



LIVING STONE

REFORMED CHURCH

ORDER OF SERVICE

August 30, 2026

NEXT WEEK: SEPTEMBER 6, 2026

LIVING STONE REFORMED CHURCH | 9:30 AM

NSA NORTH CAMPUS (112 N. MAIN ST) | BEN ZORNES

CHRIST CHURCH | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 AM

CHURCH HALL (820 DOMINION WAY) | DOUGLAS WILSON

CHRIST CHURCH DOWNTOWN | 8:00 & 10:00 AM

CHALMER'S HALL (417 S. JACKSON ST) | BEN MERKLE

KING'S CROSS CHURCH | 9:30 AM

LOGOS FIELDHOUSE (1221 W. A ST) | TOBY SUMPTER

ASCENSION REFORMED CHURCH | 9:30 AM

NUART THEATER (516 S. MAIN ST) | SHAWN PATERSON

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ORDER OF SERVICE

ANNOUNCEMENTS & MEDITATION

- CALL TO WORSHIP -

Please stand.

ADORATION

Minister: Grace, mercy, and peace to you, from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Congregation: And also to you.

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 1:1-2

Minister: Lift up your hearts!

Congregation: We lift them up to the Lord!

PRAYER

HYMN

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling.....378

- CONFESSION -

Please sit.

EXHORTATION.....*Joshua Edgren*

PSALM

Unto the Lord I Cried and Pleaded.....Bulletin

CONFESSION OF SIN

Congregation is invited to kneel if able.

Hebrews 2:3

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Please stand.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Minister: Your sins are forgiven through Christ.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION OF FAITH

Minister: Christian, what do you believe?

Congregation: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the virgin, Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hades. On the third day He rose again from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING: PSALM 92

Minister: It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,

Congregation: And to sing praises unto Your name, O most High:

Minister: To show forth Your lovingkindness in the morning,

Congregation: And Your faithfulness every night.

Minister: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:

Congregation: He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Minister: Those that be planted in the house of the Lord

Congregation: Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Minister: They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;

Congregation: They shall be fat and flourishing;

Minister: To show that the Lord is upright:

Congregation: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Amen.

HYMN

Zion, Founded on the Mountains.....159

- CONSECRATION -

SCRIPTURE READING

(Kurt Robinson)

1 Kings 4:21-34, Matthew 12:38-42

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

BAPTISMS

Opal Imogen Stofferahn

Josiah Daniel Cabale, Ethan Nathaniel Cabale, Hannah Aletheia Cabale

"Little child, for you Jesus Christ came to this earth, struggled and suffered; for your sake He crossed Gethsemane and went through the darkness of Calvary; for your sake He cried: 'It is finished'; for your sake He died and for your sake He overcame death; indeed for your sake, little child, and you still knew nothing of it. And thus the word of the apostle is confirmed: 'We love God, for He loved us first.'

HYMN

Please sit.

It's Good to Thank the Lord.....169

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

(Kurt Robinson)

Opening: Psalm 102:25-27

Thanksgiving: Hebrews 6:13-14, 17-18

Petitions: Hebrews 4:14-16

HYMN

Please stand.

The Man Who Once Has Found Abode

166 (vv. 1-3)

SERMON

Please sit.

'Til Death Do Us Part.....Ben Zornes

PRAYER

Ending with *The Lord's Prayer.....725*

OFFERTORY

Please stand

Sanctus.....722

- COMMUNION -

Please sit.

MEDITATION.....*Joshua Edgren*

THE BREAD

At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing.....482

THE WINE

The Man Who Once Has Found Abode

166 (vv. 4-6)

- COMMISSIONING -

Please stand.

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

The congregation may raise hands.

Psalm 134.....269

CHARGE & BENEDICTION

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

2 Corinthians 13:14

"MAY I COME TO THE LORD'S TABLE?"

The Lord's Supper is observed every Lord's Day at Living Stone. We warmly invite to the Lord's table all those who are baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and His body, the Church. Since the elders are responsible for the table, when a baptized child begins taking the Lord's Supper, we ask a parent to notify one of the elders. By eating the bread and drinking the wine with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. You also acknowledge to the elders of this congregation that you are in covenant with God, being active in a congregation which is covenantally bound to the triune God through Word and sacrament. If you have any doubt about your participation, please speak to the elders before or after the service.

