



The Episcopal Church of Saint Mary

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Guidelines for Weddings: August 2016

(Everything you wanted to know, and even what you didn't know that you wanted to know about getting married here!)



Congratulations on your engagement to be married! We are pleased that you are considering the celebration of this blessed occasion at The Episcopal Church of Saint Mary in Falmouth. We hope that these guidelines will be helpful as you prepare both for your wedding, and, more importantly, for your Christian marriage.

A Christian wedding is far more than a legal or social event, and it is different than a civil ceremony. It is above all a public gathering for worship. And Holy Matrimony is a sacramental rite in which the grace of God is experienced and made known within the gathered community. It is intended to be a deeply spiritual moment for the couple and the community.

We are blessed to worship within the Anglican tradition of the Church. This means that we follow the forms of worship as set forth by The Book of Common Prayer (1979) and by General Conventions of the Church. Within this framework, however, there is plenty of room for couples to add their own creative touches.

Saint Mary's celebrates the weddings of our members and of the immediate families of our members. This is an essential part of our life as a parish community. Exceptions can be made for others if the couple has some connection to or history with this parish community, or for some other compelling reason. It is the Rector's prerogative to make this determination.

How to begin planning

Step One: Call the parish office at 207-781-3366.

Choose your date and time in coordination with our parish office **BEFORE** you reserve a place for the reception. Except in rare circumstances, at least 90 days advance notice is required in order to schedule a wedding. Here at Saint Mary's, weddings are not scheduled to take place during Lent, on Thanksgiving weekend, or between Christmas and New Year's Day.

Important note: If you choose to book a reception date and time before talking with our parish office, we may be unable to accommodate your wedding in our parish calendar!

Step Two: Set up a time for both members of the couple to meet with the Rector, the Reverend Nathan Ferrell.

Each parish pastor is required to ensure that both parties to the marriage have been instructed as to the nature, meaning and purpose of Holy Matrimony before the wedding can take place. At Saint Mary's, this is typically done through the use of an on-line resource called Prepare-Enrich (www.prepare-enrich.com). Once this relationship assessment is completed, the couple meets between 3 and 5 times with Nathan to discuss the report and to plan the ceremony.

More details on the items above:

Membership Requirement

Because Christian Marriage is lived out in the context of the community of faith, participation in the life of a Christian community is essential. If the couple is not currently a member of a parish, now is the time to start. Being a member of a parish entails regular participation in worship, and making a commitment of time, talent and treasure.

If the couple lives in the Falmouth area, the Rector will discuss with them the steps to becoming members of Saint Mary's. If the couple lives in another community, the Rector will help the couple to find a local Episcopal Church where they can become members.

Baptism Requirement

Because of the sacramental nature of Holy Matrimony, at least one of the parties must be baptized. (The baptism need not have been in an Episcopal Church. Every baptism performed with water in the name of The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is recognized as valid by The Episcopal Church.)

Counseling Requirement

The Episcopal Church requires its clergy to meet with the couple for premarital preparation. The exact nature and number of sessions will be determined by the Rector, but generally three to five sessions are recommended. Persons living at some distance from Saint Mary's will need to arrange for this instruction with a competent professional in their area, and plan to spend at least one session with Fr. Nathan to plan the ceremony itself. In this case, the couple is responsible for making the arrangement and seeing that a recommendation is sent to the Rector by the professional counselor discussing the couple's involvement in the church, and the premarital counseling process.

Remarriage after Divorce

The Episcopal Church permits remarriage after divorce in most instances. Such permission is not automatic, however, and requires the permission of the Bishop on recommendation of the Rector.

In addition, the Church requires the following:

- proof that a former marriage has been terminated by civil annulment or divorce decree
- that the parties be instructed as to their continuing responsibilities to the former spouse and any children of a prior marriage.

Generally speaking, permission is *normally* granted for remarriage after one divorce. If there has been more than one divorce for either party, it is questionable that permission will be granted.

Marriage License and Canonical Requirements

Those being married at Saint Mary's must be willing to sign a Declaration of Intention before the wedding. The Declaration of Intention is an affirmation of a couple's intention to live in a Christian covenantal relationship as explained in The Book of Common Prayer.

Marriage licenses can be obtained from the clerk of the town where either member of the couple resides. Marriage licenses are valid for a period of ninety (90) days. A blood test is not required. Out-of-state residents should apply at the Falmouth Town Hall, 271 Falmouth Road. In the case of remarriage following a divorce or annulment, you must provide legal proof of dissolution or nullity.

Music at your wedding

Saint Mary's is blessed to have both a wonderful pipe organ and an extremely gifted Organist and Choirmaster, Mr. Bruce Fithian. Once Nathan has given approval for your wedding at Saint Mary's, you should make an appointment with Bruce to go over music. Bruce may be reached by e-mail at bsfithian@aol.com, or by telephone at (207) 831-7113.

Music may also be offered by other musicians or vocalists, according to your interests. All of this should be discussed with Nathan as soon as possible. If you request to have another organist play on our organ, Bruce must first approve of this prior to confirming the arrangement, due to the sensitive and valuable nature of our organ.

Same-sex Marriages

The Episcopal Church celebrates and blesses the marriages of two persons regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Our Rector is gladly willing to officiate at the weddings of members who happen to be of the same gender.

