
YOUR WEDDING
AT
ST. MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from St. Mark's	3
Introduction	4
Marriage in the Episcopal Church	4
Weddings at St. Mark's	5
Scheduling your wedding	6
Setting Date and Time	7
The Clergy and the Service	7
The Wedding Liturgy	7
Premarital Counseling	8
Remarriage of Divorced Persons	8
The Wedding Guild	8
Wedding Fees	9
Receptions	9
Music	10
The Marriage License	10
Preparations in the Church and the Chapel	10
About the Church and the Chapel	11
Wedding Flowers	11
Programs	12
Photography	13
The Rehearsal	14
The Wedding Day	14
Alcohol and Beverage Policy	15
A Final Word	15
Appendix A	16



Letter from St. Mark's

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ,

We are so pleased that you are considering having your wedding here at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. We are a parish grounded in the Anglican tradition and have served as a witness in the city of San Antonio for over a hundred and fifty years.

In addition to our beautiful surroundings, the Episcopal wedding liturgy is steeped in history and has guided couples through the centuries to a deep and abiding covenant with one another. It is an important transition in the life of any family, and scripture and the liturgy help us to name and honor this. We hope you will take the time to read through this booklet and see what our hopes and expectations are. Weddings are often times of great excitement and great stress! We believe that St. Mark's can support you in the planning of the service and help you ground your vows in a community.

We look forward to taking the time to get to know you as a couple. It is important to us as clergy that we have a connection that will hopefully last long after the wedding is over. We are partners with you and make vows to support you in your married life with one another.

This is a time of deep joy for you, and we look forward to sharing in it.

Peace,

The Reverend Elizabeth Knowlton

Rector, St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Introduction

We welcome your inquiry concerning marriage at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in San Antonio. The following information describes our wedding policies and procedures. You are encouraged to read this document carefully, as this information will assist you in planning your wedding and also acquaint you with the customs and traditions of the Episcopal Church regarding the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage.

Marriage in the Episcopal Church

In the Episcopal Church marriage is a solemn and public covenant between two persons entered into in the presence of God and lived out with the support of one's church home. Marriage, then, is a community event. The wedding ceremony, or the Marriage Rite, is the *liturgical expression and proclamation* of these beliefs.

The liturgy is meant to communicate the central tenets of what we believe to be true about Christian marriage – that marriage is a reflection and incarnation of God's will for human persons in committed relationships and that Christian marriages are both pronounced and lived out in the presence of a community of faith. Therefore, as the Book of Common Prayer commends, "Marriage shall not be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God."

The clear intention of the canons of the Episcopal Church and the wedding ceremony itself testify to this belief that marriages which are solemnized in the church, long after the "wedding day," continue to be nurtured within the context of a community of faith.

The administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is governed by

- The Canons of the Episcopal Church
- The rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer
- The directives of the Bishop of the Diocese of West Texas
- The policies of St. Mark's
- The laws of the State of Texas

The Canons of the Episcopal Church require

- At least 30 days (but preferably 90 days or more) notice before any wedding may occur
- The Bishop's consent for the second marriage of any person previously married whose spouse is still living
- That each couple receive premarital instructions
- That at least one member of the couple be a baptized Christian

Weddings at St. Mark's

Membership:

At St. Mark's, it is customary that at least one of the parties be a member in good standing of this parish, or the son, daughter, or parent of a member in good standing. Candidates for Holy Matrimony must establish their membership at St. Mark's, at a minimum, one year before a wedding at St. Mark's can take place.

Episcopalians in the Diocese of West Texas who wish to be married at St. Mark's should have a priest from their home parish write a letter to the Rector of St. Mark's requesting that their wedding take place at St. Mark's.

On occasion, it is possible to schedule weddings for Episcopalians outside of the Diocese of West Texas who are active in their home parishes. To request that this take place, the potential candidates should ask a priest from their home parish to write a letter to the Rector of St. Mark's requesting that St. Mark's celebrate the marriage.

