

This booklet has been prepared to assist you in planning

***Your Wedding***  
  
***and***  
  
***Your Marriage***

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Please Read Carefully

**INTRODUCTION**

“A wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime.”

There is more to marriage than just a wedding. In many families, so much energy goes into preparing for the wedding (and even more for the reception) that preparing for marriage is often overlooked or assumed.

**PREPARING FOR THE MARRIAGE**

At Saint George we believe that Christian marriage is an exciting new life — a gift from God. The relationship between a man and a woman who plan a life together in marriage deserves the best that can be offered in careful and thoughtful preparation. To that end, we require a period of marriage preparation with the prospective bride and groom.

**PREPARING FOR THE WEDDING**

However, because many questions arise over wedding plans, we have prepared this booklet as an aid. We hope that it will answer most of your questions so that you can plan the kind of wedding that will give joy to you, your friends and family, as well as free you to concentrate on the exciting opportunity of preparing for marriage.

**WHAT KIND OF SERVICE?**

All services in the church are primarily worship of Almighty God. The forms available for use will be shared with you by the clergy early in your sessions. There are some options available and you will be asked to make some choices. The order the “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” begins on page 423 in *The Book of Common Prayer*. You should look this over and become familiar with its provisions.

**MAY WE HAVE COMMUNION?**

Yes! In fact, we encourage a couple, as their first act together as husband and wife, to share in this great sacrament of our Lord’s presence.

**MAY NON-EPISCOPALIANS RECEIVE COMMUNION?**

Yes again! Any baptized person in fellowship in his or her own church family is welcome to receive. It is the Lord’s Table, and the Lord’s people are welcome.

**HOW LONG WILL THE SERVICE LAST?**

A nuptial celebration (wedding with communion) will take about 45 minutes, depending on the number of people who receive.

NOTE, however, that the length of the service depends more on the length of the procession, the amount of music chosen, and the lateness in starting.

## ***PARTICIPANTS IN THE WEDDING SERVICE***

The priest is in charge of the service. Only the clergy can answer questions concerning how the service will run. Questions of etiquette are generally questions of taste or custom. The clergy are familiar with most of these and should be consulted well in advance if there is a particular question.

The Altar Guild: A member of the Altar Guild has been designated to supervise all physical arrangements of the church: flowers, candles, distribution of the flowers to the wedding party, etc. She must be contacted by the bride as soon as possible after the wedding date is set.

The best man is in charge of the groom. He ensures that the groom gets to his place on time. He takes charge of the marriage license and ensures that it gets to the rehearsal. He is in charge of the bride's wedding ring and carries it during the ceremony. He also signs documents as directed by the officiating priest.

The maid (matron) of honor helps the bride dress. She ensures that the bride gets to her place on time. She takes charge of the groom's wedding ring and carries it during the ceremony. She signs documents at the direction of the officiating priest.

*The canons of the Church and the law of Texas require two witnesses to any marriage. Traditionally, but not necessarily, these are the best man and the maid (matron) of honor.*

Other attendants are groomsmen and bridesmaids. You may have as many as you wish, but more than three of each causes crowding due to limitation of space.

Ushers: You should have at least two ushers. You need not have more than four. Ushers should not double as groomsmen since they are needed to help in seating latecomers, escorting the mothers, and dismissing the congregation.

You may have ring bearer(s) and flower girl(s) if you wish.

Involve as many friends and relatives as you can. Here are some of the ways in which they can participate:

- **Readers**        Reading the Lessons before the Gospel (two readings).
- **Acolytes**        Young people can be used to carry the cross or torches. Please speak with the clergy about this if you wish.
- **Clergy relatives** or clergy friends may participate in the service; however, the clergy of St. George should be consulted early in the planning so they may extend the courtesy of an invitation to visiting clergy.
- **If pictures are to follow the ceremony**, a substitute hostess at the reception could be used until the mother of the bride arrives.
- **Ask someone** to oversee the guest book, and someone to see to the gifts.
- **Involving others** brings them into the celebration!

