

# To those who are planning to marry . . .

The anticipation of a wedding is such a delightful time. The focus is on the future, a new kind of future for the couple, their families and their extended family. Preparing for marriage is a holy time. The Catechism of the Book of Common Prayer reads "Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter a lifelong union, make their vows before God and the Church and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows". St. Mark's clergy and staff stand ready to support you with this important step.

This booklet is designed to answer many of the questions you might have and to serve as a guide to all the plans you will be making in regard to your marriage in the Church. Please feel free to ask for clarification regarding any information that is unclear to you. We wish you well as you begin your journey, learning and loving and growing together...

The Clergy and Staff of St. Mark's Episcopal Church

#### Preparing for your marriage at St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. This informational booklet is offered to couples inquiring about Holy Matrimony in the Episcopal Church and specifically at St. Mark's. Its purpose is to outline the Church's view of Holy Matrimony, Constitutions and Canons of the Church pertaining to Holy Matrimony, and items specific to marriage at St. Mark's.

# **General Considerations**

Christian marriage presupposes two individuals who are professed Christians, who fully and happily intend to fashion their marriage around the Christian faith. By Canon Law at least one of the couple must be a baptized Christian. Canon Law further requires that a minimum of thirty days' notice for a marriage must be given; however, it is wise to contact the priest as far in advance as possible in order to avoid scheduling conflicts. All weddings at St. Mark's must have the approval of the Rector.

If both persons are not active in worship and the life of the Church when the couple decides to make the commitment of marriage, both should consider, and at least one must begin regular worship and involvement in the Church. For those who have no intention of regular involvement in any church, it might well be appropriate to be married in a different context.

If either person has been married before and is now divorced, the couple, with the assistance of the priest, must first seek the Bishop's permission to have the second marriage in the Church. In such cases it will be necessary to have copies of all relevant divorce decrees. Unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances, it is normative that there be at least a year between the date of the final divorce decree and the date of the wedding. The church office should be contacted at least six months prior to your desired wedding date. For a third marriage, additional time and counseling may be necessary.

#### **Preparation**

As with all the sacraments, there is a period of preparation. The Canons of the Episcopal Church require that the clergy instruct couples preparing for the Sacrament of Marriage. The instruction focuses on the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony. Therefore, the clergy will address with the couple the following:

The maturity of the relationship of the two people seeking to be married;

The extent to which the couple has discussed and decided upon matters pertaining to their religious convictions and their intentions regarding the Church and their relationship to the community of faith;

The extent to which they have discussed and decided upon such issues as budget and their whole economic situation;

The couple's hopes and goals regarding children, raising a family, and matters relating to the relationship with each other's families.

It should be understood that after the initial meeting, such instruction will involve a minimum of three sessions with the couple, and more if the priest so decides.

#### The Wedding

The date of the wedding must be scheduled through the Church office and in consultation with the clergy. A non-refundable deposit of \$100.00 is required to hold your wedding date. The deposit will be applied to the balance of your wedding fees which are due 14 days prior to your wedding. Normally, weddings are *Not* scheduled immediately before or after Major Feast Days (i.e. Christmas) or during Lent. Exceptions may be made under unusual circumstances and only after consultation with the Rector. Under no circumstances should any announcement of a wedding at St. Mark's be made until the couple has had an interview with a priest, the priest agrees to officiate, deposits paid and St. Mark's Declaration of Intention has been signed. In the event a judgment is necessitated by virtue of divorce; no announcement can be made until the Bishop has signified his permission.

In the course of premarital instruction, the couple will meet with the St. Mark's Altar Guild Wedding Coordinator who is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with all church arrangements for the wedding. The coordinator is present for the rehearsal and to assist in the smooth flow of the wedding itself, therefore an outside wedding consultant is not needed at either the rehearsal or the wedding. Planning well in advance of the wedding date will make for a more joyous and worshipful event.

# The Wedding Ceremony

Christian marriage is a request for God's blessing upon a covenant freely taken by a man and a woman for a lifetime. There are some options which the couple may elect, but it should be kept in mind that the form of the service itself is prescribed by the Church. The administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is governed by the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer, the Canons of the Episcopal Church, the directives of our Diocesan Bishop and our Parish polices.

The Rite for Holy Matrimony may be found in the Book of Common Prayer on pages 423-432. Readings, which are acceptable for weddings are found on page 425. The procedures for each wedding are under the direction and at the discretion of the presiding clergy person. Other Episcopal clergy or clergy from any other Christian denomination may assist at the invitation of the presiding clergy.

