

WEDDING CUSTOMARY

THE CELEBRATION AND BLESSING OF A MARRIAGE ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH Parish Wedding Policy

Congratulations on your forthcoming marriage! Weddings are conducted at St. Paul's for members who are confirmed communicants or who have been received and whose names are found on the Parish register. At least one of the parties must be a baptized Christian.

Since a wedding ceremony is considered a Holy worship experience, St. Paul's has established expectations and policies. We ask that you read this Wedding Customary carefully in the early stages of your planning in order to avoid any disappointment or confusion as your wedding date approaches. It is our hope that the next months will be filled with much joy and anticipation as you begin to prepare for your life together, and we look forward to assisting you and serving you throughout this journey.

A Christian Marriage

A Christian marriage is a time of great rejoicing; however, it is far more than a civil, legal and/or social event. It is both a joyful and a solemn occasion conducted in accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church. During this Holy Service, the family and friends gather to witness a covenant by which the couple pledges to each other a life-long union of fidelity and love. Equally important, the couple's marriage receives the blessing of God, whose grace and love alone can sustain a Christian marriage.

It is a service of worship and a sacramental act—an event whereby the grace and love of God are given and made known through the words and actions of the couple who together pledge a solemn commitment to our Lord and His Church. At least one of the partners and/or both should intend that Jesus Christ will be a “third partner” in the marriage. By choosing to be married inside the church, the couple stands before God's altar and pledges before God and in the presence of God's people to live their married life in the community of the faithful and invites God's life and love to be at the center of their marriage. The couple understands the teaching of the church that God's purpose for their marriage is for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort they 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. The couple also understands that their marriage is to be unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong, and together engage to make the utmost effort to accept these gifts and fulfill these duties, with the help of God and the support of their community.

The First Step

In order to make an appropriate beginning, the couple should arrange to talk with a priest at St. Paul's about the wedding before any other plans are finalized. A wedding involves the participation of many different people, and adequate advance notice is essential. The Canons of the Church require that a minimum thirty-day notice must be given; however, it is well advised to contact the priest as far in advance as possible in order to guarantee that no conflicts in scheduling develop. Advance notice of several months should be the rule rather than the exception. All arrangements that involve the church, the parish hall, or the priest who will perform the ceremony are tentative and not to be announced until the Rector's and/or Bishop's approval has been received.

Premarital Counseling

The Episcopal Church requires premarital counseling for the couple with an ordained Episcopal priest or approved licensed counselor prior to the wedding. This counseling, however, does not have to be conducted by the same person who solemnizes the wedding; it may be conducted by a different priest in a different locale. It is necessary, however, that the two priests be in contact with one another. The counseling priest should correspond in writing with the Celebrant attesting to the course and satisfactory completion of the several sessions, each lasting approximately one hour.

If this is not the first marriage for either party, discussion with the priest is necessary to ensure the desired union is in compliance with Church canons. When the Bishop's approval is necessary, all arrangements that involve the church, the parish hall, or the priest who will perform the ceremony are tentative and not to be announced until that approval is received.

Form of Service and Responsibilities of Officiating Priest

All wedding services held in St. Paul's Episcopal Church will conform to the worship tradition of the Episcopal Church and its Canons. Additionally, the liturgy for the Holy Eucharist is normally celebrated. It is desirable that the couple act as oblationers; the priest will make arrangements for a chalice bearer and crucifer, and the wedding administrators may act as ushers during this portion of the wedding ceremony.

All services are to be conducted by an Episcopal priest, and you are free to ask any priest on staff at St. Paul's to officiate at a marriage. A visiting Episcopal priest may officiate as well. Our expectation in this instance is that all wedding arrangements will occur in accordance with the St. Paul's Wedding Customary. If either one of the persons being married is a member of another church, you may request that the clergy person of that person's church be invited to participate. Final decisions on these matters will be made by the Rector of Saint Paul's. Ministers from other traditions cannot be responsible for conducting the Episcopal rite, the blessing, the pronouncement of marriage or celebrating the Holy Eucharist. If the attendance of the priest and his/her spouse is desired at a rehearsal dinner and/or the wedding reception, individual invitations should be extended as a matter of courtesy and in order to avoid schedule conflicts.