Readings from the Holy Scriptures

At least one readings in the wedding ceremony must come from the Bible, but other inspirational readings are welcome as well. The couple will work with the Rector to confirm the selections. The couple will also select one or more readers as needed. It is quite appropriate

for members of the family, the wedding party, or guests to participate. If the wedding is to include the sharing of Holy Communion, then one reading must come from the Gospels.

Holy Communion

Sharing Communion at the Lord's Table has always been the primary focus of worship for Christian communities. It is a festive holy meal in which Christians celebrate Christ's love in their lives and come to the altar to be fed by his Body and Blood. Holy Communion is the ideal context for the sacrament of marriage. When the service includes Communion, the couple, following the taking of vows, shares with the congregation the feast of God's love. The couple will discuss with Nathan if it makes sense to include Holy Communion in the wedding ceremony after the sharing of vows.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is customarily scheduled for 5 PM either one or two days before the wedding. (Many couples have found it better to have the rehearsal *two days* before the ceremony, allowing for a more relaxing day and evening before the wedding itself.) The rehearsal will start on time and lasts approximately one hour. The entire wedding party, the readers (if any), and the parents of bride and groom (and grandparents, if in attendance) need to be present.

Guest Clergy

The Rector of the parish (Nathan) officiates at all parish weddings. Should you wish to have another member of the clergy assist, please speak with the Rector, who will invite that person to participate. The person does not need to be ordained in The Episcopal Church. Clergy from other faith communities are welcome to participate in an appropriate fashion.

Flowers for your wedding

If you wish to have flowers behind the altar, we recommend you use the two silver vases supplied by Saint Mary's. Your florist will need to collect the liners for these vases a few days prior to the ceremony, and will need to have the flowers at the church *no later than three hours before the ceremony is scheduled to begin*. The florist should call the parish office at 781-3366 to make arrangements to get into the sanctuary. Typically, the altar flowers remain in place for our Sunday worship gatherings, though exceptions to this can be made.

White Runner

The use of a runner is typically not permitted, for reasons of safety. Experience has shown that it is very easy to trip as you are coming down the aisle.

Wedding program

Saint Mary's will create and supply a simple service leaflet or program, containing all pertinent information. This information needs to be submitted to the Parish Administrator at least two weeks before the wedding. You are certainly welcome to create something more elaborate on your own, however all of the text copy must be approved by the Rector in advance of printing.

Photography and Videotaping

It is understandable to want to create a visual record of this special day, however the emphasis needs to be on the sacredness of the occasion, rather than on the presence of the photographer. Flash pictures are permitted during the processional and recessional only, and not during the ceremony itself. Pictures taken without a flash may be *discreetly taken* during the ceremony from

the balcony or sacristy areas *only*. Videotaping is permitted from the balcony with the permission of the Rector.

Seating Capacity

The church building can seat a maximum of 200 people, including the balcony. The wedding party generally sits in the chancel area, if needed.

Receiving Line

Thought should be given to whether or not you wish to receive attendees immediately after the wedding. Given the small size of our narthex (entrance area), a receiving line needs to take place outside. The weather will impact whether or not this is appropriate or if it should rather be done at the reception venue.

Throwing Rice, Birdseed, etc.

For ecological reasons, the throwing of rice is not permitted. For reasons of safety, we request that no birdseed be thrown. (It is very easy to slip and fall.) Bubbles or flower petals may be used outside.

Wedding Receptions at Saint Mary's

It is entirely appropriate, and quite convenient, to have your wedding reception here in our Auditorium or on the grounds, weather permitting. Each reception must follow the guidelines established by the Vestry (the governing body of the parish). A copy of these guidelines, including policies on the use of kitchen facilities, the use of alcohol, and mandatory insurance coverage are available from the parish office.

A reception here typically includes the use of the Auditorium and the Kitchen. If more space is required, the parish staff is happy to work with you to confirm all of the details for your event. It is possible also to hold the reception outside under a tent on our parish lawns.

Donations for Weddings at Saint Mary's

Members of Christian communities have long been encouraged to make an offering to the church of their time, talent, and treasure to support the mission of Christ's people in the world. Believers offer their time and talent in a variety of ways, and many offer their treasure through the spiritual discipline of the tithe, which is 10%. You might consider offering a tithe to Saint Mary's (10% of the total expenses of your wedding) in honor of this special occasion. How much you give is entirely your choice, and it is very much appreciated as a donation in support of our mission. It is voluntary, and no one will ever be turned away for lack of ability to make a donation. All donations to Saint Mary's are tax-deductible.

The typical minimum donations that we request are as follows:

For a regular wedding in the church sanctuary:	\$600
For a small wedding in the parish house chapel:	\$300
For also holding the reception at Saint Mary's:	\$800

The preferred method of payment is in three checks:

Organist Fee: \$200 Make check payable to Bruce Fithian

Sexton Fee: \$100 Make check payable to Roy Packard

Church Donation: \$300 Make check payable to The Episcopal Church of Saint Mary

However, one full payment check payable to The Episcopal Church of Saint Mary is acceptable. All checks must be received by the parish office **BEFORE** the rehearsal begins.

In addition, it is customary to thank the Rector for his time and attention to your wedding. This is a personal voluntary gift within your discretion. The typical amount is \$100 – 300 and is given directly to the Rector, Nathan Ferrell.

If you have any questions at all about these guidelines, feel free to call Beth Shaw, our Parish Administrator, at any time at 781-3366.

May the Lord bless you with wisdom, insight, joy and peace as you prepare for this special celebration!