

# Wedding Customary

St. Nicholas Episcopal Church  
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## A Wedding Prayer

O Gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen

The Book of Common Prayer

## Introduction

When we come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of a woman and a man in Holy Matrimony, it is an occasion of great joy in the life of the Church because the bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation. Our Lord Jesus Christ celebrated his first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee and we believe this manner of life to be adorned by Him. In Christian marriage, a man and a woman enter into life-long union, make their vows before God and the church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows. The church distinguishes between a wedding, which is a one day event, and a marriage which is intended to be an on-going, life-long union of body, mind and spirit.

The purpose of this customary is to put the details of a wedding day in order, so that the attention of the couple may be directed toward Christian marriage.

A wedding is an event which requires preparation and attention to detail. It is our hope that the information contained here will answer as many questions as possible in planning your wedding.

Weddings at St. Nicholas are celebrated according to the rites provided in the Book of Common Prayer. The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is regarded as a classic of Christian liturgy expressing the joy, solemnity, and meaning of this state of life. While personally composed vows are not permitted, there are a number of options regarding the selection of readings and prayers which will enable you to express the uniqueness of your relationship within this tradition.

For your planning purposes, the nave has a seating capacity of approximately 100, with extra seating in the transepts of 40.

## Who may marry?

It is our hope and desire that either the bride or the groom (preferably both) be an active, pledging member in good standing of St. Nicholas Episcopal Church. To be a member in good standing you will need to have been baptized and have attended worship regularly for a six month period.

Because the church vows to support a couple in their married life together, participation in the regular life and worship of this parish is expected, both before and after the wedding. This commitment allows the parish to support the vows of newly married couples with faithfulness and integrity. It is our belief that the blessing we have to give will have the most meaning within the context of a faith community, which is the church.

The Rector, may, for pastoral reasons, consider requests from non-members to be married at St. Nicholas. If the wedding is allowed, the non-member fees apply. The Rector may also be asked to perform a non-member wedding at another venue. If this is the case, other fees may apply.

The bride and groom must read this wedding booklet and agree to abide by its contents.

To schedule a wedding at St. Nicholas, you'll need to contact the Parish Office and make an appointment to meet with the Rector.

## Choosing a Wedding Date

The Episcopal Church requires that thirty days' notice be given before the proposed date of the marriage, however, it would be very unusual for less

than ninety days to be adequate. It is also required that the couple arrange for premarital counseling with the clergy regarding “the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony.” This may be a time for clergy to answer questions regarding the wedding service but our intention is to spend most of this time together discussing marriage. Normally this takes three or more sessions.

Weddings are not traditionally scheduled during the seasons of Advent (late November and most of December) and Lent (February to April). However, for pastoral considerations the Rector may give permission for a marriage during these seasons. It should also be noted that weddings which take place on Sundays are conducted during the regularly scheduled Sunday services.

You should not announce your wedding date until you have spoken to the Rector.

## Remarriages

If either the bride or the groom is a widow or widower, it is necessary that the remarriage take place at least a year after the death of their former spouse.

If either the bride or the groom has been divorced, it is necessary to receive the approval of the Bishop for the officiating clergy to perform the marriage ceremony. This procedure is done in consultation with the clergy and an additional thirty days is necessary for the bishop to consider the request. Remarriage after divorce are generally not approved until a full year has passed since the divorce.

In both of these cases, time to process a death or divorce is paramount before considering entering into a new marriage. Therefore, at least a year’s time can be a gift to the person mourning the former marriage and counseling is always recommended to help in that process.

**It is wise to wait until you receive approval from the Bishop and the Rector before you make any other plans or announcements about the wedding or wedding date.**

## Who Conducts the Ceremony?

The Rector of St. Nicholas will normally officiate at all weddings. Other members of the clergy, either of the Episcopal Church or of other denominations, may be invited by the Rector of this parish to assist in the

service. Participation by visiting clergy should be discussed during your initial conversation with the Rector.

## Flowers and Decorations

We realize that you want this to be a lovely and memorable occasion, but St. Nicholas is a beautiful church in and of itself. We recommend simplicity in your wedding decorations.

