



Weddings at Saint Stephen's

We are so pleased that you are considering being wed at Saint Stephen's. As you begin to make plans, here are some questions that may be on your mind:

Why be married in the Church? Marriage is a portrait of the love Christ bears for his people. In the developing love that graces a man and a woman as they love and commit themselves one to the other for a lifetime, the very picture of God's munificent, incarnated love is manifested to a broken world. Therefore, to be wed within the fellowship of the Church is ideal.

How do we begin? First of all, if you wish to be wed within the fellowship of Christ's Church, you need to be active in the fellowship. Both you and your betrothed should start by worshipping regularly at Saint Stephen's. Sunday mornings we worship at 8, 9 & 10:30am. We also offer worship celebrations each day Monday through Friday.

Second, we require all those preparing for Holy Matrimony to attend our *Foundations of Discipleship* class. This is a small group experience that looks closely at Faith, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Discipline, Eternal Life, and Prayer.

Third, we require all couples to undergo pre-marital counseling with a member of the clergy associated with Saint Stephen's.

The couple will be responsible for obtaining a marriage license and complying with all the legal requirements for marriage.

What if we live out of town and are active in another church fellowship? If you have a connection to Saint Stephen's through your family or through an earlier association with the parish or school, we will be glad to celebrate your marriage within this fellowship. You must go through the introductory course at your own parish along with pre-marital counseling with the clergy there. Once we receive verification that those things have been accomplished, we will celebrate your wedding on behalf of your home fellowship. Your home church does not have to be of the Episcopal denomination but must be Christian.

What if we live out of town and are not members of another fellowship? You must be active in a Christian fellowship for us to celebrate your wedding at Saint Stephen's. If you wish, the clergy at Saint Stephen's will be more than happy to contact a local parish for you in your area.

May I invite another pastor to participate in the celebration? Yes; however, a member of the Saint Stephen's clergy or other Episcopal clergy should be present and the worship must be in accord with the *Book of Common Prayer*.

May we write our own marriage vows and other parts of the worship? No, all weddings at Saint Stephen's follow the beautiful liturgy found in the *Book of Common Prayer's - Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage*, pp.423-434. [The *Book of Common Prayer* is available on-line at www.bcponline.org.]

What if one of us has been divorced? The clergy must petition the Bishop of West Texas on your behalf in order for you to be married in the Church. This is not a punitive measure, but assists the clergy and the couple in their pre-marital counseling.

May I have my wedding reception at Saint Stephen's? Yes, you may hold your wedding reception in our Parish Hall or in one of our courtyards. However, we **do not** allow any alcoholic beverages on the campus.

How much does it cost to be wed at Saint Stephen's? Members of the fellowship already support the operations of the parish through their regular giving; therefore, we do not charge a fee to be wed here. A gift of \$150 to the Pianist/Organist and another \$100 gift to the Sexton (Groundskeeper) are expected. Gifts to the clergy are completely optional.

How big can the congregation be? Congregations of 100 or less will be celebrated in the Chapel. Congregations of 100 or more will be celebrated in the Church. Couples may also be wed in Saint Stephen's Outdoor Chapel.

Can we decorate the worship space? We ask the couple to provide the flower arrangements behind the altar - one large arrangement in the Church or two small arrangements in the Chapel. The arrangements normally are expected to stay in the sanctuary for the following Sunday worship. No other decorations or alterations are allowed.

May we take photographs or film during the worship? Yes, however the photographer must not use a flash during worship, and he or she must remain in one area. Movie cameras must be stationary and set on a tripod. Before and after the worship, you may stage poses of your choice and use flash photography.

Will anyone assist us in our wedding day preparations? Yes, the *Saint Stephen's Wedding Guild* has an experienced group of women from the parish that will assist you in all areas of the worship preparation, the wedding rehearsal, and walk you through your wedding day. If the couple contracts with an outside wedding coordinator, that person will work under the supervision of the Saint Stephen's Wedding Guild and the clergy of the parish.

To whom do I speak to learn more about being wed at Saint Stephen's? Mrs. Jeannetta Watson, Administrative Assistant to the Rector, is the point-of-contact for all wedding preparation. She will be glad to speak with you and send you our Wedding Customary, which carefully lists our expectations and guidelines. Note that the church must work only with the couple to be wed. Mrs. Watson's office phone is - (512)847-9956. Her email address is - jwtatson@ststeve.org.