

Wedding Customary St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Congratulations!

It is a pleasure to begin preparing with you for your new life together in marriage... one of life's greatest vocations. I feel a strong responsibility to help you get ready for that challenge in the most creative and fulfilling way possible. To that end, I look forward to spending at least six hours with you talking about the many meanings and dimensions of the marriage relationship. During these conversations, we will talk about the strengths and weaknesses, which you bring with you to this commitment and about the needs and expectations you have of each other. We will talk about ways God and His Church can support you to have the open, growing relationship, which He intends for you to have.

There are probably a thousand questions running through your mind about things to do and decisions to be made concerning your wedding. This booklet is prepared to help you through what can be a very stressful experience... the planning of your wedding. The suggestions here represent some of the options open to you. They are not intended to limit your freedom of choice where such is provided by the canons and customs of the Episcopal Church.

I hope these suggestions will relieve some of your anxiety and I want you to know how much I am looking forward to sharing this experience with you.

Rector of St. Paul's

Canonical Requirements for Marriage in the Episcopal Church

Couples seeking to be married in the Episcopal Church are required to sign a Declaration of Intention which indicates their agreement that marriage is “a lifelong union... of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding; for the precreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, and for the safeguarding and benefit of society.”

Permission to marry will not be given until the completion of the premarital counseling, and in cases of divorce, the Bishop’s authorization has been granted. No public announcement of the marriage date and time should be made until the premarital counseling has been completed (and, if necessary, the Bishop’s authority has been granted).

Where one or both persons have been previously married and that marriage has ended in divorce and the former spouse is still living,

- a. A consultation, in writing, with the Bishop is required under Canon I.19 Sec. C and, except under extreme circumstances, no sooner than two years after the actual separation of the previous marriage;
- b. The Bishop requires at least a thirty (30) day notice to consider the request for remarriage, which is submitted near the end of the premarital counseling sessions, and further,
- c. The Episcopal clergy person doing the premarital counseling should have at least a sixty (60) day notice to consider the request for marriage

Requirements for Marriage in St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Church law requires that at least one of the parties of the marriage have been baptized. We require that at least one of the parties be a member or the child of a member of St. Paul's. The wedding liturgy from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer is authorized in the Episcopal Church. No provision will be made for altering this liturgy in any way. The Rector shall officiate at all weddings at St. Paul's, but a minister from another denomination is welcome to read a portion of the marriage service. The Rector will be happy to extend the invitation. The Rector may choose to allow a couple to be married by a previous rector of this parish or by another Episcopal priest, when special circumstances warrant such consideration. An initial meeting of the Rector, head of the Worship Committee, Altar Guild Chairperson, Organist, and Acolyte Mom with the family is suggested.

Music at St. Paul's

The organist at St. Paul's is to be given first option to play for weddings performed in this church. The fee for the organist is \$250. This fee includes a consultation with the bride and attendance at the rehearsal. An additional \$25 fee may be charged if a vocalist or instrumentalist will be performing which will require additional rehearsal time. All music played for the nuptials must be approved. The use of secular music is not appropriate. A good guideline for music for the wedding comes from the official publication of the Joint Commission on Church music: "A church wedding is a sacramental rite... it follows that any music used in connection with it should be suitable for a church service, as distinguished from a social gathering. The music, like the ceremony, should, above all, be an act of worship of God."

Flowers and Decorations in the Church

The Chair of St. Paul's Altar Guild will be available to work with the bride concerning flowers and decorations in the church. Only two vases of flowers may be placed in the altar area. No other flowers are permitted except those carried or worn by members of the wedding party or guests. However, bows and flowers may be used to mark the ends of the pews. It is requested that the flowers may remain in the altar area for the church's worship the following Sunday. It is requested that birdseed rather than rice be used after the ceremony.

Use of Acolytes

An acolyte is required and is generally chosen from the list of acolytes who serve regularly at St. Paul's. However, any young person who is a trained acolyte in the Episcopal Church may be asked to serve. The Rector should be notified if you are planning to use an acolyte who is not from this parish. The acolyte must attend the rehearsal.

Photography

We know that you will want pictures to help you remember the joy and excitement of this special time in your life. However, the taking of pictures during the wedding ceremony detracts from the beauty and dignity of the service, is distracting, and is not allowed in the church. Please help us emphasize that no cameras are allowed in the church during the service. Pictures may be made after the service when the wedding party regroups at the front of the church. Video recording of the ceremony is allowed if it does not detract from the service and is done unobtrusively from the rear of the balcony. We suggest that any photographers be dressed appropriately for the occasion.

Wedding Rehearsal

It is invaluable to rehearse your wedding, particularly if a considerable number of attendants will be taking part. Since a wedding is a service of worship, the Rector will be in charge of the rehearsal. If a wedding director is used, she shall be a member of St. Paul's who is familiar with the customs and traditions of weddings in the church. She will assist with the rehearsal, arrange the wedding procession, and assist the ushers with the seating of guests and family and start the participants into the church for the ceremony. A respectful attitude and dress at the rehearsal, as well as at the wedding, impart a sense of propriety and are a matter of decorum routinely observed. A brief service of Holy Eucharist for the wedding party and family prior to the rehearsal can be offered.

Use of the Parish House

The church's parish hall and kitchen may be reserved for the wedding reception for a charge of \$150. This is to cover the cost of utilities and extra cleaning by the sexton. Anyone using the kitchen is expected to leave the space clean and in order. Wine or champagne may be served at receptions providing an alternative non-alcoholic beverage is also offered. Beer and hard liquor are strictly prohibited in the parish hall. It is expected that all North Carolina ABC laws will be observed.

There are several rooms in the parish hall where the bridal party may dress. There is no fee charged for this, but the parish office should be notified so that arrangements can be made to have the hall open.

Customary Fees

The sexton will be available to clean the church after the wedding. There is a \$50 fee, to be given directly to the sexton for this service.

As mentioned earlier, the fee for the organist is \$250 for the rehearsal and wedding. The fee should be given directly to the organist.

It is customary that an honorarium be given to the Rector's Discretionary Fund in lieu of a fee for the Rector's services.

The fee for reception in the Parish House is \$150 and should be given to the Parish Administrator. All fees should be paid no later than the time of the rehearsal.

In no case does St. Paul's intend for financial considerations to interfere in any way with a wedding in the church or reception in the parish hall. Any difficulties caused by these fees should be discussed openly with the Rector so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Programs

The use of printed programs for the order of service and participants in the service are at your discretion, subject to final approval by the Rector. It is your responsibility to arrange for printing the programs.

The Rector of St. Paul's

Worship Committee Chairperson

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