St. Mark's Church is primarily concerned with the faith life and membership of the two persons who are to be married. Following are our definitions of the types of membership:

- Member – One of the two persons to be married is a baptized Christian and an active member of St. Mark's for at least one year prior to the wedding, participating in the life of St. Mark's and supporting the mission and ministry of St. Mark's. Members are given first priority for setting a wedding date.
- Member (non-resident) – Weddings for those living outside of San Antonio will be considered as long as one of the persons being married is an active member of a church in their home community and one of their parents is an active member of St. Mark's.
- Non-pledging member- For persons who are members of St. Mark's and one or both are baptized Christians but have not attended or pledged in the year prior to the proposed wedding date.
- Non-member- A wedding for a non-member may be considered. One of the persons to be married must be a baptized Christian. A non-member wedding may not be scheduled earlier than one year prior to the proposed wedding day.

Scheduling your wedding

When to notify the Church:

Potential couples may contact the church as early as a year before the expected wedding date.

First Contact – Please fill out the on line form on the St. Mark’s web site (www.stmarks-sa.org) and a St. Mark’s clergy will contact you to discuss your wedding.

Second Contact – After the priest and Wedding Coordinator have been assigned, the marrying couple must meet with one of St. Mark’s clergy to discuss their intention to marry. They should meet with the priest at least ninety days in advance of their intended wedding date. It is important for both parties to be married to be present at the meeting. No arrangements that involve the church, church facilities, or the priest who will perform the ceremony are to be announced until you have met with the officiating priest, and the priest’s approval has been received and the wedding is on the priest’s schedule. Following the approval of the proposed marriage by the officiating priest, church staff will verify the availability of the church and bring the date before the entire staff for approval. Only then is the wedding officially set on the calendar.

Third Contact – The Parish Wedding Coordinator – Once the date is set, church staff will notify the parish wedding coordinator from St. Mark’s Church to assist the couple with the preparations and mechanics of the wedding. She will contact you for your first appointment.

Setting the Date and Time

- Time of Year - Weddings can be scheduled at most any time of year subject to the church calendar. Please note we do not schedule weddings during Lent.
- First-come basis - Wedding dates are scheduled on a first-come basis, and only one wedding may be scheduled on any one day. Those who are members of the church will have priority.
- Time of day - Weddings may be scheduled for any time of day that is convenient and not in conflict with existing church functions. Evening weddings may begin no later than 7p.m. Rehearsals for all weddings will be set no later than 6p.m. the day prior to the wedding and will begin promptly.

The Clergy and the Service

The Rector of St. Mark's is responsible for all worship services at the church. All plans for the wedding ceremony must be made in consultation with the Rector or the officiating clergy.

St. Mark's Clergy The Rev. Elizabeth Knowlton, 210.226.2426 ext. 145

The Rev. Matt Wise, Associate Rector, 210.226.2426 ext. 150

Outside Clergy – All ceremonies at St. Mark's are under the discretion of St. Mark's Rector.

If you are interested in having a clergy person who is not on staff at St. Mark's participate in the service, please keep these guidelines in mind. First, the couple makes a request of the St. Mark's officiating clergy that a non-staff clergy be involved in the wedding. *Please do not ask someone to assist before this takes place.* Next, the rector may invite an Episcopal priest from another parish or diocese, or a clergy person from another denomination to assist in the ceremony. *Arrangements for such an invitation should be discussed at your first visit with the officiating priest.*

Episcopal Clergy from within the Diocese – The Rector may issue an invitation to Episcopal clergy from other churches within the Diocese of West Texas.

Episcopal Clergy outside of Diocese – The Rector may extend an invitation to Episcopal Clergy from outside the Diocese of West Texas with permission from the Bishop of the Diocese of West Texas.

Other Christian denominations – Under certain circumstances the Rector may extend an invitation to a clergy person from another Christian denomination to assist. Only an Episcopal priest in good standing with the Church may officiate; a minister of another denomination may take part in the service, but may not officiate.

The Wedding Liturgy

The Episcopal Church is a liturgical church, and, as such, worship services are defined by *The Book of Common Prayer*. The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is found on pages 422-438.

Because the Marriage Rite is a service of worship involving the whole congregation, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is encouraged. (See Appendix A for more thoughts on Holy Eucharist and Holy Matrimony.) The decision to include Eucharist or not at the wedding should be made by the couple in consultation with the officiating priest.

Premarital Counseling

The Church requires that the couple be instructed as to the nature of Holy Matrimony. Generally, three **Premarital Counseling** sessions are required. These sessions may be conducted by the officiating priest or he/she may refer the couple to another counselor. Counseling should begin as soon as possible and completed 30 days prior to the ceremony. Contact the priest to schedule counseling appointments.

