

## Weddings at Mount Olive Lutheran Church

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*Approved by Worship Committee, July 25, 2011*

**To the couple:** We are pleased that you want to have your wedding at Mount Olive. Weddings at Mount Olive might not look like other weddings you've witnessed, so to be helpful, we want to give you a brief introduction to how this congregation understands weddings and worship. We believe that our liturgical practice brings us closer to the Triune God whose love for the world we proclaim, and we would be delighted to have you make your vows within this liturgy. We will work with you to make your wedding a beautiful and meaningful service, to help you understand the beauty we find in our liturgical practice, and to help prepare you for a happy and fulfilling marriage.

We believe that God did not intend for human beings to be alone, but created us to live in relationship with each other in communities and throughout society. We also believe that God provides rich blessing and grace when two people choose to make life-long commitments of faithfulness and love to each other. Because Almighty God is the center and focus of our worship, weddings at Mount Olive are informed by the same understandings of worship which shape our regular liturgical life. You make your promises in the presence of God, trusting that God will bless and support you both as you work to fulfill them, and that also shapes our understanding of what is happening in this service.

What this means at Mount Olive is that weddings are conducted within the structure and shape of the Eucharistic liturgy we normally use here. Many weddings tend to follow liturgical patterns which have been shaped both by popular culture and by long-discarded notions of the bride as property transfer between the bride's father and the groom. By keeping our weddings rooted in our liturgical practice, we not only keep our attention on the Triune God, the source of our being and life, but also provide room for two people to come before God as equals in God's eyes and in the eyes of the worshippers. Given that our liturgical commitment at Mount Olive is to the historic liturgical forms of the Western Church, your wedding might be different than what you would experience in other places. But, in beginning your marriage centered in the love of God for the world and for the Church as known to us in Jesus Christ, you will find this liturgy will give you a blessing for far more than just the day of your wedding.

Because this congregation takes seriously the ministry of care for each other and support of those who are marrying, we normally only do weddings of members of Mount Olive, rather than serve as a wedding chapel for hire. Should both partners be non-members, we encourage them to become regular worshippers here at Mount Olive and consider joining the congregation before having their wedding here.

The practice of Mount Olive Lutheran Church is to offer the blessing and prayers of the church in the same liturgy whether for marriage of differently gendered or same gender couples. The guidance and vision found here for marriage services applies equally to both.

## Guidelines

1. Weddings at Mount Olive Lutheran Church are services of public worship and reflect the tradition and typical practices of worship services at Mount Olive.
2. Marriage services are celebrated at Mount Olive Lutheran Church with members of the congregation and baptized children of members. Marriage services of those with an affiliation with the congregation who are not members may be scheduled, at the Pastor's discretion.
3. The Pastor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church normally is the Presiding Minister at marriage services, and the Cantor of Mount Olive Lutheran Church normally is the musician. When requested by the couple to be married, other clergy may participate, at the discretion of the Pastor, and other musicians may participate, at the discretion of the Cantor.
4. This congregation regards marriage services as elements of the public ministry of the church and of the calling of the Pastor and Cantor. Therefore, no fees are charged for the use of the building or for the ministry of the Pastor, Cantor, or Sexton of the congregation.
5. All marriages at Mount Olive are preceded by premarital conversation and preparation, including conversation between the Pastor and the couple about their marriage. Couples will take a premarital inventory as part of this conversation, and the number of sessions will typically be four, though the length of each will be determined in the course of the conversation. These sessions are in addition to any sessions which involve planning for the liturgy itself.
6. Marriage services will be scheduled on the church calendar only after initial meetings of the couple with both the Pastor and Cantor. Making plans as far in advance as possible is important, since the schedules of many volunteers and staff involved in marriage services are affected.
7. Mount Olive attempts to be flexible and accommodating in scheduling marriage services, whether the marriage occurs in a specially scheduled service or as part of the congregation's Sunday liturgy. However, weddings are not scheduled during Lent and Holy Week or on major festivals of the church year.
8. Marriage services at Mount Olive use the order of the congregation's current worship book, *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. Since the marriage service is worship of the whole congregation, celebration of the Holy Eucharist is normally included. All baptized Christians are invited to share this sacrament.
9. The wedding party enters as part of the liturgical procession, following the liturgical ministers. The individuals to be married may enter as a couple or be accompanied by parents. The procession typically occurs during a congregational hymn. The couple to be married and the wedding party will have seating reserved that allows them and the congregation to participate fully in the liturgy.