The Prayer Book provides for an optional celebration of Holy Communion. Whether or not to include Holy Communion at the wedding is a decision that should be made by the couple with the advice of the officiating priest. Consideration should be given to the invited guests and their religious persuasion. In most cases those attending the service do so to witness the vows and not for Holy Communion. Therefore the following is offered as a guide for options to consider:

(A) If Holy Communion is desired during the wedding service, every baptized Christian present is invited to receive. Holy Communion achieves its fullest meaning in the

- Christian community when shared with each other; therefore, it would be inappropriate for just the bride and groom to receive during the service.
- (B) If you choose to include Holy Communion in your service please advise your ushers so they may help with those proceeding to the altar.

#### Extra-Liturgical Traditions

Over the years, a variety of cultural traditions have come to be associated with weddings. Many of these traditions (for example, the use of a unity candle) have ambiguous origins and purposes, and their use obscures the intent of the marriage service in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Marriage celebrations at St. Mark's Church, therefore, do not include those customs or traditions not provided for in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

# Policy for Bridal Consultants

If the assistance of a bridal consultant is enlisted by the bride, the consultant must be informed that the St. Mark's Wedding Coordinator will conduct the wedding rehearsal and the officiating priest will direct all aspects of the Wedding Liturgy. The bride is responsible for informing her consultant of St. Mark's Policy. Bridal Consultants, dressers and other related professionals are welcome to assist in dressing.

#### Rehearsals

A rehearsal prior to the wedding is required, unless otherwise determined by the officiating priest, in consultation with the couple. Your wedding rehearsal is automatically scheduled for 6:00 p.m. the evening before the wedding and will last for one hour. In the event of a time conflict, the officiating priest will provide an alternative time. The family should remind all guests that the rehearsal is taking place in a house of God. Appropriate dress, manners and respect of sacred spaces are expected at all times.

All members of the wedding party: bride, groom, attendants, groomsmen, parents, grandparents, etc. are expected to attend the rehearsal. Consideration should be given well in advance of the rehearsal as to which ushers are to seat which family members.

The wedding coordinator must be informed as to the number of parents and grandparents expected to be seated as well as the number of ushers to be used.

The rehearsal normally lasts one hour. It is imperative that all members of the wedding party <u>BE</u> <u>ON TIME</u> for the rehearsal. Rehearsal dinners should be scheduled appropriately.

#### **Children**

Children under five years of age should not be asked to be formal participants in the wedding ceremony. When children of an appropriate age are participating, parents or guardians are responsible for their behavior, recognizing the church is a place of worship at all times both during the rehearsal and the wedding itself. We have this policy because we have learned from experience that children under five years of age cannot and should not be relied upon to conduct themselves in an adult manner during the ceremony. Remaining in place, standing still, not talking, not crying and

not engaging in distracting behavior while in public view is adult behavior and is usually more than a young child can manage.

We advise you, if you are using elementary school aged boys and girls in your wedding, to prepare them in advance for the clothing they will be expected to wear. Sometimes children, especially boys, will react negatively when presented with unfamiliar, unusual and elaborate clothing and refuse to wear it. We advise you to prepare the children in advance, if boys are expected to escort girls upon entering and leaving the ceremony.

It is our policy that the wedding ring(s) is placed in the custody of the best Man (and Maid or Matron of Honor if there is a ring for the Groom). If there is a ring bearer, a representative ring is placed on the ring bearer's pillow. Experience has taught us that deviating from this policy carries with it the risk of a disrupted wedding. Flower girls may carry flowers, but may not throw petals.

#### Music

St. Mark's Organist/Director of Music has been designated by the Rector to be in charge of all music, instrumental and vocal, at every service. Therefore, please do not negotiate in advance with anyone to be involved with the music of your wedding. Only classical, sacred music may be used during the wedding ceremony. We suggest that popular secular music, in general, be reserved for the wedding reception. Early consultation with the Director of Music will eliminate any disappointments on the day of the wedding.

#### Flowers and Decorations

There is a natural beauty about St. Mark's Church that needs very little elaboration or embellishment. The accepted practice for weddings is the placement of two identical arrangements of cut, live flowers on the altar. Plastic containers, which fit into the brass vases, are available to be picked up by your florist the week prior to the ceremony. It should be noted that florists are not allowed behind the kneeling rail in front of the Altar. The flowers for the ceremony may be left in the Sacristy. Your Wedding Coordinator will then place the flowers for the Altar before the ceremony. The flowers and candles on the retable behind the altar must not protrude out so as to inhibit movement between the altar and the retable. The clergy must be able to pass through that space. Flowers or greenery are sometimes used to mark the pews reserved for family or special guests. If such arrangements are used, they must be placed so as to do no damage to the pews. No other floral arrangements except for hand-carried bouquets are permitted. Altar Guild members are present between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Saturdays. This is the optimum time for florists to schedule the decoration of the sanctuary.

