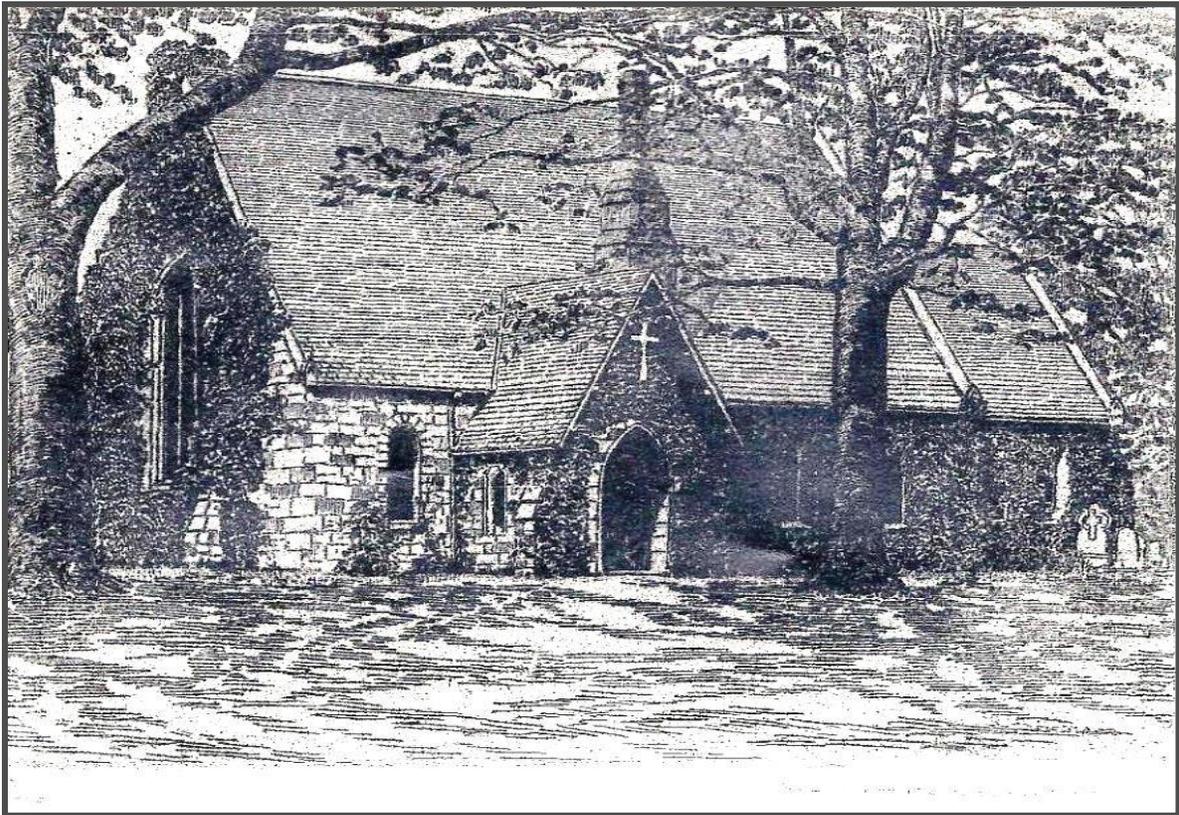


Weddings at Saint Mary's



FOUNDED 1848

Thomas W. Allen, Rector

Introduction

The church welcomes the opportunity to share with you in planning your wedding. It is the desire of the church that your wedding day be as joyful and as memorable as possible. Therefore, in order to help avoid any misunderstandings which might cloud your happiness, the following is offered as a ready reference of custom and Canon in order to help you in your planning.

How to Get Started

Before you set or publicly announce a date for your wedding, it is advisable to consult with the church. There are several matters which must be settled with the church before any date can be official.

There are Canon Laws which are the rules of the Church which govern the solemnization and blessing of a marriage. There are certain questions which must be answered before the Church is able to grant her consent to bless your marriage.

There is a Declaration of Intention which must be signed not less the thirty (30) days prior to the date of any ceremony.

There must be no conflicts with existing commitments for the church building, the clergy, or the liturgical calendar of the church. There are certain times when the traditions of the Church dictate there be **no wedding scheduled in the church:** during the seasons of **Advent, Lent and during Holy Week.** Likewise, weddings are not customarily held on Sundays (other than when they are the principle act of worship) and on Saturdays after four o'clock in the evening.

