

Marriage and Commitment Service Planning Guide – St. John’s Episcopal Church, Royal Oak *

*where marriage is stated, commitment services are also included

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage - The union of a couple 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 care and raising 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. (Adapted from The Book of Common Prayer, p. 423).

- Introduction
- Who may be married at St. John’s?
- Instruction for Marriage
- Wedding Music
- Decorations for Your Wedding
- Altar Flowers
- Other Decorations
- Rehearsal
- Wedding Day
- Wedding Fees

Introduction:

The marriage of members of the Christian faith community is an occasion of great joy, and a matter of utmost importance and great consequence. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, and at the same time one of the primary ways of serving Christ, and living out our commitments to God and each other. Therefore, preparation for marriage is vital, and part of our spiritual growth. The customs and practices of this parish concerning marriage services are given here for the guidance of those who may be contemplating marriage or who wish to assist someone who is. We hope they are helpful.

First, consult with the clergy. A couple wishing to be married at St. John’s Church should consult with the clergy of the parish before making plans. Contact the clergy for an initial appointment, preferably at least six months prior to an anticipated wedding. No marriage date or reception time should be scheduled without consultation. Please also be aware that the canons of the church require at least thirty days notice before any marriage may be performed.

A couple may wish to invite other clergy to participate in the wedding service. The policy of the parish is that the rector or associate rector of the congregation is the Officiant. Other clergy may take part and assist in the service, at the discretion of the Officiant. The official state

marriage license must be signed by the Officiant. The copy of the license presented to the couple is signed by the Officiant, and may be signed by other clergy participating.

Who may be married at St. John’s?

- **Members of St. John’s** - The policy of St. John’s Church, adopted by the Vestry, is that one or both parties must be active members of St. John’s in order to be married here or have family ties to St. John’s. The couple may become active at St. John’s as they begin premarital counseling, with the expectation that they will continue their participation in the life of St. John’s parish after they are married. All couples planning to be married at St. John’s are expected to attend services regularly.

Instruction for Marriage:

- **Pre-marital Instruction** – The Episcopal Church requires that a couple wishing to be married receive pre-marital counseling with the clergy. Counseling will typically require four to six sessions of approximately 1 ½ hours each and will take place based on the clergy person’s calendar. Sometimes couples may be referred to professional marriage counselors designated by the parish clergy who will conduct the counseling on a fee basis. In rare situations, such as where one of the couple lives out of state, arrangements for counseling by clergy of other congregations may be made. After counseling is completed, the rector may refuse to perform the ceremony if he/she does not believe the relationship is stable enough for sacramental commitment.
- **Setting the Date** – The dates of the rehearsal and wedding must be coordinated with the officiating cleric’s personal calendar and the central parish calendar. Weddings are not performed during Lent and Holy Week. You may schedule your wedding during the regular church service on Sunday morning. All arrangements concerning your wedding should be made in consultation with parish clergy.
- **Marriage Licenses under Michigan Law** - The minimum age limit for obtaining a marriage license in the State of Michigan is eighteen. The license must be obtained in the county where at least one party lives, but the license may be used in any county in Michigan.

Wedding Music:

Dr. Steve McGhee, our Director of Music/Organist, oversees the music for weddings. A consultation with him is required to make music for your wedding ceremony unique and personalized at least one month prior to your marriage ceremony. He may be contacted through the church office.

The Music Director’s Fee is currently \$300, not including additional rehearsals and/or additional soloists and musicians. Secular music that is of purely sentimental value to the couple may not enhance the sacred nature of the marriage service and is highly discouraged. “Here

Comes the Bride,” for example, is a popular secular piece and not appropriate for church weddings. Soloists/additional musicians are planned in consultation with the Director of Music. St. John’s has a wealth of talent in its own choir or professional musicians may be engaged by arrangement. Hymns may be sung (and are encouraged) at the service. The use of recorded accompaniment is not used at St. John’s.

Decorations for your Wedding:

It is the policy of St. John’s that wedding decorations should not be more elaborate than decorations for feast days in the church year. The church is a lovely worship space and is enhanced by modest decorations. Officiating clergy need to approve all plans for church decorations.

Altar Flowers:

Altar flowers adorn the most sacred place in the church. The flowers used for our Sunday services are delivered early Saturday morning. If you are having a Saturday wedding, it is our wish that the wedding flowers are used on Sunday morning offered in thanksgiving for marriage. We will try to accommodate your preferences regarding color, arrangement and type within the limits of our normal usage.

For weddings held Sunday through Friday, arrangements for altar flowers may be made through the church office, using our regular florist. The cost of these flowers will be determined by the florist and paid by the wedding couple. Flowers will be placed in the church by a member of the Altar Guild.

Other Decorations:

- **Pew Torches** – Fourteen pew torches with glass globes are available. These are placed in the main aisle pews and may be decorated with white bows or ribbons. Additional candles and flowers are discouraged.
- **Unity Candles** - Unity Candles are not used in weddings at St. John’s.
- **Pew Markers** - Pew markers are available to identify pews for your immediate families. Alternatively, the wedding party or florist may provide pew decorations. However, the officiating clergy must agree upon the design.
- **Kneeling Cushions** - Kneeling cushions are furnished by the church at the altar rail, for the nuptial blessing.
- **Runners** – Runners are not used at St. John’s.
- **Bulletins (Order of Service)** – These are designed and printed by the Church staff at no charge. If the couple chooses to print their own worship bulletin using an outside source, the contents must be approved by clergy at least one week prior to the wedding.

