

# ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH WEDDING CUSTOMARY



St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
801 Atlantic Avenue  
Fernandina Beach, Florida 32034  
(904) 261-4293

## General Guidelines

The Celebration of Christian Marriage is an occasion of great joy. The clergy and staff of St. Peter's are pleased you seek a holy union and will joyfully celebrate with you on your wedding day.

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; and
- (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

By participating in the blessing of a marriage, the congregation affirms this symbolic unity of Christ and the Church reflected in the marriage and explicitly vows “to do all in [its] power to uphold [the couple] in their marriage” – BCP pg. 425. Thus, the marriage service is conducted within the liturgical context of regular Christian worship.

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. Peter'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.

## Music

St. Peter's Director of Music 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.

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. 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.

## Marriage License

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

## Flowers and Accessories

Flowers for the 2 brass vases on the shelf behind the altar will be purchased from Dottie B's Florist (904-261-3011). 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. All other flowers for the wedding are arranged by the family and local florist. Any additional floral arrangements or decorations must be approved with the Wedding Guild.

The church will provide a wedding kneeling cushion for the marriage service. Only the candles normally used at the services in the church are allowed.

Reserved pews may only be marked by ribbons and must be removed immediately following the service. **No flowers are allowed on the pews.** Wreaths and/or garland used on the entrance doors facing Atlantic Avenue must be removed following the service.

Aisle runners are not permitted. Dropping of flower petals in the aisle is also not permitted.

## Photography/Audio

No outside distractions are permitted during the wedding ceremony. The photographer may take as many pictures as desired in the Wyatt Courtyard or garden prior to the service. **One** photograph of the bride may be taken outside the Great West Doors prior to her 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.

Group pictures may be taken after the service at the chancel steps, but not 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. The videographer **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 to the left of the Great West Doors (opposite Atlantic Avenue doors).

**NO EXCEPTIONS OR DEVIATIONS FROM THESE REGULATIONS WILL BE PERMITTED.**

**THE COUPLE AND PHOTOGRAPHER ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN THE INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WEDDINGS FORM PRIOR TO THE WEDDING REHEARSAL. FAILURE TO SIGN THIS FORM MAY JEOPARDIZE THE TAKING OF ANY PICTURES IN THE CHURCH.**

## Rehearsal

The wedding and rehearsal will be directed by the Officiant of the service assisted by the Wedding Guild of St. Peter's. Florists, wedding planners, bridal consultants, etc. are not encouraged to attend the rehearsal as they have no role in this event. The Wedding Guild members are versed in wedding procedure and etiquette and are 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.

Participants in the rehearsal include:

- Couple
- All Attendants
- Lectors
- Ushers
- Parents
- Organist
- Clergy
- Wedding Guild Members

It is imperative that all participants be on time and no rehearsal will be conducted if any member of the wedding party is intoxicated.

The marriage license and wedding programs are to be brought to the rehearsal.

## 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 Guild 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. Peter's to provide one. This is done through the church office. A *small* thank you gift or honorarium is appropriate.

## Dressing Rooms

There are rooms available for dressing in coordination the Wedding Guild or Priest. The Wedding Guild will open both rooms 2 hours before the wedding. No food or drink is allowed at either location. Both the Parlor and classroom (if used) are locked during the ceremony so personal items may be left there during the service. St. Peter's is not responsible for any personal items left unattended.

## Timing

The Wedding Guild will open the church 30 minutes before the rehearsal as well as close and lock the doors after the rehearsal. Rehearsals generally last 1 hour.

The day of the wedding the Wedding Guild will arrive 2 hours before the wedding 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 Burns Hall and Courtyard are available for receptions for a separate fee. Contact the Parish Administrator for further information of renting this space.

The couple must reserve these areas, if the reception is to be held at St. Peter's, 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 Burns 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. 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.

### Rice/Birdseed/Glycerin Bubbles/Rose Petals

No rice or birdseed may be thrown on the grounds of St. Peter's since it creates a hazardous condition on the steps and walkways. Glycerin bubbles may be showered on the couple outside of the church and other buildings. Rose petals **may not** be scattered by a flower girl during the procession of the wedding party.

### Alcohol and Drugs

It is not permissible for the wedding party to have alcoholic beverage before the ceremony. Smoking is not permitted in any of the buildings or grounds of St. Peter's. If the reception is held in Burns Hall, sparkling wines, wine or beer may be served in addition to non-alcoholic beverages. 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	\$1,000
Rector	Honorarium*	\$500
Director of Music	\$250**	\$300*
Soloist	\$100	\$150
Wedding Guild	Honorarium	\$200
Communion Fee	No charge	\$100
Sexton	\$150	\$150

- The fees listed above are for the wedding ceremony only. Additional fees are required for the use of Burns Hall.
- \*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. Checks

should be payable to the individual (clergy, musicians, wedding guild, sexton) not St. Peter's. Non-members must submit all fees three weeks prior to the wedding.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS AT WEDDINGS

1. Photographs may be made prior to the service in the gardens or courtyards. Church buildings will be opened an hour and a half prior to the time of the wedding.
2. One photograph of the bride may be made in the narthex (area at the rear of the church) prior to her entry in procession.
3. There are to be no photographs taken during the service itself. The one exception to this rule is that the service may be recorded by silent video equipment from the back corner of the church (away from the doors).
4. The photographer may stand at the rear door of the church and take one picture of the couple as they leave the church in recession.
5. Group pictures following the service are to be taken at the chancel steps, not at the altar rail.
6. 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.
7. Please restrict the time of picture taking following the wedding to 30 minutes for the sake of the wedding party, guests attending the reception, and people involved in preparing the church for the next service.

**NO EXCEPTIONS OR DEVIATIONS FROM THESE REGULATIONS WILL BE PERMITTED.**

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Photographer

AGREEMENT OF WEDDING PARTY

I have read, understand and agree to all of the rules, regulations and requirements include in St. Peter's Episcopal Church Wedding Customary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Couple

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Couple

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Wedding Planner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*This form must be signed by all parties and returned with The Wedding Information Form.*