

# An Introduction to Weddings at St. John's Episcopal Church



## The Episcopal Parish of Saint John the Evangelist

172 Main Street

Hingham, Massachusetts 02043

Parish Office: 781-749-1535

E-mail: [office@stjohns-hingham.org](mailto:office@stjohns-hingham.org)

Web page: [www.stjohns-hingham.org](http://www.stjohns-hingham.org)

*Marriage is intended by God for the mutual joy of man and woman,  
for the help and comfort they give to one another in prosperity and adversity  
and, when it is God's will, for the procreation and nurture of children.*

Book of Common Prayer, Page 423

### **Introduction**

One of the great joys of parish life is to share with a couple in the joyful and profound moment that is marriage. Your wedding day is one that you will never forget and we are eager to help make the experience meaningful and special. By choosing to be married at St. John's, we invite you to be committed to this church community now and in the future. If you live out of town, we similarly encourage you to find a congregation that will support you in your life together.

### **Requirements for Marriage in the Episcopal Church**

You should know that because St. John's is an Episcopal Church there are certain guidelines which must be followed. At least one of the parties to the marriage must be a baptized Christian (of any denomination) and the wedding ceremony must be attested to by at least two witnesses. The Bride and Groom must also agree to sign the Declaration of Intention which is included in this packet.

A minimum of three pre-marital counseling sessions with the priest is required prior to the wedding day. These sessions allow time for the priest to get to know the couple and vice versa. They also set aside time to discuss the Church's understanding of marriage, to explore the nature of life as a married couple, and to plan the service. In some cases the priest may suggest the couple seek other counseling.

**If either party is divorced**, the following procedure must be observed: the priest, in consultation with the couple, must determine that the prior marriage has been legally dissolved and that continuing concern is being shown for the well-being of the former spouse and of any children. The Bishop of Massachusetts must then give written consent to the proposed solemnization of marriage.

### **Marriage License**

An Intention of Marriage can be applied for at any city hall or town clerk's office in Massachusetts. Both parties must be present and a fee is due at that time. Your license will be issued to you in three days, and it remains in effect for sixty days. If you are living out of state and will not be present to apply for the license, you must obtain a court waiver. Hingham's Town Clerk can be reached at 781-741-1410 to answer further questions. Since the wedding cannot be celebrated without license in hand, please bring it to the rehearsal.

### **Scheduling a Wedding Date**

The date must first be cleared with the priest through the parish office. Normally weddings take place on Saturdays though some weekdays and Sunday evenings are also available. Weddings are not scheduled during the seasons of Advent or Lent, due to the penitential nature of those seasons. Since Lent's dates depend upon Easter, it usually begins sometime in February and lasts until late March or Mid-April.

### **Rehearsals**

Rehearsals are scheduled for the afternoon or evening before the wedding. They generally take 30 minutes to one hour, depending on the nature and size of the wedding. It is essential that all members of the wedding party attend and arrive on time.

### **Planning the Service**

The clergy at St. John's look forward to working with you to shape the specifics of the service. We find that prayerful attention to service planning is a wonderful way to keep focused on the true nature of your wedding day. Please read the marriage service in the Prayer Book carefully (Page 423). You should be clear that this is the service you want before deciding to be married at St. John's. Although the service will follow this content and format, there is room for striking a balance that reflects both your relationship and the traditions of the Church.

The readings during the service will be from Scripture, whether from the list appointed or other passages, chosen in consultation with the priest. We encourage the participation of friends and family members in the reading of lessons and the offering of prayers. The church will provide a copy of the readings that includes the opening and closing responses called for by the Prayer Book.

A celebration of the Holy Eucharist is a wonderful way to start your life together and to celebrate the blessing of a marriage. In the Episcopal marriage rite, communion is optional, at the discretion of the couple. At St. John's, our custom is to welcome all baptized Christians, regardless of age or denomination, to receive communion.

### **Service Bulletins**

A master copy ready for printing of the service bulletin (showing the order of service, music, and a listing of the bridal party) may be ordered through the parish office for a \$35 fee. If the couple takes on this responsibility, the bulletin must be approved by the priest prior to printing. A sample bulletin is available from the office staff. Contact Administrative Assistant Evelyn Czaja in the parish office for more information.

