

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Wedding Policies

We welcome your inquiry concerning marriage at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The information below presents our policies and procedures for a wedding in The Episcopal Church tradition. You are encouraged to read it carefully, and if you have questions or are interested in celebrating your wedding at St. Mark's, you are invited to call the parish office at (480) 964-5820.

Christian Marriage

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman entered into in the presence of God and lived out in the support of a community of faith. A Christian marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman formed and lived out in God's presence and in the discernment of God's will. The wedding ceremony is the liturgical expression of that relationship. The wedding is a worship service of joy and thanksgiving which includes the public exchange of vows and the proclamation of God's blessing. The Book of Common Prayer states, "Marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God." (BCP 435)

It is clearly the intent of both the Prayer Book and the Canons (laws) of the Church that marriages solemnized in the Church continue to be nurtured within the community of the Church. Marriage is not something that happens at one particular moment or something God is invited to attend; it is a lifelong process.

Those who come to the Church seeking God's blessing on their relationship should do so with a clear intention of maintaining an active participation in the life of the Church. While there may be extenuating circumstances, it should be considered normative that a marriage takes place where the couple intends to worship.

The Church's Laws Concerning Holy Matrimony

The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian, that the ceremony is attested to by at least two witnesses, and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church. The Episcopal Church specifies at least 30 days notice be given to the priest before he may officiate at any marriage.

Church law prohibits clergy from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced, except with the written consent of the bishop. The request for permission to remarry must be received by the bishop's office at least 60 days prior to the date of the wedding. Copies of the divorce decree(s) are submitted to the officiating priest for examination prior to the petition of the bishop. In the case of a person who has been married more than twice, outside counseling is required for that couple to make sure previous psychological issues have been addressed. The bishop considers one

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year between the end of a previous marriage and the wedding date as the minimum transition period.

Before any couple can be married by an Episcopal priest or in an Episcopal church, they must sign the following declaration, which states the nature of a Christian marriage:

"We,

and

Desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in The Book of Common Prayer. We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body and mind, is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their physical and spiritual nurture, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."

Premarital Instructions

The Episcopal Church requires preparation for marriage, generally referred to as "premarital counseling." Because the needs of individual couples will vary, the time required for premarital counseling would be adjusted to meet those needs, at the discretion of the rector. A minimum of three sessions, with both the bride and the groom present, is expected.

In situations in which the bride and/or the groom are living out of town, it is possible to make arrangements for counseling to be done by an Episcopal priest elsewhere. Those arrangements need to be made as early as possible with the officiating priest. A written evaluation from the priest who has conducted the counseling will be needed.

No announcement of the wedding should be made, nor invitations mailed, until the premarital counseling sessions have been completed and final approval of the marriage is given.

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The Marriage License

It is required that the marriage license be brought to the Church prior to the wedding rehearsal. The priest cannot officiate the wedding without the license. The officiating priest will sign and mail the license after the wedding.

Date & Time of the Wedding

A wedding at St. Mark's involves the participation of many church staff and volunteers; therefore, adequate advance notice is essential. The couple will want to talk with a priest and make arrangements as far in advance as possible in order to reduce scheduling difficulties. Planning several months in advance is the norm. All weddings are scheduled at the discretion of the officiating priest.

Weddings are customarily held on Saturdays, with the time of the ceremony between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Dates and times are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis. We do not schedule weddings on Sundays, or during Lent and Holy Week, except in extraordinary circumstances as determined by clergy.

The Altar Guild

The Altar Guild is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with all arrangements for the wedding. The Altar Guild may be present at the rehearsal and the wedding to assist and support the wedding party and to insure the smooth flow of the service itself. A celebration of marriage is one of the sacraments of our church and service must be conducted according to the policies and procedures of The Episcopal Church; therefore, outside bridal consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony.

The Rehearsal

The purpose of the wedding rehearsal is to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service ahead which will enable them to be at ease during the worship service. The bride and groom will participate fully in the rehearsal. The officiating priest, assisted by the Altar Guild, will be responsible for the actual conduct of the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals are normally held on the day before the wedding. Except in extremely unusual circumstances, rehearsals will not be scheduled to begin after 5 p.m. The rehearsal will take about an hour. The entire service, including ushering in of relatives and the entrance procession, will be rehearsed. Therefore, it is important for all members of the wedding party to attend and for everyone to be on time. The

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clergy and assisting members of the Altar Guild are expected to be in attendance at the rehearsal for no more than one hour.

The Marriage Service

Holy Matrimony is a sacrament of the Church and takes place in the church in the context of worship. As in every service of the Church, the priest is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details. The seating capacity in the church is 300.

In order to respect the time of all those present, the wedding ceremony should begin promptly when scheduled. If there are delays to the start, caused by the bride, groom, members of the wedding party, family members or their guests, there will be an additional charge of \$ 25 for each quarter hour or portion thereof of delay.

The Clergy

All ceremonies at St. Mark's are conducted by a St. Mark's priest. At the couple's request, the priest may invite an Episcopal priest from another parish, or diocese, or a clergy person from another denomination to assist in the ceremony. The officiating priest must be notified 30 days in advance of any desire to include other clergy.

