



St. Mary's Episcopal Church

Come to the Waters

The Celebration of Christian Marriage is an occasion of great joy. The clergy and staff of St. Mary's are pleased you are interested in being married in St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Green Cove Springs. An exciting part of our ministry as clergy is to prepare couples for this occasion and to celebrate and bless their marriage. At St. Mary's we believe a Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between two people in the presence of God. We ask that you observe some customs, traditions and policies that serve as guidelines and conform to the canons of the Episcopal church. Our hope is that the information below will serve as an initial and helpful way for us to communicate understanding but do know that nothing is "set in stone" until all is given final approval by the priest, who will be the Celebrant. After reading the information below, the next step is touch base with our parish administration Mrs. Cindy Thompson; (stmarysoffice@smgcs.church;) and she will schedule a consultation with the priest. We would be please to answer any questions you may have at that time.

General Guidelines

Prior to the solemnization, the Member of the Clergy shall determine: (a) that both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to the identity of either, or mental reservation; and (b) that at least one of the parties is baptized; (c) that both parties have been instructed by the Member of the Clergy, or a person known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible, in the nature, purpose, and meaning, as well as the rights, duties and responsibilities of marriage.

Title I, Canon 18, Sec. 3 We do not perform weddings during the penitential season of Lent. No date should be set for the wedding until that date has been approved by the Rector and added to the church calendar. Under the canons of the Episcopal Church, applications for marriage must be made to the Rector at least ninety (90) days in advance. This is a minimum and leaves adequate time for premarital counseling required by the Church.

No wedding shall be held after 7:00 p.m. Dates may be reserved no less than ninety (90) days prior and no more than one (1) year in advance. If either person has been divorced, there are additional requirements for remarriage. The Rector will guide you in meeting these requirements, but no wedding date may be placed on the church calendar until the Bishop has issued his godly judgment that the Canons of the Church have been fulfilled.

Premarital Counseling

After scheduling the wedding with the rector and the date has been added to the church calendar, a couple may schedule their first meeting with the Rector. Prior to marriage, three (3) counseling sessions are required with the officiating priest.

The Liturgy

The blessing of a marriage in the Church is not a private matter between the two who are marrying. A couple who seek to have their marriage blessed necessarily involve Christ in their union, as mediated through Christ's body in the world – the Church.

The liturgy appointed for the celebration and blessing of a marriage in the BCP opens with a bold statement concerning the symbolic significance of marriage for the Church: "The bond and covenant of marriage ... signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church and the Holy Scripture commends it to be honored by all people." BCP pg. 423

In the Episcopal Church marriage is a sacrament and an expression of Christian community. Generally, it is understood that persons wishing to be married by our clergy in our church are active, committed parishioners either here or in their own community of faith, or that they intend to worship with us regularly and become active members of St. Mary's Episcopal Church Green Cove Springs. The custom of joining the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage with a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist – the sacrament of unity – is an option. The Eucharist emphasizes both the symbolic and sacramental unity of Christ and the Church reflected in marriage, as well as the public nature of marriage. In the Episcopal Church, all Christians are welcome to participate in Communion; it is not permitted to exclude the congregation from receiving the Sacrament. The couple may choose to have Holy Eucharist in the church from the reserved Sacrament during the wedding rehearsal.

Clergy

All marriage ceremonies are performed by the clergy of St. Mary's Episcopal Church or other Episcopal clergy with the permission of the Rector. Clergy from other denominations may assist with the Rector's approval and at the discretion of the clergy in charge of the wedding ceremony. Lay people are invited to serve as readers of the Holy Scripture during the wedding. All music is under jurisdiction of the Director of Music at St. Mary's. The Music director plays for all weddings at the church. In case of unavailability, vacation, or emergency, the Director of Music and the Rector will arrange for a substitute.

Music

The couple should make an appointment with the Director of Music to discuss music for the wedding within two weeks of the wedding being added to the church calendar. Only hymns allowed by the authority of this church and anthems in the words of Holy Scripture or of the Book of Common Prayer may be sung at weddings. Exceptions may be made at the discretion of

the Director of Music. However, exceptions are rare! A good rule of thumb is this: if you are not likely to hear the music in our church on Sunday, then it is probably not appropriate for your wedding.

