

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SHANDON

# *Weddings*



*O 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 seeing 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.*

*A Preparation Guide for  
The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage  
at St. John's*

## **The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage**

The Episcopal Church teaches that Christian marriage is the life-long union of a man and a woman who make their vows before God and the church, and receive the grace and blessing of God and the support of the local congregation to help them fulfill their vows.

Couples asking to be married at St. John's are presumed to be seeking God's blessing and the support of this church community. We expect couples to prepare for and fulfill their marriage covenant through active participation and regular worship here, before and after their wedding. The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in The Book of Common Prayer is our liturgy for the use of baptized members of this parish. In accordance with the canons of the church, the rector makes the final decision regarding who may or may not be married at St. John's, and assigns an officiating priest for each wedding. In your preparations, please abide by the following guidelines:

## **Premarital Coaching**

We want the very best for you – we want to provide every chance and opportunity in helping you prepare for a successful marriage. Following your initial meeting with the rector, we ask all couples to meet four times with either Claudia Guignard\* or Bonnie Montgomery\*, both of whom are licensed counselors here in Columbia. The church has a special arrangement for such sessions with both. After those four sessions the couple will return to the priest officiating at their wedding to talk more specifically about spiritual issues in Christian marriage, and to make final plans for your ceremony. Finally, during the first year of marriage, couples will go back and see Claudia or Bonnie two more times – something like a “12,000 mile check up” – as part of our marriage coaching arrangement.

There is a professional fee of \$80 for each of the six sessions, and a one-time \$30 fee for the processing of a pre-marriage questionnaire each couple will complete. We are confident that such an investment in the health of your relationship is well worth the cost. (Under some plans, your health insurance may help with some of the cost.) Fees should be paid directly to the counselors. These coaching sessions, plus your meetings with the clergy, are all very important. Please allow at least three months between your initial inquiry with the rector and your planned wedding date.

## **Bishop's Judgment**

The bishop of our diocese must judge any previous marriage dissolved by a civil court before giving permission for one or both of you to marry again. At least one full year is required to pass between your divorce decree and our seeking the bishop's permission to marry again. Please allow at least six months from your initial inquiry with the rector to your planned wedding date if either of you has been previously married. Please understand we cannot approve or announce any such wedding until we have the bishop's written permission to go forward.

## **Dates of Ceremony and Rehearsal**

Weddings are celebrated year-round except during Advent (generally the month of December) and Lent (generally mid-February through mid-April). Please schedule your wedding to begin by 7:00 pm, usually on a Saturday. During busy seasons we may schedule up to two weddings on the same day, with starting times being several hours apart. A rehearsal will most often be scheduled on the evening prior to your wedding, usually around 5:30 pm.

## **Wedding Assistant**

The rehearsal and the wedding ceremony are under the sole direction of our clergy, therefore professional wedding directors, florists, musicians, caterers or others will not to be involved in the direction of the service. A member of the St. John's Wedding Committee will be assigned to assist with in-house arrangements, questions during the months leading up to the wedding, the rehearsal, and the wedding itself.

## **Photographs**

Ample opportunity will be provided for taking photographs in the church, both before and after your wedding; however, no flash pictures are to be taken during the ceremony. Please inquire early if you plan to videotape the service from the rear corner of the church. Please remember at all times that this is a solemn liturgy of worship, being celebrated in a sacred house of prayer.

## **Music**

The rector has final authority over music used in all services of the church and will delegate this authority as he sees fit. All music used in the ceremony, hymns and appropriate festival music to be performed, are chosen in consultation with the director of music. The use of secular music is not appropriate. The director of music will, at your request, engage instrumentalists and soloists as required. Since weddings are not a regular part of our director of music/organist's weekly duties, a professional fee of not less than \$200 is payable directly to the parish musician at every wedding at which any music is used. This fee may be increased to \$250 if the organist is asked to practice and perform with additional singers or instrumentalists. The organist does not attend wedding rehearsals. An additional \$50 fee is due if the organist is required to attend the rehearsal.

## **Altar Preparation**

The St. John's Altar Guild is responsible for the preparation of the altar, except for the altar flowers. The church provides fourteen candles (seven on each side) for the retable (the ledge where the altar cross is placed). (Two altar candles are also provided if the Eucharist is to be celebrated.) Up to ten pew torches are available for an additional fee. The church provides two white needlepoint kneeling cushions for use by the bride and groom at the altar rail. We do not make use of a white aisle cloth or a unity candle as part of our Episcopal wedding liturgy.

