

Weddings at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a reaffirmation by two people of baptismal life within the context of their commitment to a life-long relationship. Couples express this commitment in the gathered community of the Church. We are glad to extend the ministry of presence, witness, and blessing to all by making our facilities and staff available for the assistance of couples seeking marriage in our church. While it is not necessary to be a member of our congregation nor to be an Episcopalian in order to be married, here, our canons do require that at least one member of the couple be baptized. The liturgy for marriage will come from the Book of Common Prayer and, in most cases, be officiated by an Episcopal priest. On occasion, another ordained minister may be invited to officiate but the presence of our rector will always be required for the blessing of the marriage and the celebration of the Eucharist (if the Eucharist is included in the ceremony.)

Because of the considerable preparation involved for the principal feasts and fasts of the liturgical year, St. Stephen's is not available for weddings two weeks before Christmas, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday or the Saturday preceding, any day of Holy Week, Easter Day, Pentecost or the Saturday preceding.

Only clergy ordained within a denomination recognized by the church will be allowed to officiate in the sanctuary.

If you are interested in being married at St. Stephen's, this customary will be helpful to you and we are happy to answer any questions along the way.

First Steps

Please be in touch with our Event Coordinator (EC) to check on available dates, who will then confer with the clergy and musician before confirming that date. No public announcement should be made about a wedding until the date has been approved by the event coordinator and clergy. A contract with included deposit is required before a wedding is placed on our event calendar, after which an official appointment should be made with the EC

The customs of our church and how we conduct weddings are contained in this document and all questions should be directed to the EC. They will be your primary contact along with the clergy. The EC will be available by appointment for tours of our facility and orientation with caterers, florists, photographers, etc. The EC will also be present prior to and during the wedding to assist the wedding party.

If either member of the couple is divorced, copies of the applicable divorce decree must be provided to the initial meeting with the clergy. There must be at least one year from the date of the divorce decree and the date of the wedding. Remarriage in the Episcopal Church is subject to the consent of the Bishop of California, though approval is generally perfunctory.

Pre-Marital Counseling

All couples married at St. Stephen's are required to participate in pre-marital counseling and this initial discussion must be addressed with the clergy. It may vary somewhat according to the needs of the couple and the methods of the clergy. At the first meeting a plan for counseling will be worked out. Normally, four one hour sessions are required. On occasion, the priest may arrange for someone else to conduct the counseling.

This counseling will take place no sooner than six months prior to the wedding but no later than two months prior.

Holy Eucharist

This portion of the liturgy, also known as Holy Communion, or the Lord's Supper, is not required but always recommended. All members of the wedding party as well as the congregation are warmly welcomed to participate in and receive communion.

Music

Only sacred music may be played in the context of the liturgy of marriage, from the prelude through the procession out of the church. Once the wedding is scheduled it is appropriate for the couple to make an appointment with the Music Minister who will offer suggestions about music for the various parts of the service. If you have music that you would like to select for the Prelude, Processions, Hymns (if any), optional soloists/vocalists, please discuss at this meeting.

If you would like to have a guest organist or musician instead of the Music Minister at St. Stephen's, you may also discuss this and receive permission. In this event, the customary fee for the church musician is still required, in addition to any costs for a substitute and/or guest musicians.

Flowers

Flowers for a wedding are similar to those used for other worship occasions during the season in which the wedding takes place. Though a wedding is a cause for celebration, it does not overshadow the church's celebration of Christmas, Easter, and other major Holy Days. Again, the primary consideration is the appropriateness of decorations as they contribute to, and do not detract from, the worship of the church.

One large floral arrangement (3 feet in width) must be ordered for the wedding and it should reflect the scale of the nave. Artificial flowers are not permitted. The flowers remain in the church after the ceremony and used on Sunday for services. The Sunday bulletin acknowledges the marriage of the couple and the gift of the flowers. *The EC will give you the names of recommended florists.*

Photography and Videography

Flash photography may not be taken by anyone during the wedding service. Guests will be encouraged to witness the wedding with their eyes and hearts rather than through the lens of a camera or smart phone so that they will not be distracted from their participation in worship during the service. This policy will be stated in the wedding bulletin.

