



ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WICHITA KS

**"A LOVING FAMILY OF FAITH UNITED IN CHRIST
AND EQUIPPED FOR A MINISTRY OF SERVICE"**

**A CUSTOMARY FOR
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**

02/01/2014

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CUSTOMARY

We are glad you are considering being married at St. John's Church. The primary purpose of this customary is to aid couples in the planning of their wedding. In addition, it gives a concise explanation of the requirements of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Kansas and this parish regarding the conduct of weddings in the Church and the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Any marriage performed in this church must be in accord with the laws of the State of Kansas, the requirements of the Episcopal Church, the Diocese of Kansas and this parish.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

"Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God" (*BCP, p. 422). "Therefore, marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God" (*BCP, p. 423). "In Christian marriage, the woman and man enter into a lifelong union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows" (*BCP, p. 861.)

A Christian marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and woman, proclaimed in a public setting. By "covenant relationship", we mean a relationship that is reflective of God's relationship with God's people. It is a relationship of grace. We neither earn nor deserve God's love. Likewise, we do not merit the love we need in a marriage. It is a relationship lived out in trust and forgiveness.

Through marriage, God's grace can come to be known in real and visible ways. The relationship not only reminds us of God's grace, it draws us ever deeper into that grace. It is a redemptive relationship. We grow more and more into the man or woman that God has created us to be. In the Episcopal Church, we believe marriage to be a sacrament.

A wedding is a liturgical expression of the sacrament of marriage. The bride and the groom are the ministers of the sacrament. The priest officiates and pronounces God's blessing on the relationship, but the bride and the groom are the ones who proclaim the covenant. It is in their lives that the sacrament is lived out.

A wedding at St. John's is a religious event of festive proportions and specific intention, but it is, nonetheless, an Episcopal worship service. The central focus of the liturgy is thanksgiving for the love that God has poured into our lives. At St. John's Episcopal Church all weddings are in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer. The Prayer Book provides for some choices and flexibility. Beyond that, nothing may be added nor deleted. Marriage vows may not be written or edited.

Church wedding customs vary in detail from place to place. The guiding principle to remember is that marriage is a sacramental rite in the Episcopal Church, a regular worship service of the church and, as such, will be

conducted accordingly. St. John's has its own particular customs. Things that are permitted — or even common practice — in other churches may not be appropriate here. If there is any question as to the permissibility of anything, it is always best to check with the priest who is officiating at the wedding.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church states that Holy Matrimony is a union "entered into within the community of faith." It is expected that, under normal circumstances, those who marry at St. John's Episcopal Church will nurture their marriage in the context of this worshipping community. A wedding is a pastoral sacrament, which rightfully takes place where it will be supported through pastoral relationships and community worship. **For those who have no intention of regular involvement in this, or any Church, it would be more appropriate to be married in a different setting.**

Those who are not members in good standing at St. John's Episcopal Church, but who wish to be married at St. John's, may choose, however, to begin actively worshipping and participating in the life of St. John's Church. If after doing so for a period of six months, the couple may submit their application and pay the non-member wedding fee, in addition to completing all other requirements as described in this customary. It is our sincere hope and prayer that after such couples' weddings are completed, they would feel called by God to continue their Christian walk as part of the St. John's Church community of faith.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING & INSTRUCTION

Premarital counseling and Christian marriage sessions are required. A period of no less than one year prior to the approved wedding date must be available to complete premarital counseling and instruction.

All couples must complete sessions of instruction on Christian marriage, with the priest. This instruction is scheduled and structured at the discretion of the clergy working with the couple, and is nonnegotiable.

All couples must also complete premarital counseling with a licensed marriage and family therapist, psychologist, or other licensed professional. A licensed professional will be recommended by the clergy. Such professional services are at additional cost to the couple and arranged with the professional. Couples completing premarital counseling elsewhere, with a professional other than those recommended and referred to them by the clergy must present proof of completion from the professional no later than 60 days prior to the approved wedding date.

If either of the parties to the proposed marriage has been divorced and has a living ex-spouse, the clergy must obtain the consent of the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas for the proposed marriage to take place. The clergy must first be assured that the former marriage(s) have been dissolved by final judgment or decree of a civil court and that continuing concern will be shown for the well-being of the former spouse and any children of the prior marriage(s). It is important that the clergy be made aware of all prior marriages at the time the application is made.

