropriate arrangements with the church office.

+The custom that is popular in some place where the bride and groom each carry a lighted tapered candle with which they light a single candle that replaces the separate ones may be strong on sentiment but is rather weak on theology. The bride and groom do not extinguish their own lives and personalities to begin a new one. Rather Holy Matrimony should enhance the individual life of each. However, if a unity candle(s) is used during the Rite of Holy Matrimony, then the couple is responsible for providing the unity candle and the tapers as well as cleaning up any wax that drips on the carpet.

+Pew candles are available for use during the Order for Holy Matrimony. If you would like to use them please contact the church office so the Altar Guild can make plans to have them ready for the Wedding Service. You will need to let the church office know at least a month in advance of the wedding if you intend to use these candles.

+The church will provide wedding kneelers for the bride and groom at the appropriate time during the service. Please choose clothing (wedding dress, shoes, etc.) that will not prevent you from kneeling before the Lord on this day that he will join you together as husband and wife.

+The color of the paraments is governed by the season of the Church Year and not one's preferred color scheme. Our being joined as husband and wife falls within the Church's time and therefore it is not appropriate to change the color to suit individual preferences.

### Photographs

+Choose a photographer who has experience in wedding photography. It may be helpful to have the photographer come to the Nave in advance of the wedding to get a sense of the space and lighting. Such an appointment may be set up through the church office.

+Photographers that move about taking pictures during the Worship Service are an unnecessary distraction. Until recent years, the historic practice was to have all photography after the Worship Service, therefore photography during the Order for Holy Matrimony is discouraged. If photographs must be taken during the Service, the photographer must remain stationary, with flash and sound off.

+Videos may be made during the Service from either the balcony or one of the two transepts out of view from the congregation.

+Because photographs following the Service can sometimes take quite a while to complete, please make sure any pictures with the Pastor are done first so he can change out of any heavy vestments as soon as possible.

+Please make sure that the photographer receives a copy of these guidelines. If there are any questions as to the interpretation of these guidelines they should be discussed with the Pastor prior to the Worship Service.

### General Rules

+No tape, tacks or push pins are permitted to be used anywhere in the Nave.

+Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on church grounds.

+There is no fee for the Pastor's services, however in much the same way it is with church musicians, it has become customary to give the Pastor an honorarium or love offering but such gift is certainly not required.

+Arrangements for gaining access to the church buildings must be made in advance through the church office.

+You will be responsible for leaving the church facilities clean after the worship service. There will be a cleaning fee of \$150 per building if the facilities are not found clean. It is your choice whether to clean up after the Service yourselves or have our cleaning service do the job for you, the latter is the norm. If you choose to have the church's cleaning service, please make arrangements with the church office prior to the day of the Service. There is a set fee for cleaning the Nave and an additional one for the cleaning of the Family Life Center. Checks should be made to Christ's Evangelical Lutheran Church and paid to the church office one month prior to the date of the wedding. If you decide to clean the building(s) yourselves a \$150 deposit per building that you use will be required to ensure all facilities are left clean, which will be returned when it has been verified that the church grounds are clean and in good order.

+Birdseed or bubbles should be used as opposed to rice and then only outside of the church buildings.

+The Bridal Room with adjoining restroom is available for the bride and bridesmaids to prepare before the Service. The groom and groomsmen may use the facilities in the Educational Building. Please leave the rooms as orderly as you found them.

+Please make sure upon leaving that you have all of your belongings as CELC cannot be responsible for personal property left in the building.

+A wedding banner is available for use if desired.

+Wedding bulletins can be provided for your convenience or you may provide the bulletins in consultation with the Pastor. There is a minimal fee for the purchase of bulletins but there is no fee for typing and printing the Order of the Service. Bulletins provided through the church should be selected and ordered at least one month prior to the date of the wedding.

+We sincerely wish and pray for your joy and faithfulness during this time in your lives and in the years to come. Following your wedding we invite you to start off the first Sunday of being united by God as husband and wife to join our church family for worship at 10:30 on Sunday morning!