Canon Law specifically provides that it is within the discretion of any priest of the Church to decline to solemnize any marriage. The priest will be glad to discuss the laws and regulations of the Church.

Remarriage of Divorced Persons

Marriage after divorce is allowed in the Episcopal Church. The guidelines of the church establish the norm of one year from the date of the final decree of the divorce for remarriage in the Church, and Canon Law prohibits clergy from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced without the consent of the Diocesan Bishop. Pre-marital counseling is also required and is usually led by the priest officiating the wedding. The officiating priest will work with the couple to obtain the appropriate paperwork, which is to be submitted to the Bishop at least sixty (60) days before the ceremony is to take place. The couple should bring to the initial visit with the priest a copy of the last page of the final divorce decree stating the date the divorce was finalized. The bishop also requests a letter from the party requesting remarriage stating why the previous marriage failed and why the cause is not being carried into the proposed marriage. Generally speaking, the Bishop responds within thirty (30) days in regard to a priest's request to solemnize a second marriage.

The Wedding Guild

St. Mark's Wedding Guild has parish wedding coordinators to assist the couple to be married with the plans and details of their wedding from the day the wedding is put on the church calendar to the day of the wedding. She will advise the marrying couple about altar flowers, photography allowed (before, during, and after the ceremony), suitable music for the ceremony, use of the parking lots, and wedding fees. The parish wedding coordinator works closely with the marrying couple and officiating priest and will be present at both the rehearsal and the wedding ceremony. *Any outside wedding consultant is expected to work under the direction of the parish wedding coordinator.*

Wedding Fees

Active, Pledging Members of St. Mark's or members of their family:

At least one of the couple being married or their immediate family have been a member for at least one year prior to the wedding, are involved in parish activities, and have made a financial pledge during the annual Stewardship Campaign.

Church: \$2,500

Bethlehem Chapel: \$2,000

For Non-Pledging Members of St. Mark's or members of their family:

Church: \$3,500

Bethlehem Chapel: \$3,000

For Non- Members of St. Mark's:

Church: \$7,500

Bethlehem Chapel: \$6,500

The wedding fees noted above includes:

- Priest's fee
- Premarital counseling
- Organist's fee
- Wedding coordinator fee
- One acolyte
- East parking lot
- Church security guard
- Parking lot security guard
- Sexton
- Use of the Church or Bethlehem Chapel for the rehearsal and wedding.

A non-refundable deposit of 25% of the fee is required at the time the wedding is booked. The balance is due 30 days prior to the wedding. Any additional musical fees or other items outside of the fee noted above are due with the final payment.

Receptions

St. Mark's Church is unable to accommodate wedding receptions at this time.

Music

The Rector delegates the responsibility for all music at St. Mark's to the Organist & Director of Music. The music staff will provide you with expert assistance to ensure that music is appropriately planned and fitting for you as a couple. Because a wedding is a service of worship, the liturgical guidelines for music are subject to the same standards as music for any other worship service at St. Mark's.

St. Mark's staff organists play all weddings at which organ music is desired. If the staff organists are unable to play for your service, it is the Music Director's responsibility to designate a substitute organist. When vocal solos are desired, they are sung by St. Mark's staff soloists who are accustomed to singing in our liturgical space without amplification. The music staff will make these arrangements and can also share with you a list of approved texts and solos for your liturgy. On occasion, the St. Mark's Choir is available for weddings. Please consult with the Director of Music concerning availability and fees.

In addition to the organ, other instruments (such as harp, strings, and brass) may also be included. These additional instrumentalists are secured by the St. Mark's music staff. *All musicians and music must be approved by the St. Mark's music staff.*

Please note that only sacred music suitable for St. Mark's worship services may be played or sung. Music with secular or commercial associations, whether textual or instrumental, is not appropriate. The Organist and Director of Music, Jon Johnson, has final approval as to the appropriateness of all music used. Appointments to discuss the wedding music with the Organist and Director of Music may be made by calling the church office at 226-2426.

The Marriage License

A marriage license is the instrument that conveys to the officiating clergy the authority of the State of Texas to officiate at the ceremony and to sign the license making the marriage official in the eyes of the state. Without a marriage license, the priest cannot proceed; it is illegal.

Preparations in the Church and the Chapel

During all preparations, photography sessions, rehearsals, and other times in the spaces, we ask that all present will honor and respect the space.

About the Church and the Chapel

The Church seats 465 people.

