Wedding Guidelines of

LUTHER SEMINARY

Welcome to Luther seminary.
We are pleased to serve you as you plan this special covenant called Christian marriage.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and this seminary regard the celebration of marriage as a service of worship directed to God; from whom comes the love which brings couples together.

Therefore, it is imperative that the music, the readings, and all other aspects of the liturgy be characterized by joy and dignity.

<u>MARRIAGE:</u>
A LUTHERAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Marriage is a service of worship in which the invited guests are not mere spectators but participants. They are present not simply to watch, but to be a congregation of God's people. They are not merely to celebrate together with you on your wedding day, but also to support you in your marriage vows every day. They come together not as spectators, but as an assembly gathered to worship God with you as you make your lifelong commitment.

Marriage is a glad occasion overflowing with joy; and those who celebrate it rejoice in the gifts of God – life, strength, sexuality and the family – all that the Creator declared from the beginning to be "very good."

Marriage is not exclusively a Christian possession. It was known, practiced and honored in the Old Testament. It is, moreover, a structure which belongs to all humanity. It is essentially a covenant of fidelity between two people made with society's sanction and grounded in the steadfast love of God. God's abiding faithfulness is the model – as God is faithful, so should we be.

Marriage is a social contract, the basis of which is the commitment that a couple makes to each other. Contrary to the popular understanding, the basis is not love; for human love is changeable and cannot be depended upon as a reliable foundation. One cannot promise to be in love years hence, but one can make a commitment. Indeed, Emil Brunner has warned:

> *When marriage is based on love all is lost from the very outset. The lover cannot guarantee that his emotion of love will be either permanent or directed solely to the one person…. To base marriage on love is to build on the sand. It is not the "Eros," but solely the responsibility of fidelity [faithfulness], which creates that bond which means that one is bound to the other person.*

For human beings, faithfulness and love need not go together. In God the two are joined, and it is in God's "steadfast love" that we seek to root our covenant of fidelity, as well as our emotions of love. In the flux of experience, one thing holds true -- the vow of fidelity grounded in the love of God, which abides forever.

It is not the minister who performs the marriage, but the wedding couple. Both church and state have an interest in marriage; and marriage is done in the presence of a representative of one or the other. However, the two partners conclude the marriage. The couple marries each other, and the minister is the principal witness to their action. If the marriage is, at its heart, basically an exchange of vows of faithfulness and commitment, this is something that the minister cannot do for someone else. Nonetheless, the couple is not on their own to fulfill the promises, for God's blessing and support is asked.

A marriage service, if it is to be truly biblical, must take notice of the physical dimensions of marriage, specifically sexuality and the consummation of marriage. Sex, John Macquarie observes, "is the most obvious indicator of the fundamentally communal character of human existence," for no one person is complete in him/herself.

Those who plan to be married should discuss with the pastor the nature of marriage and the form of the service, as well as the confirmation of the date and time of the wedding. This service is designed to present a variety of options, suggestions and possibilities to meet the various situations resulting from the interactions of a pluralistic society. Furthermore, it should encourage new thinking about what the marriage service could be and open people's eyes to the vast number of possibilities that may be locally useful. The marriage service should be regarded as a kind of workbook from which a marriage service, appropriate to the particular occasion, might be constructed.

In the past, both Advent and Lent have been regarded as "closed times" when marriages were not solemnized. North American society is not governed by the church year. Consequently, it seems undesirable in most places to forbid marriage for ten weeks of the year. Holy Week is, however, the one week of the year when marriages are out of place and especially the Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, when all of the attention of the Church is directed toward the mystery of redemption.

Christmas season and the week of Luther Seminary's convocation (mid-January) and commencement (Memorial Day weekend) along with other holidays when the Seminary is closed are not available to schedule weddings.