As you select members of your wedding party, keep in mind the prescribed Episcopal service and the comfort level of your wedding party with such. As in all worship services of the Church, the priest is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details.

Scripture Reading and Prayers

The version of the Bible normally used at St. Paul's Church is the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Readers of lessons should prepare their readings in this translation or the Revised Standard Version (RSV). Please refer to the *Book of Common Prayer*, page 426 and page 429 for a list of appropriate readings and required prayers. Readers of Old Testament and Epistle lessons should be chosen by the couple. It is quite appropriate for members of the family, the wedding party, or guests to participate in this way from the lectern. When the Eucharist is celebrated as part of the liturgy, a member of the clergy will read the Gospel lesson. If you so choose, a member of the clergy may read all the lessons and/or prayers.

Dates and Times for Wedding

A wedding may be held at any time during the course of the year with the general exception of the Advent and Lenten seasons. In addition to these church seasons, weddings may not be scheduled in conflict with any service or event which involves the St. Paul's membership. Times are generally scheduled no earlier than 10:00 a.m. and no later than 7:00 p.m. The wedding rehearsal is normally held on the day before the wedding between the hours of 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. All members of the wedding party, including parents, grandparents, and lay readers must be in attendance and on time; since the rehearsal involves the participation of many people and to avoid glitches and confusion on the day of the wedding.

If there is to be a dinner or party, it should always be scheduled after the rehearsal. A rehearsal usually lasts no longer than one hour. The officiating priest with the help of the Wedding Administrator will conduct the rehearsal and wedding ceremony. Private consultants and/or wedding planners are certainly welcome to attend and observe but may only assist and participate at the discretion of the officiating priest.

Photography and Videotaping

We understand the importance that most married couples place upon the preservation of their wedding day in photographs and will provide opportunities for pictures to be taken before and/or after the ceremony. All pre-wedding photographs taken inside the Church must be finished no less than forty-five minutes prior to the beginning of the service. All photographs made in the Church must be of a sacred nature only; photographs of the groom removing the bride's garter, for example, should be reserved for the reception. If group photographs of the wedding party in front of the altar are desired after the ceremony, they may be taken for up to thirty minutes in the Church after the guests have left . . . bearing in mind the importance of not keeping guests at the reception waiting. Weather permitting and with the approval of the Rector, the Main Street and Sixth Avenue courtyards also provide an excellent area for group pictures before or after the ceremony.

Photography of any kind during the wedding ceremony itself is not permitted by either professionals or guests in attendance. The use of flash, artificial lights, and shutter-clicking interrupts and destroys the sanctity of worship and the flow of the ceremony. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to communicate this policy to their guests. Ushers will also be asked to inform family and guests that pictures may not be taken once the ceremony has begun. It is permissible for the photographer to take photos of the bride and groom as they leave the church in accordance with the St. Paul's Photography and Videography Policy.

Videotaping of the service may be done provided the camera is stationary at the rear of the church, is capable of running without a camera operator, and does not require the use of artificial lights. No portable microphone may be used.

The St. Paul's Photography and Videography Policy form should be reviewed, signed and returned to the Wedding Administrator two weeks prior to the wedding date. Please arrange an introduction between the professional photographer/videographer and Wedding Administrator once he/she arrives at the church so that the Wedding Administrator can assist in properly carrying out these policy expectations.

Music at St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Music in church weddings must be in accordance with normal standards of Episcopal worship. All weddings in St. Paul's Episcopal Church are worship services. As such, the music selected should be of an appropriate nature. The secular "traditional" wedding music of Mendelssohn and Wagner is not used; there are alternatives which are more suitable for Episcopal weddings. As well, texts of a secular source are not permitted nor are texts from semi-religious songs. Music of a light, romantic nature or from Broadway shows, film scores, and other popular sources is better suited for the reception following the service.

Contact the Music Minister at St. Paul's as soon as possible to discuss arrangements for music after receiving approval for your wedding from the Rector and/or Bishop. This should be done before contracting with any other musicians. The use of soloists and instrumentalists can be a lovely addition to the service; however, all these must be approved by the Minister of Music at the time of your music consultation. The Music Minister will assist you with contact information for the church organist. It is your responsibility to contact the church organist to set up a time to plan the service music. Should the church organist be unavailable for your wedding, he/she will make arrangements for a qualified substitute. The use of non-staff organists will be considered on an individual basis and is solely at the discretion of the Music Minister and church organist.