Instrumental music must be of a dignified nature suitable to a service in this church.

All music must be approved by the Director of Music prior to the ceremony. The Director of Music will help make arrangements for the choir, vocalists and/or instrumentalists and must approve the ability of the soloists to perform during the ceremony.

All fees for soloists or instrumentalists are the responsibility of the wedding party. Although it is not necessary to have wedding programs, the couple may decide to use them. The couple are responsible for their design and printing. All content is subject to approval of the Rector. The couple may wish to consult with the Rector and Director of Music as to what should be included in the program.

The Marriage License

The marriage license issued in the State of Florida will be brought to the church at the rehearsal and given to the Priest at the Rehearsal.

Flowers and Accessories

The Wedding Coordinator must approve all decorations

The altar and the altar cross are the focal point of the church. Nothing may be used which will obstruct or detract attention from it. Flowers for the 2 brass vases on the shelf behind the altar must be purchased from Divine Florist -322 Ferris St, Green Cove Springs.
<https://middleburgflowers.com>; **Phone(904) 531-9528**. These are the only decorations allowed behind the communion rail. The altar flowers placed in the church for a wedding are considered to be an offering to God and are left in the church for use on Sunday morning and then taken to the sick and shut-ins of the parish following Sunday's service.

Remember, St. Mary's is a historical and sacred space. Pew bows are permitted on the end of designated family pews only. There are no other decorations permitted in the church. Approach rails at the entrance doors may be decorated if desired, and a small vase of flowers may be put on the table in the narthex. No other flowers are permitted in the church. Individual wedding party flowers can be ordered from any florist of your choosing but must be delivered no later than 2 hours before the start of the service. We do have a refrigerator for storage.

Only the candles normally used at the services in the church are allowed. Wreaths and/or garland used on the entrance doors must be removed following the service. Aisle runners are not permitted.

Rice, birdseed, rose petals, are not permitted anywhere inside or on the grounds of St. Mary's. Please keep this in mind if you choose to use the parish hall for your reception.

Photography/Audio

As a sacramental rite of the church, your wedding is first and foremost to be a worship experience in which all in attendance are participating and is not to be viewed as simply something to watch. Understandably, your family and friends will want pictures of your wedding and will cherish them. We work to maintain a balance between the reverence of the solemn rite and the desire to “capture” the moment. Therefore, we require that the guidelines below be followed by all photographers.

No outside distractions are permitted during the wedding ceremony. The photographer may take as many pictures as desired on the lawn or in the River Room prior to the service. All such pictures must be completed 30 minutes before the start of the service.

The groomsmen may be photographed when they first enter the church. The wedding party and bride may be photographed outside the doors prior to their entry in procession. **No photographs are to be taken during the service.** The photographer may stand at the rear of the church and take one picture of the couple as they exit the church. We do request that any pictures after the service that will include the priest be taken first. Group pictures may be taken after the service at the altar rail. Any photographs taken at the altar rail are to be those which reenact the parts of the service which took place at that location. Under no circumstances are photographs to be taken with members of the wedding party behind the altar rail. Time for taking pictures following the service is restricted to 30 minutes for the sake of the wedding party, people attending the reception, and people involved in preparing the church for the next service. A videotape of the wedding may be made. Videographers **MUST** attend the rehearsal so that they understand exactly where their equipment may be set up. One stationary camera may be set up at the back of the church 45 minutes prior to the service.

No hand-held cameras, cell-phone cameras, or any “roaming videographer” is permitted at any time during the service. No extra lighting is permitted.

Episcopal Weddings

There are some wedding traditions that are not practiced in the Episcopal Church.

Some examples include

- 1) Unity Candle(s)
- 2) Additional Candles
- 3) Substitute brides at the rehearsal
- 4) Profession Wedding Consultants (may help plan reception and festivities but may not assist during the rehearsal or wedding).

Rehearsal

The wedding and rehearsal will be directed by the Officiant of the service assisted by the Wedding Coordinator. Florists, wedding planners, bridal consultants, etc. are not encouraged to attend the rehearsal as they have no role in this event. The Wedding Coordinator is versed in wedding procedure and etiquette and is here to help make your wedding run smoothly.

