

## **POLICIES ON WEDDINGS, BAPTISMS, AND FUNERALS** **GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, BELFAST, PA.**

The congregation of Grace Lutheran Church takes seriously its commitment to the pastoral care and spiritual growth of its members, as well as non-members for whom pastoral services may be provided. Therefore, we have adopted the following policies with regard to weddings, baptisms, and funerals of members and non-members.

### **WEDDINGS:**

It is our policy to perform weddings for members of Grace who agree to come with their fianc\_ to three pre-marital counseling sessions with the pastor. The pastor will consider performing a wedding for two non-members if there is a serious commitment by at least one of the partners to joining Grace Church, and if there is sufficient time for the pastor to get to know the couple well enough to be able, in good conscience, to give his blessing to the marriage. This is in accord with a long-standing policy of the Lutheran Church which states: *“Before solemnizing a Marriage, the Minister shall counsel with the persons about to be married, and shall diligently inquire: first, as to whether the union contemplated be in accordance with the Word of God; second, whether it be in accordance with the laws of the State. No Marriage shall be solemnized unless the Minister be convinced that God’s blessing may properly be asked upon it.”*

The couple should contact the pastor as early as possible to set up a schedule for counseling and planning - at a minimum, six months before the proposed wedding date. There are fees for the services of the organist and custodian. For non-members there are also fees for the pastor’s services and the use of the building.

### **BAPTISMS:**

The pastor will perform a baptism only when at least one of the parents is a member of Grace, or has made a commitment to joining and raising the child in the church. A baptismal instruction session with the pastor is required. Except in very extenuating circumstances, the baptism should take place during the worship service so that the congregation can affirm their commitment to the spiritual nurture and support of the child being baptized.

We encourage parents to choose a godparent/sponsor who is an active church-goer and who puts a high value on the child’s Christian upbringing. A godparent *does not* have to be the child’s legally appointed guardian in case of the death of the parents.

### **FUNERALS:**

The pastor will perform a funeral service for anyone, member or non-member. The survivors of active members are encouraged to consider having the funeral (or memorial service) in the church. Viewings can also be accommodated at the church. For members, there is no fee for the pastor’s services or use of the church. There is a fee for the custodian’s services.

*Approved by church council 9/4/97  
(Revised 5/09)*