

**Trinity Lutheran Church**  
Policies and Procedures

**Position on Abortion**

This congregation recognizes that the issue of abortion and reproductive rights is a complex issue that is still dividing Americans and still being debated both in religious institutions and in civil court. However, because this congregation takes seriously its commitment to its adherence to the Word of God, The following points regarding abortion are a fundamental policy of our beliefs, behaviors, and practice.

1. To hold firmly to the clear Biblical truth that, (a) the living but unborn are “person” in the sight of God from the time of conception (Job 10:9 – 11; Ps. 51:5; 139:13 – 17; Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:41 – 44); (b) as persons the unborn stand under the full protection of God’s own prohibition against murder (Gen. 9:6; Ex. 20:13; Num. 35:33; Acts 7:19; 1 John 3:15); and (c) since abortion takes a human life, abortion is not a moral option, except as a tragically unavoidable by-product of medical procedures necessary to prevent the death of another human being, viz., the mother. Accordingly, we reject abortion as a means of “retroactive” birth control.
2. To speak and act as responsible citizens in the civic and political arena on behalf of the living but unborn, to secure for these defenseless persons due protection under the law.
3. To offer as an alternative to abortion supportive understanding, compassion and help to the expectant parent(s) and family, and to foster concern for the unwanted babies, encouraging agencies and families to open hearts and homes to these children in their need for family.

In addition, we encourage all members to:

- A. To warn, publicly and privately (Prov. 31:8 – 9) against the sin of abortion;
- B. To instruct the community of God that abortion is not in the realm of Christian liberty, private choice, personal opinion, or political preference;
- C. To nurture a deep reverence and gratitude for God’s gracious gift of human life;
- D. To oppose in a responsible way attitudes and policies in congregations, schools, hospitals, and other institutions within their sphere of influence and work which suggest that abortion is a matter of personal choice;
- E. To promote clear instruction of Christians morality in our homes, schools, and congregation, showing the blessings and safeguards inherent in God’s will for sexual chastity before marriage and faithfulness in marriage; and
- F. To show love and compassion to those who have had abortions and show them through the Gospel that there is a way of forgiveness.

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## Burial of the Dead

The purpose and focus of a Service for Burial of the Dead can be best summarized by the Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship (hereafter CLBW, Pfatteicher, 1990, p. 175):

*The Burial of the Dead is an expression of the faith and hope of the community of those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ in the face of the death of one of its members. This expression takes three aspects: 1) Prayer for the one who has died, commending that person to the care of God; 2) comfort of the bereaved with their assurance of the power and goodness of the living God; and 3) praise of God "to whom all things live," the destroyer of death and the source of life and salvation.*

The Burial of the Dead incorporates 1) a liturgy of baptism, where the promise of salvation is made with the individual, and also 2) a liturgy for Easter, which makes the proclamation for the individual the deliverance from death to life as our Lord and Master Jesus was brought from death to life (CLBW, p. 477). Some comments on these two aspects are appropriate. Regarding Baptism, Luther has this to say:

*St. Paul, in Romans 6 says, "we were buried in Christ by baptism into death." The sooner a person dies after baptism, the sooner is his baptism completed... There is no help for the sinful nature unless it dies and is destroyed with all its sin. Therefore the life of a Christian, from Baptism to the grave, is nothing else than the beginning of a blessed death. For at the last day God will make him altogether new. ...Then shall we arise from death, from sins, and from all evil, pure in body and soul, and then shall we live eternally. Then shall we be truly lifted up out of baptism and be completely born... (Luther's Works, hereafter LW 35:30-31).*

And of course the culminating event for Christians is the resurrection of Christ. If indeed we were buried in Christ by baptism into death (Romans 6:4), then also through Christ, who defeats death and rose from the dead, we too shall rise to new life. For if we are united in a death like his, we shall certainly be united in a resurrection like his (Romans 6:5). Baptism is the beginning of the Christian life, death and the resurrection (Easter) are the conclusion of it. Hence the significance of such things in the Burial of the Dead.