### **Music**

Once you and the priest have agreed to go forward with the ceremony, we will ask you to contact the parish organist to schedule a meeting to discuss options and to begin planning. There are a range of possibilities from organ alone to organ accompanying congregational hymns to other instruments and soloists. Whatever music is chosen will need to be consistent with the musical traditions of the parish. The parish organist is to play for all weddings. Please contact Elisabeth (Buffy) Gray at [egray@stjohns-hingham.org](mailto:egray@stjohns-hingham.org). Music fees start at \$250 minimum and will be discussed with Mrs. Gray. They are determined by the type of service and according to the guidelines set by the American Guild of Organists, and may increase due to additional musicians or soloists. Music fees are due two weeks before the wedding. On the rare occasion that the bride and groom have a friend or relative who is an organist and who they would like to play their wedding, the parish organist is to be compensated at the fee of \$250 for the service.

Any vocal or instrumental soloist must be obtained through the parish organist. Please do not hire anyone on your own. The use of any public address system for a soloist or any amplification of music is prohibited. Your choice of music for the ceremony should be appropriate to the sacred nature of the occasion and texts should be taken from the hymnal, Bible, or the Book of Common Prayer. Consult with the parish organist with specific questions regarding musical choices. Secular music is best saved for the reception.

Be sure to meet with the organist well in advance of the wedding, giving consideration to music with which you may not be familiar. The music should reflect the corporate nature of the service as the congregation is gathered to witness and affirm the joining together of the two of you in Holy Matrimony. Wedding music should never be a distraction from the meaning of this sacred event nor should it serve as a showcase for the musician or singer.

Music before the service should set the atmosphere for the occasion. The wedding processional and recessional should express the joy and dignity of the occasion. It is appropriate to have the congregation sing a hymn or two during the service. Instruments used in the service in addition to the organ might include trumpets or other brass, violin, oboe, or string ensembles. In any case, music should be live and not recorded.

### **Flowers and Other Adornments**

Flowers, boutonnieres, and bouquets may be brought in by a florist. We ask that the florist be in touch with the Church Office at 781-749-1535 to let us know whether you are leaving the flowers for Sunday morning as an offering (which is typical) or taking them with you to the reception. *Please note* that any flowers meant for the altar must be arranged in the urns belonging to the Church. We have several pair which are meant to fit the limited space by the altar. The florist is welcome to come several days in advance of the wedding to pick up a pair.

“Unity candles” are not used. Please refrain from the use of rose petals, rice, bird seed, or any type of confetti thrown after the service.

### **Aisle Carpet Runner**

Because the church aisle has a permanent carpet in place, the use of a white aisle carpet runner is optional. If you wish to have one, we only use the church’s linen carpet; those supplied by florists are of paper or plastic and tend to slide when rolled out and are easily punctured by heels. You pay for the cost of cleaning the church’s runner which is \$80. Please let us know far in advance whether you plan to use it.

### **Respect for the Church**

The wedding party is expected to treat the Church with respect. The Church is a place of prayer, and an atmosphere of reverence for the presence of God is expected. It should go without saying that food and drink are not allowed in the Church or in the sacristy.

### **Photography**

We work hard to maintain a joyful and worshipful atmosphere throughout the wedding ceremony. Therefore there shall be absolutely no use of flash pictures or lights for photographs during the wedding ceremony. Your photographer may use a flash for pictures of the wedding party entering and leaving the church, provided they are taken at the rear of the church. *Under no circumstances may the photographer come down the aisle or be in the front of the church during the service.* Photographs without flash may be taken from the rear of the church.

The best way to photograph a wedding party is either before or after the service. Photographs may be taken before the ceremony, as long as they are concluded 30 minutes before the start of the service, or for 30 minutes following the ceremony.

Videotaping is permitted during the service, with available light only and with the videographer adhering to the same restrictions as above. The videographer and equipment must be unobtrusive. The use of any lights is strictly prohibited. The designated place for a video camera is in the back of the church where the bridal party can be recorded entering and leaving the church. Under no circumstance is the videographer to move about in the church before the service and must remain stationary during the recessional.

## **Seating Capacity**

The Seating capacity of St. John's is 300 people.

## **Other Clergy and Wedding Coordinators**

Generally, the parish priest officiates at all weddings held at St. John's. Other clergy that you may wish to participate must be invited to do so by the rector. Outside wedding consultants may not be used for any component of the wedding ceremony.

