

Wedding Inquiries

Dear fellow redeemed by the blood of Christ,

You are likely reading this because you have recently become engaged, or are seriously considering Holy Matrimony. We rejoice with you, and wish you all the blessings that God intends for man and woman in this blessed estate that He instituted!

With regard to marriage and wedding preparation, the pastors of St. John's are here to help the active members of this congregation grow in a God-pleasing relationship that leads toward marriage, and to assist them in wedding preparations that are consistent with the faith confessed in this congregation.

In most instances those who approach the pastors of St. John's to talk about marriage are delighted to learn from God's Word, eager to grow in faith, and happy to be guided by the pastor in God-pleasing marriage preparations that are consistent with His Word. It is a special joy for pastors to serve when this is true. And we pray the same for you.

When, however, there is an unwillingness to learn from God's Word, grow in a God-pleasing relationship, or plan a wedding service that is consistent with these things, then serious challenges can arise which must be worked through before the pastor can agree to perform the wedding.

SPECIFICALLY, THE FOLLOWING ARE SEVERAL POINTS ON WHICH WE WANT TO BE VERY CLEAR UP FRONT.

1. Weddings at St. John's are for active members of the congregation and their fiancé(e).

- Because growing together in the hearing of God's Word is foundational for Christian marriage, *the couple must continue to be in worship together throughout marriage preparation*, as agreed upon with the pastor. *If not, the pastor may determine that wedding preparations can no longer proceed at St. John's.*
- *We do not perform marriages for couples who are not members of the congregation.*¹ We do, however, welcome inquirers to begin worshipping with us, start taking classes toward membership, and then *eventually* talk with the pastor about marriage preparation at St. John's.
- It is not necessary for both fiancé and fiancée to be members of the congregation, though the pastor will explain and commend the benefits of this as the ideal.

2. Living together in a sexual relationship outside of marriage is sinful in God's eyes and therefore harmful, both spiritually and to marriage preparation.

- When an unmarried couple is living together, the pastor will gently and lovingly discuss this with the couple, keeping God's Word and will as the chief consideration.

¹ On rare occasions, and only in certain unusual situations, the church sanctuary itself *may* be offered to LCMS members who are members of other LCMS congregations. However, in these cases, the couple's own LCMS pastor normally performs the marriage ceremony. See the separate paragraph in the wedding "Guidelines" for details.

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- The pastor will patiently attempt to lead the couple toward a God-pleasing response and concrete actions that are consistent with a life of faith.
- *When a God-pleasing response to such conversations about living together in a sexual relationship outside of marriage is not forthcoming, this often results in the pastor determining that wedding preparations can no longer proceed at St. John's.*

3. Weddings at St. John's are generally performed at St. John's.

- The pastors of St. John's perform weddings specifically as ministers of Christ and His Gospel who are called to serve the flock at St. John's with the gifts Christ gives in His Church.
- This is best accomplished in the Lord's house where the people of St. John's gather weekly for worship.
- For this reason, *the pastors generally do not perform weddings at locations other than St. John's.*

We hope that these few thoughts help give you an idea of what to expect as we, the pastors of St. John's, serve you with God's Word. We look forward to meeting you, getting to know you better, and helping you prepare for a memorable wedding day and a life together growing in Christ!

Adopted by the pastors and Board of Elders
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