



## *Welcome to St. Paul's Episcopal Church!* **Wedding Customary**

At St. Paul's, we believe that one of our most important ministries is to offer welcome and hospitality. In that spirit, we are glad you are here and hope that if St. Paul's is not already your spiritual home, you will consider making it so. We are also grateful to know that you are interested in having a wedding at St. Paul's.

A wedding is one of life's great moments, a time for good wishes, feasting and joy. It is also an invitation for a couple to share life together in the spirit of Jesus Christ. It is based upon a public and life-long covenant between a woman and man, celebrated in the presence of God and before a priest and congregation.

Because marriage is a commitment "not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly," we ask that you read through this document carefully and then talk with us about your coming marriage.

### **A Step-by-step guide to getting married at St. Paul's**

1. Read the material in this document.
2. If you still wish to proceed, contact the church office (813-803-7489).
3. The Priest will then contact you to set up an appointment. *If all agree to continue forward after that meeting*, the date for your wedding will be placed on St. Paul's calendar.
4. You will schedule required pre-marital counseling sessions with the Priest (four sessions).
5. You will contact the congregational coordinator, Ms. Christine O'Donnell, at [cvodon47@gmail.com](mailto:cvodon47@gmail.com) to choose altar flowers. Chris serves as the liaison between the church and our florist.
6. You will schedule an appointment with the music director (Ms. Gina Spano, email: [spano.gina@gmail.com](mailto:spano.gina@gmail.com)) to plan the music.
7. You will meet with the Priest to finalize the wedding ceremony.
8. You and the wedding party will attend a rehearsal the day before the wedding. Two wedding coordinators (who are St. Paul's parishioners appointed by the Priest) will help coordinate both the rehearsal and the wedding. The coordinator(s) assigned to

your wedding will contact you in advance of the rehearsal in order to ensure that the rehearsal and wedding will run smoothly.

*We expect that people will be on time  
for the rehearsal and the wedding!*

### **What does the Episcopal Church require?**

At least one of the parties to the marriage must be a baptized Christian, and the wedding ceremony must be attested by at least two witnesses (normally the best man and maid of honor). You will meet at least three times with the Priest during the course of your preparation.

### **Do I need to be a member?**

No. However, we do ask that, after you have selected St. Paul's as the place of your wedding, you worship regularly with us on Sundays or weekdays. We believe that marriage is not just a ceremony in our building, it is part of the community of believers and seekers here. We hope that at some point you would consider becoming members of St. Paul's. Your individual spiritual journeys (and your marriage journey) will be enriched by belonging to a faith community.

We will also consider a wedding here if you are a member at another church which is out-of-town. We understand that sometimes family arrangements make it easier to be married in the family's church rather than the church one is regularly attending. In this case, you may usually make arrangements for the clergy person in that church to do the pre-marital counseling. In any case, *there are different fees for non-members.*

### **What if I am divorced?**

In the Episcopal Church, we observe the following procedure if you are seeking to be remarried. Clergy, in consultation with the couple, are asked to determine: that there is evidence that the prior marriage has been dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction; and that continuing concern is being shown for the well-being of the former spouse, and of any children. Permission from the Bishop of Southwest Florida is also required.

*Please note:* It is the policy of the Priest that she will not officiate (or allow St. Paul's to be used) for a marriage ceremony if either of the parties has been married more than once before.

### **What does the State of Florida require?**

You must obtain a marriage license (which requires proof of identification: birth certificate, passport, driver's license, baptismal certificate). Bring this marriage license with you to the rehearsal.

### **How soon can the wedding be put on the calendar?**

The date will be chosen after your initial meeting with the Priest. Weddings must be scheduled at least 90 days in advance. Rehearsals normally take place at 5:00 p.m. the night before the wedding. Please remember to bring your marriage license, along with your wedding programs and any other decorations, to the rehearsal.

As you plan, please consider that you may arrive up to one hour before the service and stay up to 30 minutes after the wedding. We ask that you take responsibility for being on time.

### **Are there times when weddings cannot take place?**

Weddings are generally celebrated on Saturdays. Weddings are not performed during Holy Week (the week before Easter), because of the sacred nature of that time. If you are not sure of the date of Easter in a given year, the Priest will be glad to let you know.

### **Who plans the service?**

The Priest works with the bride and groom. All weddings at St. Paul's are according to the Prayer Book liturgy of The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage (page 423 of The Book of Common Prayer). No additions or deletions are permitted.

Clergy of other parishes or traditions may assist in the service, but the invitation comes from, and after consultation with, the Priest. We encourage the participation of friends and family in the reading of the lessons. There are options as to which three selections from Scripture will be read at your service.

You choose one of the following Old Testament lessons:

Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)

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)

You choose one of the following New Testament lessons:

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)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

You also select one of the following Gospel passages (to be read by the priest):

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light...Let your light so 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 have loved you)

We will be happy to provide a simple program for the wedding at no extra cost to you. However, most couples prefer to create their own programs.

*Our experience is that these next two areas tend to cause needless misunderstandings and conflicts. Please read these sections carefully.*

### **What about music?**

The parish organist will work with you (or assign another musician) to discuss options and to begin planning. Our organist will be creative and flexible when helping you choose the best music for your wedding. Bring your ideas and preferences to her.