## **On the Day of the Wedding**

The wedding party should plan to arrive one hour before the wedding. Have ushers in place no later than 45 minutes prior to the start of the service. A good rule of thumb is at least one usher per 50 people in attendance. Some ushers should be persons other than those in the wedding procession, to help seat latecomers.

## **Fees**

There are no fees for the sacraments of the Church. The costs associated with a wedding cover the costs of the event, utilities, cleaning, and the musician's time.

You will notice a significant difference in the cost for active members and non-members or non-active members of the Church. This is an unfortunate distinction to be made but one that takes into consideration those who support the parish spiritually and financially throughout the year. For the sake of definition, an active member is someone who has been attending and contributing regularly for the past six months.

The organist's fee will be determined after the appropriate consultation. If music chosen demands additional preparation time or if there are soloists or instrumentalists to coordinate or if there is an additional rehearsal, the fee will reflect the increased demands on the organist's time.

Everything not marked "outside arrangements" must be paid at the time of the wedding rehearsal. Individual checks should be made out according to the List of Fees. The remaining fees may be paid in one check payable to "Parish of St. John the Evangelist." At the priest's discretion any of these fees may be waived or reduced, with the exception of the organist's fee.

## List of Fees

To cover costs related to weddings held at St. John's, please note the following fees:

Please make one check out to "Parish of St. John the Evangelist:"

Church Building Use	\$250 (active members) \$500 (non-members & non-active members)
Aisle Runner (optional)	\$80 (cost of cleaning)

The following are to be paid in separate checks made out to the individuals listed:

Clergy	Honorarium at couple's discretion for active members; \$200 for non-members and non-active members for the priest's time in pre-marital counseling, rehearsal, and officiating
Organist: Elisabeth C. Gray (outside musicians may increase the music fee)	determined at consultation
Bridal Assistant: Sandy Baker	\$100
Sexton: Myriah Manley	\$100
Bulletins: Nancy Holtschlag (if done by parish office)	\$35
Flowers	outside arrangements

# Wedding Information Form

*(To be completed and returned to the church office)*

Groom's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor or Widower \_\_\_\_\_ Number of this marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized? \_\_\_\_\_ In what denomination? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Residence \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Bachelor or Widower \_\_\_\_\_ Number of this marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized? \_\_\_\_\_ In what denomination? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Ceremony \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal: Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witnesses \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Permanent Address after Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Declaration of Intent

We, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the liturgical forms authorized by this Church. We believe it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, and of the safeguarding and benefit of society, and we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto.

Clergy \_\_\_\_\_

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## Policies for Photographers at Weddings

The couple who is arranging for you to photograph their wedding is being married at St. John's Episcopal Church in Hingham, Massachusetts. These guidelines serve to make everyone aware of the Church's expectations and requirements.

Our central concern is that the service retains its dignity and beauty. A wedding is neither a press conference nor a pageant. St. John's offers a beautiful setting and the words of the liturgy set forth both the seriousness and joy of the event. We expect that all those involved, the couple, their attendants and guests, and any professional or other photographers, to act in a manner consistent with that beauty and solemnity.

The photographer should be as inconspicuous as possible. Wandering down aisles or popping out to interrupt the procession is not allowed. Once the prelude music begins, the photographer should take a position in the rear of the church and stay there. *Flashes or other lighting will not be used during the service.* This extends to the wedding guests who are taking pictures as well.

Photographs may be taken before or after the service. If the presence of the priest is desired, please arrange that with the priest before the service.

Photography sessions should end thirty minutes before the service begins and are not to extend more than thirty minutes after the service. Parish staff and lay volunteers have to prepare the church for the next day's services and should not be kept waiting for an extended period of time.

Videotaping arrangements should be made with the priest well before the service begins and will conform to the restrictions given on lights and movement.

In order that there be no confusion about the church's expectations and the couple's desire that their wedding conform to the customs of St. John's, we ask that both the couple and the photographer sign this paper, indicating that they have read it and will abide by its provisions. This form should be returned to the church office at least two full weeks before the date of the wedding.

Bride \_\_\_\_\_

Groom \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer \_\_\_\_\_

## Suggested Hymns for Weddings

Hymn 487 – Come My Way, My Truth, My Life

581 – Where Charity and Love Prevail

544 – Jesus Shall Reign

8 – Morning Has Broken

376 – Joyful, Joyful

657 – Love Divine, All Love's Excelling

516 – Come Down, O Love Divine

518 – Christ is Made the Sure Foundation

593 – Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace

577 – God Is Love