CONSULTATION AND PREMARITAL COUNSELING

The couple will consult with their presiding minister on several important subjects. The first will be to plan the marriage service itself, including the character of the service, its formality, the inclusion of scripture readings, sermon, Holy Communion, etc. This counseling will also include conversations concerning the nature of Christian marriage. Premarital counseling allows the couple to determine if they have reached reasonable agreement on the important issues of married life. A benefit of these discussions will be to establish a relationship with the presiding minister and a community of faith which will extend beyond the wedding day.

The couple should also meet with the musician to plan the music to complement the chosen service. In order to allow for adequate time for preparation, we suggest that consultation with the musician occur at least two months in advance of the wedding date.

THE CEREMONY

Couples who are interested in a wedding ceremony at Luther Seminary are welcome to use their own pastor, provided the pastor is duly ordained in her or his tradition and you are current members of that parish. You may also use a friend or family member, who is properly ordained with the written permission of your congregational pastor. Otherwise you will be expected to use a pastor from Luther Seminary.

The wedding service in the Evangelical Lutheran Worship is the primary service suggested for use at Luther Seminary. Hymns and readings should be selected in consultation with the presiding minister. Luther Seminary's preference for the rite of Holy Marriage is in the context of Word and Sacrament with a service of lessons, hymns, sermon and Holy Communion, offered as a sacrament of God's presence and a reminder of the great feast of unity in the kingdom to come.

The couple must notify the wedding coordinator a month in advance if Holy Communion will be included in the wedding service so that a sacristan may be secured. A small honorarium is required for the sacristan and will be added to the rental fee.

MUSIC

Since the marriage ceremony at Luther Seminary is considered strictly a service in which a Christian couple vows very solemn and holy promises and receives from God and the Church a truly sacred blessing, a rubric that is fitting states, "The use of secular music shall not be permitted in the church." In a wedding, as in the other services of worship, music is to glorify God. Regardless of the degree of formality, the celebration of marriage is a service of worship and therefore music is considered an integral part. Music should be carefully chosen to embody high standards of quality reflecting praise of God. Luther Seminary has a list of musicians who are well equipped to assist the wedding couple in the selection of appropriate music.

Additional musical options are possible such as employing soloists, choral ensembles, or other instruments in conjunction with the organ or piano; however, consideration must be given to the ability of the participants to play or sing the music with assurance. Music for entertainment has no place in any religious service.

It is needful to point out that music does not become "sacred" through long usage, nor by casual association with scriptural texts. The popular *Bridal Chorus* from Wagner's *Lohengrin* is an operatic piece from German mythology, which tells, of a marriage which ends in divorce immediately following the song. It is as poorly suited for a Christian wedding as is Mendelssohn's music from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is ballet music during which the groom appears with the head of an ass. The use of these two marches, therefore, is forbidden in our chapels, even as it is forbidden in congregations of many major denominations.

Solo vocal music is by no means essential. If it is to be used, the couple should consult with the presiding minister and musician regarding the suitability of the selections to be sung. Congregational hymnody is very appropriate for use in the rite of Holy Matrimony.

DECORATIONS

The beauty of the nave will add significance to every wedding, so Luther Seminary has ruled that no decorations of any kind shall be attached by nails, staples, tape or any device that will mar the furniture. Only cut flowers shall be used. **No decorations (including candles) are allowed on the altar, piano, or baptismal font.** No floral pedals or candle votives may be placed in or near the aisles of the sanctuary. Decorations which obstruct the view of guests, or which restrict proper movement in the chancel, are in poor taste. All floral arrangements and other decorations for the chapel are subject to the approval of the seminary wedding coordinator *(please see the section in this brochure which directly speaks to the issue of flowers).*

The paraments highlight the liturgical season of the Christian year. The colors are not changeable.

Please Note: Confetti or rice is *never* to be thrown as one of the options for the traditional greeting as the wedding couple leaves the church. We suggest some of the more current trends of bubbles (exterior), rose petals, bell ringing, etc. for use at this time.