The music chosen in collaboration with the church organist will add beauty, grace, and spiritual depth to the service. Texts of hymns and other music must be from the *Hymnal 1982* or other *Episcopal church authorized hymnals*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, or directly from Holy Scripture. The normal pattern of musical pieces is as follows: a 20–30 minute prelude-recital before the wedding, a hymn (or instrumental piece) for the procession in, hymns and other service music as needed during the ceremony, and a hymn or instrumental piece for the procession out. It is the norm that the organist be present for one hour at the wedding rehearsal. Again, all music played or sung by soloists must be of a sacred nature and conform to the criteria listed above.

Decorations – Flowers and the Florist

At the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage, flower arrangements are appropriate for the altar. The height of the flowers cannot exceed the height of the altar cross found on the re table. You may place one arrangement on either side of the cross. Plastic or artificial flowers, feathers, and plumes are not permitted. If approved by the Wedding Administrator, you may also choose to place natural flower arrangements on the glass doors between the Narthex and Sanctuary, in the Narthex, and as small reserved pew markers. If you choose, the church will provide velvet RESERVED pew markers. Additionally, you may want to consider white satin/tulle bows/greenery to dress the iron railings along the outdoor front church steps. Your florist should coordinate time of flower delivery with the Wedding Administrator. The flowers will be left on the altar for the Sunday service the next day. These flowers are in celebration of the marriage and/or in honor/memory of someone else. A dedication will be announced during the following Sunday's worship service and printed in the Sunday bulletin. Please provide the appropriate wording for the dedication to the Wedding Administrator.

Altar Candles

The lighting of candles is often used as a sign of festivity and solemnity in Christian worship. They remind us that Jesus is the Light of the World and the presence of God in the Gospel reading. The candelabra on the re table will always be lit prior to the ceremony. Candles will be placed on the altar and lit prior to the ceremony only when the Holy Eucharist is celebrated in the marriage ceremony. The Paschal candle will be lit and placed at the front of the Sanctuary for all wedding ceremonies occurring between Easter and Pentecost. The use of what is commonly referred to as a “Unity Candle” is not a part of the Episcopal ceremonial rite for weddings.

Aisle Runner, Rose Petals, Rings and Rice

Due to the nature of bridal gowns and trains, new shoes, wedding jitters, and the possible hazard of tripping and entanglement, the use of a white aisle cloth or runner for the entrance of the bride and her escort is not permitted. The scattering of imitation rose petals down the center aisle is permitted. If you choose for a flower attendant to scatter petals, you must appoint someone to remove them from the rug following the ceremony. If a ring bearer is a member of the wedding party, imitation/plastic rings should be affixed to the ring bearer’s pillow. The actual rings will be handled by the best man and Maid/Matron of Honor. The use of rice, bird seed or other natural materials for guests to use as the bride and groom exit is not allowed on St. Paul’s Episcopal Church property. The surrounding sidewalks/streets are city property and as such require written approval from the city of Franklin with approval submitted to the Rector if natural materials will be used in those areas.

Bulletins

Programs for a wedding ceremony can be printed by St. Paul’s. Samples bulletins are available for your review. The bulletins will be printed on standard ivory copy paper. You are welcome to bring in specialty paper of your choosing if you prefer, or you may use an outside printer. A brief note regarding the use of photography and electronic devices by guests will be included in the bulletin. *Please note: prior to printing, the contents of the bulletin must receive approval from the officiating priest of St. Paul’s.*

Tower Bell

It is customary to celebrate and ring out the joy and toll the news of the union of the new couple using the tower bell. The groom should appoint one of the ushers or groomsmen for such task. See the Wedding Administrator for guidance prior to the wedding ceremony.

Seating

St. Paul’s Episcopal Church will normally seat approximately 175 guests comfortably. Additional chairs may be added in the side aisles to accommodate 225 guests.

Dressing Rooms & Arrival Times

The church will be open and ready for any and all wedding participants one hour prior to the rehearsal and up to four hours prior to the wedding ceremony. All wedding party participants should arrive and gather in their designated areas *no less than one hour* before the ceremony.

