

*Marriage Preparation
at Christ Lutheran Church*



To the Bride and Groom,

Congratulations, we share your excitement as you prepare for married life. We want to provide solid preparation for all marriages, as well as a beautiful and joyous wedding service for those being married at Christ. Carefully read this manual as a guide through the marriage preparation process at Christ Lutheran. There is also important information for those being married by one of our pastors.

Each couple is unique. Each marriage is special and reflects individual needs and desires. While we seek to reflect the uniqueness of each couple, our marriage preparation process also reflects a solid biblical understanding of marriage, a thorough grasp of relationship building, and current research in the areas touching marriage in our society. Joining together with you we endeavor to support and guide you to a strong and vibrant marriage union where together you can touch this world with God's rich grace. This can happen as you join us and follow this simple path provided as you prepare for marriage.

Many begin the preparation process fearful of marriage, or resigned to the notion that 50% of marriages fail. But this is not the truth. You will join us in a marriage preparation process where you can actively change this dismal 50% failure to an over 95% success rate in your marriage. This is close to marriage insurance! That's why we encourage you to follow the guidelines carefully.

What does success look like? A lifelong marriage? Yes, but more. You will create a home for yourself, your children and your children's children that will be a place of grace, joy, love and lasting security. This can be yours as you build your relationship God's way and not your own:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
And he will make straight your paths.
Be not wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.
Proverbs 3:5-8

Nothing special happens by being married in a church, but something very special happens when we walk together with the living God, building your marriage in His power, by His plan, and supported by His people.

Join us together in Christ, that others may know Christ.

The Marriage Preparation Process

For those desiring their wedding service be conducted by one of our Pastors, one of you needs to be a member of our congregation. We believe that Christ Lutheran has a spiritual responsibility to serve and strengthen each and every marriage in our congregation.

If neither of you are a member of Christ Lutheran Church and you want to be married at Christ we ask that you contact our Director of Outreach and Member Engagement, to find out how to become a member.

Our marriage preparation process takes a minimum of six months and up to a year.

Wedding dates will be discussed at your first meeting with the Director of Pastoral Care and Family life.

The following list is an itemized chart of marriage preparation activities and the cost associated with these items:

Basic Activities Costs:

Pre-Marriage inventory (paid directly to zoescore.com)	\$40
Books, preparation resources, and administration	\$60

Exceptions:

Sometimes additional preparation activities are desired such as those under “Optional Activities.” The couple will be responsible for the cost of additional activities.

Refunds will be made for couples who choose not to marry.

For those who live away from Christ Lutheran, such as college students or those who recently moved, special electronic preparation arrangements can be made through the Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life.

For Couples Desiring only Marriage Preparation at Christ Lutheran

We will prepare any couple for marriage. We will work within your time frame. Sometimes marriage preparation goes on after the wedding. All preparation is helpful. Please contact the Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life to begin the marriage preparation process. The above costs apply.

Considering the overall cost of weddings, we see this as one of the least expensive items, but by far the most important investment you’ll make. As you count costs, the wedding lasts one day, the marriage relationship lasts a lifetime. We will help you build a lasting relationship.

Steps for Marriage Preparation

1. First, relax, we love marriages and want yours to be special. Marriage is God pleasing and not a problem that needs counseling. We are here to support and guide you.
2. Fill out and return the “Marriage Information” on-line form.
3. The Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life (DPCFL) will contact you to set up an initial meeting. He will email you marriage prep questions for you to fill out and bring to your appointment.
4. At that appointment you will return the completed forms, pay fees and discuss the returned information. Preferred wedding dates will be discussed.
5. After this meeting you will be assigned a mentor couple. Please allow two weeks for your mentor couple to contact you.
6. Your mentor couple will have you take the online Zoe (www.zoescore.com) pre-marriage inventory that will serve as a guide for your preparation mentoring.
7. Complete pre-marriage sessions with the mentor couple, usually 3–6 sessions over 4 months. Other opportunities to help your relationship grow may be suggested such as seminars or Engaged Encounter.
8. For those being married at Christ Lutheran Church, after the 2nd or 3rd mentor visit you will meet with the wedding coordinator. She will provide you a wedding planning book with all the information you need for planning a wedding at Christ Lutheran.
9. For those being married at Christ or by one of our pastors off site: one to two months before the wedding date, meet with the DPCFL to evaluate the pre-marriage process and finalize your wedding service plans. If you are being married by one of the other Pastors you will need to meet with him to discuss the wedding service.
10. For those being married off site, this presents some unique challenges to the pastor. Make sure you make all the proper arrangements with the Church or venue and communicate contact information with the pastor.
11. Time to celebrate and worship: wedding rehearsal and wedding day!
12. Follow up support for your marriage is provided, and strongly encouraged. Your mentor couple will contact you at intervals of three months, seven months, and one year after the wedding.