1. Speak to a Wedding Sexton before selecting your florist. The St. Nicholas Flower Guild can assist in finding a florist if you need recommendations.
2. There are several locations for flowers in the church. The primary location is on the retables on either side of the beveled glass window. You may also use a clear glass vase of your choosing if you prefer. An arrangement may also be placed under the cross.
3. The secondary location for flowers is a large arrangement in front of the altar. This arrangement should not be taller than 36 inches.
4. The couple may choose to leave the flowers on the altar for Sunday services the next day. However, if this is the intention, they must sign the flower dedication sheet in the hallway. If another dedication is already made for that Sunday, the wedding flowers must be removed by the florist or volunteers immediately after the wedding. If left on Sunday, the Flower Guild will arrange for removal after the services.
5. Any decorations, including flowers for the altar, must be completed by a time agreed upon by the Wedding Sexton and the florist. To alleviate any confusion, please be sure your florist is advised of these regulations.
6. There are to be no artificial flowers or greenery (i.e. plastic or silk) used in the decorations.
7. Candles are limited to the altar candles and the two torches. With special arrangement, you may also use candles with hurricane-type lamps in the windows of the church. These options may be decided at the time of your meeting with the Wedding Sexton. Our service does not allow for the use of a unity candle.
8. Pew markers of ribbons and greenery are allowed in the church if desired. They must be attached in such a way that they do not damage pews or chairs.
9. Clean up: The florist or wedding family members must be on hand immediately after the wedding to remove the decorations.
10. Aisle runners are not used at St. Nicholas.

## Wedding Music

Weddings at St. Nicholas are usually accompanied by joyful music which is uplifting and enriching. It is assumed that a couple desiring to marry in this

parish subscribes to the style of worship and musical traditions associated with St. Nicholas Church.

While remaining within those traditions, the Music Director is ready to assist in planning wedding music which is both beautiful and appropriate for use in the Episcopal Church. Each wedding ceremony is considered individually in order to select music which reflects the unique quality of the occasion. Whether the marriage service is to be small or large, informal or stately, the music should be suitable for a religious service.

If the Music Director is unavailable for the date of your wedding, she will help in offering suggestions for other musicians.

During the music consultation the Music Director will give a demonstration of pieces of music to illustrate this principle. Varieties of musical resources, however, are available. Music may be simple or elaborate, joyful or solemn, light or serious.

The Music Director is responsible for the music at all wedding services. With the permission of the Music Director and Rector, other persons skilled in music as soloists or instrumentalists known to the couple may be used in an adjunct way within the wedding liturgy. When other musicians assist, the professional fee for the parish musician still applies.

Please do not retain any musicians, singers, choirs, or instrumentalists without prior consultation with the Music Director and Rector. Policy guidelines regarding what may or may not be used in services of the church are derived from statements on page 14 or the Book of Common Prayer.

## Holy Communion

It is most appropriate that the celebration of the Eucharist be a part of the marriage ceremony. Generally this changes the length of the service by approximately fifteen to twenty minutes and requires additional music selections.

As with all celebrations of the Holy Eucharist at St. Nicholas, all persons are invited to receive the Sacrament. A decision regarding the Eucharist should be made after conferring with the Rector during consultations and at least a month prior to the wedding.

## Attendants

Our liturgical space limits the number of bridesmaids/attendants to 3.

The groom should have the same number of attendants as the bride. You may, in addition, have a child serve as flower girl and/or ring bearer.

## Rehearsal

Rehearsals of wedding are under the direction of the Rector and the Wedding Sexton, not a Wedding Coordinator. It is understood that rehearsals are scheduled no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day preceding the wedding and start promptly to avoid delay and in consideration of the parish staff. Only members of the wedding party need to be present for the rehearsal. Persons needed for the rehearsal are the bride and groom, best man, maid/matron of honor, bridesmaids, ushers, readers, father of the bride (or whomever will walk her down the aisle), mothers of both the bride and the groom and flower girl and/or ring bearer, as well as acolytes and crucifer if they will be part of the ceremony.

## The Wedding Day

The groom, groomsmen, and the ushers should arrive at the church at least one hour before the scheduled time of the wedding. The groom and groomsmen will wait in the Sunday School room. The ushers will be in place when guests begin to arrive, usually at least one half hour before the ceremony.

The bride and her attendants should arrive at the church not later than fifteen minutes before the scheduled time of the wedding. They may wait in the Double classroom until time to go into the narthex in preparation for the Procession.

An usher normally offers his right arm to the woman in a party. Her escort follows behind. No woman should be seated unescorted by an usher. Specific ushers will be assigned to seat honored guests and to escort them out of the church after the service. As one faces the altar, the left side of the church is referred to as the bride's side; the groom's side is on the right. Unless a guest requests seating on a specific side, ushers should seat persons on either side, filling the pews from the front first.

At the appointed time, the honored guests will be seated. After the bride's mother has been seated, no one is to be escorted to a seat. Latecomers must wait outside the narthex until the procession is over. They may then quietly find a place near the back of the church. The Wedding Sexton will assist them.

