



GUIDELINES FOR THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Christian marriage is a service of worship, more aptly called *The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage*. The word celebration expresses the joy of the event and its public and communal nature. The word blessing is a reminder of the solemn, religious context of this holy covenant. It is sacramental work and is not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. Saint Mary's, therefore, has what may seem like high expectations for those wishing to be married in our faith community.

- In the wedding service, the two people promise in God's name to be faithful to each other for life. The congregation commits to support the couple and prays that God will strengthen and guide them in their life together. The priest proclaims God's blessing upon them. The sacred nature of the service and the solemnity of the promises made by the couple influence the decisions to be made about the wedding.
- The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the couple be a baptized Christian and that two witnesses attest to the marriage or blessing ceremony. Premarital counseling is also required by the canons of the church, and in Washington County, it entitles you to a discounted rate for a marriage license. (Premarital counseling is offered by Saint Mary's clergy to members of the parish only.)
- Saint Mary's offers this rite and its sacred space to parish members, their children and grandchildren. The service of Christian marriage assumes that **the couple are active participants in the life of Saint Mary's Parish**. Persons seeking God's blessing through the Church for their marriage are **expected to be regular in worship, especially during the months prior to their wedding**. Of course, it is hoped that couples who marry at Saint Mary's continue in regular worship following their wedding. The solemn vows of Christian marriage are expressed within the context of the living community of the Church.

Many people find that civil marriage is a more suitable expression of their vows. The Church fully recognizes civil marriage, and in many countries it is the norm. A civil marriage may be blessed by the Church later when the couple wishes. This is not another wedding rite; it is the prayerful blessing and affirmation of the marriage already engaged.

- The marriage ceremony will be performed according to an authorized liturgy of the Episcopal Church. One of St. Mary's clergy will officiate in nearly all cases. The liturgy reflects the communal aspect of the Church's life and the reality that marriage is a sacramental rite grounded in the community's commitments to support one another.

Before the Wedding

A marriage license from the State of Minnesota must be obtained, but not more than six months prior to the date of the marriage. The license should be brought to the church well in advance of the wedding (see above).

Premarital counseling is required by the Canons (national governing laws) of the Episcopal Church (see above).

When one or both parties have been previously married and that marriage ended by civil decree (divorce) or annulment, permission for remarriage must be obtained by the Rector from the Episcopal Bishop of Minnesota. An Application for the Solemnization of Marriage after Divorce must be sent to the Bishop at least sixty days before the proposed wedding date. A copy of the divorce decree or certificate of annulment must accompany the application. At least one party to be married must be a member in good standing of a parish or mission in the Diocese of Minnesota to apply.

Policies and Professional Services

It is ordinarily assumed that the clergy of St. Mary's Parish will officiate at the service. If you wish to involve clergy from another church in the ceremony, please consult with the Rector prior to making any arrangements.

The Rector must approve all musical selections, either instrumental or vocal, in advance. Guest musicians must assume responsibility for arranging rehearsal times at the church, if needed.

All arrangements for the use of the church building and grounds must be made with the Parish, preferably at least three months in advance. The Parish will reserve your date (if available) and put you in contact with other necessary parties (wedding coordinator, sacristans, etc.).

St. Mary's Parish will provide candles (without decoration) for the Altar. All other decorations, flowers, candelabra, etc., are to be provided by other parties. A "Unity Candle" and the candles from which it is lighted are the responsibility of the wedding party.

PLEASE NOTE:

- ❖ For safety reasons, aisle cloths/runners are not permitted
- ❖ No nails, tape or wire may be used to attach decorations to the pews, walls or other appurtenances

A competent photographer may take photographs before or after the service. A video recorder on a stationary tripod may also be used. Please instruct family members and guests that flash photography IS NOT PERMITTED during the ceremony.

Please inform your family and guests that the throwing of rice, birdseed, confetti, etc., IS NOT PERMITTED on church property.

Rooms are available for the bridal party to use for dressing and preparation. Smoking or vaping IS NOT PERMITTED in the church buildings, and alcoholic beverages ARE NOT ALLOWED anywhere on St. Mary's Parish property. If soft drinks or bottled water is consumed, please be sure that all cans, bottles and other containers are disposed of properly. Be sure to remove all personal items and leave the facilities in proper order.

The wedding party is responsible for removing decorations and other personal items from the church buildings immediately following the ceremony. It is often helpful to ask a friend or relative to take responsibility for this and to make certain that all personal items left behind are returned to those to whom they belong. The wedding party is also responsible for returning chairs and other furniture to their proper places. If the wedding is on a Saturday, please remember that there are services in the church Sunday morning.

Schedule of Fees

Facility Rental Fees	Member ¹	Non-Member ²
Church	No Charge	\$1000.00 *
Fellowship Room	No Charge	\$500.00 *
Guild Hall	No Charge	\$750.00 *
Memorial Garden	No Charge	\$500.00 *

¹ A **Member** is defined as an active participant in the life and ministry of St. Mary's Parish demonstrated by regular attendance at public worship and by financial support for the previous twelve months.

² A **Non-Member** is defined as a friend of St. Mary's Parish, a resident in the surrounding communities or a non-profit organization.

Additional Fees	Member	Non-Member	
Premarital Counseling <i>Required for all marriages</i>	\$150.00	Not Available	<i>Also available through licensed professional counselors</i>
Priest/Officiant	\$150.00	\$300.00	
Organist/Pianist	\$200.00	\$300.00	Includes rehearsal
Vocal Artist	\$150.00	\$250.00	Includes rehearsal
Cleaning Service	\$100.00	\$200.00	Required for all weddings
Wedding Coordinator	\$150.00	\$300.00	Required for all weddings

* **Facility Use Reservation Deposit.** To reserve any Parish facility for an event, the Parish must receive a non-refundable deposit of 50% of the total facility rent at least 90 days before the event or at the time of the reservation if the event is less than 90 days in the future.

Fees Paid. A check for the total of all applicable fees, less deposit, must be received by the Parish Treasurer at least one week prior to the date of the wedding.

In special or extenuating circumstances, the Rector, in consultation with the Wardens and/or Vestry of St. Mary's Parish, may amend these policies and fees. Any such amendment shall be confirmed in writing and conveyed to all parties.

We have read and accept the policies and fees for weddings at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Afton, Minnesota, and agree to abide hereto.

Signed

Date

Signed

Date