

Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church

Guidelines for the Celebration & Blessing of a Marriage

3557 Crosshaven Drive, Birmingham, Alabama, 35223

205-967-8786

The celebration of marriage is an occasion of great joy. We are pleased to share in your wedding day and that you seek to be joined in holy union at our church. Christian marriage is a solemn covenant between two persons entered into in the presence of God and lived out in the support of the Christian community. The actual service is a sacrament of the Church, therefore, not a creation of the participants. Worship will be in accordance with the canons of the Episcopal Church and the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer. The final determination of the form and content of the marriage service lies with Saint Stephen's clergy, who will guide and direct you in this process. The guidelines within are offered for your assistance as you plan your wedding.

PARISH STAFF AT WEDDINGS

The Reverend John Burruss, Rector

The Reverend Katherine Harper, Associate Rector

The Reverend Mary Bea Sullivan, Director of Spirituality & Wellness

Zachary Brown, Parish Administrator

Leslie Dunlap, Wedding Coordinator

Whitney Page, Music Director

SCHEDULING YOUR MARRIAGE SERVICE

I. SCHEDULING YOUR CEREMONY

Confirmation of clergy and church availability is required before booking your wedding. Weddings should be scheduled at least ninety days in advance to allow adequate time for all preparation and pre-marital counseling. Please contact the Parish Administrator to confirm the availability of both the church and clergy.

II. SCHEDULING THE REHEARSAL

When planning for other events on the evening before your wedding, please set aside one hour for the rehearsal with the Wedding Coordinator. Everyone in the wedding party and/or the procession is expected to attend the rehearsal, including your parents and grandparents. Please contact the Parish Administrator to assist you in scheduling your wedding rehearsal.

III. SCHEDULING A RECEPTION

If you would like to hold your reception at the church, please notify the Parish Administrator the day of booking your wedding ceremony to confirm the availability of the Parish Hall. You will be required to pay a refundable deposit to secure your reception reservation the day of booking.

IV. SCHEDULING A MUSICIAN

After reserving your wedding date, please contact the Music Director as soon as possible to discuss scheduling a musician for your wedding. The church pianist is frequently available to play for weddings. Do note that musician availability is not guaranteed with the reservation of your wedding date.

V. OBTAINING BISHOP APPROVAL

In the event of a marriage after a divorce, more time is needed for the priest to consult with the Bishop and obtain consent. Bishop approval must be obtained before the wedding date can be confirmed.

VI. WEDDING COORDINATOR

The Saint Stephen's Wedding Coordinator will help guide you through the wedding process and will be responsible for ensuring that the service is conducted according to Saint Stephen's and Episcopal customs. Outside consultants may not be used in the direction of the wedding ceremony.

VII. WEDDING FEES

With this customary, you will receive a wedding fee addendum. Wedding fees should never stand in the way of your being married in the church. If finances are a challenge for you, please discuss this with your officiating priest as early as possible in the process. The Rector has final discretion on wedding fees.

THE SERVICE

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

In accordance with the canons of the Episcopal Church, at least one of the parties to be married must be a baptized Christian. Saint Stephen's clergy will officiate at weddings unless otherwise approved by the Rector. The Canons of the Episcopal Church provide that it is "within the discretion of any Minister of this Church to decline to solemnize any marriage." Any visiting clergy must be invited by the Rector and approved by the Diocese of Alabama.

1. It is appropriate, but not necessary, that the wedding or rehearsal take place in the context of the Eucharist.
2. Since a wedding is a service of worship, the rehearsal and the wedding will be under the direction of the priest and the Wedding Coordinator. No outside wedding coordinators or consultants will be involved in the rehearsal or the wedding.
3. The Music Director can help select music and engage musicians for your service. The Music Director must approve all music selections and the use of outside musicians.
4. The Wedding Coordinator must approve all flowers and other decorations. More details may be found in the section entitled **FLOWERS**. Please provide a copy of the *Policies for a Florist at a Wedding* to your florist.
5. It is appropriate for lay people to read the lessons from the Bible and prayers. This is a meaningful way to involve more friends and family in your wedding service. The priest will help you plan this.
6. If ring bearers and flower girls are considered, it is recommended that they be at least five years of age. Ringbearers should not carry the actual rings.
7. The building will be available to all wedding participants, including florists, photographers, and caterers, from three (3) hours before the wedding begins until one (1) hour after the wedding ceremony or reception concludes. If more time is required, early arrival may be requested at a special rate. The earliest you may arrive at the church is 9am.

II. REHEARSAL

It is customary for the rehearsal to be held on the day prior to the wedding. It is expected that all members of the wedding party and procession will participate in the rehearsal and arrive on time. Plan for the rehearsal to last one hour. The clergy and wedding coordinator will conduct the rehearsal. *The wedding license must be given to the officiating clergy at the wedding rehearsal.*

III. FLOWERS

1. Decisions about flowers and other decorations should be made in consultation with the Saint Stephen's Wedding Coordinator.
2. It is customary for flowers on the altar to remain for services the next day and an acknowledgement will be included in the service bulletin in thanksgiving for your marriage. Following Sunday services, smaller arrangements are created and delivered to sick and homebound parishioners as part of our pastoral care ministry.
3. Only fresh flowers and greenery are permitted. If anything is hung on the pews, doorways, or outside, they must be removed after the ceremony or reception, if held at Saint Stephen's.
4. Ribbons may be used on the pews, but nails, wire, or tacks are not allowed. Each pew seats about 9 people. Tell your florist how many pews to reserve for family and friends.