FLOWERS, CANDLES, BULLETINS

Flowers should be tastefully displayed in vases. If other arrangements are desired, permission should be granted by the presiding minister. Altar flowers may be given to the wedding staff following the ceremony for distribution to the sick or shut-ins. **At no time will flowers be placed directly on the altar, piano, or baptismal font.** The couple should inform the wedding staff regarding all flower arrangements as soon as possible or no later than two weeks in advance. The florist is encouraged to visit the chapel to view the nave and chancel before floral arrangements are finalized. Artificial flowers are not accepted in the worship spaces of Luther Seminary.

Purchase of a wedding unity candle is the responsibility of the couple. Only drip-less candles may be used at Luther Seminary.

Purchase and printing of the wedding bulletin is also the responsibility of the couple. Bulletin information must be submitted for approval to the wedding coordinator at least two weeks prior to the wedding day. The presiding minister can assist in supplying the order of service. Bulletin folders may be purchased at the Luther Seminary Bookstore. The couple is required to proofread the bulletin prior to printing.

HONORARIA/FEES AND LIABILITY INSURANCE

All honoraria and facility rental fees will be discussed as part of the pre-marital preparation.

Liability Insurance is required. The couple must present a certificate of insurance to the Seminary. The wedding coordinator will provide information on this procedure during the initial consult with the couple.

All rental fees, including a certificate of insurance are due by the pre-wedding meeting (one to two weeks prior to the wedding dates).

The wedding license, and any additional honoraria must be given to the presiding minister, musician or wedding coordinator at the wedding rehearsal. It is important that these tasks be accomplished on that day.

RECEPTION

No food or drink may be brought into the Seminary facilities.

You may consult options for wedding reception and catering with Luther seminary dining services.

If the reception is to be held at a place other than the Seminary, it is still permissible for the couple to receive guests in the narthex following the ceremony.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

The wedding rehearsal is most often scheduled for early evening preceding the wedding day, and will last from an hour to an hour-and-a-half. Members of the wedding party must be present. **Promptness for beginning the rehearsal and service is vital due to multiple scheduling of our facilities and staff.**

The wedding license and all fees and honoraria must be given to the presiding minister at the wedding rehearsal. It is important that these tasks be accomplished prior to the day of the wedding.

VIDEO AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Luther Seminary does not provide videotaping services. Any videotaping must be done from the rear of the nave in order to maintain the integrity of our worship. Your videographer is encouraged to stop at the chapel prior to the wedding day to become familiar with the premises.

To preserve the dignity of your wedding celebration, flash photography may be used only before or after the service. Professional photographs may be taken prior to the arrival of wedding guests in order to facilitate departure at the conclusion of the service. No flash photography is to be used during the service. All natural lighting photographs taken during the ceremony must be done from the rear of the nave. It is the responsibility of the wedding couple and ushers to make these restrictions clear to professional photographers as well as guests. If a photograph is desired of a particular portion of the service, the presiding minister may re-enact this scene at the conclusion of the service. The photographer is encouraged to visit the Seminary prior to the wedding day to view the layout of the chapel as well as speak briefly to the wedding coordinator or pastor regarding appropriate photograph opportunities.

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IF YOU CHOOSE TO BE MARRIED AT LUTHER SEMINARY:

I. **Wedding application process**

All persons making inquiry about a wedding at Luther Seminary must fill out an "application" to be married at Luther Seminary. This document will serve as basic information about the couples' interest in having a wedding on campus and will be used to provide information to add/cross-check with the database and begin conversation with the couple.

II. **Wedding coordinators**

A Luther Seminary wedding coordinator will be assigned to work with the couple in all matter of preparation for the service. The wedding coordinator works under the supervision of the Seminary Pastor's Office and may consult with the Seminary Pastor in any matter related to the ceremony.

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We hope this document has been helpful to you as you plan your marriage celebration. Please keep this information throughout your planning process so that you may refer to it frequently.

Luther Seminary welcomes the opportunity to assist in the nurture of your marriage covenant.

We will remember you in our prayers and invoke God's blessings on your married life.

Seminary Pastor's Office Hours
Monday through Thursday
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Seminary Pastor – Rev. Paul Harrington
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Updated: June 2010