Because of the sacred nature of the Marriage Rite, music outside of the sacred repertoire (popular songs, show tunes, etc.) is best included in your reception. St. Paul's organist must be consulted and give consent if other musicians are to be invited. *The music of the service is ultimately at the discretion of the Priest, in consultation with the organist.*

### **What about photography or video?**

We strive to maintain a joyful yet worshipful atmosphere in the wedding service. Good professional photographers understand this, and they will agree to minimize distractions and respect the sacred nature of the building and the liturgy.

The best way to photograph wedding participants *is before or after the service*. Weather permitting, the courtyard makes an excellent area for group pictures before the wedding. Please remember that those who are in charge of securing the building will be ready to leave 30 minutes after the wedding service is over.

**No photographs** of any kind may be taken in the church during the service. *Please tell friends and relatives not to use cameras or to stand up in the middle of the service to take a picture.* It is disruptive to the service and does not respect the sacredness of the ceremony or building. Photographs may be taken in the church during the 30- minute period following the service.

Videotaping is permitted during the service, with available light only, with the videographer positioned in a stationary place (no movement allowed).

We also require that the following announcement be prominently listed in your wedding program: *No photography of any kind is allowed during the wedding ceremony.*

### **Who does the flowers and decorations?**

You are required to have flowers on the altar at your expense. You must use the florist that supplies the Sunday altar flowers at St. Paul's. All flower arrangements must be made in consultation with Ms. Christine O'Donnell, the congregational coordinator, at [cvodon47@gmail.com](mailto:cvodon47@gmail.com).

The two chapel altar vases are each 13" high and arrangements may not exceed 24" in height (no higher than the top of the altar cross).

The flowers on the altar are left in place for the following Sunday's services, in thanksgiving for the wedding.

*There are to be no ribbons or bows on the altar flowers, nor are any artificial or dyed flowers allowed. Only flowers are to be on the altar – no statues, pictures, mementos, etc.*

All decorations (outside of altar flowers) must be removed within 30 minutes after the wedding.

All flowers (including those carried by the wedding party) are paid for by you.

No aisle cloth or runner is allowed. This prevents the possibility of any tripping as the wedding party processes down the aisle.

**Please Note:** We do not throw flower petals, rice, confetti, bird seed or any other similar substance within or without the church building.

*Final decisions about decorations and their placement are at the discretion of the Priest.*

**No alcoholic beverages** of any kind are permitted in the church, parish hall, or parking lot during either the rehearsal or on the wedding day. Also, your wedding may coincide or overlap with other parish activities. We ask that you share the facilities in a courteous and appropriate manner.

**Does the Episcopal Church use a unity candle?**

No. There is no ceremony of a Unity Candle in the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in the Episcopal Church. It is suggested that this ceremony might take place at the reception.

**What are the fees?**

When we meet with couples planning weddings, we often find that careful lists have been made of the costs: reception site, food, and drinks; florists and photographers; clothing and limousines. Where is the church on that list? We would ask: what value do *you* put on this item? The basic set fees for weddings are:

**Pledging Members..... \$700.00**

These fees include the following:

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Organist               | Wedding Coordinators (2) |
| Pre-marital Counseling | Altar Guild              |
| Sexton                 |                          |

**Non-Members..... \$1300.00**

These fees include the following:

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clergy                 | Vicar's Discretionary Account |
| Organist               | Wedding Coordinators (2)      |
| Pre-marital Counseling | Altar Guild                   |
| Sexton                 | Church Utilities              |

A 'pledging member' is defined as someone who has been a giver of record for at least one year prior to making an application to get married at St. Paul's.

Arrangements may be made for a vocal soloist or instrumentalist for additional fees. This must be coordinated and approved through the organist/choirmaster.

*The person responsible for these fees will be designated on the wedding preparation records. A deposit of \$100.00 (check made out to St. Paul's Episcopal Church) is due at the time of booking the wedding. The remaining fees are to be paid one month prior to the rehearsal.*

We ask that you also consider giving a 10% tithe of the overall cost of your wedding as a contribution to St. Paul's. For example, if your entire wedding costs \$15,000, we ask that you consider giving a total of \$1,500 to St. Paul's (which would, of course, include the basic fee of either \$700 or \$1300). St. Paul's gives far more than it gets — to its members, to those who come here to use and enjoy our sacred space, to those who are helped through our ministries and to Wesley Chapel which benefits from this holy presence in its midst.

### **A Prayer for Couples**

*God of tenderness and strength, you have brought our paths together and led us to this day; go with us now as we travel through good times, through trouble, or through change. Bless our home, our partings and our meetings. Make us worthy of each other's best, and tender with each other's dreams, trusting in your love. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Contact Persons at St. Paul's**

Vicar: The Rev. Adrienne Hymes (813) 803-7489;  
Email: [ahymes@episcopalswfl.org](mailto:ahymes@episcopalswfl.org)

Congregational Coordinator: Ms. Christine O'Donnell,  
Email: [cvodon47@gmail.com](mailto:cvodon47@gmail.com)