## **THE REHEARSAL**

**When:** Usually the rehearsal will be held the day before the wedding. The time will be set by the bride and the officiating priest.

**Who Should Attend:** The rehearsal should be attended by the parents of both bride and groom, all ushers, groomsmen, bridesmaids, maid (matron) of honor, best man, groom and bride. Participants such as readers and acolytes, if chosen, should be present. Others may attend if they wish.

**The rehearsal should begin on time.** The actual rehearsal lasts between 45 minutes and one hour. Many people are involved and good manners dictate respect for their time.

### **What to bring:**

1. The marriage license.
2. The wedding book given to you by the clergy during your pre-wedding preparation.
3. Fees (or donations) for the church, clergy, organist, altar guild, and custodian.

The parish register and the license will be signed at the rehearsal.

The timetable will be determined at the rehearsal; for example; when to seat the mothers, when the bride should enter, when photographs should be taken, etc. These decisions will be made in consultation with the priest.

Please, no alcoholic drinking before the rehearsal.

A member of the Altar Guild will be present for the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding. Her function is to assist with the rehearsal and be of service to the bridal party.

## **FEES**

There is a separate fee schedule published.

**NOTE: All fees are required the day prior to the rehearsal.**

## ***DECORATING THE CHURCH***

Saint George Episcopal Church is a beautiful building and elaborate decorations are neither necessary nor encouraged.

**Flowers:** Please consult with the Altar Guild **before** ordering flowers. Flowers in the sanctuary are placed only on the retable of the altar in the own containers.

No flowers are allowed in the church except those which are normally used as part of the regular services of the church. This means that only two vases of flowers, which will be placed on the retable of the altar, are allowed. No other adorning of the church is allowed except when the wedding takes place during one of the festive seasons of the Church Year, for which the church has already been decorated (Christmas or Easter), in which case the decorations of the church will also be available for the wedding. It is the responsibility of the florist to arrange with the church office to pick up a set of vase liners from the church to be used for the altar flowers. At all times the altar flowers from weddings will be in our regular altar vases, and no other vases or pots are to be used. We ask that wedding flowers remain on the altar for Sunday services and subsequent distribution to the ill and infirm. Flowers may be placed in the narthex next to the guest book.

**Pews:** Decorative bows, with or without floral sprays, may be placed on the aisle-end of the first three pews. Check with Altar Guild for more information.

**Candles:** The only candles allowed in the church are those which are normally part of the church service, which means the office candles on the retable of the altar (Eucharistic candles and torches will also be lit if it is a nuptial Eucharist). One exception to this is if the bride wishes an evening candlelight service, in which case the wall sconces may be used, and some additional candelabra, positioned at the rector's discretion.

**Aisle Runner:** The church does not own an aisle runner nor encourage its use. However, should you wish to use one, you may rent one from your florist. The church aisle is approximately 70 feet long. There are 17 pews on either side of the aisle.

## ***MUSIC***

Music appropriate to the joy and solemnity of the occasion should be selected for the wedding. Secular, theatrical or operatic tunes (including the traditional "Wedding March") are not to be used. If organ music is desired, the parish organist will serve at all weddings held in the church.

The Director of Music is responsible for any music played throughout the service. They will make selections from the standard repertoire to play before the service (prelude). They will also, in direct consultation with the bridal couple, offer options for processional and recessional music, as well as hymns, solos, or any other instrumental music. These consultations should be made well in advance.

Any solos which are sung should be of an appropriate and sacred nature. Secular popular music does not have a place in this liturgy. The primary factor in making decisions about a sung selection will be its text. All decisions relating to any music chosen will be at the discretion of the

Director of Music. Any final decisions will, of course, be made by the Rector.

Should the bridal couple wish to make use of a different organist for the service, this must be cleared with the Director of Music, who serves as parish organist. It will be necessary for the visiting organist to meet with our parish organist to discuss the use of the organ.

Use of soloists, congregational hymns and other instrumental music is highly encouraged. Please allow sufficient time to go over these arrangements with the Director of Music. Appointments for consultations can be made by calling the church office, (210)342-4261.