## **Altar Flowers and Decorations**

We invite you to provide the altar flowers for your wedding by working with a local professional florist. To ensure proper size and balance, you may take two of our vase liners to your florist to use as a guide. Call the parish office to obtain the liners. Our height limit is 35"; and arrangements must not extend so far outward or forward that they interfere with the seven-branch candlesticks, or with the priest's access to the area behind the altar. We ask that you not place any other decorations within the Sanctuary (the area inside the altar rail), though if you wish, small flower arrangements may be used to mark the front pews for family members. Please take these non-altar arrangements with you following your ceremony.

We need to have your flower arrangements delivered to the church no later than 10:00 am on your wedding day. With your permission, our tradition is to use your altar flowers at our worship services the following day, in honor of your new marriage. Please let us know in advance if you would like us to note in our Sunday bulletin that your arrangement is being offered that day in thanksgiving for, or as a memorial to, particular individuals of your choosing. Depending upon the date of that particular Sunday, the bulletin might also reflect names of other donors/memorials in addition to your own. Again with your permission, after Sunday worship we would like to share your flower arrangements with parishioners who may be sick in the hospital or homebound.

## **Bride and Groom Information Form**

Complete the enclosed Bride's and Groom's Information form and return it to the parish office at least two weeks prior to the ceremony. This information will be used to prepare for your wedding and to create a record of your ceremony in our Marriage Registry.

## **Wedding Bulletins**

A wedding bulletin is not necessary; however if you wish to design one, your priest can double-check your layout and order of service with you before your bulletin goes to print. Our parish office does not design or print these.

## **Optional Honorarium to Clergy**

An honorarium, given directly to the clergy in thanks for his/her time in preparation and oversight of the wedding liturgy, is traditional but certainly not mandatory.

## **Facility Offering**

While there is no charge for members to be married at St. John's, your offering towards our non-budgeted costs is very much appreciated. We suggest a general range of \$250 - \$500. Please make checks payable to St. John's Episcopal Church, and deliver to the parish office during regular business hours two weeks prior to your wedding.

## **Rehearsal Dinners and Wedding Receptions**

Wedding parties may wish to hold their rehearsal dinner and/or reception at St. John's. Arrangements and reservations must be made through the parish office. Fees, contracts, deposits and guidelines outlined in St. John's Facilities Use Policy apply. Contact the Director of Parish Operations for more information. Please note that tobacco products and alcoholic beverages are not allowed at any time on the grounds of St. John's. Please advise family, friends, and members of your wedding party not to bring them onto church property.

### **Information Sheet, Marriage License, Fees, and Offerings**

The Bride's and Groom's Information sheet included in this booklet, your marriage license, the organist's fee, and your additional offering should be delivered to the parish office two weeks prior to the wedding. No marriage can be conducted under any circumstances without a marriage license.

# *Contact Information*

Please contact any of the following people for more information

## **Wedding Assistant Committee**

Carol Fowles, chair

790-0629

bwf2@sc.rr.com

## **Director of Music Ministry**

Celia Tolar-Bane

799-4767

ctb@stjohnscolumbia.org

## **Director of Parish Operations**

Michelle Rabon

799-4767

mwj@stjohnscolumbia.org

\*Claudia Guignard, R.N., N.Ed., Ed.S.

Licensed Professional Counselor, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, National Board Certified

Her office is located at 4700 Forest Drive in Columbia, Phone – 803-960-9361.

Mail payment to 1662 Kathwood Drive, Columbia, SC 29206.

\*Bonnie Montgomery, Ph.D.

Clinical Psychology, Coaching and Consulting Solutions for Life.

Her office is located at 1528 Blanding Street in Columbia, Phone – 803-748-0309.

Mail payment to 1528 Blanding Street, Columbia, SC 29201.



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The Right Reverend W. Andrew Waldo, Bishop  
The Reverend J. Fletcher Montgomery, Rector  
The Reverend Scott R. Fleischer, Assistant Priest  
The Right Reverend Charles F. Duvall, Bishop Associate

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[www.stjohnscolumbia.org](http://www.stjohnscolumbia.org)



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