Therefore, our purpose in this rite of burying the dead will be to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the end that the promises in baptism are remembered before Almighty God; the living are comforted through the promise of the resurrection and are called to repentance and faithfulness through the Gospel; and all honor and glory is finally rendered in thanks to the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This means that our worship in a funeral service is unalterably trinitarian in language and content, and unabashedly focused on the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

This congregation and its pastors do not provide facilities for, nor do they participate in

generic religious rites and human ceremonies for the broadly religious or the vaguely Christian which deny, dilute, diminish, or disregard the truth which is Jesus Christ and him alone. As a matter of Scriptural and confessional fidelity, we do not tone down our unmistakable intention to name the name of Jesus Christ and tell his story, in order that all present might be saved and come to a knowledge of what we hold as the truth. It is true that some attending the funeral service will be pagan or otherwise non-Christian, and thus will be embarrassed or offended by our expression of faith in the triune God. This is certainly sad, but it should in no way silence us in our corporate response to the call to testify to Jesus the living Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. In the same light, convictions and practices that differ from our traditions and practices will not be incorporated into the planning or conducting of the service. This church affirms that “the ceremonies or tributes of social or fraternal societies have no place within the service of the church” (LBW, p. 206).

### **Recognition of the Deceased**

“In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for relatives or associates of the deceased to comment briefly on the meaning of the life of the deceased for the community, but this must not overshadow or exclude a proclamation of the Gospel by the preacher (Manual on the Liturgy, hereafter ML, p. 360). Military honors or other political and social recognitions and rites have no place *within* the liturgy of the church. It is either by Christ we are saved, or not at all. Should such recognitions be desired, they must be held prior to or following the liturgy of the church.

### **Notification of a Death**

“The death of a member of the church should be reported as soon as possible to the pastor who will assist in ...arrangements for the funeral” (ML, p. 355). The pastor will be available to meet with the family following notification of a death.

### **Role of the Pastor**

All decisions regarding the rite of the Burial of the Dead are to be made in consultation with the pastor of the church. These decisions include but are not limited to: date, time, location, service, liturgical appointments, scripture readings, music, hymns, soloists, recognitions, the sacrament of the altar, and the like. Funeral directors may participate and serve in the rites of the church, but only at the pastor’s directive.

Again it is to say that there is a balance between comforting the bereaved and not diminishing the distinct and succinct message of the church at this time. Indeed, the message of the Gospel in itself is “comfort and defiance, for in his name we are baptized” (LW 28:108).

### **Requests of the Deceased and the Family**

While every attempt will be made to accommodate reasonable, relevant, and reverent requests regarding the rite of burial, such desires cannot supercede or replace the established and time-honored traditions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Again, it is to say that at a time such as this, *Christ Jesus and no one else will have his way with us*. Prior requests of the deceased and requests of the family are always suggestions, and never directives, to the church and pastor.

“The sermon may include a recognition of the life of the deceased, but its purpose is not eulogy, but a proclamation of hope and comfort in Christ” (ML, p. 360). The pastor will put primary emphasis here. Eulogizing the deceased does have benefits, and appropriate alternate times and places will be discussed.

### **Location of the Service**

“The funerals of practicing Christians shall be in their parish church, the place where their lives of worship have centered” (ML, p. 355). The sanctuary of the church is the place where we have encountered *Jesus for us* and received the abundance of God’s blessings and promises. Specific and explicit symbols of our faith are here: The cross, the altar where the sacrament of Holy Communion has been received, the baptismal font where the promise was sealed with the individual, and so on. Other spaces generally are generic and nondescript, and as such, do not demonstrate the seriousness of Christ for us. Funeral homes, while often used as a location, should be used only as a last resort.

