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**St. Mark’s Episcopal Church**

**Wedding Guide**

**August 2011**

St. Mark’s Episcopal Church

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Greetings to you! We are glad you are considering holding your wedding service at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church. A wedding is a joyous celebration at which the Church extends its blessing to a couple making their vows to one another before God. This guide is designed to be a helpful resource to you as you make arrangements for your wedding day. We will do whatever we can to help ensure that you begin to build a strong foundation for this God-given, lifelong covenant with one another.

You will get the best understanding of what this parish is like and how it approaches weddings by attending worship with us. Christian weddings are services of worship to God, in many ways not unlike Sunday mornings. It would be our pleasure to welcome you and let us get to know you.

We hope to see you soon – and on behalf of the congregation, may the peace of the Lord be always with you!

–Fr. Dustin D. Berg, Rector

*Gracious and everliving God, you have created us male and female in your image: look mercifully upon this man and this woman who come to you seeking your blessing, and assist them with your grace, that with true fidelity and steadfast love they may honor and keep the promises and vows they make: through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever.*

*Amen.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage**

**St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Canton, Ohio**

This booklet has been prepared to be of help to couples intending to be married at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church. All weddings at St. Mark’s must conform to the Canons of the Episcopal Church, the liturgical forms of *The Book of Common Prayer* and generally follow our parish customs. Listed herein are some requirements you will need to consider as you make plans for your wedding at St. Mark’s. All who seek to be married at St. Mark’s Church should understand that the ceremony itself is considered to be a sacramental rite of the Church and not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

1. **Christian Marriage**

The Episcopal Church holds that marriage was established by God in creation. Marriage is a lifelong, monogamous and faithful union between a man and a woman, in heart, body, and mind, 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. The rubrics of *The Book of Common Prayer* state:

*“Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the Episcopal Church it is required that one, at least, of the parties must be a baptized Christian; that the Ceremony be attested by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conform to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.” (BCP page 422)*

Couples who seek to be married in the Episcopal Church must sign a Declaration of Intention[[2]](#footnote-2) (page 17) to establish their relationship under this definition of marriage and constantly seek God’s help to maintain the health and wholeness of their union. If ***both*** parties cannot accept this definition and basis of marriage, they should not be married in the Episcopal Church.

1. **The Canons**

Title I, Canon 18, Section 2 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church states:

“Before solemnizing a marriage the Member of the Clergy shall have ascertained:

1. That both parties have the right to contract a marriage according to the laws of the State.
2. That both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong.
3. That both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.
4. That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
5. That both parties have been instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by the Member of the Clergy, or that they have both received such instruction from persons known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible.”
6. **Wedding Arrangements**
7. **Contact the Clergy:** The first step in arranging your wedding is to contact the clergy. No wedding will be scheduled without the clergy’s knowledge and consent. The nature of the ceremony and the use of the property are completely under the clergy’s direction and control.
8. **Church Participation:** Because a wedding is essentially about creating a new community between persons, and because the Church’s role is to celebrate and bless that union by its prayers and presence, ***it is strongly recommended that the couple seeking marriage at St. Mark’s attend worship.*** You will get a good feel for how we approach weddings by participating in our worship. It is our desire that, because you seek to be married here, you would become known and participate in our Christian community. We are not simply an attractive building in which to hold a wedding, but a living, worshiping Body of Christ.
9. **Marriage Preparation and Counseling:** The Canons of the Episcopal Church require that *“both parties have been instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony…”*.*[[3]](#footnote-3)* This requirement is intended to provide some foundational teaching for the couple on both practical concerns and spiritual dimensions of Christian marriage. Our hope is that you will gain valuable tools to place in your “marriage toolbox”! At least three sessions are required, with the usual number of meetings being between 3-5 and at the clergy’s discretion. These marriage counseling sessions are held at the time and place as scheduled in consultation with the clergy.
10. **Divorce and Re-marriage:** No divorced person may be remarried by an Episcopal priest in the Diocese of Ohio without the express written permission of the Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio. If a divorced person wishes to be married at St. Mark’s, **both** parties must first meet with the clergy to discuss the previous marriage, the divorce, and its impact on the proposed marriage. The divorced person or persons must fill out an application form (available from the clergy) to seek the Bishop’s permission. A copy of the persons’ final divorce decrees must accompany the application. The application must be made at least 60 days before the wedding to allow ample time for the Bishop’s consent.
11. **Dates of the Wedding Service:** Wedding dates and times will be set by the clergy only, and must be arranged at least 90 days prior to the actual date. All wedding ceremonies at St. Mark’s Church are conducted in accordance to the liturgical forms found in *The Book of Common Prayer*. No wedding will be scheduled on a Sunday, since Sunday is the Lord’s Day and is set aside for the celebration of Christ’s Resurrection only. Weddings are also not held the weekend after Thanksgiving, or on Christmas, New Year’s or Easter.
12. **Capacity of the Church:** St. Mark’s can seat approximately 325 people. Our parking lot can accommodate 105 cars plus 2 handicapped spaces. Special arrangements for limousines or use of our front drive must be made with the clergy.
13. **Guest Clergy:** The Celebrant at **all** weddings at St. Mark’s is the clergy of St. Mark’s, with the only exceptions being made in consultation with and approval from the clergy of St. Mark’s. Ordained clergy from other churches may participate in the marriage liturgy, but only upon the invitation, and under the direction and control of the clergy of St. Mark’s.
14. **Application Form:** An application and information form must be filled out and returned to the church office **at least 90 days** before the scheduled wedding date. One is enclosed with this booklet, and additional forms may be obtained at the church office.
15. **Wedding Coordinator:**