INTRODUCTION

If someone was given the choice between a luxury vacation on a private tropical island and counting a warehouse full of packing peanuts, the right option is readily obvious. But our culture has an acute case of apathy when it comes to the goodness & glory of marriage, and the mysterious kindness found in a godly courtship. We've swapped that which is a glory for that which is a bore. What God wants us to see when we look at courtship is an unsearchable wonder of His kind providence.

THE TEXT

There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid. Proverbs 30:18-19

A WONDERFUL THING

This riddle describes courtship as something of a mystery. It is the sort of thing that doesn't quite follow the rules of scientific observation. What was it that brought this man and this woman together? This numerical riddle progresses from the mysterious and untraceable movements of eagles, snakes, and sea-faring vessels, to the union of a man and maiden.

Our curiosity wants a system, a chart, a ready-to-hand explanation. This riddle, like a good riddle, leaves us with a furrowed brow. If you could crack that code you'd be the wealthiest matchmaker of all time. Something guides the eagle in the sky, the snake on the rock, and the ship on the sea; yet that something leaves no trace.

There's also a deliberate tension in this proverb. A couple are drawn together romantically, and of course, this union is unseen. This might tempt a couple to think they can indulge that union without scrutiny or consequence. In fact, this proverb is immediately followed with a warning parable: the adulterous woman eats, wipes her mouth, and says, "I've done no wrong (Pro. 30:20)." So what is the answer to this riddle? There is One who does guide all things to their appointed end; the adulterous is a fool who says, "There is no God." The wise man knows that in the magnetic pull that draws a man and maiden together, God is at work. That being the case, a young couple should walk each stage of romance with the knowledge that their love for each other cannot escape the eyes of the Lord, and it is either pleasing to Him, or it is in defiance of Him.

TRACING THE UNTRACEABLE

But the mysterious and wonderful way of a man with a maid does in fact have a visible outcome. Their unseen affection does become manifest. It is manifested in a wedding (solemnized vows) and it is manifested in children (consummation). So, let's do our best to trace this often untraceable path.

SPARKS FLY

God kindly limits the scope of your search for a wife or husband. God did this for Adam by showing him that his helper wouldn't come from the Animal Kingdom. But in Adam's case, he had the advantage of getting a corner on the marriage market. Yet the same God is at work in our case. Animals? Off limits (Gen. 2:20, Lev. 18:23). Same sex? Ditto (Lev 18:22). Anyone already married? Off the market (Ex. 20:14). The gorgeous woman you captured in conquest? Cool your baby jets (Deu. 21:10-14). Those too old, or too young? Out of consideration (Gen. 1:28). Outside the faith? No go (1 Cor. 7:39). In this way, God has kindly narrowed your search down to probably about a hundred suitable matches.

Your duty is to consider whether that pool of prospective matches is marked by godly virtues, and if not, find a way to expand the pool. Along these lines, Richard Steele offers this wise counsel, "Do not

first love, and then consider; but first consider, and then love. Chiefly fix your observation on the soul of the [prospective wife].” Physical attraction shouldn’t be ignored, but godliness must take priority. Think of it like two cars in a garage. One is a vintage muscle car, one is a standard issue, but only one has an engine. Pick the one with an engine.

A man is seeking a helper for his particular mission. Say a man wants to go live off-grid up near Elk River. He needs to recognize that not every young woman will jump at that opportunity, but some might be thrilled by that prospect. So, as singles mingle, a man should know where he is going and if he is going somewhere compelling, with good-natured determination, he will likely have several interested parties. For young women, remember that a feature of courtship for a young woman is that of interruption to her current trajectory and the hitching of her wagon to a young man’s star. If the sparks of initial mutual attraction and affection begin to fly, it is important to quickly move to the next stage.

ZONE OF VULNERABILITY

Too many couples begin flirting and making eyes at each other, and then are bewildered by what they should do next with all their burning desires. This is what, around here, is called the zone of vulnerability. Both the young man and lady find their hearts becoming intertwined, and to walk away would bring about grief, heartache, and a horse-trough of disappointment.