### **The Casket**

“The coffin remains closed throughout the service” (ML, p. 356). Viewing of the body is appropriate prior to the service, but upon closing the casket for the service, it will not be reopened for viewing at a later time. Flags, flowers, or other adornments (with the exception of a funeral pall) shall not rest upon or beside the casket during the service. Presentations of the American Flag may be made prior to the beginning of the service or during military honors at the conclusion of the committal. The placing of a funeral pall (where available) and the placing of the coffin up near the altar, the baptismal font, and the Paschal Candle speaks to the presence of the triune God and his enduring promise to us. *All other things symbolically confuse and sentimentally distort the message of God to the mourners.* The Christian funeral is a time to witness to the majestic sovereignty of God over death while the world falters before its denial of death’s sting.

### **Cremation**

The Lutheran Church has no theological position regarding cremation of the remains. Nevertheless, cremation is becoming more commonplace. This church will treat cremated remains the same as if a body were present, because the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it relates to the deceased has never been contingent upon human practices.

### **Liturgical Appointments and the Service**

Chancel paraments and clergy vestments shall be the color of the church season or holy day. The Paschal (Christ) Candle shall be lit, symbolizing the tie with baptism and the death and resurrection of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. Flowers can be an appropriate visual expression of sympathy and love. However, too many flowers can detract from and interfere with the liturgical emphasis and movement, as well as clutter the chancel area.

The liturgy itself, while allowing for some flexibility, can be found on pages 206-214 in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. This shall be the basic structure of the funeral service. It is strongly recommended and encouraged to incorporate the Holy Supper of our Lord into the

service. It is to say that indeed, just as Christ's body and blood are given and shed for us, we too will share in eternal life. The church organist may be available to provide music. Every attempt will be made to honor specific musical requests. However, the music "selected for use at a funeral should embody high standards of quality, and in general reflect the spirit of Christian confidence, trust, and hope in the resurrection. The hymns should reflect such themes as the invocation of the Holy Spirit, comfort, the communion of saints, hope in the resurrection" (ML, p. 356).

### **Memorial Gifts to the Church**

The council and Stewardship Team maintain a list of recommended categories and items for which donations may be made.

### **Receptions Following the Committal Service**

At the request of the family, the Trinity Lutheran Church serving teams will coordinate and serve at a reception for family and friends at the church. Such functions not necessarily appropriate during the service itself may also take place here.

This policy has been enacted not to make such times as this more difficult, but rather to express the deepest and most profound mystery of the church: namely the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the promise that the deceased, too, shall share in this mystery. For if we have indeed hoped in Christ for this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:19). For indeed the mystery is this: "We shall not all perish, but we shall be changed. In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-2)

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## **Weddings at Trinity Lutheran Church**

While the rite of marriage within the Lutheran Church is not considered a “sacrament” (that is, a means of God’s Grace), it nonetheless is a sacred and joyful day! We are happy to provide you with our services as you bind yourselves together as husband and wife, in the hopes that it will be a most memorable day!

The rite of marriage is not something to be undertaken lightly, because of its lifelong, binding commitments and promises that are made in the presence of God and those gathered for that day. It is our hope that the information contained in this pamphlet will assist you in planning a joyous day and a permanent, lifelong marriage. We pray that God’s blessing fill you as you begin a lifelong partnership together in the name of Christ Jesus!

### **Can we get married here, even if we are not members?**

Increasingly, the institution of marriage has come under attack in our society. For thousands of years, marriage was recognized as a union between one man and one woman only. Recent decisions by the Supreme Court of the United States have served to undermine this sacred institution established and sustained by God. Therefore, this congregation has chosen to refuse to perform weddings for those who are not related to this congregation in some way, in an effort to preserve and maintain its ancient tradition and history regarding the sacred institution of marriage.

We refuse to perform non-Christian weddings. We also refuse to perform same sex weddings, along with any type of union that may exist outside the Biblical definition of marriage as that which is between one man and one woman only, and who were man and woman at birth. Those who do not profess Christian beliefs or who will not agree to this will not be allowed to marry in this congregation.