The parish is fortunate to have members who serve as wedding coordinators. One of them will be assigned to you to help you in your arrangements. She will be a good source of information and detail. Before the ceremony, she will be available to help with planning. She will have a good concept of the time frame you need to consider, as various size weddings also vary in the time required to prepare.

Your wedding coordinator will be with you to help at the rehearsal and at the ceremony itself. She will be on hand to help people get to the right places at the right times. She will help your photographers and instruct them in the policies and procedures for taking pictures in the church.

The wedding coordinator serves as a hostess and friend for all those who are involved with your wedding. She will have that safety pin you might need or that extra hand to help straighten a bride’s veil. She will be there to guide the bridal party down the aisle, getting excited bride and nervous Dad all squared away. In other words, her task will be to help you make this special day one with the least amount of concern and worry.

Upon completion and return of your wedding application and information form, your wedding coordinator will be able to begin some of the arrangements for your service.

**“Bridal Consultants:”** Bridal or wedding consultants are not a part of a wedding ceremony and have no function in the performance of the service itself. Holy Matrimony in the Episcopal Church is a sacramental rite, and so must follow the forms and rubrics of *The Book of Common Prayer* and is under the total control of the officiating priest.

The couple shall consult the wedding coordinators initially and then again three weeks or more before the wedding, to verify preparations.

1. **Music:**

**A. Church Canons:**

*“It shall be the duty of every Member of the Clergy to see that music is used as an offering for the glory of God and as a help to the people in their worship in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer and as authorized by the rubrics or by the General Convention of this Church. To this end the Member of the Clergy shall have final authority in the administration of matters pertaining to music. In fulfilling this responsibility the Member of the Clergy shall seek assistance from persons skilled in music. Together they shall see that music is appropriate to the context in which it is used.”[[4]](#footnote-4)*

**B. Appropriate music selections**: A Christian wedding is more than a solemn exchange of vows. It is an act of worship in which the bride and groom celebrate a sacrament together, and where family and friends offer praise and thanksgiving and ask God’s blessing on their new life together. As such, a wedding is a communal liturgical celebration. The guests are not present as spectators, but as worshipers. In worship, people are called upon to communicate to God through music. Selected music for the wedding must then speak for the people and reflect those words of praise and thanksgiving to God. It must express God’s love for his Church, call upon him for his blessing, and offer praise and thanksgiving for this joyful occasion.

Certain “traditional” organ selections, such as the “Bridal Chorus” from *Lohengrin* and Mendelssohn’s “Wedding March” do not fit the above criteria and are not used in this parish. (The music of *Lohengrin* accompanies an illicit wedding and Mendelssohn’s music accompanies a farcical wedding.) Some popular songs (“I Don’t Know how to Love Him”, “Evergreen”, etc.) and “old standards” (“O Promise Me” and “I Love You Truly”) do not express the divine-religious dimension of love, nor do they offer praise or thanksgiving, nor call upon God for his blessing.

**C. Arrangements:**

All music is, therefore, to be cleared through the organist and the clergy. The organist will be glad to suggest and demonstrate appropriate music with you.

