

# **GETTING MARRIED AT ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

***Special Note: Before you proceed any further, please do not book your wedding reception before you call the church to check to see if the rector is able to perform your wedding on your preferred date.***

Welcome to the joy of planning your wedding. We offer you this brochure to make this sometimes daunting task a little easier. The brochure provides information about who can be married at St. Paul's Church, an explanation of parish traditions and policies, a schedule of fees, and a wedding checklist. This brochure takes you from the beginning of your premarital instruction sessions to your wedding day.

This brochure is part of a larger packet that contains a *Wedding Information Sheet*, *A Petition to the Bishop for Consent to Solemnize a Marriage after Divorce or Annulment* (if applicable), *Wedding Checklist*, and other information important for you as you plan your wedding. The rector will give you the whole package when you meet with her.

## **What is Christian marriage?**

The catechism describes Christian marriage as that sacrament "in which the woman and man enter into a 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. (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 861).

The purpose of Christian marriage is stated in the introduction to the service: "The union of husband and wife in heart, body and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord." (*Ibid.* p. 423)

Christian marriage is primarily a covenant between a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife. The terms of the covenant are stated clearly in The Declaration of Consent (*Ibid.* p. 424) and in the vows (p. 427). The vows are not simply vows between two people; they are made in the presence of God and in the presence of the congregation, which witnesses the vows and promises to uphold the bride and groom in the vows they make.

Christian marriage is an extraordinary gift of God, in which a couple is called to live in the saving grace of Christ, enriched, guided and sustained by the Holy Spirit, in communion with the community of the Church. Holy Matrimony is one of the seven sacraments of the Church and is intended by the Church for those who are committed to following Christ and being active members in a Christian fellowship.

## **About the service**

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a service of worship. While every attempt is made to make the service festive and joyous, primary attention is given to the devotional aspect of the sacrament. Requests for practices and music more appropriate

for a reception, therefore, are discouraged. All weddings at St. Paul's are celebrated according to the *Book of Common Prayer*, which provides a simple, beautiful, and dignified liturgy.

### **The canons of the Episcopal Church and the laws of the State of Connecticut that govern marriage**

St. Paul's follows the Canon Laws of both the National Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Connecticut concerning Holy Matrimony. We also follow all the laws of the State of Connecticut. According to these Canons—which govern the operations of the church.

1. At least one partner must be a baptized member of the Body of Christ.
2. The rector must have received thirty days' notice from a couple intending to marry; and if for any reason the cleric waives this requirement, the Bishop will be notified in writing immediately. At St. Paul's you need to speak with the rector about your intention to be married at least six months in advanced of your intended wedding date.
3. Christian marriage is lived within a community of faith. In all cases, our expectation is that the couple will be in good standing with a parish Church. Under no circumstances should the Episcopal Church be a "place of convenience" for a couple to avoid the marriage standards, requirements or prohibitions of their own denomination.
4. If either or both of you have been married before and ended that marriage by legal annulment or divorce, you must supply the rector with evidence of your annulment or divorce (most often by seeing the certificate(s) of divorce) and you must ask our Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Ian Douglas, for permission to be remarried in the church (the rector will help you do this). This request to the permission for permission to be remarried in the church must be received by the diocese at least 60 days before the planned wedding date.
5. Where for either party seeking marriage there has been more than one marriage dissolved by civil decree, our diocese requires that additional testimony from a professional marriage counselor/therapist. The rector will refer you to such a counselor/therapist.
6. To be married at St. Paul's your wedding must be performed by the rector, or you must have the permission of the rector for another priest to perform your wedding.
7. In Connecticut the marriage license must be obtained in the same town or city in which the ceremony is to take place or the city or town in which either of the parties to be married resides; and the record of said ceremony, signed by the officiating priest, must be returned by the priest to the office from which it was issued.
8. Both parties to be married must sign *The Declaration of Intention*, and the priest will provide you with this document.
9. Intentional premarital Christian counseling, whether by the officiating cleric or another person designated by her, is a canonical requirement.
10. Any priest or bishop may decline to officiate at a marriage.

**At least 6 months prior to your wedding: An interview with the rector is required to schedule a wedding at St. Paul's**

At least six months prior to the wedding, both members of the bridal party should make an appointment for an initial interview with the rector. While you are at the interview, the rector will provide a Wedding Packet and arrange for premarital instruction sessions.

Please schedule your wedding with the church before you book your reception. Often couples will book their reception one to two years prior to their wedding date and they will then wait until three to six months before the date on which they wish to be married to contact St. Paul's and the rector. They are then often surprised to learn that the church and/or the rector are not available on the date and at the time they wish to be married. The church and the rector are not always available. Please contact the church when you are booking your reception.