Who May be Married?

The purpose of the local parish church is to serve its parishioners; it does not have the resources or the time to provide services to the public at large. In the singular case of weddings, the natural beauty of the church and its charming intimacy place it in great demand. To assure a fair and equitable policy with regard to the performance of marriages, it has been decided to place certain restrictions on the availability of the church. The Rector has absolute, final authority on who may be married. *The use of St. Mary's Church for the purpose of weddings is restricted to "parishioners" of St. Mary's.* To that end the following are considered "parishioners":

- Couples in which one person is already a registered member of the congregation.
- Couples who have no church home, but are in the process of making St. Mary's their spiritual home. Those finding themselves in this category should note that active participation in services of public worship will be expected prior to the beginning of

counseling and prior to the setting of any wedding date. For Episcopalians, this will assume the issuance of a letter of transfer to St. Mary's and active participation in the life of the congregation. For those not members of the Episcopal Church, it is understood that at least one of the parties will seek instruction and eventual confirmation at the hands of the Bishop. New couples must have established membership 1 year prior to scheduling a wedding date.

Remember; before you announce or publish the date of your marriage you must have met with the clergy to insure there are no canonical impediments. Completed your premarital counseling (and when applicable, obtained the consent of the Bishop), and cleared the date and time with the **Church Office**, the **Clergy**, and the **Altar Guild**.

General Principles: The church is the House of God and your wedding is a sacrament of the church which is His body. All weddings are under the absolute control of the parish priest; his/her authority is the Book of Common Prayer and the Canon Law of the church. Before you make any plans for your wedding service, you should read and familiarize yourself with "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" and its appurtenant rubrics from the Book of Common Prayer.

Canon Law: Episcopal Canon requires that the clergy of the church meet with couples intending marriage not less than thirty (30) days prior to any such marriage to:

1. Ensure that there are no connubial impediments to the proposed union.
2. Allow the clergy to instruct the couple as to the nature and content of the Declaration of Intent.
3. Ensure there are no canonical impediments to the proposed union. Minimally, there are three meetings between the couple and the clergy, and three meetings with the couple and the counselor prior to the wedding rehearsal.

For those who are divorced there are additional and special canons which come into play.

Divorce decrees must be **final** before any plans can be made for re-marriage in the church (we recommend that decrees be final not less than one year prior to the date of the intended ceremony). For those previously married in the Episcopal Church it is required that a "Marital Judgment" be obtained from the Bishop. This process will add four to six weeks to the time necessary prior to the official acceptance of any wedding date, the offering of the church's approval of the marriage, and the publication of the date.

Civil Law: Under Maryland Law, a civil license must be obtained before the church can solemnize a marriage. The minimum age for obtaining such a license is sixteen (16) years (with notarized consent from parents). Since the church is in the jurisdiction of Harford county, the

license must be obtained at the courthouse in Bel Air, the county seat; a process that can take up to three business days. There are no required blood tests in the state of Maryland and witnesses are not required to obtain a license. One of the contracting parties must apply for and receive the issued license. These licenses are good for ninety days (90) and thus may be picked up well in advance of the intended date. The civil license should be placed in the hands of the clergy at or before the time of the rehearsal. Persons not resident in the county may apply for a license by mail, including a statement from a clerk of the Court (or a comparable official). These forms are available from any Clerk of the Court in Maryland. **Remember, the clergy cannot officiate at any wedding if they are not in possession of all three copies of a valid license.** If you are not getting married in the church, be sure the location of your wedding is in Harford County. If not, you need to make plans to obtain your license from the appropriate jurisdiction.

Flowers and Decorations: there is no requirement for flowers in the church, but when they are used, they are restricted to those carried or worn and those used to adorn the Altar. The church provides vases and liners (to be used at the Altar) and thus restricts the size and number of arrangements.

Decorations and Runners: The center aisle of St. Mary's is carpeted thus there is **no need for a runner.** Simple white ribbon bows may be used to denote reserved pews.

Candles: The only candles used at St. Mary's are those traditionally placed on or by the altar. In the case of Candle Light Weddings, special arrangements must be made through the Altar Guild, a special fee is also levied for this service. (Please note, Candle-light weddings only show well after sundown) Unity candles have no place in the order of service and are not allowed.

