

A Guide for Marriages at St. George's

INTRODUCTION

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, 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. Therefore, we hold weddings only for active members of St. George's.

BECOMING A PART OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

If you, or an immediate family member, are not already a member of St. George's Church, your first step is to begin to worship at St. George's 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. We prefer that you are active in the community for at least six months before your wedding. If you are not "on the rolls" of St. George you may either choose to be baptized, transfer your membership from another Episcopal Church or attend the reaffirmation class and receive the laying on of hands by the Bishop.

After you are a member of St. George's, and you want to inquire about wedding plans, 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.

PRE-MARITAL PREPARATION

At St. George'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 and the sharing of power. We also discuss the liturgy itself and role of faith in the couple's life. In addition, we may recommend a session a professional therapist and/or a marriage preparation workshop offered by the Virginia Institute of Pastoral Care, www.vipcare.org . You will need to schedule an appointment to meet with one of our wedding coordinators as part of the preparation process (contact info available 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 Virginia. One year must elapse after the final divorce decree before application is 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. George's are celebrated within the rich tradition of the Anglican Communion to which the Episcopal Church belongs. *The Book of Common Prayer* is our principal planning resource for the service, but there are alternative, approved liturgies also available. Weddings may be celebrated in the context of the Holy Eucharist, at which all persons present will be invited to participate. The Eucharist (Holy Communion) is optional.

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, Easter Week, in the last week of Advent, Christmas Eve, or on some holiday weekends. To reserve your date, please contact the facility coordinator after you have confirmed the wedding with the clergy.

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

A. Yes. We do have a sliding scale of "fees" (rather than donations), depending on number of people, use of kitchen, amount of time, etc. To arrange for this, talk directly with our Facility Coordinator. Clergy may reduce or waive fees if needed.

Alcoholic Beverages: A bartender must be present to serve/check i.d. Wine, beer, or punch (no other mixed drinks) may be served, provided there is an attractive non-alcoholic alternative. You must submit, in writing, your plan for serving alcohol to our facility coordinator.

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 logistics involved in the wedding service itself. It is a very important part of the wedding preparation. The rehearsal is conducted by a member of the Clergy and St. George's Wedding Coordinator. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend the rehearsal. This should include the 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 lasts about 1 hour.

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

A. The church and Faulkner Hall (which can be used as a dressing or staging room) are normally available two hours before the wedding. Faulkner Hall has two nearby bathrooms and a full

length-mirror in the adjacent hallway. *Be sure to designate a person to gather up immediately after the service any clothing or personal articles brought to the church by members of the wedding party.* The church is not responsible for any articles left in the rooms 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, insuring that the flowers are placed in liners that will fit our vases. Our Facility Coordinator is happy to recommend a florist and may help you may arrange for the flowers to be given for Sunday's worship as a Thanksgiving offering.

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. Liturgical furniture in the church may not be moved.

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

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

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

A: A mature five-year old is usually capable of these roles.

Q. What candles are used at St. George's?

A. We use the office light candelabra on the altar or Eucharistic candles. A "unity" candle is not part of our liturgy. Torch candles may be posted on the columns for an additional cost.

Q. What about parking and accessibility?

A. Street parking is limited to two hours. The municipal lot at the foot of George Street on the river, two blocks from the church, is unlimited and open to the public. We recommend that you secure from City Hall signs on which you note "No Parking - Wedding" and cite time from and to and post them in the early morning on the day of your wedding to reserve five spaces in front of the church on Princess Anne Street for the convenience of your wedding party and family. The city charges a modest fee for their use and is refundable upon their return to City Hall by you. Three handicapped spaces are provided by the city on Princess Anne directly in front of the church (please note that two of them are not reserved for handicapped at all times). The accessible entrance to our elevator is via our George Street door directly around the corner from the handicapped space.

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

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

Q. Does St. George's have other special needs helps?

A. A hearing-impaired system for individuals to adjust to personal needs is available. Large print editions of the Prayer Book liturgy are available. We have an elevator and accessible restrooms near the nave.

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

A. The couple should schedule a meeting with the parish Music Director at least 6 weeks prior to the wedding date. The only restriction upon music is that it must come from the rich repertoire of music suitable for the Church as determined by the Music Director. The parish Music Director serves as organist for all weddings. An outside organist may be used only with permission from the Music Director who will still be paid the customary fee whether or not he/she plays for the wedding. This fee does not apply if Director of Music is unavailable. Arrangements for additional vocal or instrumental musicians must be made in consultation with the Music Director. Payment to additional musicians should be arranged with those musicians.

Q. Who provides service bulletins?

A. The couple arranges to have bulletins printed, and a draft must be sent to the clergy for proofing ahead of time. The church office can produce a simple bulletin if needed (turn in all information 30 days ahead). All paper and printing expenses are paid by the couple.