Being married at Christ Lutheran by one of our Pastors means that you are thoroughly prepared for the grand adventure of marriage. Following our carefully crafted process you will have confidence in your decision to marry knowing that our process has an over 98% marriage success rate for the past 20 years. What we do works, and will work for you.

What We Believe About Marriage

We want to share with you our simple statement of belief about marriage based on the Bible. You probably have heard many points of view about marriage, wouldn't it be nice to know what God, the marriage designer and architect, has to say about His gift? As you read, don't be overwhelmed, please keep in mind that none of us keeps God's standard perfectly. But it is important to know the design and the standard because it comes with rich blessing and wholeness in life together. We know that with His power He can do for us and in us what we cannot do for ourselves. You are not alone, we will walk with you as you prepare for the blessing of marriage.

We are not here to judge your faith or spiritual life. We are not perfect and will never be perfect in this life. Redemption and new life in Jesus Christ is a gift from God by His grace. Marriage does not grant you reconciliation to God, only Jesus can do this through His life giving Word of promise by His Holy Spirit. Jesus earned your salvation on the cross, He died in your place before God, taking on all your sin. Jesus now freely gives you life forever because He loves you.

Marriage is a divine institution created by God for humanity before our fall into sin. As God's image bearers the gift of marriage is for procreation, as caretakers of God's creation, and for our companionship and pleasure. (Genesis 1 & 2) Marriage was created by God as a lifelong union between one man and one woman. (Matthew 19:4-6)

The divine gift of marriage, along with humanity and all creation, was corrupted by willful humanity's fall into sin. (Genesis 3) Yet God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, continue to show great personal interest in every marriage union. God desires that husband and wife become one in marriage. God made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest details of marriage. Therefore, Marriage is a spiritual institution built on spiritual values including commitment, honesty, grace, love, patience, generosity, gratitude, forgiveness and more. (Malachi 2:15) God does not desire that we seek to love our spouses and build our marriages on our own power, but to turn to Christ daily for the power to do His will. (Matthew 19:26; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Luke 9:23-25)

Marriage is not a private institution, but intended by God to establish respect, authority, trust and contentment in society. Marriage is a gift from God meant to be lived out "in the presence of God and these witnesses." Therefore, we do not hide or run from our marriage issues and problems, but seek help and support from God's people. (Exodus 20:12-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31).

Since marriage is a spiritual institution given by God: a secure, fulfilling, rewarding, and loving marriage needs to be built on God's foundation and according to His plan and not our own. (Matthew 7:24-27; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12) With that in mind we believe that God created sex as a wonderful gift to humanity to be expressed only within the bond of marriage. (Song of Songs; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, 23; Hebrews 13:4). In marriage preparation we ask that those being married here respect and follow God's plan and live in separate households. (John 4:1-42; Hebrews 13:4)

We are committed to preparing any couple for marriage. We may not commit to doing the wedding service, but we have witnessed the success of solid biblical marriage preparation and we are committed to supporting couples in their preparation. We support the Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life and his dedication to biblical marriage and marriage preparation. We ask that you follow through completely on his recommendations and guidance in helping you to build a secure, strong, and joy filled, lifelong marriage.

Marriage and the Pastors at Christ Lutheran Church

We look forward to serving each and every couple as they prepare for marriage. We look forward to participating in your beautiful, Christ-centered, wedding ceremony. In fact, the Bible starts out with a wedding in Genesis and ends with a wedding in Revelation. Make no mistake, God uses weddings and marriage as an example to the world of His love for His people. God wants your marriage filled with that kind of love and giving. Here are some pastoral guidelines as you prepare for your wedding and marriage:

