

Your Wedding Ceremony



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Priest-in-Collaboration

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"God of tenderness and strength, you have brought our paths together and led us to this day; go with us now as we travel through good times, through trouble, or through change. Bless our home, our partings, and our meetings. Make us worthy of each other's best and tender with each other's dreams, trusting in your love. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Wedding Customary

A wedding is one of life's great moments, a time for good wishes, feasting, and joy. It is also an invitation for a couple to share life together in the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is based on a public and lifelong covenant between two people, celebrated in the presence of God and before a priest and congregation. Because marriage is a commitment "not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly," we ask that you read through this booklet carefully and then talk to us about your upcoming marriage.

We welcome those interested in exploring the spiritual aspects of their marriage relationship as this will guide and determine the role of the parish church and the priest in planning, scheduling, and celebrating their Christian marriage. The following guidelines are provided to every couple inquiring about a wedding at St. John's Episcopal Church. It is our hope that these guidelines will offer you an initial understanding of what is entailed in marriage and in a wedding ceremony in an Episcopal church, as well as an understanding of St. John's particular procedures and policies.

According to the Canons of the Episcopal Church, a marriage ceremony is permitted when:

1. At least one of the persons being married is a baptized Christian.
2. A minimum of 90 days' notice is given, dated from the first meeting with the priest. Reserving a date six months or more in advance is highly recommended.
3. Marriage ceremonies may be taken from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer or from other authorized alternative marriage services.
4. Divorce is not in itself a barrier to remarriage, but if one or both parties is divorced, the Episcopal church requires certain steps to be followed in order to be remarried in the church. First, the priest must obtain permission to officiate at the wedding from the diocesan bishop, with a minimum of 60 days' notice. No arrangements may be made until any divorce is absolute and the person is legally free to marry. A copy of the Decree of Divorce Absolute is necessary. Thirty days after the order is entered (usually the date of the hearing), a Judgment Divorce Nisi is issued. After 90 days, the Judgment Divorce Nisi becomes an absolute Judgment of Divorce.
5. Marriage is both a legal and a spiritual union. The priest acts as an agent of the state and signs the marriage license. In the marriage ceremony, the priest pronounces God's blessing on the couple's love and life together. It is the church's hope that Christian marriage begins and matures within the context of a Christian community. Indeed, one reason it exists is for the benefit of the Christian community.
6. Couples requesting a marriage ceremony in the Episcopal church who are not members are encouraged to attend worship services before and during the time of preparation of the marriage ceremony, as you discern your own role in the Christian community.
7. The director of music will play the music at every wedding unless he is unavailable. He is proficient at both organ and piano. If other musicians are desired, please discuss this with the director of music.
8. The Episcopal church believes that the wedding ceremony is a sacred service, and it is hard to maintain that sanctity if a photographer or your family/friends are moving around taking pictures. Thus pictures may be taken as the wedding party enters and leaves the church. Flash

photography is not allowed during the service. The priest will make this announcement at the beginning of the service and encourage your family and friends to take pictures on your way down the aisle. Your priest will be more than happy to restage any photo after the service.

Wedding Preparation Timeline

- *At least six months in advance*, make an appointment with the priest to discuss a potential wedding at St. John's or another location. With clergy agreement, set the wedding date and time. The priest is unavailable for weddings the week before and the week after Easter and Christmas due to parish responsibilities during that time of year.
- Make four to six appointments for marriage preparation with the priest at St. John's, another Episcopal priest, or a premarital counselor located where the couple live or work. Premarital sessions are concluded one month before the marriage ceremony.
- If one person is or both persons are divorced, then priest must obtain permission of the diocesan bishop in order to officiate at the marriage ceremony. The priest writes a letter to the bishop requesting permission to bless the marriage after meeting with the couple for premarital counseling. The bishop requests a minimum of 60 days to respond.
- Contact the director of music to select music appropriate for a marriage service.
- One month prior to the wedding, plan a consultation with a staff member (which will be determined by the church) regarding the bulletin. The church office can make copies of a simple bulletin provided by the couple for no charge. More elaborate bulletins are the responsibility of the couple or can be made by the church for a fee.
- A rehearsal helps make the participants more comfortable and ensures the ceremony will proceed smoothly and with dignity. The rehearsal normally takes place the evening before the wedding. The bridal party may arrive up to one hour prior to the ceremony for the purpose of last-minute preparations, pre-wedding photographs, and so on. The Bride's Room and/or Parish Hall will be made available for the bride, her attendants, and her immediate family. Please bring the marriage license, bulletins, and all fees to the church the day of the rehearsal. *(Nerves and excitement on the wedding day can lead to forgetfulness on the wedding day!)*