Confetti, rice and flower petals: Shall **NOT** be used in or near the church. Your guests will be able to scatter/throw **Wild Bird Seed outside** as you exit the church.

Music: The Parish organist is responsible for the music at all services of the church. Together, with the rector, the organist is the final authority on what music is proper and appropriate for use in the church. A rehearsal with the organist is required, and should be scheduled at least two weeks prior to the service. If music is to be provided other than our Parish organist, such as other instruments (harp, strings quartet, etc.) or by a cantor, this also must be cleared by the organist and the rector.

Fees and Gratuities

Donation to the Church – There is no charge for use of the church by those who already tithe/support the Church and her work. However, as soon as others are asked to serve or perform for you, compensation is both suitable and in keeping with tradition. Here at St. Mary’s parishioners are asked to pay two gratuities, the organist and the sexton.

The Altar Guild - most weddings require at least two changes of hangings as well as the setting and re-setting of the altar. A member of the Altar Guild will assist you at the rehearsal, and be certain that all goes smoothly at your Wedding Service. Your gift will help provide the church with linens and paraments which are regularly retired because of age and wear.

The Sexton – He will assure that the church is clean and presentable both before and after your service.

The Organist – is included among those receiving a fee, since weddings are not a regular part of the salaried payments by the church. Additional fees for a soloist should be discussed with the organist.

The Clergy – of course are not paid for their service, especially by those who regularly support the church. Yet, a gift offering is an acceptable tradition within the church for both members and non-members.

- **Donation to the church** **\$ 300.00**
- **Altar Guild** **50.00**
- **Sexton** **50.00**
- **Organist** **200.00*** without soloist
- **Clergy** **200.00** (suggested amount)
- **Candle-light Service** **100.00** (not available on Saturday)

Please make direct payment to the person/ group (altar guild receives the payment for the Candle-light Service)

Approximate schedule for wedding:

- **½ hour before: Ushers arrive and begin seating guests**
- **15 minutes before the Groom and Best Man arrive at the sacristy**
- **On the hour: Special guests are seated**
- **On the hour: The Bridal Party are ready for procession**

The marriage Register – this must be signed by the bride, groom and witnesses. This is done as soon after the ceremony as possible. Until this is signed the marriage is not ‘legal” in the eyes of the state.

Photography: It is a tradition at St. Mary’s not to allow photos to be taken during any service without permission of the clergy. Please have your ushers tell guests not to use cameras until the service is over.*

- If you will provide a bulletin for the Order of service please note the above message. Your photographer can take pictures of the procession in, technically it isn’t part of the ceremony.
- If it is acceptable to the clergy, one or two non flash pictures may be taken from the rear of the church
- Likewise , with clergy permission, Video can also be set up and used (light available) during the service.
- Photographers should be reminded not to wander around the church during the service.
- Following the service you will have **Thirty Minutes** to take any pictures the photographer was unable to take during the service. Please remind your photographer your guests are waiting outside or at the place of reception. If you and photographer have a list of pictures needed, and the people ready to be in them this should be ample time.

*Please remember, aside from your guests, the clergy, altar guild and sexton are all waiting until the photographer is done before they can begin their work!

Important names and numbers:

Rector – Father Thomas Allen 410-569-0180

Office Manager – Amy Parker 410-569-0180

Organist – Robert Wallace II (302) 528-8051

Altar Guild – Sallie Parker 410-838-3677

Ushers: Your duty is to see that everyone is seated in a timely fashion, and that the church is exited smoothly. Please arrive at the church at least a half hour prior to the service. A member of the Altar Guild will be available to answer any questions that may arise.

As each woman enters, the usher offers her his arm, inquires whether she is a friend of the bride or groom, and seats her accordingly. If a man accompanies the woman, he should follow a step behind. Unaccompanied men are shown to a seat, but not escorted.

Anyone with cameras or video equipment should be advised of the church policy of **no pictures during the service.** This can be done firmly, but politely, but it needs to be done. Only the person designated by the Bridal couple (and approved by clergy) will be allowed to video the service.

The Parish Hall will be unlocked a half hour prior to the service. Restrooms are available inside the Parish Hall.