



THE CHURCH OF
ST JOHN THE DIVINE
CHANGING LIVES FOR GOD IN CHRIST

Christian Marriage
in The Church of St. John the Divine
2450 River Oaks Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77019-5898
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A Letter from the Rector

A Christian wedding is a joyous event to all of us. Consequently, we heartily congratulate you and are happy that your wedding will be celebrated in The Church of St. John the Divine.

We will make every effort to assist you in your planning to ensure that your wedding will occur with the beauty, dignity, and reverence that a Christian service should provide. Please help us by reading this booklet carefully and by complying with its instructions and suggestions. Any question it fails to address or answer satisfactorily may be discussed with the officiating clergyman in the premarital counseling sessions. Experience has shown that the procedures outlined herein will present a service which will honor God in Christ as well as be inspiring and pleasing to you and to your guests.

In Christian marriage, a couple embraces a life-style, which seeks to reflect the presence of God in all they do. This effort is achieved as they nurture their relationship with one another in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. Such an endeavor requires commitment. A couple must take its Christian marriage vows seriously and see the spiritual dimension of their marriage as extremely important. In the years following your wedding, St. John the Divine will provide support to you to expand this spiritual dimension through our worship, education, fellowship, and witness. Our desire is to celebrate your wedding, but also to celebrate your marriage as it is lived out among us.

Again, we are delighted to share in this Holy event with you and anticipate it with great joy.

In Christ's Name,

The Reverend Laurens A. Hall, Rector

General Information

1. The canons of The Episcopal Church specify that Holy Matrimony is "...entered into within the community of faith." Therefore, the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in The Church of St. John the Divine is intended for communicants of this parish.
2. Baptism is the foundation of the Christian community. It is a requirement that at least one of the couple be a baptized Christian. Those who have not been baptized and who wish to be baptized should speak to one of the priests.
3. A priest on the active staff of St. John the Divine will officiate at weddings held here. Other clergy, either of The Episcopal Church or another denomination, who have a special relationship with the bride or groom, may be invited by the officiating priest to assist him or her in the service.
4. Priests of other Episcopal parishes or missions are welcome to use the church or chapel for weddings of their members, provided scheduling can be arranged and the rules of this parish are observed.
5. The Episcopal Church requires that notice of intention to marry be made at least 30 days prior to the proposed marriage date. Additional time is required if either the bride or groom has been married previously and the former spouse is still living. In this case, permission for remarriage must be obtained from the Bishop after a consultation with and petition by a priest of St. John the Divine.
6. The Canons of The Episcopal Church require clergy to provide premarital counseling to engaged couples prior to performing their marriage. This is done through our five-week **Marriage Preparation Classes** which are offered in both fall and spring. These classes are required for marriage at St. John the Divine. Only under certain circumstances, such as one person living out of town, can alternate arrangements for personal counseling sessions be made. The need for such arrangements must be made with the individual clergy person performing the ceremony. In addition to the **Marriage Preparation Classes**, the clergy person will meet several additional times with the engaged couple to develop the specifics of their service.
7. "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" in *The Book of Common Prayer* is the service used in The Episcopal Church. Personally composed or other services may not be used.

8. *The Book of Common Prayer* provides special scripture readings for the service, from which the couple may make a choice, whether or not the Holy Communion is planned. Should the wedding be planned without Holy Communion, the couple is urged to receive this sacrament together as near the wedding date as possible.
9. A valid marriage license is required for marriage. A wedding at St. John the Divine cannot take place without a marriage license.
10. Texas marriage licenses are valid for 30 days from the date of issue, with a 72-hour (3 days) waiting period before the marriage may take place. So, please plan accordingly.
11. The officiating priest is the only person who signs the license following the marriage ceremony. The church is responsible for returning the signed license to the county clerk's office.
12. For information about obtaining a marriage license in Harris County, Texas, contact the Harris County Clerk's office by calling 713-755-6411 or view their website at www.cclerk.hctx.net.

Scheduling a Wedding

1. Weddings will not be scheduled on Sundays, or during Holy Week (beginning with the Saturday before Palm Sunday), or during the week before Christmas. Weddings scheduled during the week after Christmas will be held with full Christmas decorations remaining intact.
2. Normally, not more than one wedding per day will be scheduled in either the church or chapel. If it becomes necessary to schedule more than one wedding on the same day in either facility, three hours shall be the minimum time between weddings.
3. To reserve a date for a wedding, please contact the church's event coordinator. After conferring with you and the priest you desire to officiate at your wedding, the event coordinator will enter the date and time into the church calendar.
4. Your wedding invitation **must** be sent to the church's event coordinator. This will serve to confirm the date and time you have reserved for your wedding.