Please note that those in charge of securing the building will be ready to leave thirty minutes after the wedding service is over.

Honoraria

It should be noted that these honoraria do not pay the full cost of such services, which are subsidized by the parishioners of St. John's Church.

1. **St. John's Church (\$300).** In circumstances where a couple is not a member of this parish community, we require a fee for the use of the church. There is no church fee for members.
2. **Parish Hall Rental (\$300).** In circumstances where a couple is not a member of this parish community, we require a fee for the use of the Parish Hall. There is no church fee for members, although donations are encouraged and appreciated.
3. **Officiant/Celebrant (\$750).** If the bride or groom is a parishioner and a *pledging* member of the congregation, then no honorarium is expected for the priest (although the couple may make an offering to the parish, which will be given to the Rector's Discretionary Fund for the care of those in special circumstances). If neither the bride nor the groom is a supporting member of St. John's Church, then a check for \$750 made out to Marya DeCarlen with "Rector's Discretionary Fund" written in the memo line is requested.
4. **The Music Director (\$300).** This includes time for his work, involving a conference to select practice, rehearsal, and the ceremony itself. He is available to sing solo anthems for an additional fee of \$50. Other soloists may be secured through the music director and will charge their own fee. If you require accompaniment, speak to the music director to make arrangements.
5. **The Church Assistant (\$150).** This is the charge for the coordination and cleaning before and after the rehearsal and wedding. If you are holding a candlelight service, there will be an additional charge of \$50.
6. **Wedding Service Bulletin (\$100).** After discussing your individual ceremony requirements with you, the parish administrator is available to produce your wedding service bulletin. Fee covers these services (meeting, selection, design, copying, and folding) and the cost of the printing. Please ask about this early in the planning process and submit all ceremony information *no later than two weeks prior* to the date of your ceremony.
7. **Altar Flowers/Decorations.** Please coordinate flowers and decorations through St. John's altar guild directors. You may order flowers directly from your chosen florist *or* through the altar guild. If you order flowers through the guild, we ask for a minimum donation of \$35 for each altar bouquet. If desired, you may purchase an aisle runner from your florist.

Final Checklist for the Couple

- ✓ *Secure wedding date and time.*
- ✓ *Reserve rehearsal date and time.*
- ✓ *Obtain a marriage license* from the town clerk about a month before the wedding.
- ✓ *Set up four to six appointments* to meet with the priest for premarital counseling sessions.
- ✓ *Meet with the music director* to discuss processional and recessional marches, any soloists, pieces to be played, special music requests, and so on, allowing plenty of time before the wedding date.
- ✓ *Consult the altar guide* regarding altar flowers you wish to purchase through St. John's and if you want to use the candelabra for a candlelight service. Also, discuss with the guild any special decorations you have in mind.
- ✓ *Arrange a time to meet* with the parish administrator about the wedding bulletin if needed.
- ✓ *Select Scriptures* to be read during the service.
- ✓ *Choose and contact readers.* Remember that readers must be able to be heard and understood. Be sure to give them the Scriptures well in advance so they can practice and be comfortable with their delivery.
- ✓ *Keep other clergy* posted on arrangements being made, especially those in which he/she may be involved (i.e., rehearsal).
- ✓ *Bring the marriage license and honoraria* (see the list of all applicable fees above under "Honoraria") to the rehearsal or deliver them to the Parish Office during the week prior to the wedding date.
- ✓ *Arrange for a photographer* who agrees to minimize distractions and respect the sacred nature of the building and the liturgy.