

Weddings

At

St. Matthew's

Holy Matrimony is a sacramental rite, a means of grace by which God blesses those who come before God in love to join in a sacred covenant. Weddings are first and foremost worship within the Christian community. As in all worship, we strive to maintain simple dignity in the conduct of our liturgies.

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church
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The Rev. Brooks Graebner, Rector

Christian Marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.

-The Book of Common Prayer, page 422

Weddings in the Episcopal Church

According to the laws (canons) of the Episcopal Church, both partners must understand the sacrament of marriage as taught by the Episcopal Church. In witness thereof, the couple must sign the "Declaration of Intention," agreeing to enter into the covenant of marriage by making a life-long voluntary commitment to each other.

Premarital counseling by the clergy is another stipulated requirement.

Remarriages

If either of the couple has been divorced, the clergy must seek permission from the bishop of North Carolina to officiate at the wedding. The request for permission follows meeting with the couple and fulfilling the guidelines set forth by the bishop.

License

The couple must also secure a license from the Register of Deeds Office of a North Carolina county. The license should be in the hands of the officiating clergy person before the rehearsal.

Weddings at St. Matthew's

Eligibility

We are a small church with limited resources of time and space. Therefore, we must respectfully decline most requests from non-members for weddings at St. Matthew's. Exceptions are sometimes made for couples who are known to our parish, or are members of other Episcopal churches, or who can otherwise demonstrate strong and compelling connections to St. Matthew's or the Episcopal Church.

Clergy

The rector must approve the scheduling of every wedding in the parish. Episcopal clergy from outside the parish may preside at weddings at the invitation of the rector. Clergy who are not Episcopalians may assist, again at the express invitation of the rector.

Location

Since Matrimony is a sacramental rite of the church, weddings should ordinarily take place in the church building or another consecrated setting.

The Prayer Book

The liturgy for all marriages will conform to *The Book of Common Prayer* and its guidelines. The couple may choose whether they wish to have only the service for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage or whether they wish to have the Eucharist as well.

Counseling

Premarital counseling is necessary and usually comprises three sessions. The nature, meaning and purpose of Holy Matrimony is

discussed and specific planning for the wedding is done. Some or all of the pre-marital counseling may be done by other clergy or a licensed marriage and family counselor if the arrangement is satisfactory to the rector and the couple.

Setting the Date & Time

All marriages must be scheduled with the rector. Weddings are not customarily scheduled during Advent and Lent, never during Holy Week, or after 5:00 p.m. on Saturday evenings. Except under extraordinary conditions, marriages must be scheduled three months in advance and in no case less than 30 days in advance. Six months notice is preferable.

The Church Building

160 people can be seated comfortably in the nave and balcony of St. Matthew's. The church and parish building will be open and available to members of the wedding party two hours prior to the ceremony for gathering, dressing, photography, etc.

The parish does not provide wedding service bulletins or programs. If you wish to provide bulletins or programs, you may discuss arrangements with the clergy.

Wedding Coordinators

While the assistance of wedding coordinators on matters of etiquette and aesthetics is appreciated during the rehearsal, the rector is the Master of Ceremony and final arbiter of all matters liturgical within the parish. Wedding coordinators who act in a disruptive or obtrusive manner will be asked to leave the grounds.

The Wedding Party

St. Matthew's is a beautiful, small church. Because of the size of our chancel, trying to accommodate more than four attendants each for the bride and groom becomes difficult and detracts from the beauty of the service.

The use of very young children as ring bearers or flower girls is also strongly discouraged.

Dressing Room

A room is available for the bride and her female attendants to dress at the church, if desired. We ask the gentlemen in the wedding party to arrive dressed and ready.

If the bride and her female attendants dress at the church, the bride should arrange for two friends or relatives not in the wedding party to collect and remove all personal items, including purses, from the dressing areas, as soon as the bridal party has finished dressing.

Guest Registers

Guest registers are best used at the entrance to the reception area and actually provide a helpful delay while the wedding party and family completes photographs after the liturgy.