### **Why get married in a Church?**

Because we place extreme value on the Holy Scriptures, we hold firmly to the teachings that the Bible offers regarding marriage. In this day and age where divorce is becoming more and more commonplace, we still believe marriage to be a sacred and lifelong institution. We believe this because Jesus affirms the sacredness and permanent nature in the Gospels of Matthew (chapter 19) and Mark (chapter 10) where he quotes from the account of creation in Genesis and declares “*that at the beginning the Creator `made them male and female,' and said, `For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*” The writer of Hebrews tells us “*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure*” (13:4a). This and other passages from the Bible instruct us that marriage is indeed a lifelong, binding promise made to one another in the sight of God. We believe, teach, and practice that marriage is ONLY between one man and one woman. Two who marry become a new creation as they become “one flesh.” Therefore, we marry in the church to have the union sanctified and blessed by almighty God, who gives us breath and still sustains us in life.

**What will our service be like?**

Because we believe marriage to be a binding promise made in the presence of God, the service is a sacred and joyful occasion. A copy of the general service can be made available if requested. All aspects of the service should reflect good taste and Christian values. All parts of the service serve to give Glory to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They also serve to remind us and instruct us as to God's Word and his will in our lives. Music, practices, and other such things that do not reflect this will not be permitted. This does not mean that the service itself is rigid and inflexible. Variations in the standard service are permissible, but should be discussed ahead of time with the pastor, and are also subject to the approval of the pastor. There are a number of choices and decisions for you to make regarding the service. The following FAQ's will address these.

The average length of a wedding service at Trinity Lutheran is approximately thirty to forty five minutes. This will vary, of course, with musical selections and other added components.

**What pre-wedding requirements must we meet?**

Before any marriage service, it is expected that the couple go through a period of premarital instruction or counseling. We are committed to maintaining and nurturing strong Christian couples and families, and therefore offer this period of instruction to help the couple strengthen and improve their relationship with one another and their relationship with Christ Jesus our savior. Studies show that couples who actively participate in a period of premarital instruction have a significant advantage over others in maintaining a fulfilling, lifelong marriage. It is in your best interests to go through this process, since it is our desire for your marriage to indeed last a lifetime.

Generally, you can expect between 4 to 6 sessions, most lasting an hour to an hour and a half in length. One additional session will be held approximately 6 months after your wedding. Most people who engage in this process find it to be extremely helpful to them in understanding themselves and their partners better.

Individual expectations from the couple may also be decided upon, based upon the conclusions taken from each session.

**How many people can the church sanctuary seat?**

In general, the regular seating capacity in the sanctuary itself is 225-250 people. Additional seating may be utilized in the commons area.

Room for the wedding party to dress and change is available.

**How do we set our wedding date?**

The church secretary can assist you in offering available dates, but all dates are tentative until approved by the pastor.

**What about alcohol or smoking?**

According to our policy, there is no smoking in the church building or the church yard. There is also to be no alcohol of any kind in the church or the church yard. Additionally, the pastor or another church representative may refuse participation in the wedding service of anyone who has been drinking prior to the service.

**Can we choose our own music for the service?**

Music is often a big part of the service, and therefore all requests for specific selections will be considered. However, in keeping with the definitions of the service outlined previously, such music should conform to good taste, Christian morality and the praise of God. No music is permitted unless first approved by the pastor.

Should you wish, we have members and musicians here who can offer suggestions of appropriate music for your service.

**What are appropriate decorations for the church?**

Because the rite of marriage is performed within the framework of the congregation and the church year calendar, the altar color will be that which is appropriate to the day and/or season. Summer time weddings, which are popular, will most likely be green, which is the color of the season of Pentecost. Other colors, appropriate to the seasons of the church, are white, red, purple, and blue.

Flowers and other adornments may be of any color or style you choose. Flowers are not normally permitted on the altar, except as a part of the unity candle base, if so used. If you would like the flowers to be left and used for the following Sunday's worship, please notify the church office of this in advance. Mention of it will then be made in the bulletin. Decorations along the aisle are permitted, and are subject to the pastor's approval, but may not be taped or otherwise permanently fastened to the chairs.