The Chapel seats 36 people

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel – including seasonal hangings and ornaments such as the Advent Wreath, Christmas Crèche, Christmas greens and decorations, and the Paschal Candle – are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of the Church; please do not disturb or remove them.

Simple common sense forbids any decorative activity that would damage the building and furnishings, such as driving tacks in the pews, using adhesive tape, and/or using materials which leave stains on the carpets, etc.

Wedding Flowers

St. Mark's is a lovely, historic church with a beautiful nave. There is a typical "ornamentation" of the church for wedding services that often includes pew and altar flowers. These ornaments are aesthetically pleasing and appropriate for all weddings. Our beliefs dictate that the Marriage Rite is a 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 in these sacred spaces.

Flowers **may** be placed in the following locations:

- Altar Flowers
- Pews in Center Aisle
- Church Entrance Doors (one arrangement for each door)
- Garland over Church Entrance Doors
- Chancel Rail

All flowers including the Altar flowers will need to be removed immediately after the ceremony.

The florist should be engaged as soon as possible and informed of the church's decorating policies. Our parish wedding coordinator can suggest an appropriate florist, and will work with you and your florist. Please have your florist contact the parish wedding coordinator at least thirty days prior to the wedding in order to go over specific requirements regarding vessels, size, type, and delivery of flowers. All floral decorations must be in place a minimum of two hours before the wedding. The florist is responsible for dismantling any floral decorations immediately after the ceremony.

Only church supplied vessels maybe be used for the flowers and candles in the sanctuary of the Church or Chapel.

Only living flowers – Only living flowers and plants may be used. No synthetic, silk, dried or any kind of floral substitute are to be used anywhere in the Church or Chapel

Unity candles – There is no provision for the use of a “unity candle” in the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in The Book of Common Prayer. Therefore, St. Mark’s does not allow the use of unity candles.

Rice, etc. – No rice, confetti, birdseed, flower petals, or other material may be strewn or thrown in the Church or on the Church grounds.

Aisle runner – No aisle runners are permitted

Bouquets – The florist or an appointed person will be responsible for distributing bouquets and pinning corsages and boutonnieres.

Programs

The format of the order of service leaflet varies just as each wedding does, but the basic contents remain the same. Several sample templates are available from your wedding coordinator and can be taken to a printer for design. The official title of the wedding ceremony is, “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage,” and should appear on the order of service leaflet. If a program is to be used, a digital proof of the program and/or order of service must be submitted to the wedding coordinator and approved by the church before it is printed, at least two weeks before the rehearsal. Please make sure you bring your wedding programs to the Rehearsal. When there is no program, an order of service, including music, must be given to the parish wedding coordinator prior to the rehearsal.

Guest books- Guest books in the Narthex create last-minute traffic jams and delay weddings. They are better positioned at the receptions.

Photography

The photographer and/or video person are required to work under the direction of the parish wedding coordinator and clergy. As a sacramental rite of the Church, the marriage is not to be interrupted or disturbed by the distraction of photographs being taken or videotaping.

- Cameras may be set up only in locations according to the diagram obtained from the parish wedding coordinator. Once in place, only remote operation is allowed.
- No high intensity light or flash may be used during the ceremony by the photographer.
- The photographer will be informed by the wedding coordinator as to where they may shoot pictures during the opening and closing processions and during the wedding. Flash photography may be used for the opening and closing processions only.
- Equipment permitted – Silent, un-manned equipment may be used in one location (either time-exposure and/or videotape) with the approval of the parish wedding coordinator.
- No guest photographs – Because wedding guests occasionally attempt to take flash photographs during the marriage service, a sign may be posted at the church doors reminding guests that there are to be no photographs taken during the ceremony. Ushers will be asked to remind guests arriving with cameras that they are not to take photographs inside the church once the candles have been lit.
- After the service – A limited number of flash photographs (not to exceed those that can be taken within a twenty minute period) may be taken of the wedding party following the wedding celebration inside the church after the last guests have left the room. The candles will be extinguished at the conclusion of the ceremony and will not remain lighted during the photography period. The candles are part of the liturgy. When the service is complete, the candles are extinguished.
- As a courtesy, pictures which include the priest should be taken first so that he/she may leave.