Placing a guest register at the entrance to the church is discouraged, as it often causes the liturgy to begin past the appointed hour.

Flowers & Decorations

Altar Flowers

At weddings, we follow the same policies and practices regarding floral decorations as we do at our regular Sunday morning services. This means we allow two floral arrangements in the church, one on either side of the cross on the shelf behind the altar. Arrangements should be in keeping with the scale of the space. There are no restrictions on color or blossom size of flowers. No artificial flowers or non-natural materials may be used in the flower arrangements.

Flower Deliveries

Delivery of flowers should be coordinated with the clergy. It is customary to leave altar flowers in the church for services on the following Sunday. During the week following Christmas and Easter, there will be flowers placed elsewhere in the church under the direction of the flower guild. All florist charges associated with the wedding are the responsibility of the couple.

Personal Flowers and Boutonnieres

Bouquets and boutonnieres are to be delivered to the Ruffin House and all wrappings should be thrown away.

Candles & Pew Bows

Pew bows with attached greenery are permissible, provided they do no damage to the pews or their finish. Window candles are also permissible, provided that hurricane globes are used to avoid a fire hazard. You may rent ours for \$35. General custom at St. Matthew's is to use white altar hangings for weddings; changes are at the discretion of the rector and the altar guild. Other than the window candles mentioned above, only those candles we customarily use in worship are permitted. As it is not part of the liturgy, no unity candle is to be used.

No other decorations are permitted. Neither aisle runners nor special kneeling cushions are allowed, and no flowers or petals should be scattered in the church or church grounds.

There is to be no exterior decoration on the doors or the landings unless prior authorization has been granted by the clergy. Removal of decorations is the responsibility of the couple. Special questions about what types of floral arrangements or decorations are permissible should be directed to the clergy or the flower guild. Any items which do not fall within the guidelines above or that have not been specifically approved prior to the service will be removed. The throwing of rice or bird seed is also not permitted at St. Matthew's.

Everything but the altar flowers should be removed at the end of the service.

Photography

ALL FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY,
BY AMATEURS OR PROFESSIONALS,
IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN
DURING THE SERVICE.

If desired, one video camera may be set up in the balcony to run during the service. One photographer may take photographs of the procession and the recession unobtrusively from the back of the church, never stepping further into the church than the edge of the balcony.

Photography following the service is permitted, however, the bounds of proper behavior within the church should be observed at all times. The period of photography following a marriage service should last no longer than twenty to thirty minutes.

Music

The parish organist will coordinate and assist with the selection of appropriate music. Music that is of a purely secular or sentimental nature is not suitable for worship. Additional instrumentalists and soloists may be used, but the approval of all music and musicians in the church rests with the clergy and staff. There will be an additional charge for extra rehearsals.

On occasion, and subject to the approval of the clergy and the parish organist, guest organists may play for weddings at St. Matthew's.

The standard fee for the organist is \$250, which includes a consultation, rehearsal, and the wedding itself. The organist's fee should be paid directly to the organist, no later than the day of the rehearsal.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are for reviewing and practicing the wedding liturgy, so that all participants can be comfortable and competent during the celebration of the sacrament itself. Most decisions on placement and seating need to be made prior to, not during, the rehearsal.

It is customary to schedule a rehearsal to take place in the church the day or evening before the wedding. The rehearsal will ordinarily last about one hour. All members of the wedding party should be present and prompt. Please arrange the exact time for the rehearsal with the clergy and musicians. The ceremonial actions associated with the marriage rite are established by the clergy, in consultation with the couple. Consultants or directors may assist the couple in the implementation of the ceremony but have no authority to direct or determine the actions of the wedding itself.

Fees

A wedding is a normal service of the church; no fees are charged to members of the parish for the use of the building, the services of the Altar Guild, and the clergy.

Non-members of the parish are expected to make a \$350 donation to St. Matthew's one month before the wedding, in recognition of the costs associated with the maintenance of the parish program and property.

The clergy do not charge fees for their services from members or non-members.

Receptions

To reserve the Fellowship Hall for a reception, please call the church for availability and fee schedule. (919.732.9308)