IV. PHOTOGRAPHY

1. To maintain the sacredness of the marriage liturgy, photographs may not be taken once the wedding procession has begun. **The Saint Stephen's Wedding Coordinator MUST approve any exceptions.**
2. The wedding party should plan to take most of the pictures before the service. We suggest that you and the photographer plan what pictures will be taken after the service to allow the wedding party to depart for the reception timely.
3. Photographs taken before the service must be completed at least thirty [30] minutes prior to the service start time. Photographs taken after the service must be completed no more than one hour after the service concludes.
4. Videotaping may be done from a designated stationary place in the corner of the West transept or from the sound booth. For further details, talk with the Wedding Coordinator. The couple is responsible for providing their photographer and videographer with a copy of the *Policies for the Photographer at a Wedding* and ensuring that all guidelines are followed.

V. FURNITURE, APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER CUSTOMS

1. The church has all the furniture and other appointments necessary for a dignified and sacred wedding. If you want to rearrange anything, or bring something else in, you must obtain clergy approval.
2. We do not allow rose petals or anything else to be scattered in the aisle. Because of safety concerns, an aisle runner may not be used for weddings.
3. Only liturgical candles may be used. Wedding party members may not carry lighted candles. The use of a unity candle, unity sand, or other similar symbols are not permitted.
4. For ecological reasons, only birdseed may be thrown on church property. The church reserves the right to prohibit the use of sparklers as the wedding couple departs depending on weather conditions or other factors.
5. It is the tradition in the Episcopal Church to celebrate the 12 days of Christmas until Epiphany (December 25 - January 6). If your wedding is during this time, please be advised that our church and grounds will still be decorated for Christmas. This includes, but is not limited to, wreaths and bows on the main signage on Overton Road, wreaths and bows on the main entrances and inside of the church, and 2 Christmas trees in the main hallways. These decorations will not be removed until the Saturday following Epiphany.
6. It is customary that weddings will not be conducted during Lent, beginning Ash Wednesday through Easter.

VI. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND SMOKING

Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed on the church grounds other than at the wedding reception. Wine, champagne, or beer (must be in a keg or pony-keg and served in cups) may only be served at the rehearsal dinner or at the reception. Clearly labeled non-alcoholic drinks must also be provided. **Violation of these policies may result in cancellation of the service and reception as well as forfeiture of your deposit. Smoking is not allowed in the church buildings.**

VII. ACOLYTES

An acolyte lights the candles, carries the processional cross, serves at the altar, and extinguishes candles at the end of the service. You may choose to have a friend or family member serve in this role. If Saint Stephen's supplies the acolyte, a fee is charged.

VIII. BULLETINS

Printed bulletins are not necessary but are acceptable. If you wish for the church to produce bulletins, a standard format is used. Only minor stylistic changes are permitted. *All wedding party names, scripture selections and music must be submitted to the Parish Administrator at least two weeks prior to the wedding.*

All printing is done in black and white. If you obtain an outside printer, the order of worship should be included AND approved by the clergy in its final form before printing.

IX. COUNSELING

The Episcopal Church requires its priests to perform counseling and instruction about marriage (or ensure adequate preparation from a specialized counselor) prior to officiating at weddings. Ensuring there is adequate time to complete all pre-marital counseling is necessary when scheduling your wedding date.

X. THE RECEPTION

1. If the reception or rehearsal dinner is held at the church, the Parish Administrator will provide you with detailed policies. See *Policies for A Caterer at a Wedding Reception*.
2. All rehearsal dinners and receptions must conclude by 10pm.
3. A refundable deposit is required to reserve the Parish Hall for a rehearsal dinner or reception. The funds will be deposited upon receipt and may be reimbursed to the couple the week following the wedding. Failure to leave the premises by 10pm, damage or theft of property, or violation of alcohol or other policies may result in forfeiture of your deposit.
4. The bridal party's personal belongings should be locked in cabinets in the Terrace Room during the service and reception. Items left unsecured are at the individual's risk. If preferred, the Wedding or Reception Coordinator can lock the Terrace room if requested.
5. A Saint Stephen's Reception Coordinator must be present for all rehearsal dinners and receptions. The Reception Coordinator can assist you in all policy and building matters and can operate our audio-visual equipment.

