



# **St. Stephen's**

## **Episcopal Church and School**

### **WEDDINGS AT ST. STEPHEN'S GENERAL POLICIES**

We are so pleased that you are considering being wed at St. 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, we hope you are active in the fellowship. Both you and your betrothed should start by worshipping regularly at St. Stephen's. Sunday mornings we worship at 8 am and 10:30am. We also offer worship celebrations on Wednesday mornings at 10 am and a contemplative prayer service once a month on Wednesday evenings in the Chapel.

Second, we require all couples to undergo pre-marital counseling with a member of the clergy associated with St. Stephen's. If that is not possible, and you have a family connection with St. Stephen's Church or School, arrangements may be made to have counseling completed with another clergy person who will send a letter verifying you have completed the counseling. This does not need to be with Episcopal clergy, but must be within the Christian family of denominations.

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 not members of another fellowship?** You must be active in a Christian fellowship, or express intent to join one for us to celebrate your wedding at St. Stephen's. If you wish, the clergy at St. 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 St. Stephen's clergy or other Episcopal clergy should be present, and the worship must be in accord with the *Book of Common Prayer*.

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**May we write our own marriage vows and other parts of the worship?** All weddings at St. 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](http://www.bcponline.org).] Any variations must have the approval of the Rector.

**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 St. Stephen's?** Yes, you may hold your wedding reception in our Parish Hall or in one of our courtyards. If you will be serving alcohol, there must non-alcoholic beverage option(s) also available.

**How much does it cost to be wed at St. 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. There are fees for sexton (\$150), Pianist/Organist (\$175), Church Wedding Planner (\$150), and Audio/Video Technician (\$100 only if held in the Church). An honorarium for clergy is customary.

**How many may attend my wedding?** Celebrations of 100 or less may be held in the Chapel. Celebrations of 100 or more will be celebrated in the Church. Couples may also be wed at the St. Stephen's Outdoor Chapel.

**May 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. If held on a Saturday, the arrangements normally 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 a specific area of the worship space. Video cameras must be stationary and set on a tripod. Before and after the worship, you may take photos of your choice and use flash photography.

**Will anyone assist us in our wedding day preparations?** Yes, the St. Stephen's Wedding Planner 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 St. Stephen's Wedding Guild and the clergy of the parish.

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**To whom do I speak to learn more about being wed at St. Stephen's?** Our Wedding Planner will handle all requests and will be glad to speak with you and send you our *Wedding Customary*, which carefully lists our expectations and guidelines.

Our wedding coordinator, Jeannetta Watson ([jwatson@ststeve.org](mailto:jwatson@ststeve.org)) is your primary contact, and will assist you with the planning process.

*Please note that there are additional requirements and modifications to these policies for non-members.*