The marriage license must be presented to the Rector no later than the time of the rehearsal.

THE WEDDING SERVICE

["The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage"](#) begins on page 423 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. The clergy will discuss with you the options within the service and help you make choices, such as which passages from Holy Scripture are to be read and whether or not Holy Eucharist will be celebrated.

An order of service is prepared in consultation with the clergy and the couple and a service bulletin is printed in the parish office. If it is printed elsewhere, the content must be approved by the Rector.

The entire service of Holy Matrimony proclaims the unity of the married couple, so the lighting of a "unity candle" or the use of any other "unity" symbol is redundant.

EUCHARIST

Eucharist (Holy Communion) is a meaningful way for Christians to mark the beginning of their married lives. The word "Eucharist" means "thanksgiving" and by setting the wedding in the context of the Eucharist there is a focus on giving thanks to God for the gift of love and for this relationship. Whether or not to have Eucharist at the wedding is a decision that should be made by the couple with the advice of the officiating priest. If Holy Communion is planned as a part of the ceremony, it will be available to all present who are baptized and desire to receive the sacrament. The Episcopal Church has open Communion, and does not limit the Eucharist to the bride and groom or to the wedding party.

THE SERVICE BULLETINS

All pertinent information for the service bulletin must be provided to either Cathy Harris, Parish Administrator or Connie Shawver, Parish Communications, at least three weeks prior to the wedding.

PARTICIPANTS

With the consent of the rector, anyone the couple desires may participate in the service. It is especially important that you inform the rector as early as possible if you want to invite clergy from outside this parish to assist. This is particularly important if the guest clergy is not licensed in this Church.

MUSIC FOR THE WEDDING

St. John's Director of Music will guide the selection of appropriate music for the service. A wide variety of music and instrumentation is available; with sacred music being the norm. The final approval rests with the Rector. The Director of Music is the designated organist for all weddings, and vocalist or instrumentalists are under his full direction.

THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

The priest will oversee the wedding rehearsal. The rehearsal makes the service go more smoothly, it allows another opportunity for questions to be answered, and it provides the participants a certain level of confidence. It is imperative that all members of the wedding party be present and on time. A date and hour for rehearsal must be set with the clergy and must be held prior to any dinner or party. **No food or drink is allowed in the nave of the church, nor any other part of the church building or property, during the rehearsal.**

The participating clergy and staff do not expect or plan to attend any event such as a rehearsal dinner or wedding reception without having received an invitation in advance.

DECORATING THE CHURCH

Historic St. John's is a beautiful setting for a wedding ceremony; and it's considered unnecessary to expend time and money on extra ornamentation in the church. There are certain restrictions imposed by the fire marshal for everyone's safety; candles other than the altar candles must be approved by the Rector.

The Parish Administrator, in consultation with the Altar Guild, supervises the decorating of the church. For weddings, white altar flowers are ordered to the specifications of the vases and niches in which they are placed. The flowers remain in the niches for the next service, at which time prayers of thanksgiving are offered for the newly-married couple. Any floral decoration at the ends of pews, or elsewhere in the church, must be removed following the wedding ceremony. The strewing of flower petals is prohibited.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Formal Photographs should be taken prior to the wedding. Photography must not interfere with the arrival of guests or delay the service start time. No photography is allowed during thirty minutes prior the start time. Pictures may be taken during the procession and recession, but picture taking is not permitted during the sacred ceremony.

Videography of the service is allowed; however, the camera must remain in one place previously approved by the Rector. No extra artificial lighting is allowed.

The church will remain open for no longer than thirty minutes after the service for any additional photography and videography.

It's recommended for photographers who aren't familiar with St. John's be invited to observe the rehearsal.

PARKING

Church parking lots are located on the northwest corner of Third and Topeka Streets (in front of the church) and on the northwest corner of Third and Emporia Streets (behind the church). Additional parking is available on the street. Please notify your guests.

ACCESSIBILITY

St. John's has two elevators; one is inside the east entrance of the education building and the other, accessible from Topeka St., is located outside under the west crosswalk within the gated courtyard.

