

THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING  
OF A MARRIAGE

*Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or  
lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with  
the purposes for which it was instituted by God.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS\

St. John's Policy.....	3
Declaration of Intention.....	4
Canon 18 - Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony.....	5
Canon 19 - Concerning Re-marriage.....	6
About Your Wedding - General Remarks.....	7
Wedding Coordinator.....	7
The Rehearsal.....	8
The Altar Guild.....	9
The Music.....	9
Photographer.....	11
Fees.....	12
Fees for Use of Hunter Hall/parish House.....	12
Contact Persons.....	12
Information Form.....	13-15

## **THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY POLICY OF ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

For a stress-free and wonderfully joyous wedding we ask both parties in the wedding to read this booklet carefully. Address any questions you may have to the officiating priest.

### **The Episcopal Prayer Book service for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage states:**

*The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.*

Unlike other sacraments in our church, the ministers for Holy Matrimony are the couple who publicly affirm their marriage vows in front of two or more witnesses rather than a priest or bishop. A church wedding is different from a civil service because the promises are consecrated to God by prayer and the priest blesses the marriage dedicating the couple's relationship to God. The people gathered represent the Church to witness and support the couple in their new life together.

*Holy Matrimony* in the Episcopal Church is understood as the Church's support and blessing of the marriage relationship and is most appropriately done in the church. It is expected that at least one of the partners is Christian and actively supports the church through regular attendance and financial giving.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church require pre-marital preparation. At St. John's this involves at least six hours of counseling with a priest or a licensed counselor to discuss issues around family, communication, money, and the meaning and expectations of marriage, among other issues. If the couple uses a priest other than the officiating priest or a licensed counselor in another city for pre-marital preparation, that person will write a letter to the officiating priest indicating that counseling is complete and he/she is satisfied that the couple is prepared to work toward a faithful relationship to the end of their days on earth. See Canon 18, page 5.

In the case of other marriages, permission of the Bishop is required. See Canon 19, page 6. The officiating priest provides the necessary forms to be completed 90 days before the wedding date.

The wedding sacrament is a worship service offering praise and thanksgiving to God. The Eucharist is appropriate and recommended at weddings but not required. The service will be planned jointly by the couple with the priest following the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer.

Those desiring a wedding at St. John's should request an appointment with the officiating priest six months prior to the wedding. Music must be suitable to the occasion and approved by the priest. Hymns or songs in praise of God are appropriate. Secular love songs are not. Music selections are made in consultation with the director of music and the priest.

**IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHURCH CANONS,  
THIS STATEMENT IS TO BE SIGNED BY THE COUPLE:**

**DECLARATION OF INTENTION**

We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Signature of partners

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

**CONSTITUTION AND CANONS OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION  
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 2015, P. 58**

**CANON 18: Of the Celebration and Blessing of Marriage**

Sec. 1. Every Member of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage, and also these canons concerning the solemnization of marriage. Members of the Clergy may solemnize a marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 2. The couple shall notify the Member of the Clergy of their intent to marry at least thirty days prior to the solemnization; provided that if one of the parties is a member of the Congregation of the Member of the Clergy, or both parties can furnish satisfactory evidence of the need for shortening the time, this requirement can be waived for weighty cause; in which case the Member of the Clergy shall immediately report this action in writing to the Bishop.

Sec. 3. Prior to the solemnization, the Member of the Clergy shall determine:

- (a) that both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation; and
- (b) that at least one of the parties is baptized; and
- (c) that both parties have been instructed by the Member of the Clergy, or a person known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible, in the nature, purpose, and meaning, as well as the rights, duties and responsibilities of marriage.

Sec. 4. Prior to the solemnization, the parties shall sign the following Declaration of Intention:

We understand the teaching of the church that God's purpose for our marriage is for our mutual joy, for the help and comfort we will give to each other in prosperity and adversity, and, when it is God's will, for the gift and heritage of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of God. We also understand that our marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong; and we engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of our community.

Sec. 5. At least two witnesses shall be present at the solemnization, and together with the Member of the Clergy and the parties, sign the record of the solemnization in the proper register; which record shall include the date and place of the solemnization, the names of the witnesses, the parties and their parents, the age of the parties, Church status, and residence(s).

Sec. 6. A bishop or priest may pronounce a blessing upon a civil marriage using any of the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

Sec. 7. It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize or bless any marriage.