The Rehearsal:

The date and hour of the rehearsal should be set when scheduling the wedding. The clergy will conduct the rehearsal, which normally lasts approximately one hour (from the time it actually gets underway). If a marriage consultant is engaged, it is understood that the consultant does not need to participate in the rehearsal or on the day of the wedding. Should questions arise, consult the officiating clergy. The following persons should attend the rehearsal:

- The prospective couple
- Persons who will escort the couple in the procession, if that is your wish (parents, etc),
- Wedding attendants (including flower girl and ring bearer if used) and appointed ushers
- Those who will be reading lessons and leading the prayers,
- Any others who will be taking an active part in the wedding service.

(Please note: The rector requests that close family members and friends also attend the rehearsal, as this is a time of preparation and instruction in the nature and meaning of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, as well as a rehearsal of logistics and movement in the service.)

The Wedding Day:

- **Access to the Church** - Normal arrangements for a wedding include access to the dressing rooms and church one hour before the time of the wedding, and approximately one half hour following the wedding. If more time is required, it must be arranged in advance with the clergy.
- **Photography** - If you wish to have photographs/video taken at the church, as part of your wedding day, please have the photographer/videographer call the clergy at least one week prior to the wedding for instructions, and observe the following guidelines:
 - Please inform your photographer, family and guests that no flash photography is permitted during the ceremony inside the main body of the church.
 - Photos may be taken during the procession into the church, provided that the photographer is at the rear, no farther than 1/3 the length of the aisle into the church.
 - Photography from the balcony is permitted during the service, using available light.
 - A brief period (thirty minutes maximum) for picture taking at the Altar may follow the service
 - If you wish to have an extended time of photography, it must be before the service.
 - Ask the photographer to check in with the clergy upon arrival at the church.
 - The ushers should inform guests bringing cameras with them to the wedding, not to take flash photographs or to stand in the aisle during the service.
- **Dressing** - Rooms are available for the wedding party for dressing. They will be opened one hour before the wedding. The dressing room can be locked during the service, but the church assumes no responsibility for personal belongings left unattended. All possessions should be taken with you immediately after the service.

- **Ushers** - If the guest list numbers one hundred or more, the ushers should arrive at the church one hour ahead of the ceremony. It is customary to plan one usher for each fifty guests; never plan for less than two ushers.
- **Arrivals** - All participants in the wedding should be ready twenty minutes before the service, so that the time immediately before the service can be a time of emotional calm and spiritual preparation. If members of the wedding party are not dressing at the church, they should arrive at the church at least one-half hour before the wedding. If people are dressing at the church they should arrive still earlier. Again, please be ready 20 minutes before the service, for final preparation and prayer.
- **Parking** - Parking is available in the church parking lot at the rear of the church. Guest parking is not allowed at the front of the church, with the exception of handicapped guests. The bridal party cars or coaches may use the front access drive, parallel to Woodward Avenue, to arrive and depart.
- **Confetti, Rice, Flowers, Balloons, Birds, Butterflies, Bubbles, etc.** - These may not be thrown or released either in the church or on the church grounds. It is suggested that each family make this known to the guests and that the ushers be instructed to implement this policy.
- **Receiving Lines** - Receiving lines most appropriately are part of the wedding reception. Moreover, receiving lines at the church, combined with time for photography after the service, can lead to extensive delays in the wedding party arriving at the reception. Therefore, receiving lines are strongly discouraged, unless the reception is to be held in the Parish Hall of the Church. If the couple desires a receiving line at the church, they should note that the legal marriage documents must be signed before a line is formed, and that arrangements and additional fees may need to be made for the sexton’s extended hours.
- **Receptions and Rehearsal Dinners** - The Parish Hall is available for receptions and rehearsal dinners, using a caterer under contract at St. John’s. Arrangements may be made through the church office. An outside caterer needs approval from the rector. All clean up must take place the same day, and is entirely the responsibility of the caterer and or the couple.

Wedding Fees

There is no rental charge for the use of the church, chapel or Parish Hall for a person who has been a member for the past six months (from the date of application for the wedding) and is currently pledging to the church, or for a person who has family ties to the church. However, a thanksgiving offering is required along with fees for individual services.

All fees due prior to the wedding

Wedding fees: Payable to St. John’s Episcopal Church, Royal Oak

Thanksgiving offering	\$600	_____
Flowers	\$100	_____
Pew Torches (Optional)	\$100	_____
	Total	_____

Music: Payable to Steve McGhee

Organist	\$300	_____
Soloist (separate arrangements)		
	Total	_____

Non-members:

There is a \$1500 charge for the use of the church or chapel. Charges for items listed above are in addition to this rental fee.

Off-site Wedding:

There is a charge of \$600 given as a thanksgiving offering for the marriage, made payable to St. John’s Episcopal Church. In addition, all travel and accommodation expenses for clergy as well as the fees for the Sunday supply clergy must be paid.