### ***BULLETINS***

Worship bulletins can be prepared by our publications coordinator or printed. In either case, the format must be approved by the clergy. Bulletin samples may be obtained from the church office.

A choice of scripture readings for the service is located in the back of this booklet.

### ***PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOGRAPHY***

If you contract with a professional photographer for your wedding pictures, please ask that person to contact the officiating priest before the service begins. No flash photographs are permitted during the service. Available-light photographs may be taken from the rear balcony of the church. Please tell your guests not to use flash cameras during the wedding. Equipment may be placed in the choir loft with prior approval of the Director of Music.

Picture-taking after the celebration often takes longer than the wedding ceremony and delays the clean-up and preparation necessary for the next service. Remember, you are in charge of the photographer. Many couples now have their wedding pictures taken before the celebration begins, when they are fresher. The wedding party are not to go behind the Altar rail for pictures.

**Video tape equipment** must be approved by the officiating priest before the day of the wedding.

### ***THE DAY OF THE WEDDING***

The bride traditionally dressed in the St. George Bride's room. Long mirrors restroom facilities are available.

The groom and his men should arrive at the church at least thirty minutes before the ceremony. They should wait in the church office until summoned.

This will be an exciting day and nerves will be on edge. But please, no alcoholic beverages before the wedding. This is too important a day to have our senses dulled. The priests will not proceed if Bridal party members are intoxicated.

The clergy of St. George like to begin on time. Some wedding plan books advise that it is usual and even proper to start 15 minutes late. Disregard such advice. Starting as close to on-time as possible is not only good manners and common courtesy, it is also a gift to all those who are giving you the gift of their presence (and their time).

## USEFUL HINTS

Rice is **NOT** permitted. If some celebration must be observed, we allow birdseed outside only ... and only after all pictures are taken to avoid tracking the seed into the church. Do **NOT** distribute the seed to your guests in the building.

Photocopy a map showing the route from the church to the reception; this can be distributed as guests leave the church.

Decide beforehand which family members are to sit in which pews — usually grandparents sit in front with the parents — and how many pews are needed. Tell relative where you want them, and they should tell the ushers.

Decide on disposition of pew decorations. Normally the altar flowers will be used for our Sunday services.

*One other note:* Since you would want your guests to enter into your joy as fully as possible, try to avoid a long delay between the wedding and the reception. Such delays will often mean that some guests will choose between attending the wedding or the reception.

## CHECK LIST

Below is a sample list of the things about which you will be thinking. Many should be cared for well before the wedding. Cross off those that do not apply and add others as you think of them.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm the time of the rehearsal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consult with the Director of Music (Keith Earle – 342-4261).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Consult with a member of the Altar Guild. (Alana Woods – 210-422-9273 or email - [awoods@swri.org](mailto:awoods@swri.org))
- \_\_\_\_\_ Order the service bulletin. (Call Church office – 342-4261)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Confirm the delivery time for flowers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decide on disposition of flowers following the wedding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Select the readings from Scripture.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Choose readers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Decide on acolytes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Determine family seating.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Will there be a Eucharist?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Will the reception be in the Parish Hall?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Will there be a receiving line at the church?
- \_\_\_\_\_ Note those things to bring to the rehearsal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encourage people to be on time.

## A SUGGESTED ORDER OF PROCESSION

*(spacing is not exact)*

Cross

Clergy

Best Man + Groom

Groomsman + Bridesmaid

Groomsman + Bridesmaid

Groomsman + Bridesmaid

Maid (Matron) of Honor

Flower Girl

Father of Bride + Bride

## READINGS

One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

## OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)

Genesis 2:4-9,15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)

Song of Solomon 2:10-13;8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)

Tobit 8:5b-8 (New English Bible) (That she and I may grow old together)

## NEW TESTAMENT

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)

Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named)

Ephesians 5:1-2,21-33 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128.

## GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light ... Let your light so shine)

Matthew 7:21,24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

Mark 10:6-9,13-16 (They are no longer two but one)

John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)