A brief conference for this purpose – with the bride, groom, organist (or other musicians), and clergy – should be scheduled at least two (2) months before the wedding.

Other musical accompaniment (piano, strings, brass, etc.) may be used with the prior consultation and permission from the clergy.

1. **Flowers and Decorations**
2. The tradition is for a couple to provide flowers for the altar and leave these flowers as an offering for the following Sunday services at the church. The wedding coordinator can suggest a florist who is familiar with St. Mark’s, if you don’t have a preference. A special liner is used for the vases. Arrangements for getting the liners to your florist are made through the wedding coordinator.
3. **Pew ribbons** may be fastened to the pews and are available through the wedding coordinator if needed; or, you may provide your own. If used, they must be attached to the pew in such a way as not to damage the pew or leave marks or tape. Greenery or flowers may be added, at the discretion of the wedding coordinator.
4. No floral or other decorations are permitted elsewhere in the church. The liturgical and architectural focus in the Episcopal Church is upon the altar and its cross. Any decorations which detract from this central focus are not permitted.
5. For safety concerns, **aisle runners** are not to be used nor are flower petals recommended to be strewn. In the past, aisle runners were used on marble or wood floors to keep the bride’s dress and train from getting dirty.
6. **Unity candles** may be used, but need to be provided by the wedding couple. ***The two individual candles MUST remain lit for the entire duration of the service (they are not to be extinguished upon lighting the larger, center candle).***
7. **Rehearsals**

A wedding rehearsal is scheduled in consultation with the clergy to prepare the bridal party for the service. *It is intended to ease the bridal party’s concerns and to enable full participation in the service of worship. It also enables the wedding coordinator to fine-tune details such as the timing for ushers to seat parents, etc.*

The cooperation of the bride and groom and their families and friends is especially important in having *everyone* who is to participate in the wedding in any way, present at the appointed hour for the rehearsal. The rehearsal is not adequate unless all actual participants are involved, and it cannot begin until all are present. If there are any questions about who must attend the rehearsal, please contact the clergy at least one week before the rehearsal.

All participants must arrive on time.

Previous experiences in other weddings will almost certainly not have prepared your attendants for their particular function in your wedding. This is important to mention because each wedding and its details are unique. Participation in other weddings does not mean attendants’ presence and promptness is unimportant.

1. **The officiating clergy conducts all rehearsals.** Along with the church’s wedding coordinators, it is helpful if the organist, musician(s) and/or soloist(s) attend the rehearsal. It is the responsibility of the couple to arrange for the organist, other musician(s), and/or soloist(s)’ presence.
2. Wedding rehearsals usually last approximately one hour.
3. Marriage License: No wedding can be performed without a valid marriage license. Marriage licenses may be obtained at the office of the Clerk of the Stark County Probate Court at 110 Central Plaza S (Suite 501), Canton, Ohio 44702. The phone number is 330-451-7759. The valid marriage license must be presented to the Officiating Clergy *at the rehearsal*.

In addition to the marriage license, it is also helpful for the couple to bring other papers they wish to have signed to the rehearsal. This will eliminate anxieties on the wedding day and allow the couple to enjoy this very special day without undue concerns.

1. **Policy on Wedding Photography**

As a sacramental rite of the Church, weddings are to be conducted with reverence and respect. Since a church building is a place consecrated for the celebration of sacraments and the worship of God by his people, St. Mark’s building and its worshipers must also be treated with reverence and respect. We accept and encourage the tradition of photographically recording this happy event, but that process must be done in accordance with the sacramental character of the wedding service.

Photographs may be taken in St. Mark’s Church as follows:

1. **Prior to the wedding ceremony:** in the area where the groom and attendant(s) wait with the priest, in the lounge where the bride, her attendant(s) and the parents assemble before the ceremony, and on the grounds, if desired.
2. **During the ceremony:** *Flash photographs may* ***NOT*** *be taken either by professional photographers or congregation.* Flash photos may only be taken as the bridal party enters the nave. Available-light photos may be taken from the **back aisle only** during the ceremony. Photographers may **not** proceed up the center aisle at any time during the ceremony.
3. **After the ceremony:** Flash photos may be taken when the bride and groom are about two-thirds of the way down the aisle. After the ceremony and recessional, posed photos may be taken in the chancel.
4. If there are any questions about this policy, please contact the clergy prior to the wedding.
5. The attached form must be completed by all photographers and returned to St. Mark’s Church at least **two weeks** prior to the wedding. *All photographers must check with the officiating clergy at least twenty (20) minutes prior to the wedding.*
6. This policy applies to any and all photography to include, but not limited to, both still photography and video recordings. It is the responsibility of the couple to see that this policy is conveyed to all amateur and professional photographers intending to photograph the wedding.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF ST. MARK’S CHURCH**