The Wedding Sexton will cue the attendants for the procession. The groomsmen will enter from the Rector's office to stand with the groom and

best man. The bridesmaids, matron/maid of honor, flower girl, ring bearer, bride and her father (or whoever is walking her down the aisle) will proceed down the aisle at the appropriate musical cue. The congregation will stand as the bride enters.

If there is to be Holy Eucharist, two ushers may assist by indicating by row when persons may approach the altar for communion.

Immediately after the Recessional, the entire party should meet with the Rector in the Rector's office to sign the marriage license and the parish register book. Once the congregation has exited, the wedding party may reenter the nave for pictures in the church, if desired.

## Photography and Video Recordings

We appreciate the desire of the bride and groom and their families to have photographs commemorating the wedding, but it should be remembered that this is a sacred worship service. Our intent is to insure that the visual record reflects and preserves the sacredness of the occasion. Therefore:

1. Photographs may be taken from one hour before the service up to 20 minutes before the start of the service.
2. Additional photographs are allowed for 20 minutes after the service and should be limited to the bridal party, clergy and immediate family.
3. A flash photo of the bride and her escort coming down the aisle and one of the bride and groom leaving the altar are permitted. **No flash pictures may be taken by anyone during the ceremony, including the photographer.** Additionally, pictures during the ceremony should not be taken during prayers. The photographer should also minimize movement during the ceremony, taking photos from the back of the church.
4. Video recordings are allowed from a single fixed point during the service using ambient light.

## Dressing Areas

The large Double Classroom is available where the bride and her attendants may dress before the wedding. The groom and groomsmen may use the Sunday School room as a changing area.

## Receptions

Receptions may be held at the church. Fees for non-members may apply. The Double Classroom may be used as a reception area, and the kitchen may be used for preparation. Our space is best used for smaller receptions with finger foods, rather than sit-down meals. The family is responsible for all catering, set-up, and clean-up of any space used for the reception. Beer and wine may be served.

## Nursery

The nursery may be used for children during the service, but the couple is responsible for finding their own babysitters and clean up of the nursery.

## Bulletins

Bulletins for weddings will be printed by St. Nicholas' free of charge.

However, this is only possible if all of the appropriate information is made available to us *at least three weeks* prior to the wedding ceremony. Copy for all programs must be reviewed by the Rector prior to printing.

At one of the pre-marital counseling sessions, the Rector will help you plan the liturgy and thus prepare the bulletin. You will receive a copy of the bulletin for review, but the bulletin itself will be prepared by St. Nicholas staff only. We ask that you refrain from sending elaborate fonts or graphics to be used in the bulletin. The wedding party may be included in the bulletin, along with simple directions to the reception. No added poems, scripture verses (other than what is selected as the readings), or other text or graphics may be included.

## Rice and Birdseed

We do not allow the throwing of either rice or birdseed at St. Nicholas. As an alternative, you may use flower petals as long as they are thrown outdoors and swept up and removed immediately following the bride and grooms departure.

## License

Arrangements for the marriage license should be made well in advance of the ceremony. A marriage license involves a waiting period following its issuance before it can be executed. The license should be given to the priest at the time of the rehearsal. No marriage ceremony can be conducted without a properly issued license. It is the responsibility of the clergy to complete it and the married couple to return it to the county.

## Wedding Service Fees for St. Nicholas Episcopal Church

Fees are set according to the policies of the church. If you are a member of the parish and have a problem covering the published fees, please do not hesitate to discuss this with the Rector.

Building use fees (members).....	\$0
Building use fees (non-members)	
Nave & dressing areas.....	\$300
Kitchen & Reception area.....	\$250

(A non-refundable deposit of \$200 is required)

Church Cleaning.....	\$150 (church)
	\$250 (church & reception)
Rector's fees (includes 3 sessions of pre-marital counseling, wedding liturgy planning & bulletin preparation, rehearsal direction, and sermon planning)	
Members.....	\$0
<i>Donations to the Rector's discretionary fund to help with community needs are welcome.</i>	
Non-members.....	\$500
Organist (without rehearsal).....	\$175
Organist (attending rehearsal).....	\$225

### Wedding Disclaimer

*We have read the Wedding Customary for St. Nicholas Episcopal Church, as outlined in the Customary booklet, and agree to strictly adhere to its regulations as we prepare to celebrate our wedding.*

*At no time is alcohol to be consumed on church property prior to the wedding by the wedding party or their guests.*

*It is our responsibility to communicate these guidelines to our florist, photographer, caterer, and to any other persons who might be involved in helping us prepare for our wedding at St. Nicholas Episcopal Church.*

*Must be signed by both parties.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Bride's Name – Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Groom's Name – Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Bride's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Groom's Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)