**CONSTITUTION AND CANONS OF THE GENERAL CONVENTION  
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 2015, P. 59**

**CANON 19: Of Regulations Respecting Holy Matrimony: Concerning Preservation of Marriage, Dissolution of Marriage, and Remarriage**

Sec. 1. When marital unity is imperiled by dissension, it shall be the duty, if possible, of either or both parties, before taking legal action, to lay the matter before a Member of the Clergy; it shall be the duty of such Member of the Clergy to act first to protect and promote the physical and emotional safety of those involved and only then, if it be possible, to labor that the parties may be reconciled.

Sec. 2 (a) Any member of this Church whose marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court may apply to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which such person is legally or canonically resident for a judgment as to his or her marital status in the eyes of the Church. Such judgment may be a recognition of the nullity, or of the termination of the said marriage; provided that no such judgment shall be construed as affecting in any way the legitimacy of children or the civil validity of the former relationship.

(b) Every judgment rendered under this Section shall be in writing and shall be made a matter of permanent record in the Archives of the Diocese.

Sec. 3. No Member of the Clergy of this Church shall solemnize the marriage of any person who has been the husband or wife of any other person then living, nor shall any member of this Church enter into a marriage when either of the contracting parties has been the husband or the wife of any other person then living, except as hereinafter provided:

(a) The Member of the Clergy shall be satisfied by appropriate evidence that the prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction.

(b) The Member of the Clergy shall have instructed the parties that continuing concern must be shown for the well-being of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage.

(c) The Member of the Clergy shall consult with and obtain the consent of the Bishop of the Diocese wherein the Member of the Clergy is canonically resident or the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Member of the Clergy is licensed to officiate prior to, and shall report to that Bishop, the solemnization of any marriage under this Section.

(d) If the proposed marriage is to be solemnized in a jurisdiction other than the one in which the consent has been given, the consent shall be affirmed by the Bishop of that jurisdiction.

Sec. 4. All provisions of Canon I.18 shall, in all cases, apply.

## ABOUT YOUR WEDDING

The wedding planning is done solely by the couple getting married with the officiating priest and wedding coordinator. It is essential that both parties to the proposed marriage read this booklet carefully, take part in the planning, and fulfill their responsibilities for the wedding. Parents, other relatives, and friends can be most helpful by being supportive of the decisions the couple makes.

A "church wedding" means being married by a priest of the Church, whether in the church, chapel, garden or, in rare instances such as serious illness, in a home. It may take two forms, either the simple wedding ceremony, or Holy Eucharist. The officiating priest will discuss both of these with the couple at the time of the first conference.

In general, the priest of the parish officiates. Occasionally there is reason to invite an ordained minister in good standing within his/her denomination to participate. It must be cleared with St. John's rector before speaking to the other minister. The rector will extend the invitation by phone or letter. Be prepared to provide contact information.

Once a wedding date and schedule has been agreed on with the officiating priest, it is sometimes difficult to reschedule. For this reason, it is important to think through all contingencies when setting the date.

Weddings at St. John's are not scheduled on the following days: the Forty Days of Lent (Ash Wednesday through Easter), Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, or any Sunday unless it takes place within the principal service at 10:30 a.m.

A wedding may be scheduled on any week day or Saturday other than the above mentioned, providing the date is open on the church calendar and the officiating priest is available. Weddings may be held mid-morning, at noon, in the afternoon, or early evening.

*The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage* in the Book of Common Prayer is a full, beautiful, and sacramental service. There are a few options within it, which the officiating priest will discuss. St. John's does not permit couples to write their own ceremony, or introduce innovations not within Episcopal liturgical practice.

A number of behind-the-scenes people are involved when a wedding is scheduled in the church. The ceremony and events leading up to it run more smoothly when the proper people are in place. The priest will begin notifying these people when the forms are completed.

## WEDDING COORDINATOR

The wedding coordinator will be present at the rehearsal and wedding. The coordinator, working with the priest, will organize the wedding procession, place the attendants, instruct the ushers, and coordinate the seating of the mothers and grandmothers. A specific plan for arranging the wedding party and the procession must be worked out with the coordinator before the rehearsal. See the seating chart on [page .](#)

The coordinator will be your main contact. Except for the music, all arrangements are made through the coordinator, not through the church secretary or other members of the church staff. No outside coordinator or consultant has a part in the rehearsal or wedding ceremony.