This is where a young man must lead. He should not leave a young woman in a zone of guessing his intentions. He should not play coy with her. Nor should she lead him on, merely hoping for another free fancy dinner at Lodgepole. Quite as soon as he knows he’s smitten with her and that she is the sort of girl he’d like to build a household with, he should seek out her father.

COURTSHIP PROPER

When a suitor meets with a father for permission to woo and win a young woman, a father should put the young man through his paces. He should also pray with his wife and daughter about this particular young man, and consult his daughter about her willingness to begin getting to know this young man. If the father is satisfied with the young man’s character and the daughter consents to a courtship they enter what we could call “courtship proper”. It should be a season of deliberate consideration and mutual evaluation. Recognize that as a couple increasingly open up to each other, the emotional cost of walking away also increases. Thus, you should find any deal-breakers ASAP. A few things fall in this category: significant theological/worldview differences, significant sexual sin, significant financial follies, significant familial dysfunction, and significant character defects.

Couples should be permitted to have these discussions with each other, to disclose or confess anything within these spheres. This really should get sorted out within the first month of dating. Topics worth covering are: how many kids and when, goals, particular convictions, hobbies, approach to money, and favorite (fill in the blank). Parents can provide some discussion questions for the young couple to go over either together with parents present or in a public setting.

Which brings up an important, what the scholars would call, excursus, and what we plain folk call a rabbit trail. Keep things in public spaces. The temptation to take a courtship from a G-rated movie to an R-rated one is avoided by keeping to mom and dad’s living room, the coffee shop, or the city park.

So, if everything that should be brought up, has been, then what next?

PUT A RING ON IT

If everything checks out, it is time for the young man to spend as much money as he responsibly can to purchase an engagement ring. He should request her father’s blessing to ask her to marry him. Then put thought into a meaningful way to propose to her. Pro tip: halftime of the Bulls’ game is probably a bad idea, unless you’re entirely certain she’ll say, “Yes.” Even then, a humble proposal is better than a gaudy one.

PLAN THE WEDDING

Now is the time to plan a wedding. An engagement should only last as long as it takes to plan a wedding. Wedding preparations should be marked by a sort of oxymoron: austere festivity. No one should go into debt to put on the wedding, but it should be a party which the parents of the couple put on in honor of this newly formed family. This requires everyone involved to live by the biblical maxim, “Consider one another (Heb. 10:24).” Better to have a plain wedding with joyful fellowship between all involved, than a lavish festival full of strife, envy, and grudges.

During the whole process of a courtship, from the initial sparks, to the sparkle of the diamond ring, until the bride walks down the aisle, something quite obvious, but often overlooked, needs to be kept in mind: the couple isn’t married yet. Often, as soon as a couple starts dating, they begin acting as if they are one flesh. They can do this on any number of fronts. They are progressing to the uniting of their bodies, finances, emotions, and spiritual lives. But during this delicate, and ideally short, period between the engagement and the exchange of vows, they are communicating to each other what sort of behavior they are willing to partake in with someone they aren’t married to. Thus, prudence and propriety are not optional. You are setting the stage for either a marriage full of trust, or a marriage full of misgivings.

The lead up to a wedding should certainly be sweet, and the couple really should draw closer to each other. But until the vows are exchanged a big neon sign that reads “NOT YET” should hang over everything. Pastor Wilson has helpfully used the example of slowly rolling out a rug. The rug is the various aspects of intimacy: emotional, spiritual, financial, and physical. If you try to roll out one part of the rug while thinking you can keep the other parts rolled up, you will only end up with a badly misshapen rug.

BE FRUITFUL

God made us male and female for the purpose of being fruitful and multiplying worshippers of God (Mal. 2:15). You exist because God worked in a mysterious way to bring all your ancestors together. The way of a man with a maid is truly an unsearchable wonder. But it is a wonder because the doctrine of God’s sovereignty is behind it all. He is working all things together, for His glory and our good. This requires us, at every station and season, to walk by faith. After all, the way of a man with a maid is a faint shadow of Eden lost, and gives us hope for Eden restored by the most glorious thing to ever happen:

*From Heav’n he came and sought her
To be his holy bride;
With his own blood he bought her,
And for her life he died.*