The Liturgy

St. Mark's Episcopal Church uses the Book of Common Prayer for the wedding service. The Holy Eucharist is customarily celebrated at weddings. All baptized Christians are invited to receive Holy Communion.

Lay Eucharistic Ministers

Licensed Eucharistic ministers from St. Mark's or other parishes are welcome to assist. Requests for particular individuals to assist should be made to the officiating priest.

Readers

It is desirable that the Lessons from the Old Testament and the Epistles be read by lay persons. They may practice the readings at the rehearsal.

Acolytes

Family and friends who have been trained as acolytes are welcome to serve in this capacity. If St. Mark's acolytes serve for the couple, it is customary to make a small donation to them.

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The Wedding Music

St. Mark's Organist/Music Director, will play at all weddings with music. There is a fee for his services. The bride and groom should consult with him at least six (6) weeks before the wedding. Please contact the church office to get in contact with him.

Musicians in addition to the Organist/Music Director are welcome to participate in the service. However, they and their music selections must be approved by the Music Director. Recorded music is not permitted. There is an additional fee of \$50 per hour to arrange for singers, soloists or instrumentalists and their attendance at rehearsals.

Music at St. Mark's is used as an offering for the glory of God and to help the congregation in their worship. It is important that music at a wedding support this purpose. Music that does not have as its chief end the glorification and praise of God, is not to be used and may best be left for the reception. Music is provided only at those points in the service designated by the rubrics in the Prayer Book.

Decoration of the Church

The general principle to keep in mind is that a wedding is a worship service in which we seek to worship God with beauty and simplicity. Extravagant decorations are not necessary to create an atmosphere of joy and celebration.

The Flowers

Flowers at a church wedding are usually displayed as on Sundays, on the vase stands behind the Altar. It is expected that after the ceremony, the wedding flowers are the property of the church, and they will remain in the church for worship services on the following Sunday. The Sunday bulletin will identify the flowers as given in thanksgiving for the marriage.

The Altar & Aisle

The liturgical color for a wedding is white, the color of joy and celebration. The color of the altar flowers is not restricted. Extra candelabras or unity candles will not be a part of the ceremony. Aisle runners are hazardous and are not permitted.

Photography

While the Church is sensitive to the desire of the bride and groom to preserve this important moment in their lives, it is also concerned that the dignity and reverence of the service be maintained, and that family and friends' experience of worship not be compromised. The cooperation of the bride, the groom and the entire wedding party is sought and appreciated. Photographs may not be taken in the church during the

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marriage service from the time the clergy enter and until they leave, with the following exceptions:

One flash picture may be taken as the couple exits the Church into the narthex. A stationary video camera may be set up on the choir platform, and audio-taping is permitted, provided that no additional lighting or microphones are required and that set up is completed thirty (30) minutes prior to the service.

Photographs may be taken up to 30 minutes prior to or immediately following the wedding ceremony.

Receptions

When available, the parish hall (excluding the kitchen) may be reserved for wedding receptions and should be requested at the same time as use of the church is arranged. The parish hall can accommodate a reception of up to 150 people. Round tables and chairs are included in the cost. A custodian's services are also included in the reception fee. Because of the requirements for preparing for Sunday worship services, Church facilities are not available for receptions on Saturdays if the anticipated ending time is later than 11 p.m.

Other Matters

Guest Book

A guest book may be displayed and signed in the narthex before the wedding. However, it is strongly suggested, for expediency's sake, that this be done at the reception.

Rice, Confetti, Rose Petals, Bird Seed and Bubbles

Rice, confetti, and rose petals are not to be used on church property. Birdseed and bubbles may be used ONLY out of doors. Flower petals are not permitted to be thrown either in the church or in the outside areas.

Alcohol and Smoking Policy

Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on church property except at the reception in the church's parish hall, and in accordance with diocesan policy. Hard liquor is never permitted. Non-alcoholic beverages in equal quantity and prominence must be offered if alcohol is served.

No smoking is allowed in any areas or buildings of the church.

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Church Deposits, Honorariums & Fees

A non-refundable deposit of \$ 100 is payable to reserve the church for the wedding date. This amount will be applied to the fee for the use of the church. It is expected that all remaining fees and honorariums will be paid prior to the wedding rehearsal. All fees for use of the church facilities may be paid in a single check to St. Mark's. The honorarium for the organist and musicians should be made out directly to them. The honorarium for the priest should be made out to the "St. Mark's Samaritan Fund", a fund used to help indigent people in the area with rent, necessary utilities and other living expenses.

Use of the church	
By members in good standing*	\$ No Charge
By nonmembers	\$ 600
Use of parish hall for reception	
By members in good standing*	\$ 250
By nonmembers	\$ 600
Organist's honorarium	\$ 175
Priest's honorarium	\$ 250

* According to the Constitution and Canons of the Church, members in good standing are those adult communicants who have been faithful in working, praying, and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God. At St. Mark's we recognize a communicant in good standing to be those who regularly attend worship services, engage in the life of the parish, and are current financial contributors of record (by pledge or other identifiable contribution) to the general support of the parish. Membership extends to the baptized dependent children of communicants in good standing.