**POLICY ON WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY**

Bride’s Name:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Groom’s Name:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Studio:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Photographer:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that I have read, understand and will abide by St. Mark’s Church’s policy on wedding photography.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Signature)

Return to:

St. Mark’s Episcopal Church

515 48th St NW

Canton, Ohio 44709

**IX. Wedding Day Details**

1. **Service Time:**

It is customary for the time of the wedding ceremony to be placed on the wedding invitations. If you put the time for the wedding music to begin (one-half hour earlier) on the invitations, people will come too early. If, however, you wish to place another time on the invitation, specify that this is the time the pre-service (or music) begins.

1. **Arrival time:**

All members of the wedding party are requested to arrive at the church *at least one hour* before the time selected for the wedding. Music and seating of the wedding guests customarily begins one-half hour before the bride walks down the aisle. Ushers are requested to report to the wedding coordinator at this time.

1. **Bride’s Room:**

The church library is used as the bride’s room for the bride and her attendants to assemble and prepare for the ceremony. There is a small kitchen and a full, floor-length mirror available in this room.

1. **Groom’s Room:**

The groom and attendants also have a room downstairs for assembly and preparation. The wedding coordinator will direct you to it, if you wish to use it.

1. **Personal Belongings:**

The bridal party must take responsibility for gathering up all personal belongings before departing the church after the service. This ensures that you will have your things before the church is locked.

1. **Reserved pews:**

If you would like certain people to sit in reserved pews please let them know in advance so they can tell the usher where they are to be seated. The ushers don’t always know the relatives or friends so it is up to the special guest to tell the ushers that they are to sit in the second row on the left (for example).

1. **Receiving Line and Congratulations:**

The receiving line should be formed at the place of the reception, not at the rear of the church, after the ceremony. It is strongly discouraged for bride and groom to dismiss guests by pew. Also, if a receiving line at the church is desired, it is recommended to take place in the church lobby to avoid unnecessary congestion. Your officiating clergy will advise you at the rehearsal about how to hold a receiving line, if held at the church.

No rice, confetti, bird seed or similar substances shall be used in the buildings or on the grounds. Bubbles, however, are appropriate, *outside*.

1. **Fees and Expenses:**

It is important to consider the expenditures of time and effort that go into your wedding on the part of clergy, altar guild, wedding coordinator, and musician(s). Therefore, this fee schedule is provided to allow proper cost calculations.

**MEMBERS**

1. Use of Church and Parish Hall – No charge.
2. Officiating Clergy – No charge. It is, however, customary for the couple to give a gratuity as they determine. Also appropriate are donations to the clergy’s discretionary fund.
3. Organist – $200

Consultation

Rehearsal

Ceremony

1. Cleaning Charges – $100

**Non-Members**

1. Use of Church – $400
2. Officiating Clergy – $350

(This includes the necessary pre-wedding conferences, the rehearsal, and the wedding.)

1. Organist – $200
2. Cleaning Charges – $100
3. Altar Guild – $ 50
4. Use of Parish Hall for Reception – $250

For the purpose of this booklet, a member is defined as one who has his or her baptism recorded at St. Mark’s Church; has made a financial pledge for the support of the parish; and has regularly attended worship all for at least 6 months prior to the wedding.

**Outdoor or Non-Church Weddings** are discouraged. However, the fees for the Officiating Clergy for non-Church weddings are the same as above plus an added charge for mileage to and from the wedding site for the rehearsal and the wedding based on the current IRS mileage rate.

All fees are to be paid at least two weeks prior to the wedding, and paid directly to, or all checks made out to the individuals or organizations listed above (see inside of front cover for names).

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

**Declaration of Intention**

We,

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

And

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the liturgical forms authorized by this Church.

We believe that 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.

And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God’s help thereto.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Groom

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Bride (Maiden Name)

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ A.D. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

MC900364178[1]

1. *The Book of Common Prayer,* 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Canon I.18.3, e-g; *Constitution and Canons (2009)*, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Canon I.18.1, e; *Constitution and Canons (2009)*, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Canon II.5, *Constitution and Canons (2009)*, p. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)