Ushers may begin seating guests up to forty-five minutes before the wedding begins. Flower attendants and ring bearers age five and above along with parents and grandparents to be seated as part of the procession should arrive no later than thirty minutes prior to the service and will gather in the Columbarium room off the Narthex.

All members of the wedding party are welcome to use the church to dress and prepare for the wedding. The Wedding Administrator will acquaint you with these locations on the night of the rehearsal. Please do not leave valuable items in these locations during the wedding ceremony. You are welcome to bring snacks and ONLY non-alcoholic beverages for consumption prior to the wedding. All personal belongings, including snacks/drinks, should be removed and the room returned to its original condition immediately following the ceremony.

Our Wedding Staff

At least one member from St. Paul's Altar Guild will serve as the Wedding Administrator. You will be assigned a specific person who will work with you and under the direction of the Rector and/or officiating priest throughout the planning process. Expect contact from this person within two weeks after approval of your wedding. Together with our Wedding Customary in hand and the guidance of the Wedding Administrator, you can begin to make the necessary and proper arrangements to ensure not only that the wedding day flows beautifully and smoothly but also that the customs and traditions of the Episcopal Church are honored and upheld. Please discuss any special needs or concerns that you may have throughout the planning process with your contact person. The Wedding Administrator will assist you and your attendants on the wedding day as well as at the rehearsal. While outside private consultants and/or wedding planners hired by the bride or her family are helpful in some areas of wedding preparation, they will have no role or authority once the wedding party arrives at the church for either the rehearsal or day of the wedding ceremony. As a courtesy, the bride should initiate contact between the Wedding Administrator and consultant/planner to discuss each party's area of responsibility.

Marriage License

Persons being married at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Franklin are required to obtain a marriage license from the Williamson County Court Clerk and to give it to the officiating priest on the night of the rehearsal.

Use of Parish Facilities

Read the Wedding Facilities Customary (pages 1-5), signing page 1 and returning to the Wedding Administrator at St. Paul's. If available, additional areas of the Parish may be reserved for the wedding rehearsal and/or wedding reception. When your wedding has been approved by the Rector, these areas may be reserved and noted on the Parish Calendar upon receipt of the signed Wedding Facilities Customary and deposit check.

If your wedding rehearsal and/or reception includes the serving of wine or beer, it must be stationed inside the facilities with a trained bartender in control and in charge of these beverages. Non-alcoholic beverages must be prominently displayed and served as well. Alcoholic beverages other than wine or beer *may not be served*.

Costs

All brides will be required to post a \$200 reservation deposit to hold the wedding date open and reserve the Church proper. Deposit checks will be returned once the Wedding Administrator has checked and cleared the areas of use. Deposit checks will not be returned if anything is broken or damaged. It is expected the damages will be replaced in kind by the responsible party if damages exceed the amount of the deposit.

Additional charges associated with use of the property are due within 1 month of the event.

_____ Narthex, Nave, Founder's Hall, Bridal Dressing Room & Damascus Room	
_____ Giving Members	\$500
_____ Non-Giving Members	\$1000
_____ Main Street Courtyard	(no charge)
_____ 6 th Avenue Courtyard	(no charge)
_____ Nursery	\$25
_____ Otey Hall / Kitchen	\$500

An honorarium for the officiating priest of \$250-\$1000 should be considered based on the level of interaction between the couple and the priest.

Organist fees for the day of the wedding are \$200 + \$100 for the rehearsal. An additional fee may be required for the organist if the soloist or instrumentalist must rehearse with the organist. Costs for any soloist or other instrumentalist approved by the Minister of Music will be finalized with the Minister of Music.

Additionally, every bride will incur direct costs associated with their St. Paul's wedding. A cleaning fee \$200 is required for the church Sexton to prepare the Church for the wedding and for services following the wedding. An additional setup fee for the Sexton is required when additional chairs in the sanctuary are needed at \$30 per hour. An additional \$200 minimum is required for Sexton services needed for a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception held on the church property.

Child care can be provided as needed, and the associated cost will be passed on to the bride. The Wedding Administrator will discuss these fees with you when you schedule your wedding arrangements.

