

# Christian Marriage at St. Mary's Episcopal Church Kinston, NC

## INTRODUCTION

This handout is written for you if you are considering a wedding in the Anglican/Episcopal tradition at St. Mary's Episcopal Church and is designed to answer some of the many questions that arise as a couple considers marriage in the Church.

Historically, people have come to the Church because they want the Christian faith and the community of faith to be a part of their coming together as husband and wife, and as a means of providing a spiritual foundation for their life together. It is vital for persons planning to be married within the Church to understand that Christian marriage is a sacrament of our community of faith.

## BECOMING A PART OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH

If you are not already attending St. Mary's Church, your first step is to begin to worship on Sundays. Only after worshipping with us will you be able to make an informed decision about whether you would like to be a part of this Christian community.

When you are planning your marriage, you should schedule an initial meeting with one of the clergy. The primary purpose of this meeting is for the clergy and the couple to become acquainted. **Only after this meeting has occurred, and with the consent of the clergy, can any plans be made about a proposed wedding date.**

**We ask for a six-month period of notice prior to the wedding date.** The canons of the Episcopal Church require at least thirty days' notice and that at least one of the two persons to be married be baptized Christian.

## PRE-MARITAL PREPARATION

At St. Mary's, the pre-marital preparation process has two components. There will be a minimum of four sessions covering such topics as: the couple's understanding of and role models for marriage, the spiritual nature of Christian marriage, and the inter-relationship of how the couple will live with money, intimacy, the sharing of power; and the order of service for the wedding. In addition, St. Mary's requires the couple to participate in **PREPARE/ENRICH**, a marriage preparation tool. Contact info regarding this may be obtained from the Clergy.

## MARRIAGE AFTER DIVORCE

If either person has been divorced, a wedding may take place in the Episcopal Church with the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese of East Carolina. One year must elapse after the final divorce decree before application may be made to the Bishop; **no public announcement of the date may be made or invitations sent until the Bishop's permission is received.** A signed copy of the divorce decree(s) must be reviewed by the Clergy. If either person has been divorced more than once, additional counseling with an approved, licensed counselor will be required.

## SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Q. What about the wedding service?

A. Weddings at St. Mary's are celebrated within the rich tradition of the Anglican Communion to which the Episcopal Church belongs. The order of service for the *Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage* as contained in *The Book of Common Prayer* is our principal planning resource. Weddings may be celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist, at which all persons present will be invited to participate.

### Q. What can you expect from St. Mary's Church?

A. We offer you, your family and friends a genuine and warm welcome here. As one of the most significant events in your lives, your wedding will be approached with joy, respect, and attention to every last detail, along with our desire to help you bring depth, meaning and spiritual intention to the occasion. We are familiar with the anxiety and tension that couples can experience during the planning of their wedding. We promise that you will be supported by the ongoing prayers and sensitivity of our community.

### Q. What is the best time for weddings?

A. Weddings are usually held on Saturdays but may be scheduled at other times. They are not held during Lent, Holy Week, in the last week of Advent, Christmas Eve, or on some holiday weekends.

### Q. May we have our reception in the church parish hall?

A. Yes. To arrange for this, you must talk directly with the Parish Secretary to see if the space is available for the times you need, including the times when you will decorate the room and clean up.

**Alcoholic Beverages:** Beer or wine may be served if they are clearly labeled and an equally attractive non-alcoholic alternative is provided. There shall be no open bar.

### Q. When and what is the wedding rehearsal?

A. The rehearsal is customarily scheduled between 5:00 and 6:30 p.m. on the night before the wedding and is used to review the mechanics involved in the wedding service itself. It is a very important part of the wedding preparation; many questions will be answered regarding the formal procedures of the marriage ceremony. The rehearsal is conducted by a member of the clergy and St. Mary's Wedding Coordinator. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend the rehearsal. This should include the following as applicable: best man, groomsmen/ushers, the maid and/or matron of honor, bridesmaids, flower girl, ring bearer, readers of the lessons, parents, and anyone else who has a role in the service. **Everyone should be in the church 15 minutes prior to the rehearsal time.** The rehearsal will last about 45 minutes.

### Q. When should we arrive at the church for the wedding?

A. Normally the bride arrives two hours prior to the wedding. You may dress in the Bride's Room, which also has self-contained restrooms. This may be used by the bride and her attendants. The groom and his attendants must dress at home, since there are not similar accommodations for them at St. Mary's. *Be sure to designate a person to gather up any clothing or personal articles brought to the church by members of the wedding party immediately after the service.* The church is not responsible for any articles left during or after the ceremony.

**Q. How do we arrange for flowers for our wedding?**

A. Please contact a local florist for set up of wedding flowers, ensuring that the flowers are placed in liners that will fit our vases. Artificial flowers are not appropriate and only flowers on the altar are appropriate. Our Parish Secretary is happy to recommend a florist. Many couples choose to leave flowers used during the marriage service as an offering for use during the next day Sunday service. The Parish Secretary can help you make arrangements for this should you desire.