The rehearsal is generally held the evening before the ceremony, but another time may be arranged if necessary. The rehearsal is always before any rehearsal party or dinner. The rehearsal takes approximately one hour and must begin no later than 6:00 p.m.

Wedding Party Size

Please keep in mind when determining wedding party size: only four participants for each wedding participant including the two honor attendants, is the maximum St. Mary's space can handle reverently.

Ushers

Generally, the groomsmen act as ushers escorting guests to their seats before the service. They may also be designated to hand out wedding programs or the couple may designate 2 or 3 other people to that role.

If someone is asked to be an usher or hand out bulletins who is not a member of the wedding party, they should arrive 30 minutes before the service, so they are in place as guests start to arrive. If there is a service with communion, 2 people will need to be designated as Rail Ushers and 2 as Pew Ushers. These positions can be filled by ushers or again the couple may designate others for these roles. The Wedding Coordinator will be helpful in guiding those selected in how to perform these duties.

Acolytes

If there is service of communion the couple may choose an acolyte for the service or they may request St. Mary's to provide one. This is done through the church office. A small thank you gift or honorarium is appropriate

Dressing Rooms

Rooms are available for dressing. Arrangements for using them must be made with the Wedding Coordinator. The Wedding Coordinator will open the rooms two (2) hours before the wedding. The bridal party is permitted to have cold drinks and snacks, but under no circumstances is alcohol permitted.

It is suggested that male participants come already attired. They will have a small space inside the church to wait. Cold drinks and snacks are permitted, but under no circumstance is alcohol permitted.

St. Mary's is not responsible for any personal items left unattended.

Timing

Rehearsals generally last one hour. The Wedding Coordinator will open the church 30 minutes before the rehearsal and will, as well, close and lock the doors after the rehearsal.

On the day of the wedding, the Wedding Coordinator will arrive 2 hours before the wedding's start-time to open the necessary rooms for the wedding party. The Rector will arrive 1 hour before the service. The photographer has 30 minutes after the service for pictures.

Reception

The facilities of Parish Hall and lawn are available for receptions for a separate fee. Contact the Parish Administrator for further information of renting this space. If the reception is to be held at St. Mary's, the couple must reserve these areas at the same time the church is reserved for the ceremony. (While the church may be available for the ceremony, other areas may be booked for other activities.) The family or caterer must furnish everything necessary for the reception. Use of the kitchen equipment is not generally permitted. We request that Saturday night receptions conclude no later than 9:30 p.m. so that the Parish Hall may be prepared for Sunday morning. The entire campus is smoke free. All reception logistics must be coordinated with and approved by the Parish Administrator and Wedding Coordinator. **A liability policy must be purchased for the day of the event and proof shown to the parish administrator 2 weeks prior to the wedding day.** The family and/or caterer must meet with the Parish Administrator at least thirty (30) days prior to the wedding to discuss set-up of the Hall and what is and is not permissible.

Alcohol and Drugs

It is not permissible for the wedding party to have alcoholic beverages before the ceremony. Smoking is not permitted in any of the buildings or grounds of St. Mary's.

If the reception is held in the parish hall, sparkling wines, wine or beer may be served. In addition, non-alcoholic beverages must also be available. **A liability policy must be purchased for the day of the event.** Distilled spirits are not permitted under any circumstances.

Florida state laws must be observed including minimum age requirements with proper identification and preventing intoxicated individuals from being served. The hours during which alcohol will be served must be clearly stated in advance and those hours must be adhered to. Serving alcohol brings with it the responsibility for your guests which may also include transportation, departure delays and refusal to serve.

Schedule of Fees

	FEE MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Sanctuary	No charge	\$1000
Rector	Honorarium*	Honorarium
Director of Music	\$300**	\$300
Soloist	\$175.	\$250
Wedding Coordinator	\$150.	\$250
Sexton	\$100.	\$100
Rental for Parish Hall.	No charge	\$700

It is the pastoral privilege of the Rector to officiate at your wedding; there is no set fee but an honorarium of \$300 to the Rector is customary.

**If additional rehearsals are required, the Director of Music will discuss these charges at the time of your consultation.

Separate checks (detailing each check's purpose on the memo line) should be brought to the church with the marriage license one week before the wedding for members.