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of the Church and may not be disturbed or removed.

Altar Flowers may not be removed from the Church after the ceremony under any circumstances, since they are considered to be a "gift to God" in honor of the marriage. Floral gifts are acknowledged in the upcoming Sunday's worship booklet. The bulletin editor of the church must be notified at least one month prior to the wedding in order to include this dedication in the bulletin.

The use of candles in the nave (e.g., floor candelabra or at the ends of pews) is prohibited. Because of the potential hazard to guests, no rice, birdseed, paper or plastic confetti, or the like will be allowed on the Church property. Sparklers or other pyrotechnics are likewise prohibited anywhere on the property. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the wedding party and guests of this guideline.

#### **Printed Order of Service**

The presiding clergy and the organist <u>must</u> give approval for all information contained in any printed program, regardless of where or how it is printed. Appropriate samples are available from the clergy.

# **Photography**

The Rite of Holy Matrimony is a Sacrament of the Church. Therefore, no photographs may be taken during the service itself with the exception of one or two time exposures (not requiring a flash) taken from the balcony with the prior consent of the officiating priest. These should not be taken during any periods of prayer within the marriage rite. Video recording of the service is permitted from the balcony only, without any additional lighting, sound, and sound mixing equipment or microphones. Equipment for video recording must be in place 45 minutes prior to service and video operator must be in place 10 minutes before the service is to begin, where he/she will remain until the conclusion of the service.

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of the Church and may not be disturbed or removed.

Only still photographers are allowed in dressing area and all professional photographers will vacate dressing rooms and reception areas twenty minutes prior to the beginning of service. No inappropriate photographs of the Bride or Bridesmaids may be taken.

It is the couple's responsibility to notify guests that photographs, during the service, are not permitted. A note could be included in the printed program.

The clergy and staff of St. Mark's are happy to work with the couple and photographer in arranging time before and after the service for posed photos. Careful planning and early consultation with the photographer to discuss and plan poses will allow time for all photos to be taken. However, all photography must be completed within thirty minutes of the conclusion of the service. The photographer should be reminded that the marriage is being solemnized in a house of God. (It should be noted that photographers are not allowed behind the kneeling rail in front of the Altar at any time.) Appropriate dress, manners and respect for sacred space are expected at all times. The officiating priest and church staff have the right to intervene, and if needs be to direct the photographer and/or videographer to leave the Church property if this expectation is not met. The couple is responsible for insuring that the photographers they have chosen are aware of and willing to comply with these guidelines.

# **Marriage License**

The marriage license is obtained at least two weeks prior to the wedding from any County Clerk in the state of Texas. The marriage license must be given to the parish secretary six days prior to the wedding ceremony. The priest presiding at the service will complete the license after the wedding and return it to the County Clerk.

#### **Wedding Day**

The wedding party should plan to arrive at the Church no less than one-and-a-half hours nor more than two hours prior to the service. Dressing rooms are available for the bride and her attendants, as well as the groom and his groomsmen. Do not leave purses, jewelry, cameras or valuables unattended in the dressing areas. The Church does not assume responsibility for lost or stolen items. Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed on the Church property, except when arranged for at the reception (see below). Smoking is prohibited in all of the buildings of St. Mark's. Snacks and soft drinks are permitted as the wedding party prepares for the service in the Cloister room.

#### Reception

The Parish Hall, Cloister Room, and Guild Room, as available, may be reserved through the Church office for receptions. Alcoholic beverages, limited to beer and wine (no distilled spirits), may be served with the following stipulations:

- ❖ The couple must insure that no person under 21 years of age has access to alcoholic beverages.
- ❖ Alcoholic beverages must be consumed responsibly and in moderation.
- The couple must provide for the presence of a law enforcement officer, arranged through the parish office, for the duration of the reception. Check made payable to the officer must be received 14 days prior to the wedding reception.
- All alcoholic beverages must be removed from the premises at the end of the reception.
- Any behavior, which the priest or other parish staff member deems inappropriate, may result in the immediate termination of the reception, and immediate departure of the wedding party and guests.
- Any damage to St. Mark's property associated with the wedding and/or reception will be the responsibility of the couple and/or their families.
- ❖ A \$500.00 property damage deposit, refundable to the couple, must be paid in full not less than 14 days prior to the wedding and reception.