## **WEDDING PROGRAMS**

Wedding programs are the responsibility of the couple getting married. The draft must be approved by the officiating priest prior to printing at least two weeks before the wedding in case changes are needed. Full-text, electronic templates are available upon request. Full text makes it easier for the congregation to follow the service.

### **SECURITY**

A security person will open the church for the rehearsal and wedding, be present in the building during both, and lock the church afterward.

### **SEXTON/CUSTODIAN**

The sexton will ensure that the church and dressing areas are clean and orderly prior to the ceremony. Respecting the property of St. John's, the wedding party will leave it clean and orderly.

### **REHEARSAL**

The rehearsal is scheduled at a time mutually agreed on by the wedding couple and the officiating priest. The priest conducts the rehearsal with the wedding coordinator. It is crucial that everyone in the wedding party attend the rehearsal and arrive on time. The wedding couple must plan sufficient travel time for out-of-town participants. The rehearsal takes about one hour, or longer if participants arrive late. If you plan an after-rehearsal dinner, schedule the rehearsal two hours prior to the dinner plus travel time and allowance for inclement weather. If you would like the officiating priest to attend the rehearsal dinner, please extend an invitation in advance.

The rehearsal is for the purpose of practicing what is previously planned and agreed upon. Changes during the rehearsal often add to stress and create confusion.

### **MARRIAGE LICENSE AND FEES**

When you come to the rehearsal bring the Marriage License and checks made out individually to appropriate participants. See [page](#) .

### **THE ALTAR GUILD**

The Altar Guild prepares the church for the wedding. This involves changing the hangings, supervising the decorations putting out the wedding kneelers, setting up candles, and in the case of Holy Eucharist, preparing the linens, chalices, patens, and other items.

### **FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS**

The Altar Guild member assigned to your wedding will tell you the customs and norms for decorating the church and flower arrangements behind the altar. After you call the Altar Guild contact person, a member of the Altar Guild will be assigned to your wedding and will discuss decorations and other items with you.

Floral decorations are limited to altar flowers and appropriate flower and ribbon arrangements for marking reserved pews for family, along with a modest amount of greenery in other places. The florist must use the vases that are in the church. The florist must come and pick up liners for vases. Decorations are not allowed outside the altar area, except for flowers arranged around aisle candles. It is the bride's discretion about taking the wedding flowers or leaving them for the church



to use on Sunday morning. The Altar Guild will need to know a week prior to the wedding if the flowers will be left or taken.

Altar candles are furnished by the church. There is a charge of \$50 for aisle or window candles or \$100 for both. The Altar Guild will be glad to advise you on this. Testimonies from over one hundred and fifty years of weddings has been that St. John's is at its loveliest when *simplicity* rules.

### **ORGANIST**

St. John's organist will play for the wedding. If the organist is not available a list of approved organists will be provided by the director of music. Other classical instruments such as the harp, violin, flute and/or vocalists will work closely with the organist in preparation for a smooth and grace-filled wedding. The organist will be notified by the priest as soon as the wedding application is approved and will approve and coordinate all decisions related to music in the service. The organist will discuss your wedding music with you and play sample selections if it is helpful.

### **THE MUSIC**

St. John's has high standards for the music used in its services. Sentimental and popular secular music are not allowed. Generally, classical music, hymns, and certain folk music with biblical or religious connotation may be acceptable.

Music is used at appropriate points in the service as provided by the Book of Common Prayer. The organist will discuss options with you. Occasionally a couple will request the Lord's Prayer as a sung solo. The reason we do not do this is that the Lord's Prayer, said by all, is an important part of the liturgy.

### **DRESSING AT THE CHURCH**

If the wedding party chooses to dress at the church, one partner may use room 208 on the second floor (Mollie Warwick Room). The other partner may use the choir room downstairs. Just before the ceremony begins, the downstairs party can move to the vesting room to avoid sighting of the other partner if that is important to the couple. It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to ensure that someone will remove all food, beverage bottles, and other items from the church after the ceremony and before the wedding party leaves the church. Care for those who will use those rooms after the wedding is appreciated.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Wedding pictures are of interest primarily to the couple and their families. Photography should be planned so that wedding guests are not kept waiting for an inordinate period of time. Instruct the photographer to take a few good shots of the wedding party, bridal couple, and family to ensure that the wedding guests' time is respected. A well-planned photo record of your wedding can be made by an experienced photographer in about 15 minutes.