### **At least 5 months prior to your wedding: We need your wedding information sheet**

Once the rector agrees to officiate at your wedding—and at least **five months prior** to the wedding—the bridal couple must return their wedding information sheet to the rector. She will pass on your information to the secretary so that the rooms you need for the wedding and the rehearsal can be reserved. She will also review the various fees and let the Music Director know about your wedding.

### **At least 5 months prior to your wedding: Multiple premarital counseling sessions are required**

Premarital counseling sessions are required. You will meet with the rector six times for premarital counseling. If you are a member of the parish (you are registered in the parish, attend worship services at least three times a year, and contribute to the parish through a pledge of money to St. Paul's), premarital counseling is free of charge. If you are not a member of the parish, you will be charged a fee of \$50 per session or \$300 total. These fees will be paid directly to the rector. If you cannot afford these fees, please speak with the rector about a sliding scale.

If issues in your relationship come to the surface that are beyond the training of the rector, she may also require you to meet with a marriage/relationship counselor/therapist. If you are referred to a professional counselor/therapist by the rector, you will be required to supply the rector with a letter from the counselor/therapist that speaks to your readiness to be married. She will not officiate at your wedding if you decline to be referred to a counselor/therapist when she feels you need such a referral, if you do not provide her with a recommendation from your counselor/therapist, or if your counselor/therapist feels you are not ready to be married. If you are referred to a counselor/therapist, you will be responsible for the fees involved with such counseling.

As stated above, if you have been married two or more times, you will be required to meet with a counselor/therapist who will need to provide the rector and the bishop with a letter about your readiness to enter a new marriage. You will be responsible for the fees involved with this meeting.

### **Marriage License**

Your marriage license must be obtained from the Town of Southington. You may apply for it at the Southington Town Hall at the Office of the Town Clerk. By phoning or visiting the Town Clerk before you apply you may find out about the legal requirements for the granting of a marriage license.

You must bring your marriage license to the church office at least five days prior to your wedding. We will hold it for you in the office. **Your wedding cannot be legally performed without it!**

### **The reception needs to be somewhere else**

Given the heavy building use, St. Paul's facility is not available for wedding receptions.

### **The Altar Guild will help**

St. Paul's Altar Guild prepares the church for the wedding.

Please note that the following items are not permitted:

- Wedding runners are not permitted. They pose a hazard to the women in the ceremony who are wearing high heels;
- Live animals, such as doves, may not be released either inside or outside of the church;
- Rice, confetti, wheat or birdseed may not be thrown, either inside of the church;
- Flower girls may carry a basket of flowers, but may not scatter loose petals on the floor of the aisle.
- Balloons may not be released—for ecological reasons; and
- You may not attach anything with tape, nails, staples or tacks to the pews, walls or any other part of the church.
- Once the ceremony has ended you may wish to wait about five minutes for your guests to exit for the reception. Then you may return to the church for 30 minutes of picture taking.

### **Information you will need about wedding flowers**

Altar and chancel flowers make a wedding more beautiful and symbolize the new life in Christ initiated by a Christian wedding. You need to make arrangements directly with a florist (or through your wedding planner) for any flowers you desire at your wedding. Simplicity is urged, however, since over-decorating can detract from your wedding rather than enhance it. Any decoration, floral or otherwise, to be used on the ends of pews must be tied with string or ribbon.

The flowers you provide for your wedding belong to you. You may take them when you leave, or you may leave them at the church so that they can be included in our regular Sunday service in honor of your wedding, and then distributed to homebound or hospitalized parish members, afterwards. You will need to inform the rector in advance of your wishes regarding the flowers.

You may have your flowers delivered to the church up to 1 hour prior to the start time of your ceremony. As most weddings are on Saturdays, there is no one in the church to receive your flowers more than 1 hour prior to the service. If the flowers for the wedding

are to be delivered to the church, please ask your florist to have them delivered when you or someone you designate is at the church to receive them. That person can check that the order is complete and distribute the flowers to the members of the wedding. Please note: flower girls may carry a basket of flowers, but may not scatter loose petals on the floor of the church.

### **Information about wedding music**

The music for the wedding is under the direction of the Music Director, who acts under the authority of the Rector.

- All songs, soloists, instrumentalists, texts or guest organists must be approved *in advance* by the Music Director.
- The organist does not usually attend the rehearsal, but at your request will attend if scheduling permits. There will be an additional fee for the organist's presence at the rehearsal.

### **Service Programs**

It is not necessary for the congregation to have programs for your wedding. If you would like to have them, however, please make up your own and bring a rough to draft to the rector one month prior to the wedding for proof reading. *Please do not print your program before the rector has reviewed it.*

### **Things you should know about photographing your wedding**

Please share the following information with your photographer.