Fees

1. Our event coordinator will discuss with the bride and groom the current fees for a wedding at St. John the Divine and will provide a list of the fees to the couple.
2. A deposit of 50% of the total fees is due at the time that the wedding date is confirmed with our event coordinator and the officiating priest.
3. The balance of the fees, including all music fees, are due two weeks prior to the wedding date.
4. In the event of a cancellation, please contact the event coordinator, as penalties and fees may apply.
5. An honorarium from bride and groom to the officiating priest may be presented either directly to the priest or to the wedding coordinator for the priest at the rehearsal or following the marriage ceremony and will be gratefully accepted.

Wedding Coordinator

St. John the Divine provides a wedding coordinator to assist with the wedding ceremony.

1. The wedding coordinator and members of Wedding Hostess Guild will be present at both the rehearsal and the wedding to coordinate the details of the ceremony with the priest, organist, and wedding participants.
2. If an outside wedding consultant has been employed, his or her involvement will be limited to the reception and other nonchurch activities. The rehearsal and wedding are the responsibility of the staff of St. John the Divine.

Music

A church wedding is a Sacrament in the Episcopal Church. The music, like the ceremony, should be an act of worship. As one of the most joyous moments in a Christian's life, a marriage before the altar should have music which expresses both the joy and reverence of this important occasion. To ensure a uniform standard of excellence in the music at weddings celebrated at St. John the Divine, we have adopted the policies set out below.

1. The director of music or a designated representative from the Music Ministry Staff *must* be retained for all weddings requiring music.
2. After confirming the date of your wedding with the event coordinator, please contact the Music Ministry Office by telephone or email music@sjd.org to reserve a consultation with the director of music. In this consultation, much information will be given to assist and guide you in your preparations. Early planning will ensure adequate preparation of the music selected.
3. Many possible choices of music styles from traditional to contemporary are available for your wedding. Music at weddings varies from simple organ or harp music to more elaborate combinations. Some weddings engage instrumental or vocal soloists. Other weddings use brass, strings, hand bells, or multiple combinations of instruments and soloists. A choir is engaged for some weddings. The music ministry staff will guide and assist you in making your choices.
4. Concerning texts, The Episcopal Church requires that the sung portions of any service be in words of Holy Scripture, *The Book of Common Prayer*, or an authorized hymnal. Any other text requests are subject to careful scrutiny and must be congruent with scripture. The rector is the final authority on questions of textual appropriateness.
5. It is customary to schedule one meeting with the music ministry staff to confirm the specific selections for your ceremony, to review the placement of music within your ceremony, and to review the number of participating musicians and their fees.
6. All musicians must be contracted through the Music Office. Musicians shall not be contracted prior to consulting with the director of music, and all vocalists and instrumentalists must be approved by the director of music prior to their engagement. Only professional soloists and instrumentalists are engaged for ceremonies to ensure the highest standards of worship.
7. The Church of St. John the Divine does not allow music to be played from CD or tape during the ceremony. Additional information is available on the church website: www.sjd.org.

Decorations

Simplicity and good taste should always be the mark of decoration in the House of God. Extensive and elaborate floral displays are unnecessary and discouraged, because of the inherent beauty of the church and chapel. The following is a list of decorations which may be used in the church:

1. Altar flowers: Two arrangements of fresh flowers are to be supplied by the bride's florist and must be arranged to fit the church altar vase liners. No bows or artificial flowers may be used. Arrangements must be left on the flower counter for the church's sexton or Altar Guild member to position properly. All flowers for the altar are your gift to St. John the Divine and *are not* to be removed from the church after the wedding.
2. Pew markers consisting of greenery, flowers, and/or bows may be attached to the pews, but only in a manner and with materials that do not damage the pews.
3. Aisle candelabra: The church's aisle candelabra are attached to the pews along the center aisle. There are 14 candles covered by glass chimneys. All costs for use of candelabras and candles are in the fee schedule.
4. Candelabra belonging to a florist may not be used.
5. Following the wedding, the florist must remove all decoration on the pews so that the church may be cleaned for the next scheduled service.
6. The church furnishes needlepoint wedding cushions for the couple to kneel on at the altar. A runner down the center aisle is not permitted.