All photos should be posed either before or after the wedding. Many couples are electing to have the pictures made before the wedding because everyone is fresh and there is no delay if a reception is planned. **No picture taking is permitted during the ceremony, either by guests or your professional photographer.**

Videotaping is permissible if the camera placement and sound requirements are worked out well in advance with the priest. No extra lighting is permitted, the camera must be in an unobtrusive location, and on a tripod so there is no movement during the service. St. John's does not provide video or audio taping.

### WEDDING FEES

Clergy - A contribution to the priest's Discretionary Fund is customary.

Organist	\$250.00
Coordinator	100.00
Custodian	100.00
Security Person	50.00
Altar Guild	<u>50.00</u>
<b>TOTAL W/O AISLE CANDLES</b>	<b>\$550.00</b>
Aisle Candles (set-up fee)	50.00
Candles	<u>20.00</u>
<b>TOTAL WITH AISLE CANDLES</b>	<b>\$620.00</b>
Additional Fee for Non-Members	\$500.00
Additional reception fee for use of Hunter Hall	\$250.00

### CONTACT PERSONS

Rector	The Rev. Marquita L. Hutchens	C: 304.989.5982
Choir Director	David Morton	W: 304.346.0359
Organist	Daniel Faber	C: 304.543.5128
Office Contact	Lisa Nolan	W: 304.346.0359
Altar Guild	Carter Blundon	H: 304.342.5878
	Linda Workman	C: 585.880.4576
Coordinator	Varies	

**INFORMATION FORM  
TO BE COMPLETED BY THE WEDDING COUPLE**

Partner's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Single  Widower  Divorced (circle one) Number of this Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination \_\_\_\_\_ Approx. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmed \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination \_\_\_\_\_ Approx. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Member of a church?  Yes  No If so, name and location of church \_\_\_\_\_

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

Place of Birth – City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Partner's Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Single  Widower  Divorced (circle one) Number of this Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Baptized \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination \_\_\_\_\_ Approx. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmed \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination \_\_\_\_\_ Approx. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Current Member of a church?  Yes  No If so, name and location of church \_\_\_\_\_

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

Place of Birth – City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

## WEDDING AND REHEARSAL INFORMATION

Date of Rehearsal \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Rehearsal \_\_\_\_\_

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

Place of Rehearsal and Ceremony \_\_\_\_\_

What time should church be open for rehearsal? Time \_\_\_\_\_

What time should church be open for ceremony? Time \_\_\_\_\_

Will photographs be taken the day of the ceremony? Time \_\_\_\_\_

Will flowers be delivered the day of the ceremony? Time \_\_\_\_\_

Does the couple want the officiant present for the photography?  Yes  No

Name of officiant \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Witnesses: \_\_\_\_\_

Lectors selected by the couple?  Yes  No

Lectors selected by the officiant?  Yes  No

Readings: Old Testament \_\_\_\_\_ Lector \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm \_\_\_\_\_ Lector \_\_\_\_\_

Epistle \_\_\_\_\_ Lector \_\_\_\_\_

Gospel \_\_\_\_\_ Read by priest or deacon

Organist \_\_\_\_\_

Holy Eucharist  Yes  No Number of people expected to receive communion \_\_\_\_\_

Eucharistic Minister(s) for Holy Eucharist must be from St. John's Episcopal Church.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Aisle Candles?  Yes  No Number of attendants \_\_\_\_\_

Will any of the wedding party dress at church?  Yes  No

Will Hunter Hall be used for a reception?  Yes  No If so, how many guests? \_\_\_\_\_

Number of tables needed with eight chairs per table \_\_\_\_\_

***All reception supplies including food, serving dishes, glassware and dinnerware are provided by the wedding party. Hunter Hall must be left clean and in order.***

How long will the reception last? \_\_\_\_\_

## SEATING CHART

Names of Attendants (on left facing altar)

Names of Attendants (on right facing altar)

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Who will light the candles? \_\_\_\_\_

Those being seated on left facing altar

by whom

First \_\_\_\_\_

Second \_\_\_\_\_

Third \_\_\_\_\_

Those being seated on right facing altar

by whom

Fourth \_\_\_\_\_

Fifth \_\_\_\_\_

Sixth \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Ringbearer \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Fowerbearer \_\_\_\_\_

Other Instructions \_\_\_\_\_

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