XI. WEDDING MUSIC

1. *After reserving your wedding date, please contact the Music Director as early as possible to secure a musician.* Musician availability is not guaranteed with the reservation of your wedding date.
2. Saint Stephen's pianist specializes in elegant and sacred music.
3. The officiating clergy and Music Director must approve all outside musicians and music selections. The Music Director can assist you in hiring any additional musicians and soloists if requested.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SACRED MUSIC

SUITABLE FOR PRELUDE AND SEATING of Mothers and Grandmothers

- "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" - Bach
- "Rhosymedre" - Vaughan Williams
- "Bist du Bei Mir" (If Thou Art Near) - Bach
- "Arioso" - Handel
- "Second Movement" - *Pathetique* Sonata - Beethoven
- "Canon in D" - Pachelbel
- "Sheep May Safely Graze" - Bach
- "Air" from *Water Music* - Handel

SUITABLE FOR PROCESSIONALS

- Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" – Bach
- "Canon in D" – Pachelbel
- "Arioso" – Handel
- "Trumpet Voluntary" – Clarke
- "Trumpet Tune" – Purcell
- "Rigaudon" - Campra

SUITABLE FOR RECESSIONALS

- "Rigaudon" - Campra
- "Rondeau" - Mouret
- "Hornpipe" from *Water Music* - Handel
- "Psalm 19" - Marcello

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. Sacred Hymns are also appropriate to use for the procession, dismissal, and at communion.
2. **The Music Director must approve all music choices and any outside musicians.**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Address: 3775 Crosshaven Drive, Birmingham, AL 35223

Church Telephone Number: 205-967-8786

CLERGY MEMBERS

The Rev. John Burruss, Rector.....john@ssechurch.org
The Rev. Katherine Harper, Associate Rector.....katherine@ssechurch.org
The Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan.....marybea@ssechurch.org

STAFF MEMBERS

Zachary Brown, Parish Administrator.....zachary@ssechurch.org
Leslie Dunlap, Wedding Coordinator.....leslie@ssechurch.org
Whitney Page, Music Director.....whitney@ssechurch.org

POLICIES FOR A FLORIST AT A WEDDING

A copy of this policy must be given to your florist

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1. Decisions about flowers and other decorations should be made in consultation with the Wedding Coordinator.
2. When weddings are on Saturday, flowers must be left on the altar for services the next day.
3. Your florist may use the church's containers or their own. All florist containers must be picked up the week following the wedding.
4. Only fresh flowers or fresh greenery may be used.
5. Florist tape or ribbons may be used on the pews, but **nails, wire, or tacks are not allowed.**
6. Flowers may be placed on the table behind the altar. No flowering of the cross is permitted.
7. The building will be available to florists from three (3) hours before the wedding start time. If more time is required, early arrival may be requested at a rate of \$100 per hour. The earliest you may arrive at the church is 9am.
8. If anything is hung on the pews, doorways, or outside, it must be removed after the ceremony/reception (this includes flowers, signs, etc.).

POLICIES FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER/VIDEOGRAPHER AT A WEDDING

A copy of this policy must be given to your photographer / videographer

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1. In order to maintain the sacredness of the marriage liturgy, photographs may not be taken once the wedding procession has begun. The Wedding Coordinator and Rector must approve any exceptions.
2. The wedding party should plan to take most of the pictures before the service. We suggest that you and the photographer plan ahead and agree on a list of the pictures that are to be taken after the service to allow the wedding party to depart for the reception timely.
3. Photographs taken before the wedding must be completed at least thirty [30] minutes prior to the service start time. Photographs taken after the service must be completed no more than one hour after the service concludes.
4. Videotaping may be done from a designated stationary place in the corner of the West transept or from the sound booth. For further details, talk with the Wedding Guild Coordinator.
5. The building will be available to florists from three (3) hours before the wedding start time. If more time is required, early arrival may be requested at a rate of \$100 per hour. The earliest you may arrive at the church is 9am.

**POLICIES FOR A CATERER AT A
WEDDING RECEPTION or REHEARSAL DINNER**

A copy of this policy must be given to your caterer

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1. You may use the kitchen, but must supply your own dishes, cups, serving trays, etc. You are **responsible for cleaning the parish hall and the kitchen** except for the floor and Parish Hall furniture (this will be done by the cleaning service). Kindly restore all areas use to their original state. The housekeeper makes sure that the kitchen and parish hall are clean prior to the wedding.
2. You may use our icemaker. Check beforehand for quantity/capacity.
3. Alcohol may be served at wedding receptions or rehearsal dinners only under these conditions:
 - a. Wine, beer, champagne, and wine/champagne punch may be served. If beer is served, it must be in a keg or pony-keg and served in cups. No bottles or cans are allowed. Liquor may not be served.
 - b. Cash bars are prohibited.
 - c. No one is allowed to move around the reception hall serving alcoholic beverages.
 - d. Alcoholic beverages may only be consumed in the reception hall or adjacent patio.
 - e. The couple will ensure that responsible persons--who know and understand these policies--are in control of serving the alcoholic beverage.
4. A refundable damage deposit is required for all receptions and rehearsals and is due in order to reserve the Parish Hall. Your deposit will be refunded the week following your wedding if the church has sustained no damage and all policies have been followed.
5. Caterers or the couple must provide all linens; Saint Stephen's will not furnish linens for reception tables.
6. The building will be available to florists from three (3) hours before the wedding start time. If more time is required, early arrival may be requested at a rate of \$100 per hour. The earliest you may arrive at the church is 9am.