10. Music for marriage services will be compatible with the tradition of sacred music at Mount Olive Lutheran and with the liturgy. All music for the service is planned with the guidance and assistance of the Cantor.
11. Regular Eucharistic ministers of Mount Olive will assist in the liturgy. Requests for family members or friends to assist as readers, acolytes, etc., are welcome and should be made to the Pastor as early as possible in the course of the premarital preparations.
12. Regarding decorations, beauty and simplicity consistent with worship of God and the liturgy is in order. Elements such as aisle runners, floral arches, unity candles, throwing of rice, birdseed, or confetti, or release of bubbles, birds, or balloons are examples of inappropriate additions to the liturgy. The congregation's pew candles may be used if requested well in advance, to enable the Altar Guild to arrange for their installation and removal.
13. Floral decorations likewise should be simple and appropriate. Two large vases are available at either side of the altar. If preferred, the couple may provide their own vases for these two locations. Nothing should be taped or tacked to pews, altar rail, or any church furniture. If the couple wishes the flowers to be left for use at the next Sunday liturgies of the congregation, they should make that clear with the church office well in advance of the day so we don't schedule other flowers for that morning.
14. A summary of these guidelines, *Flowers and Decorations for Weddings at Mount Olive Lutheran Church*, will be provided on a separate sheet to the couple to be married. The couple is responsible for delivering this information to the florist and confirming his/her understanding of it.
15. Regarding photography, while Mount Olive understands the desire to preserve the events of the wedding day, the congregation holds a deep concern for the dignity and reverence of the service and seeks to ensure that the worship of family and friends is not compromised by distractions. It is likewise understood that the liturgy begins from the time of the prelude, not after the procession has entered, so particular care during the procession is required. Photographs may not be taken in the church during the marriage service from the time the liturgical procession begins until the ministers leave, with the following exceptions:
  - Flash photographs of the wedding party may be taken as the procession enters, provided the photographer is in the fourth pew from the back and doesn't move into the aisle. Flash photographs of the wedding party may also be taken from the narthex as the couple exits the church.
  - Stationary video cameras may be set up in the rear of the church, in the choir and transept galleries, provided no additional lighting is required. Set up must be completed at least 30 minutes prior to the service.
  - Still photographs not requiring flash may be taken during the liturgy from the galleries and rear of the church as well.
16. Other photographs should be taken before the service. Wedding participants and photographers should be out of the nave 45 minutes prior to the service. If photos are

taken after the service, these should be kept to a minimum and should be completed within 45 minutes after the service ends.

17. A summary of these guidelines, *Photography for Weddings at Mount Olive Lutheran Church*, will be provided on a separate sheet to the couple to be married. The couple is responsible for delivering this information to the photographer and confirming his/her understanding of it.
18. Space is available for wedding participants to dress at the church if they choose. They should make their wish to use dressing spaces at one of the meetings with the Pastor.
19. A guest book may be provided for guest signatures in the narthex prior to the service. Due to the limited space in the narthex, if the couple desires to greet guests attending the service, this should be planned for the fellowship area in the Parish House or, if weather allows, outside on the front steps of the church. Alternately, if a reception is planned, guests might be greeted as they arrive at the reception.
20. As the wedding is set within the worship service, participants and guests should conduct themselves accordingly. Persons under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances will not be permitted to participate in the wedding. Smoking is not permitted anywhere in the building.