Photographs may be taken by your photographer, as well as your guests, **before and after** the service. **No flash photos** may be taken during the service itself. Your wedding is sacred and flash photography causes distraction for you and your guests. It is a good idea to add a sentence to your wedding bulletin respectfully requesting guests to refrain from picture taking during the service. Similarly, while the video recording of your wedding is permitted, it must not detract from the service. Arrangements, therefore, must be made with the clergy ahead of time for the positioning of the camera. the camera must remain in one spot throughout the service, and no special lighting is permitted.

Before and after the service opportunities will be provided to pose for whatever photos your photographer and you may desire. However, the wedding party may use the church for taking photographs no earlier than 60 minutes prior to the ceremony beginning, and/or no longer than 30 minutes after the service ends.

- At St. Paul's, flash photography is not permitted during the ceremony.
- The photographers must refrain from placing themselves between the congregation and the bridal party.
- We recommend that you take photographs in the church up until ten minutes prior to the service.
- You have 30 minutes following the service to take additional pictures. After 30 minutes the altar guild will begin cleaning up the church to prepare for the services on the following day. We ask that you respect this time restraint, as the

members of the altar guild who have worked on your wedding and need to prepare the church for the Sunday services, are all volunteers and have given their time freely.

- Video taping is possible from a single fixed position using the available light in the church; however, this position must be approved by the officiating priest *prior* to the wedding.
- No photographs of any kind may be taken from the main aisle during the service.
- Photographers are not allowed to enter the sanctuary (the area between the communion rail and the altar) at any time.
- Chairs and other furniture in the church are not to be moved.

### **Here's how much it will cost**

Fees for all couples being married at St. Paul's:

Organist: \$150 (payable to *a person to be determined* and due 2 weeks prior to the wedding)

Soloist: \$100 base rate payable directly to the soloist and due 2 weeks prior to the wedding)

Additional fees for those couples who are not pledging members of St. Paul's Church:

Clergy: \$50/session premarital counseling (payable to Suzannah Rohman)  
\$250 for the rehearsal and ceremony (payable to Suzannah Rohman—due 2 weeks prior to the wedding)

### **Things you should know about using our facility**

St. Paul's is a smoke free building. You may smoke outside on the premises *if you clean up after yourself*. In accordance with the safe church policies of the Diocese of Connecticut and this congregation, you are not permitted to serve alcoholic beverages at any function taking place on the premises when children are present and without the approval of the vestry and the rector.

### **About the wedding rehearsal**

Wedding parties usually schedule rehearsals on the evening prior to the wedding day and last about 45 minutes. Please make sure that all members of the wedding party have directions to St. Paul's and arrive on time as scheduled. The rehearsal will begin within ten minutes of the scheduled start time, so anyone who arrives later will miss crucial parts of the rehearsal. The bride and groom will sign the *Declaration of Intention* and the witness will sign the *Parish Register* at this time. If you wish the officiating clergy to attend your rehearsal dinner, you must invite the clergy person at least one month in advance. The officiating clergy may or may not be able to attend this dinner.

### **About your wedding day**

*You must arrive early for the wedding*

Please ensure that members of the wedding party are aware that they must arrive at least thirty (30) minutes in advance of the scheduled wedding time—or earlier if you have arranged for photographs to be taken before the ceremony.

You may arrive up to one and a half hours (90 minutes) prior to the start time of the wedding. Please inform the officiating clergy when you plan to arrive.

*Dressing rooms are available if arranged in advance*

The library and some classrooms downstairs are available as dressing rooms. Please let the officiating clergy know if you will need these rooms. Please let the clergy know if you plan to dress at the church and if you would like the bride and groom kept from seeing each other prior to the beginning of the wedding.

*We will accept on rare occasions begin the wedding on time*

The wedding will start at the appointed time. We of course cannot begin if either the bride or groom is absent, but we will not delay the start of the wedding by more than 10 minutes because a family member, member of the wedding party, or other individual has not yet arrived, unless the officiating clergy person has deemed that some extraordinary event has detained the person(s).

*If you wish the rector to attend your wedding reception, you need to invite her.* Please keep in mind, however, that she may not be able to attend. This is not a reflection on your relationship with her. Saturdays, the typical day on which weddings are held, are very busy days for the rector, as she is preparing for the services on Sunday. If she can attend she will, but please understand if she is unable to do so because of scheduling issues.

## **Have fun**

The clergy, altar guild and staff look forward to making your wedding at St. Paul's Church a smooth and happy event. We hope that this brochure has helped you as you plan your wedding. We extend our best wishes and congratulations to you as you embark on your life together. We hope that you enjoy your day.