DATE AND TIME OF WEDDING

At St. John's, we do not have weddings during the forty days of Lent, i.e. from Ash Wednesday through Easter Day. While social custom clearly prefers Saturday weddings, there are no theological or liturgical reasons to prefer one day to another. For practical reasons Sunday weddings can work a hardship on both the Altar Guild and the priest, and are therefore not preferable.

Weddings may be scheduled for any time of the day that is convenient and not in conflict with existing commitments. Saturday weddings may not begin later than 7:00 p.m. The wedding party may arrive at the church no earlier than four hours prior to the beginning of the wedding ceremony.

No wedding date or times shall be finalized by the intended parties until date is approved by the clergy.

USE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS

The pews in the nave can comfortably seat **200** people.

Dressings rooms are made available for up to four hours prior to the service. The bride and her attendants will use the church parlor on the upper level of the education building. The groom and his attendants will use the library. Light refreshments are permitted in the dressing rooms.

Alcoholic beverages are prohibited from all parts of St. John's property, including parking areas. Please notify all members of the wedding party of this restriction. No Smoking is allowed in any of St. John's buildings. Failure to comply with this restriction may result in the cancellation of your wedding.

Nursery care may be provided by St. John's upon request.

Wedding guests should refrain from releasing balloons or showering the newly married couple with rice, birdseed, confetti, flower petals, soap bubbles, etc., as they depart from the church. Such items are harmful to the environment, difficult to clean up and can cause a danger of slipping on the steps. Please refrain from these practices.

St. John's is not responsible for any lost or stolen articles/personal effects.

CONTACT INFORMATION

✘ **The Reverend C. Earl Mahan, Rector**

earlmahan@stjohnswichita.org

Telephone (316) 262-0897

✘ **Cathy Harris, Parish Administrator and Bookkeeper**

cathyharris@stjohnswichita.org

Telephone (316) 262-0897

✘ **Connie Shawver, Parish Communications and Service Bulletins**

connieshawver@stjohnswichita.org

Telephone (316) 262-0897

✘ **Dr. Dean Roush, Director of Music and Organist**

deanroush@stjohnswichita.org

Telephone (316) 687-9783

✘ **Mailing Address**

St. John's Episcopal Church

402 N. Topeka St.

Wichita, KS 67202-2414

✘ **Website**

stjohnswichita.org

✘ **Parish Office Telephone**

(316) 262-0897

NOTES

Wedding Application

St. John's Episcopal Church, 402 N. Topeka St., Wichita, KS 67202

Date _____ Requested Date & Time of Ceremony: _____

Acceptance of St. John's Requirements and Wedding Fee

We read St. John's Customary for Christian Marriage. We agree to abide by all requirements listed, understand these policies are not negotiable, and accept the Wedding Fee of \$ _____, half paid with this application and half paid 30 days before the wedding rehearsal.

_____ and _____
Bride's Signature Groom's Signature

Declaration of Intention

We, _____ (Bride) and _____ (Groom), 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 *Book of Common Prayer*. "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."
(Title I Canon 18 Sec. 3(e-g). Constitution and Canons.)

_____ and _____
Bride's Signature Groom's Signature

Names and Contact Information of Applicants

Bride's Full Legal Name: _____ **Email:** _____
Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____
Residence: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Groom's Full Legal Name: _____
Email: _____
Home Phone: _____ **Cell Phone:** _____
Residence: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip)

Additional Information for Parish Register (required by Church Canon)

Bride:
Date of Birth _____ Age: _____
Current Status: Single/never married
 Widowed Divorced
Baptized? Yes No
Confirmed in the Episcopal Church? Yes No
Current Communicant? (Attend church?) Yes No

Full Legal Names of Parents:
Father: _____
First Middle Last
Mother: _____
First Middle (Maiden) Last

Groom:
Date of Birth _____ Age: _____
Current Status: Single/never married
 Widowed Divorced
Baptized? Yes No
Confirmed in the Episcopal Church? Yes No
Current Communicant? (Attend church?) Yes No

Full Legal Names of Parents:
Father: _____
First Middle Last
Mother: _____
First Middle (Maiden) Last