The Rehearsal

The purpose of the wedding rehearsal is to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service ahead of time so they can be comfortable during the actual ceremony. Wedding rehearsals are normally held the evening before the wedding but may not be scheduled after 6:00 p.m. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and should arrive at least fifteen minutes early. The rehearsal lasts no longer than one hour. The wedding coordinator will instruct ushers at the wedding rehearsal on their duties for the wedding ceremony.

Outside wedding consultants and/or florists are not needed at either the rehearsal or during the wedding. They are, of course, welcome to attend the needs of the couple before the wedding. If an outside wedding consultant is used, s/he should understand that s/he works under the direction of the clergy and the St. Mark's parish wedding coordinator.

The marriage license needs to be brought to the rehearsal. The license will be signed and returned to the appropriate county office by St. Mark's the week following the wedding. The original license will be returned to the couple by the county office four to six weeks after the wedding. Please advise your wedding coordinator if you will need a copy of the signed marriage license to be mailed to you from St. Mark's.

Please remember to bring your wedding programs to the rehearsal.

The Wedding Day

All members of the wedding party should arrive at the Church at least one hour before the wedding. The Dean Richardson Room (2nd floor) and Room 102 will be available two hours before the wedding. **Early entry is not available.**

Any wedding garments may be brought to the church at the time of the rehearsal. Hair and make-up should be done before arriving and may dress at the church. The wedding party should arrive dressed and ready.

Both rooms will be locked during the service and re-opened after the service to gather any objects left in these rooms. Both rooms need to be vacant no later than 20 minutes after the wedding. We suggest that arrangements be made to remove all personal items from both rooms immediately after the wedding. St. Mark's Church cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.

The wedding coordinator is responsible for assisting all members of the wedding party and the families in taking their places at the proper time. She will also give all other directions prior to the ceremony.

Outside wedding consultants and other related professionals are welcome to assist in dressing. Outside wedding consultants function at St. Mark's as parish guests under the direction of the parish wedding coordinator.

Alcohol and Smoking Policy

No alcoholic beverages or smoking are allowed anywhere on the church grounds.

A Final Word

We hope this booklet is helpful as you anticipate and plan this wonderful event in your life. We want you to know that we view your wedding day, in this community of faith, with the joy and care it deserves. We pray for God's blessing on your life together.

Appendix A

Why Holy Matrimony is Celebrated in the Context of Holy Eucharist

Sacraments are special ritual celebrations in which physical, material, or bodily things become bearers of the grace of God that bring a new way of being to pass, and in that new way of being the nature of God is revealed. For example, in Holy Baptism, water and oil bring into being a new relation between the baptismal candidate and God, initiating the candidate into a new identity as Christian and member of the community of faith. In Baptism, God is revealed to us as One who welcomes us, seeks us out, loves us and longs for communion with us, that we may have Life. In Holy Eucharist, through bread and wine, God is revealed as one pours out his own life for us in Christ to forgive, nurture, and strengthen us as a new people who find our Life in pouring ourselves out for the world. These are the two great sacraments in which “outward and visible signs” bring to pass an “inward and spiritual grace” as we enter into relation with the God whose nature they reveal. (See the official definition of a “sacrament” in the Book of Common Prayer, p. 857.) Holy Matrimony is also a sacramental rite. In Holy Matrimony, the material signs of the sacrament are actually the husband and wife, in their presence and promises to one another. They commit to one another, promising to love one another without reservation or condition, and this relationship reveals, however imperfectly and incompletely, the God who also loves us faithfully and forever, without condition, and calls us to love others in this way. Thus, the sacrament of Holy Matrimony brings a new relationship into being, but that relationship is more than a bond of love between two people: it is a glimpse of the bond of love to which all Christians are called, in imitation of the way God loves us. For this reason, the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church assumes the wedding liturgy will occur in the context of Holy Eucharist. Marriage is not simply the act of two people, but a symbol and part of a larger life to which all Christians are called: loving the world, faithfully and unconditionally, as God loves us. Holy Eucharist is the sacrament in which Christians normally celebrate this call and nourish this identity. Celebrating Holy Matrimony in this context grounds the marriage clearly in its natural home and strengthens the relationship through the Eucharistic sacrament by which Christians are continually nourished for their daunting and joyful task. On occasion, pastoral reasons may necessitate a wedding liturgy without communion, but this decision must not be made lightly. If you have questions about this, the presiding priest can help you think through the issues and determine if a non-Eucharistic wedding is warranted.

The Rev. Jim Farwell, 2000