If the services of a caterer, decorator or band/DJ are employed, they must confer personally with the Church staff to coordinate use of the facilities. The officiating priest reserves the right to prohibit the use of music that could reasonably be construed as offensive to the Christian Faith. All food, beverage and decoration items must be removed from the Church at the conclusion of the reception. Unless authorized by the Rector, the reception is to conclude no more than two-and-one-half hours after the end of the wedding service. Advise the Wedding Director of any special transportation from the wedding by limousine, carriage or bus, so that the appropriate measures can be taken to ensure that street traffic is not disrupted.

#### **Financial Considerations**

#### Wedding Date Deposit

The date of the wedding must be scheduled with the parish secretary and in consultation with the clergy. A non-refundable deposit of \$100.00 is required to hold your wedding date. Please note: the \$100.00 deposit will be applied to the balance of your wedding fees.

Please obtain from the church Secretary the current form explaining in detail the fees for wedding service at St. Mark's Church

Wedding service in Chapel or Main Sanctuary includes: Clergy, Organist, Sexton and Wedding Coordinator.

If additional rehearsals with other musicians are necessary an additional fee may be required

A \$500.00 property damage deposit, refundable to the couple, must be paid not less than 14 days prior to the wedding and reception.

The bride, groom, a parent or grandparent of the bride or groom must be a confirmed member of St. Mark's Church at least six months prior to the wedding. Membership requirements may be discussed in more detail with the Rector or other clergy of St. Mark's

Please obtain from the church Secretary the current form explaining in detail the fees for a wedding reception at St. Mark's Church

Payne Hall, Cloister or Guild Room - Includes the use of the room, a Sexton for the first 5 hours. If the reception is especially large or complex or if alcoholic beverages are included in accordance with the rules documented in this customary, an additional sexton may be required at an additional rate per hour with a 5- hour minimum.

A \$500.00 property damage deposit, refundable to the couple, must be paid not less than 14 days prior to the wedding and reception.

#### Vocalists or Instrumentalists:

Each individual artist sets own fees. Please make check payable to artist.

# Security

Required for receptions at night or serving beer/wine. The fee for the officer is charged per hour with a 4-hour minimum. Please check with Church Secretary for current fee.

All fees must be paid in the church office 14 days prior to the wedding date.

The staff of St. Mark's hopes that your wedding is a joyous occasion filled with happy memories. Please do not hesitate to ask any questions that arise in the course of planning this extraordinary event in your life of Faith.

## **Scripture Readings**

One or more of the following lessons is to be selected for use in the service. If the wedding includes a celebration of Holy Communion, a lesson from the Gospels must be included.

#### Old Testament and Apocrypha

Genesis 1:26-28 (He created male and female) Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (a man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh) Song of Solomon 2:10-13, 8:6-7 (many waters cannot quench love) Tobit 8:5b-8 (New English Bible) (that she and I may grow old together)

## **New Testament Epistles**

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (love is patient and kind) Ephesians 3:14-19 (the Father from whom every family is named) Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (walk in love, as Christ loved us) 1 John 4:7-16 (let us love one another for love is of God)

#### Gospels

Matthew 5:1-10 (the Beatitudes)
Matthew 5:13-16 (you are the light...let your light shine)
Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)
Mark 10:6-9, 13-16 (they are no longer two but one)
John 15:9-12 (love one another as I love you)

Please make only one choice from each group.

# IMPORTANT CHECKLIST

<u> </u>	1.	The wedding date must be arranged through the Parish Secretary and be placed on the Church calendar before invitations are printed and plans established. Your wedding deposit is due.
<del></del>	2.	All music must be arranged in consultation with the Organist/Choirmaster.
	3.	Special attention should be given to sections in this booklet entitled: Flowers and Decorations, Photography, and Reception. Notify your wedding professionals (florist, photographer etc.) concerning St. Mark's Policy.
	4.	Arrange to meet with the Wedding Coordinator to review all matters of wedding procedure.
<del></del>	5.	Arrange for pre-marital instruction with the officiating priest.
	6.	If the reception is at the church, schedule a planning meeting with the Head Sexton. You will be asked to complete an Event Coordination Plan.
	7.	Balance of wedding fees paid 14 days prior to wedding.
<u></u>	8.	Obtain marriage License at least two weeks prior to wedding.
<u></u>	9.	Bring marriage license to Parish Secretary six days prior to wedding ceremony.

# Declaration of Intention

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to be a li We belie mutual j God's w And we	to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do ifelong union of husband and wife as set forth in the Book of the that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mit oy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity ill, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the kndo engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our uship and to seek God's help thereto.	of Common Prayer.  nd, is intended by God for our  and adversity; and, when it is  owledge and love of the Lord.
Signature e	of Groom	
Signature e	of Bride (Maiden Name)	<del></del>
Dated		
We hav	ve read, understood, and agree to the guidelines set out h	erein:
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