Rules for decorating the chapel are basically the same as for the church, with the following variations:

1. The wall behind the chapel altar is wood. Nothing may be attached in any fashion to the wall.
2. Altar flowers: The chapel has several sets of brass vases from which to choose. The liners or a pair of vases may be picked up by the florist a day or two before the wedding, if desired, and the flower arrangements may then be placed in the brass containers and left on the flower counter the day of the wedding. The flower vases are placed on the altar shelf and must be of appropriate size to flank the cross. The sexton or Altar Guild

member will place them on the altar shelf. The flowers on the altar are your gift to The Church of St. John the Divine and *are not* to be removed from the chapel after the wedding.

3. Aisle candelabra: The chapel's aisle candelabra are black wrought iron standards clamped to the pews, with three candle holders each, covered by glass chimneys. Three candelabra are installed on each side, three rows apart. The church will supply the candles. One pair of seven-branch candelabra, complete with candles, may be placed on either side of the sanctuary step. See fee schedule for costs.

The services of the St. John the Divine Flower Guild may be obtained for arranging the altar flowers and decorating the candelabra for your wedding. Please call the Flower Guild chairperson for information regarding this procedure.

Printed Wedding Leaflets

1. The church will provide a wedding leaflet for a nominal fee.
2. The leaflet will contain an outline of the order of service and a list of the wedding party.
3. Information must be submitted to the Music Office and wedding coordinator at least three (3) weeks before the ceremony to allow for typesetting, proofreading, and printing.
4. If you wish to have a leaflet designed elsewhere, you must submit a proof to the Music Office and wedding coordinator so that it can be approved before it is printed.

Photography

As a marriage service is a Sacrament of the Church, in keeping with the atmosphere of worship, only the professional photographer hired for the wedding may take photographs during the ceremony as described below.

1. The bride and groom are responsible for informing their photographer, family, and guests of the church policy regarding photographs.
2. Wedding guests are also expected to observe this courtesy and must not interrupt the service by the taking of photographs during the ceremony. Their failure to do so may make it necessary for a reminder of this during the service. The ushers at the wedding are encouraged to remind the guests of this policy.
3. Photographs may be taken before the service in the bride's room, the rector's sacristy, outside on the church grounds, and in the narthex as the wedding party is lined up for the procession.
4. The photographer may, from the balcony of the church or chapel, take a timed exposure using existing light, requiring no flash, during the service.
5. The bride and groom may be photographed from the narthex coming down the aisle after the service.
6. Photographs may be taken after the service in front of the altar, provided they can be taken within a fifteen-minute period.
7. Neither the photographer nor the wedding party may go behind the altar rail for pictures.

Video

Videotaping of the ceremony has become very popular and offers the bride and groom a very special opportunity to relive their sacred event.

1. St. John the Divine offers a competitive wedding package and provides a demo to show quality of product and pricing. The video package will include a minimal of four cameras, state of the art sound reinforcement of the ceremony live as well as to tape, and a trained audio and video crew to capture this special event. The final product will be provided on DVD for the bride and groom. This service can be contracted through the director of media of St. John the Divine.
2. If however, you choose to use another videographer, the videographer you choose must contact the director of media at least one week prior to the wedding for specific approved camera locations and audio requirements.
3. After confirming your wedding date with the event coordinator, please telephone the director of media to reserve your date for their services.

Child Attendants

1. Flower girls and ring bearers must be at least 5 years old and able to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion.
2. The flower girl may carry a basket of flowers, but may not drop flower petals, either live or silk, or any other material.
3. The ring bearer should not carry the wedding rings on the pillow.

The Rehearsal

1. All members of the wedding party should be present at the rehearsal. Please request that they be prompt, so that the rehearsal can proceed within the allotted time, which is usually one hour.
2. The rehearsal is under the direction of the officiating priest. The priest will be assisted by the wedding coordinator and/or a member of the Wedding Hostess Guild. She will give the appropriate signals to the organist and will help space the bridal party for procession. No one else is needed to give these directions.
3. The marriage license **must** be brought to the rehearsal and given to the officiating priest at the time that the marriage register is signed by the bride and groom and their witnesses.
4. Ushers to escort the bride and groom's mothers and grandmothers should be appointed prior to the rehearsal.
5. Ushers will be instructed by the officiating priest and the wedding coordinator as to seating the wedding guests. Basic information is as follows:
 - a. Guests are seated from the side aisles only. The center aisle is reserved for the bridal procession.
 - b. Ushers should offer the right arm to female guests.
 - c. Traditionally, the bride's family and friends are seated on the left side, and the groom's on the right side. It is also proper to seat guests on either side.
 - d. Please ask family members and friends to inform the usher if they are to be seated in a special pew.
6. The bride's mother should lead the congregation in standing at the bride's entrance. Other directions for standing and sitting during the service will be given by the officiant.
7. After the service, the wedding party processes out, the last bridesmaid and groomsman being immediately followed by the bride's parents and the groom's parents.
8. Ushers should be assigned to bring out unescorted mothers and grandmothers.

