

Traditions . . .

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The pastor said these get-togethers are most popular in rural communities where couples tend to have large support structures. Sometimes 200 to 500 people attend.

Deahl said the city weddings he's performed are "fairly small." Most people are 17 to 33 years old when they marry. If they attend UNL, they probably will go home for their service. Most wedding ceremonies Deahl has performed at Grace United Methodist are "transient weddings," he said. He said people will walk in and want a wedding done in two days. They come to the church because "That's where weddings are done, not necessarily out of a commitment" to the church, he said.

Deahl said the United Methodist Book of Discipline requires ministers to hold sessions with the couple before they are married.

"Usually, by the time anybody comes in, there's very little that a minister can do to change the decision," Deahl said.

Meeting with the couple does give the minister a chance to make the service "as friendly as you can get it."

Family members sometimes sing or read scriptures, prayers or poems.

"I'm not sure if there is a typical marriage service," Deahl said.

Music is an element that makes weddings different. Deahl said there are two varieties. The first, basic style includes classical music sometimes played by professional musicians.

Modern music is the second variety. Deahl said one couple he married used Country-Western music in their service.

Writing your own wedding vows also makes a service distinctive, Deahl said. Some people are concerned about sexist language and are sensitive to the language of traditional vows. However, the minister said, he's seeing less innovation in this area.

"People are more concerned about tuxes and how they match bridesmaid gowns," Deahl said.

Deahl said he has noticed some common themes in most of his weddings. He said only one of the couples usually belongs to the church they are married in. More Protestant women are marrying Catholic men now, he said.

The Rev. Richard Deonise from Blessed Sacrament Rectory said he sees quite a few mixed marriages. He said this is because Catholics are a minority in the Lincoln area. Mixed marriages aren't forbidden in the Catholic Church but he said he "tries to discourage them because of

different religious backgrounds."

Couples look at what they each bring to a marriage during pre-nuptial preparation with the father, he said. The threesome starts meeting up to eight months before the service takes place.

"It helps me to get to know the couple," Deonise said. "That way, on that (wedding) day, there is a deeper relationship between the couple and the priest."

During the eight-month period, the couple is given material to help in planning for the ceremony. These guidelines include approved church music.

"The church music has to be expressive of the holiness and beauty of God himself," Deonise said. "We use a lot of contemporary church music."

Every parish has its own musicians who can play for the wedding, but couples can provide their own, he said.

Increased family involvement, larger weddings and pre-nuptial dinners are current trends, he said.

"Nothing has changed in terms of doctrine," Deonise said.

The traditional nuptial mass includes a declaration of public consent, an exchange of vows and the blessing and exchange of rings. Prayers, scripture, a sermon and communion round out the service.

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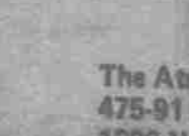
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