Candles appropriate to the day can also be lit. This would include a "unity" candle (which you must provide).

The "Paschal" or Christ candle is not lit during the service, unless your wedding were to occur within the season of Easter. This candle is only lit during Easter, baptisms, and funerals.

All of the chancel furnishings are a dedicated part of this church and its worship life, and are therefore not to be removed, shifted, or otherwise concealed.

All such decorations that you provide must be removed at the conclusion of the service.

**Is photography allowed in the service?**

The most appropriate time for your photographer to take pictures is either before or after the service. However, during the service, the photographer may not use flash photography nor are they allowed to be up and moving about in the sanctuary. The chancel area is off limits to photographers entirely during the service. This is to help preserve a reverent and worshipful atmosphere during this



sacred rite. Videography is also allowed, but video cameras must be in inconspicuous locations.

### **Is it permissible to throw rice as the couple leaves the service?**

No, because the origins of this custom actually derive from ancient pagan and fertility religions which make it inappropriate for a church wedding. Bubbles, ringing bells, petals, candy favors, or other things that are easily biodegradable are permitted.

### **How do we put together our bulletin?**

Obtaining the actual bulletin cover is the responsibility of the bride and groom. Many examples can be purchased from any Christian bookstore, and the church has numerous catalogs through which they can also be ordered. The church office will be happy to provide at cost, the service of printing the bulletins. The order of service and content must be approved by the pastor and proofread by the couple before they will be run. If you choose to design your own cover, keep in mind that it should be in good taste and within the context of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **Do we rehearse the service ahead of time?**

Generally, the wedding would be rehearsed the evening before the actual service. It is a good idea to run through it ahead of time so that the service itself can run smoothly. Expect the rehearsal to take approximately one hour.

### **May other pastors participate?**

At the request of the bride and groom, and at the pastor's discretion, additional pastors may participate in the service. However, it is important to note that it is customary for the pastor of this church to be the presiding minister at all weddings, by virtue of his calling to this congregation. The potential inclusion of other pastors does not indicate an endorsement of another denomination's practices, but is considered out of our common bond through Jesus Christ our Savior.

### **What do we need to set up for the service?**

Setup can generally be done by the bridal party in the days immediately preceding the service. As mentioned, it is expected that all decorations be removed at the end of the service, unless previously arranged otherwise.

### **Can we use the sound system at the church?**

The system currently in use is new with the building, installed in the Spring of 2015. It is a highly elaborate system and we require that only those who know the system operate it. Therefore, one of our sound techs must be present to run the system if it is used. They will also attend the rehearsal so that they know in advance of what needs there are for the service.

### **Who will play the music for our service?**

This is entirely up to you. Our musicians, pianists and organists are available. In addition, there are a number of people here who also sing for weddings. Another option is pre-recorded music, with the pastor's approval, that can be played through the sound system. Such music can either be on CD or on cassette tape.

### **Can we use a wedding planner?**

Many couples are now relieving some of the stress and burden of wedding planning and coordination by using a wedding planner. However, all matters pertaining to the worship service are subject to final approval by the pastor, as this is his area of responsibility and leadership.

### **What fees are associated with our wedding at Trinity Lutheran?**

It is customary to pay for additional services needed. Many of these services and fees are arranged ahead of time between the provider of the service and the couple. Here are some universal recommendations for some of these services:

Organist/Accompanist:	\$75.00-\$100.00
Soloist/Special Music:	\$50.00, or \$30.00 per song
<u>Sound System tech:</u>	<u>\$50.00</u>
Pastoral gratuity:	\$100.00
Church Wedding Planner:	\$100.00

### **May God bless your Wedding day!**

We hope this pamphlet will assist you, should you desire to marry here at Trinity Lutheran Church. If you have any questions that you find are not answered here, we will be happy to answer them for you. May God bless your union and life together!

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