Dressing Areas

1. The bride's room in the church is located to the right as one enters the narthex from the center door. There is ample room for the bride and her mother to dress in this room. Bridesmaids may dress in the ladies' lounge, to the right of the narthex and across from the bride's room.
2. The bride's room in the chapel is located to the right as one enters the narthex. It is the first room off the corridor that is accessed from the narthex.
3. Each of these rooms contains a restroom, full-length mirrors, and space to hang dresses. Pictures of the bride, her mother, and her attendants may be made in these rooms. Bridesmaids should have hair and makeup done before they arrive to dress; however, touch-ups can certainly be made in the dressing rooms.
4. Dresses may be delivered in the morning on the day of the wedding and will be checked in by the sexton. Dressing rooms will be opened two hours before the wedding.
5. The groom, groomsmen, and ushers should arrive dressed for the wedding. In the church, they may gather in the family room located off the long corridor along the right side of the church from the narthex. In the chapel, the groom, groomsmen, and ushers may gather in the family room, which is the second room located along the hallway to the right after one enters the chapel.
6. Please plan to have someone remove all personal articles from the dressing rooms after the wedding service.

Receptions

After the ceremony, you may choose to celebrate your wedding with a reception at St. John the Divine. Below are the policies we have adopted for receptions held in our facilities:

1. Receptions are scheduled through our event coordinator. It would be wise to reserve the time and space desired for the reception at the same time as the church or chapel is reserved for the wedding, as space and availability are limited.
2. Wedding receptions may be held in Summers Hall or the parlor.
3. Couples are responsible for providing all food and drink, paper products, decorations, servers, musicians and clean-up. **Alcoholic beverages may not be served.**
4. St. John's director of food services **must** be retained for all receptions, as all food that comes onto St. John the Divine's premises must be cleared through him.
5. St. John the Divine has a full-service kitchen and has right of first refusal for providing food or catering any event that uses the church's facilities. If we are not able to cater the event, then another caterer of your choosing may be employed.
6. If another caterer is used they must provide certification and proof of insurance to St. John's business manager at least two weeks before the event.
7. When caterers are used, the caterer is subject to the oversight of the director of food services or his designated agent. He or she will assist in locating utensils and operating kitchen equipment, but does not make arrangements for the reception, the serving or the clean-up.
8. The church will provide tables and chairs according to the caterer's request.
9. **Receptions must end by 10:00 PM.** Out of consideration to our sextons, please remember, most weddings are on Saturdays and they must prepare the church facilities for Sunday morning use. We do not wish to rush you, but ask only for sensitivity to the needs of the church and its staff.

Leaving the Church: Rice, Etc.

The ringing of the church bells is an effective and appropriate way to greet the newly married couple as they leave the church or chapel.

1. Rice, birdseed, rose petals, confetti etc. *may not* be thrown after the ceremony or after a reception held in the church facilities, either inside or outside the buildings.
1. The release of balloons, birds, or animals is also prohibited.

Childcare

2. St. John the Divine does not supply childcare for weddings or rehearsals.
3. Church nursery rooms are not available for use during weddings or rehearsals.
4. Parents should make private off-site babysitting arrangements for their children.

Other Facility Information

1. Parking is limited at St. John the Divine; please ask your guests when parking on the street to observe "No Parking" signs and refrain from blocking driveways or their vehicles may be ticketed or towed. Please follow the directions of the personnel helping with the control of traffic and parking.
2. The facilities of St. John the Divine are in constant use by a number of groups with many activities occurring simultaneously. Please be considerate of those who are here for purposes other than your wedding.
3. There are no checkrooms or secure package storage area in the church, chapel, or reception areas. Please discourage guests from bringing packages to the church.
4. We ask your help in keeping our facilities clean and litter-free.
5. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted in any part of the church buildings and grounds. Please remind your wedding party of this rule, as failure to comply will halt the wedding proceedings.