If photography is to take place prior to the wedding, it will be scheduled two hours before the service and can last up to one hour. If all photography is to take place immediately after the wedding, one hour will be scheduled. We do not permit full photography sessions both before and after the service.

Flash photography of the couple may be taken at the entrance just before the procession and again as the couple is processing out. At all times, the photographer must remain in the narthex and not inside the church. If the couple wishes to have photos that reflect the service itself (e.g. vows, blessing, giving in marriage, etc.) that will be done immediately after the wedding in a way that no one looking at the photographs in the future will know that they were not taken in the moment. Timing for these photographs are limited to 15 minutes post-wedding.

If a professional photographer takes the photos, please have them schedule a phone appointment with the EC no later than two weeks prior to the wedding to go over our requirements.

Videography

Upon availability and ample notice, the church can video (livestream or record) the service.. The fee is included in the fee schedule at the end of this customary.

Marriage License

Application for a marriage license may be made in any city or town in California. The couple must go in person to apply for the license. Adequate time should be allowed before the wedding date to comply with civil regulations. The license must be brought by the couple to the rehearsal for signature by the couple and clergy. The clergy will mail the license following the wedding.

Wedding Rehearsal

Normally, the wedding rehearsal takes place in the evening prior to the wedding. Everyone who is to have a role in the ceremony is expected to attend. Please impress upon all participants the need for promptness, as the rehearsal cannot begin until all are present. Everyone will practice the role he or she will have in the wedding, including the bride if there is one. Any participant who has a major part in the ceremony must be present at the rehearsal. Only those actually participating in the wedding must be at the rehearsal.

All others not having a part in the actual ceremony need not be present as such presence is often a distraction to the purpose of a rehearsal. The priest, with the assistance of the EC, will conduct the rehearsal. *Outside bridal consultants are not necessary and are not permitted to offer any consultation regarding the liturgical celebration.*

The marriage license must be presented to the priest at this time for safekeeping, since no wedding ceremony can take place without a valid license.

Rehearsals are typically scheduled for 6:00pm on the evening prior to the wedding. Promptness is required. If the wedding party is not present by 20 minutes after the scheduled start time, an additional fee of \$200 will be applied.

Important Notes:

No rice, birdseed, flower petals, or confetti may be thrown on church property or in the street outside the church, during or after the service because of safety hazards and the clean up issues they pose. Sparklers are not permitted.

We do not permit the use of additional candle stands, unity candles or candelabra, flower stands, kneeling benches, aisle runners, pots, or urns from an outside supplier. No tacks, nails, pins, screws, or tape which will deface or permanently damage furniture or walls may be used to secure any decorations on the church property.

Wedding Fee Schedule

Anyone who is preparing for marriage at St. Stephen's will pay a \$1000 deposit to hold the date in the church calendar. *Members of St. Stephen's who have pledged in the year preceding the request for marriage will receive a \$1000 credit to the wedding fee.* The balance of all fees are due no later than 10 days prior to the wedding date. Fees not paid by then may include forfeiture of any fees paid as well as the date itself.

Wedding \$2750

Includes non-refundable Deposit, Church, Rehearsal and Ceremony, Event Coordinator and Altar Guild assistance

Music Minister \$500

Fees for add'l musicians should be discussed with the the Music Minister

Clergy Honorarium \$500

Wedding Program (if requested) \$100+
(commensurate with size of wedding)

Wedding Receptions (includes Kimball Hall and Courtyard)

With a ceremony in the church \$1800*

Without ceremony in the church \$2800*

Cleaning Fee \$250

*This fee assumes a six hour reception time, including prior to and after while a caterer is preparing and cleaning up. The fee is \$100/hour afterward up to eight hours total. All receptions and clean up must be accomplished by 10:00pm.