1. All of our marriage preparation goes through the office of the Director of Pastoral Care and Family life (DPCFL).
2. Typically the DPCFL performs the weddings at Christ Lutheran Church.
3. Requests for another Pastor on our staff for your wedding service needs to be made through the DPCFL's office as well. He will check the availability of the other Pastors.
4. The Pastors have as their goal to build marriages based on commitment and a lifelong covenant only to be separated by death.
5. The Pastors see marriage as a God-pleasing union of a man and a woman and the wedding day as a joyous worship service. He desires to be a part of your solid preparation and memorable wedding day.
6. The Pastors are not required to marry people if it violates his spiritual and/or doctrinal convictions. Nor are the Pastors required to marry people against his better judgment or the better judgment of the marriage preparation team.
7. Since God calls us to respect the boundaries of marriage and the fact that 90% of cohabiting relationships fail, we do not marry those cohabiting outside of marriage. However, we will support a couple in any way we can to enable them to live in separate households. Many have been wounded by broken marriages, or encouraged by friends and family, to live together first. Still, our experience has proven that our pre-marital program is incredibly helpful in preparing couples for their entire married lives, not just their wedding day. Therefore, we welcome all who wish to marry to join us in our pre-marriage preparation program and we are committed to providing this exceptional experience to each regardless of where they plan to marry.
8. We do require that those being married by one of our Pastors be over 20 years old. While an individual may be considered an adult by age 18, we believe they are still in the process of figuring out who they are apart from their parents and parents' household. In fact, only 1 in 8 marriages of those under 20 succeed.
9. We ask those who have been divorced to allow at least 18 months to pass after the divorce is final before considering remarriage. We believe a new relationship should not be pursued until the potential of a healthy reconciliation has been exhausted. Divorce is a process and so is recovery. Finishing that process and resolving the issues will set the stage for a healthy new relationship. (Malachi 2:16)
10. We require a six month advance notice for a wedding. That means you need to begin the marriage preparation process at least six months prior to your proposed wedding date. This will allow you enough time to complete the marriage preparation process. This process is designed to raise issues that will require time to work through to build a healthy marriage.
11. A wedding or marriage is not the solution to a sin problem. Marriage will not erase addictions like drugs, alcohol, sex or pornography. Marriage will not cure depression or lead to recovery from divorce. Marriage will not change your sexual orientation. All these issues and more need the spiritual healing and restoration power of Jesus Christ from the cross. When we fail to live out His word, when we fall and falter, God has given us reconciliation in Jesus. Seek help from one of our Pastors if you need help in this redemptive process of repentance, confession and forgiveness. (1 John 1:5-10)
12. We are committed to preparing any couple for marriage. We may not commit to doing the wedding service, but we have witnessed the success of solid marriage preparation and we are committed to supporting couples in their preparation.

Regarding Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce

Divorce is a difficult issue. Divorce is never easy, never clean, never sinless, and never victimless. Divorce is not God's design (Malachi 2:13-16), but comes by human prerogative. There are times when divorce seems the only choice left. In fact, most people don't want a divorce as much as they want the pain to end.

Difficult and dangerous situations often leave us difficult choices. Marriages involving abuse, alcoholism, infidelity and/or desertion are some of the situations that people confront when looking at divorce. Yet, 62% of the divorces in our country involve none of these difficult situations.

For those who have been through a divorce we promote a healing process centered on the forgiveness and restoration of Jesus Christ. Since 60% of second marriages fail, along with other grim statistics, it seems most people bring unresolved relationship issues into their next marriage.

Because most divorces are sad and unnecessary we strongly encourage those who are pursuing divorce or are divorced, to make sure all avenues of reconciliation are sincerely pursued. The Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life can aid you in this process.

Please keep in mind that it takes at least 18 months and often longer to recover from divorce. The death of a marriage needs to be grieved and issues need to be dealt with by both parties.

Remarriage After Divorce

We recognize that those contemplating another marriage are even more fearful than before. No one wants to see another divorce. We want you to have a fulfilling marriage. That means issues need to be resolved and healing needs to be as complete as possible before another marriage is consummated.

1. In general, remarriage is desirable. (Genesis 2:18, I Corinthians 7:7-9, I Timothy 5:14)
2. Remarriage following a divorce is possible under the following conditions:
 - a. Every effort at reconciliation has been exhausted.
 - b. All obligations for child support and alimony are met.
3. Since second marriages have such a dismal success rate, please work with us considerately as we assess the level of your recovery and look carefully at the issues that led to your divorce. No one, especially you, wants to see another divorce.
4. The 6-12 months preparation process is even more critical for remarriage situations.
5. Please respond completely to the "Remarriage Couple Questions" in the back of this guide.

Remarriage After the Death of a Spouse

Remarriage following the death of a spouse is a God pleasing choice. The main concern is that the mourning process is at a place that facilitates a healthy marriage. Grief sometimes clouds people's choices and judgement. The marriage preparation team desires to aid you in your decision and preparation.

Please take the time to respond to the "Couple Questions" sheets provided before you meet with the Director of Pastoral Care and Family Life.

As you plan, remember the marriage preparation process takes at least 6 months.

How to Get Your Marriage License

Kansas:

Johnson County Courthouse

100 N. Kansas Ave
Olathe, Kansas
913-715-3428

<https://courts.jocogov.org/dc ML Req App.aspx>

Wyandotte County Courthouse

710 N. 7th St., First Floor
Kansas City, KS 66101
913-573-5000

<http://www.weddingvendors.com/marriage-license-laws/united-states/kansas>

Missouri:

Jackson County Courthouse

415 E. 12th St., Room 104
Kansas City, MO
816-881-3198

<http://www.jacksongov.org/>

Jackson County has two locations where you may apply for a marriage license. Jackson County Courthouse Recorder of Deeds Department 415 East 12th Street, Room 104 Kansas City, Missouri 64106 (816) 881-1577 Jackson County Courthouse Annex Recorder of Deeds Department 308 West Kansas Avenue, Suite 104 Independence, Missouri 64050 (816) 881-4608