Q. What about photography at our wedding?

A. Your wedding is a sacred and solemn event and the staff of St. George'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:**

Flash photographs of arriving guests, ushers, bridesmaids, bride and groom are acceptable prior to the service. Flash photographs may be made of the wedding party at the beginning of the entrance procession and at the end of the retiring procession.

Still photography Ushers are to instruct arriving guests with cameras that no photos are allowed during the service to avoid the necessity of the Clergy having to stop the service to make such a request.

A designated photographer may take photos silently and without flash during the ceremony from a stationary location out of sight lines (gallery is best). Likewise, video taping of the service is also permissible with a stationary camera using natural light only.

No posed photographs may be made of the wedding party at the altar during the service. Again, photographers may only be present during the service if they are stationary, silent (no camera noises), without flash, and out of sight (in the back or gallery). A tripod for video recording is permitted but must also be out of sight lines. The wedding party may assemble at the altar before or after the service for pictures. Any photographs which include the Clergy are to be taken first. The candles will remain lit for 15 minutes after the service has ended; all

photographs to be taken must be completed in that time. The front steps of the church and church yard are also available for photographs and posed groupings.

It is the responsibility of the couple to make clear these proper customs and rules to the photographer and all who are involved in the wedding.

Q. May we use an outside wedding consultant?

A. Professional wedding consultants are not used. A Parish Wedding Coordinator will be available at the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding to assist. The clergy and a Parish Wedding Coordinator direct the wedding and not a professional consultant.

Q. How do we get a marriage license?

A. You may get the license at any courthouse in Virginia. A driver's license is sufficient identification. The fee must be paid in cash. No blood tests are required and there is no waiting period. The license is valid for 60 days. When you have obtained the license, give it to a member of the Clergy at your next appointment or at the rehearsal.

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. George's Clergy. You should discuss this with the St. George's Clergy at your first meeting. Do not contact assisting clergy until you have spoken with St. George's Clergy.

Q. May we have our wedding at another location?

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

Q. What money is expected by the church?

A. Finances should not prevent someone from being married at St. George's. We do expect couples to contribute to the church to help cover costs and as a way to express thanksgiving. Rather than specify a fee, we invite you to make a gift, an offering. Some offerings are "required" for costs that are standard. Other offerings are "by donation" and we provide a range to consider. When deciding how much to give, consider

- 1. what you would pay for similar services in other contexts.**
- 2. whether or not you already support the church financially.**
- 3. what your financial resources are.**

The "fixed" offering is typically around \$500, minimum. The "donation" offering is often between \$500 and \$1000. All offerings are payable to St. George's Church and will be distributed accordingly by our Business Manager. These offerings may be reduced or waived at the discretion of the clergy. Please complete [the offerings summary sheet](#) so that the offering can be distributed

appropriately.

Offering should be made at least 2 weeks prior to the rehearsal.

General Wedding: by donation \$300-\$700 suggested

Acolyte/Crucifer (if needed): \$25

Bulletins: simple format may be provided, couple pays for paper and printing costs.

Candles: additional expense may be added for special candles.

Clergy: In recognition of preparation and officiating the service a donation is typically made to the discretionary fund, for charitable and sacred uses. (suggested \$200-\$500)

Facility manager: \$100 (if needed...discuss with clergy)

Parish Wedding Coordinators: \$150 each (typically 2, unless wedding is larger than 200 people or more than 12 attendants)

Music Director: \$200 for one consult, rehearsal and wedding.

\$25 for each rehearsal time with additional musicians

\$50 booking fee if the Music Director is asked to engage additional musicians - should be paid directly.

Premarital Preparation sessions: included in the donation to clergy.

Reception in Sydnor Hall/Kitchen: See church office. \$100 refundable deposit. includes facility manager

Summary of Monetary Offerings

The clergy may adjust these amounts in consultation with the couple.

Couple Surnames: _____

Wedding Date: _____

Offerings that are "required"

Bulletins: (only if produced by church - \$75 for first 100) _____

**St. George's Wedding Coordinators (required): \$150 each (usually 2)
Additional coordinators may be needed for weddings with more than
12 attendants or 150 guests).**

Acolyte/Crucifer (if applicable): \$25 (each)

Candles (additional costs for extra candles):

Torches (up to 50): \$75

7-Branch Candelabra: \$25 extra

Facility manager (if needed...discuss with clergy): \$100

Music Director: \$200 + extra rehearsals Total:

Offerings that are "by donation":

**Clergy discretionary fund (which helps others in need) in recognition of time spent
preparing for and officiating the service and marriage preparation sessions: (\$200-\$500
suggested)**

Building/facility donation (\$300-750 suggested)

If reception in Sydnor Hall/Kitchen: (consult church office)

TOTAL:

This total is payable to St. George's Church in a single check two weeks in advance of the rehearsal. Please include this page along with your check and bring it to the church office.