

Wedding Guidelines

For



For parishioners of St. John

Wedding Guidelines

for

The Episcopal Church of St. John in the Wilderness

The Episcopal Church holds that marriage is first and foremost an act of prayerful vows and commitment; secondarily a ceremony of beauty and pageantry. Your desire to be married in the Church of St. John in the Wilderness should be guided by prayer and reflection on marriage as a sacrament.

God established the bond and covenant of marriage in creation, and our Lord adorned this manner of life by His presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the holy mystery of the union between Christ and His church.

“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 it may be for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. Therefore, 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.”
(Book of Common Prayer, p.423)

In the Episcopal Church it is required that at least one of the parties be baptized Christian, that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses and that the marriage conforms to the laws of the State of North Carolina and the canons of this church.

After obtaining permission from the rector to be married at St. John, pre-marital counseling is required. If you are unable to schedule this with the presiding clergy of St. John, you will need to schedule it with your rector/pastor. When completed, a letter from the person who provided the counseling is to be sent to the rector of St. John, briefly describing the content of the sessions.

SCHEDULING YOUR WEDDING

Weddings must be scheduled at least three months in advance. Contact with the staff clergy should be made at the earliest possible time to discuss your preferred date. If it is available and all the guidelines are met, the date will be entered on the church calendar. The church can only accommodate two weddings per month. The bride and groom will sign a wedding agreement and fee schedule. All fees are to be paid ONE MONTH prior to the wedding date.

Weddings are not performed on Sundays, New Year's Day, during Lent, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

WEDDING COMMITTEE

After you have met with the rector and filled out the paperwork the church secretary will notify the Wedding Committee. A Wedding Committee member contacts you to set up a meeting where together you go over the details of your wedding and personal needs and requests. The Wedding Committee provides information and guidance in the church setting and notifies other people who are involved in preparing things, like the altar cloths, for your wedding day. During the rehearsal and ceremony, Wedding Committee members assist the wedding party and your guests and help the wedding run smoothly. The presiding clergy is the director of all the services of Holy Matrimony, assisted by the members of the Wedding Committee. In keeping with the sacredness of the church, professional wedding consultants are not permitted to direct the rehearsal or wedding at St. John.

DETAILS OF THE SERVICE

Please read through the wedding service in the Book of Common Prayer. As you read the suggested selections of Holy Scripture,

consider how these passages, aided by God's grace, address the covenant of marriage and, in particular, your own marriage.

The service starts on time, so please tell your guests to be in their seats at the church at least 15 minutes before the service begins. Otherwise, guests will not see the bride go down the aisle, as no one is seated at that time. The service generally lasts 30-45 minutes, if there is no communion. Your first married act together may be to share Holy Communion with your guests. At St. John, the Eucharist is open to all who are baptized, and is not just for the married couple. However, it is not necessary for your wedding ceremony to include communion. This is a decision for you to make.

Of those set out at page 426 of the Book of Common Prayer, select the passages that speak to you the most. You may also choose one or two people to read the passages during the wedding service. If you are planning to share the Holy Communion as your first act together, please choose a passage from one of the Gospel texts. That will be read by the priest. You may also choose two (additional) people to witness your wedding (usually the best man and maid/matron of honor) to sign their names when the marriage is entered into our Book of Records. This is done after the ceremony.

MUSIC

When the wedding date is set with the clergy, the first thing to do is contact the church organist, Dewitt Tipton, as soon as possible. Ask the secretary for his phone number. . You may choose to have your own organist, but *all music* must be discussed with Dewitt. If you are having special instruments or additional performers, we will accommodate you as best we can. *Please remember that St. John in the Wilderness is a small church and does not have room for many people near the altar.*

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographs may be taken by one official photographer during the service as long as there is **NO FLASH** used. Please remind guests not to use flash cameras inside the church, also. We highly recommend that photos of the bride and her party be taken in the hours prior to the service, and that photographs at the altar be taken afterwards. In order to prevent the guests from being kept waiting, these should be well planned in advance, and participants notified that they are to be present (including clergy and acolytes, if desired), and taken as expeditiously as possible.