**Q. May adornments (bows, etc.) be put on the pews?**

A. Yes, if they are secured with ribbons or soft clips. No wire or metal clips or anything that might mar the pews may be used. **Please make arrangements for any adornments to be removed after the wedding.**

**Q. Can we move the liturgical furniture at the front of the church?**

A. Liturgical furniture in the church may not be moved.

**Q. Is an aisle runner appropriate at St. Mary's?**

A. No. Aisle runners can be serious safety hazards and may not be used.

**Q. What candles are used at St. Mary's?**

A. We use the office light candelabra on the altar or Eucharistic candles. A "unity" candle is not part of our liturgy.

**Q. How do we arrange for music at our wedding?**

A. *The couple should schedule a meeting with the parish Director of Music at least 4 months prior to the wedding date to work on the music for the wedding. A 50% non-refundable deposit of the organist's fee will be due at the time of this meeting. The balance of the fee will be due 30 days prior to the wedding.* The only restriction upon music is that it must come from the rich repertoire of music suitable for the Church as determined by the Director of Music. The Rector has final approval of all music used during a wedding. The parish Director of Music serves as organist for all weddings. An outside organist may be used only with permission from the Director of Music who will still be paid the customary fee whether or not he/she plays for the wedding. This fee does not apply if the Director of Music is unavailable or the couple has decided they do not want organ music. Arrangements for additional vocal or instrumental musicians must be made in consultation with the Director of Music. Payment to additional musicians should be arranged with those musicians.

**Q. Is there a suggested minimum age for a flower girl or ring bearer?**

A. In our experience, a mature five-year old child is generally capable of performing these duties.

**Q. What about photography and videotaping at our wedding?**

A. Your wedding is a sacred and solemn event and the staff of St. Mary's labor diligently to assure that the two people being married are prepared for that event and are not in any way distracted from its importance for their future life together. To help in accomplishing that goal, you may use one professional photographer. **The following rules are to be strictly adhered to:**

No flash photography whatsoever, neither video nor still, professional nor amateur, is allowed in the nave, chancel, or any part of the sanctuary during the wedding ceremony. On the day of the wedding, the clergy will instruct professional photographers and videographers as to where they can position

themselves during the service. The basic rule is that photographers and videographers may *not* obstruct the view of *any* guest or participant during the ceremony. They must videotape and take pictures from the balcony. Flash photos may *only* be taken as the wedding party walks down the aisle at the beginning and at the end of the service. Posed pictures can be taken in the church or St. Francis Garden before or after the service. Photographers must agree to these rules. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make clear these customs and rules to the photographer and all who are involved in the wedding. Violations will not be tolerated.

**Q. May rice or birdseed be thrown as we leave the church?**

A. No. Nothing may be thrown or scattered at the church.

**Q. How do we get a marriage license?**

A. The license is issued by the Register of Deeds, Lenoir County, North Carolina. To obtain a marriage license, both bride and groom must do the following: present identification that in the determination of the Register of Deeds the applicants to the marriage are at a minimum age of 18 years and are authorized to be married under the laws of this state; types of identification accepted are a current and valid government issued photo ID, such as a driver's license, passport, etc.; the applicants (both) must bring their Social Security card; the cost of a Marriage License is \$60, cash only. No blood tests are required and there is no waiting period. The license is valid for 60 days.

**Q. May another clergy member officiate at our wedding?**

A. Other clergy with whom you have a personal relationship may share in your celebration by assisting the St. Mary's clergy. You should discuss this with the St. Mary's clergy at your first meeting. Please do not contact assisting clergy until you have spoken with St. Mary's clergy.

**Q. May we have our wedding at another location?**

A. In certain circumstances, St. Mary's Clergy may participate in weddings held in other locations, such as the home of either the bride or the groom. Out-of-town weddings are generally not possible for the Clergy. These matters must be discussed with the Clergy at the first meeting.

**Q. May we use an outside wedding consultant?**

A. **Professional wedding consultants are not for the direction of the wedding service.** The "Wedding Director" role is filled by a trained Parish Wedding Coordinator who will be available at the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding to assist.

**Q. What fees are expected by the church?**

A. The following fees apply. All fees for church/chapel use are payable to St. Mary's Church. Fees to the organist, sexton for cleaning, Wedding Coordinator, and acolyte are made directly to the individuals, and should be given to our Parish Administrator. Should you have questions, please contact the Parish Administrator. The fees are negotiable only in the most extreme cases, at the discretion of the clergy. In some cases, couples choose to minimize their costs by having a truly small service, by having no music or flowers. In these cases the price can be appropriately modest.

**Fees should be paid at least 2 weeks prior to the rehearsal.**

	<b>Members:</b>	<b>Non-members:</b>
<b>Church Use:</b>	\$150	\$400
<b>Chapel Use:</b>	\$50	\$200
<b>Sexton:</b>	\$100	\$150
<b>Wedding Coordinator:</b>	\$150	\$200
<b>Acolyte/Crucifer:</b>	\$15	\$30
<b>Organist:</b>	\$300 (ceremony) \$150 (rehearsal)	

*It would be unusual for the organist to not need to be present for the rehearsal. This decision is made in consultation with the Rector, Organist, and Wedding Coordinator.*

*Organist fees are the same for members and non-members.*

\* Please note that there is no prescribed fee for the officiating clergy. An honorarium understood as a "thank you" gift for the priest's time in preparation and for the wedding may be appropriate, but that is strictly at the discretion of the couple being married. However, those who are not members of St. Mary's Church, a fee will be charged in consultation with the clergy performing the wedding. The fee will be equal to or greater than the fee for the organist.

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