

## + WEDDINGS IN OUR PARISH +

The holy estate of marriage was instituted by the Living God at the beginning of His Creation. This oldest of institutions is the ordinary estate of mankind. The Church rejoices in this good gift and encourages and counsels all God's children to enter into this estate. To enter into marriage is simply to make a public declaration of fidelity between one man and one woman for their lifetime. Therefore, one does not "need" the Pastor or the local church to enter into marriage. However, the Christian does desire God's Word and Blessing for this holy estate, and the Church welcomes such opportunity to bless and counsel God's children who desire a "church wedding" and the presence of the Pastor.

Since a church wedding is a worship service presided over by the local Pastor, this means the participants are willing to heed God's Word and the requirements of the local parish and her Pastor. Therefore, mindful of God's Word and the clear teaching of His Commandments, a church wedding requires the future spouses to lead a "chaste and decent life in word and deed." Physical intimacy before marriage does *not* preclude a church wedding, but it does require repentance and absolution.

An additional requirement, locally, is that at least one of the future spouses holds membership in the Parish. The church buildings and the Pastor are paid for and supported generously by the members, and, additionally, there are solid legal reasons for limiting church weddings to membership, as well as other pastoral considerations. Non-members who would be interested in a church wedding are certainly welcome to visit with the Pastor and the possibility of membership is open and encouraged, and can be included with the marriage catechesis (biblical instruction shaped by Luther's Catechism).

For all those who are seriously dating/courting, you are encouraged to visit with the Pastor as part of your growing together in relationship with one another. If you become engaged, that is, pledged to be married, you are invited to arrange a visit with the Pastor as soon as possible—even before you pick a wedding date.

When you meet with the Pastor, please note, you will not be receiving licensed, professional marriage counseling. There are secular professionals who can be recommended and can provide these services (for example, a marriage inventory). These can be helpful. What the Pastor provides is the counsel and admonition of God's Holy Word. The Scriptures are opened up, what God has revealed about the holy estate of marriage, and Martin Luther's Catechism is reviewed, as well as the duties and blessings of marriage. In the course of these visits, the Pastor will work with the couple how many visits to have; it is also suggested to visit \*after\* the wedding too!

What about the wedding service itself? Those details will be discussed by the Pastor with the couple. There is both flexibility and boundaries, keeping in mind that the wedding in the church is a worship service and the usual order and rules apply.

If you would like more information or to ask questions or to meet about arranging a wedding in our Parish, please contact Pastor Volbrecht at the Church Office, #507-642-8414. Thank you and God bless!

The Rev. Greg Volbrecht  
July 2018  
The Lutheran Parish of  
Salem-Madelia & Trinity-Lewisville, MN