Videotaping may be done only if it is inconspicuous.

PROGRAMS

Although not necessary, some wedding couples have programs printed up for the guests outlining the ceremony. You may choose to have St. John do the printing for free, or you may find a commercial printer for your program. The presiding clergy has to approve the format for programs. If you choose to have your programs printed by someone else, you will need to give a rough draft and description of your program to the presiding clergy **ONE MONTH** before the wedding for approval. If St. John is printing the programs, **give the information to the church secretary three weeks prior to the wedding.**

REHEARSAL

Generally, the evening before the ceremony we will rehearse the entire ceremony. Please remember to bring the marriage license to the rehearsal! It is also important that all attendants who will be in the wedding come to the rehearsal. This is especially important if there are young children involved; they need to be made as comfortable as possible prior to the ceremony. The rehearsal usually lasts at least one hour. Please be sure that those participating in the ceremony understand their parts. Please have

all participants present for the rehearsal at least 15 minutes prior to the designated time.

FOLLOWING THE SERVICE

The priest, bride, groom, and witnesses will sign the register and the license. Photographs may be taken inside or outside of the church.

ABOUT THE CHURCH

St. John can comfortably accommodate 175 guests at the maximum. Please keep this in mind as you develop your guest list. There simply is not room for people to stand, and there is not a balcony to accommodate an overflow crowd. The space at the altar is also limited. *Please, no more than 10 in your wedding party, including the bride, groom, and any ring bearers or flower girls.* Should the bride's dress have a train, one of the attendants will need to be responsible for helping the bride manipulate it as she moves and turns.

FLOWERS

There are some local florists who know the interior of St. John well. They are Blossom Basket, The Flower Market, and The English Garden. There are, of course, other florists in the area. Flowers may not be taller than the cross and will be put behind the altar against a white wall, so white flowers do not show up as well as some other colors. The flowers are to be left for the Sunday service. If you choose to have flowers in the Carriage Entrance or on the doorway, you do not have to leave these for the church.

CANDLES AND GREENERY

There are two 7-tier candelabra that will be used behind the altar. In addition, there are 11 aisle candelabra which you may use. These are wrought iron and fit on the aisle side of the pews. We will supply the (white only) oil-filled candles. If you have a large

wedding with many guests in the middle of August you may not wish to use these, as they do add a bit of heat, even though the church has air conditioning. There are also 12 windows which may be filled with leathery greenery, such as magnolia. If you choose to decorate the windows, your florist will need to supply those candles and holders. Make sure that one person in your group is responsible for removing them from the windows. We do not light a unity candle at St. John in the Wilderness.

GETTING DRESSED

The bride and her attendants may wish to dress in the Parish House or in the smaller Tower Room in the church, itself. There is no charge to dress at either location. Please do not take any church property as souvenirs. We would appreciate your being dressed more than one hour before the service, to have time for pre-wedding pictures. The groom and his groomsmen should also arrive early to gather at the church to have their boutonnieres pinned on and for pre-wedding pictures.

SMOKING, FOOD, AND REFRESHMENTS

There is no smoking, eating, gum chewing, or drinking in the church proper. St. John is a tobacco-free campus. The bride may provide snacks, soda, or water to the bridesmaids while getting ready at the Parish House. Please designate someone in your group to gather all personal items, pick up waste products, and clear them out before the wedding begins.

PARKING

There are six handicapped parking spaces near the Carriage entrance of the church. These are to be used by people with the proper tags, and not as convenient spaces for the bridal party. There is plenty of parking (75-90 spaces) in the lower church lot and at the Parish House. Parking gates are usually locked an hour or so after the wedding. If your guests are carpooling to the reception, leave cars in the Parish House parking lot.

ABOUT THE PARISH HOUSE

Your reception can be held in the parish House across Rutledge Street from the church. You may schedule this when you schedule your wedding. There is no fee to use the Parish House for parishioners. However, note on the fee schedule that there is a sexton fee for his service.

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