

# Wedding Guidelines Booklet



St. Gregory's Episcopal Church

Updated May 2011

## Introduction

We are so pleased that you wish to be married at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church. We want your wedding to be a meaningful and happy occasion for you, your families and your guests.

*The Book of Common Prayer* (BCP, p. 422) tells us that "Christian Marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God". "The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana, of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people" (BCP, p. 423). All arrangements for weddings at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church will be made to honor the sanctity of this sacrament.

The following guidelines are based on *The Book of Common Prayer* and customs created through experience at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church. We hope that the guidelines will assist you in preparing for a prayerful and meaningful marriage celebration and that you will be able, with the help of the clergy and members of the parish to have a memorable experience of worship here. If you have any other questions along the way, please feel free to discuss them with Mtr. Rachael via email (AJ.RN.EVANS@GMAIL.COM) or by phone (231-955-2464).

## Getting Married at St. Gregory's

Though not always necessarily the celebrant, the Rector will be in charge of all weddings celebrated at St. Gregory's. The liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage in *The Book of Common Prayer* (pages 423-432) includes scripture readings, prayers, and the exchange of vows. If you wish, the service may also include a homily and/or celebration of Holy Eucharist.

Those wishing to be married at St. Gregory 's must allow for the following:

- \*At least one member of the couple must be baptized.
- \*The authorized liturgies of the Episcopal Church must be used.
- \*A minimum of thirty (30) days notice of the marriage must be given as required by Canon Law.
- \*If one or both, members of the couple have been previously married this is discussed with the Rector during the first session. A period of one year after a divorce is finalized is required by the Episcopal Church before the

**Bride's Information:** (please print clearly or type)

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Birtdate:

\_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace:

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Father & Mother's full names & address (may list separately if divorced and at two addresses):

Witness name (usually Maid of Honor):

\_\_\_\_\_

Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Confirmed Episcopalian: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Groom's Information:** (please print clearly or type)

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Birtdate:

\_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace:

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Father & Mother's full names & address (may list separately if divorced and at two addresses):

Witness name (usually Maid of Honor):

\_\_\_\_\_

Baptized: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Confirmed Episcopalian: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

wedding can take place.

\*Premarital counseling is required. This requires three to six sessions with the Rector and/or someone she designates.

### Initial Steps

The first step is to make an appointment with Mthr. Rachael, who approves all wedding ceremonies at St. Gregory's. Both members of the couple should plan to attend. It is most likely that at this meeting, a date will be set. While Canon Law of the church requires at least thirty (30) days, it is best to make arrangements for a wedding as far in advance as possible. An advance notice of at least three (3) months is advisable. Please do not assume that the church and/or the Clergy will be available for the date you have in mind. Please do not make any arrangements for your wedding until your wedding date has been approved by the Rector. Marriages are not scheduled for the following days: New Year's Day, from Ash Wednesday until after Easter Day (Lent), Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Advent, and Christmas Eve.

Participation of other clergy from another church, denomination or faith should be discussed with the Rector during the first meeting. If there is to be Communion during the ceremony, you should tell the Rector the approximate number of persons invited to the wedding so the Altar Guild can plan for an adequate number of guests. The couple should consult with St. Gregory's Choir Director about acquiring an organist, pianist or other musical accompaniment for the wedding approximately two to three months prior to the wedding. If other instrumentalists or soloists are desired, the choir director can assist with this as well. All music must be paid for directly by the couple to the talent, this includes the choir director who may be available for solos.

### Remarriage in the Episcopal Church

In cases when one or both parties requesting marriage have had one prior marriage that ended in divorce, the couple must disclose this at the first meeting with the Rector. A copy of the divorce record is helpful, but in most cases, not required. In cases when one or both parties has had two previous marriages end in divorce, an application for permission must be made by the Rector to the Bishop of the Diocese of Western Michigan, The Rt. Rev. Robert R. Gepert. Because of this application process, couples in this situation must meet with the Rector six months prior to the proposed wedding date. An application for remarriage does not automatically ensure acceptance by the Bishop. The Bishop

relies on the Rector's impressions and information gleaned from the pre-marital meeting. Transparency and honesty helps this process. These policies are not meant to be formal and legalistic; the underlying concern is that the issues which led to the dissolution of the previous marriage do not come back to haunt the newly married couple. Feel free to ask the Rector for clarification on this.

### **A Wedding Planner/Coordinator**

You may wish to hire an outside wedding planner or coordinator for the occasion. If you plan to do so, please let the Rector know as soon as possible. The Rector will work with whomever you choose, however, this person is not permitted to have any role in either the wedding rehearsal or the ceremony itself. It is the Rector who has final say over what occurs during the ceremony and the coordinator must be willing to take direction from the Rector.

### **The Marriage License**

In Michigan, a marriage license is only valid for thirty (30) days. There is a three (3) day waiting period, not including the date of application. You must apply for a marriage license at the county clerk's office in the county in which you live. You may then be married in any county in Michigan. You must bring the license with you to the wedding rehearsal.

### **The Facilities**

In addition to the sanctuary, the bride and groom may have separate dressing spaces, to be worked out with the Rector or, if needed, the Altar Guild Directress. The groom and groomsmen may use the priest's sacristy to get dressed and wait for the wedding to begin. This room has closet space, seating and mirrors. The room also has an exterior door that opens to the side parking lot. The bride and bridal party may choose between the rooms on the parish hall end of the building.

You may use the Parish Hall for a reception after the ceremony, if desired. This needs to be arranged with the Rector. If you decide to serve alcohol at a reception, you must request a copy of and make yourself familiar with the diocesan alcohol policy. This is available from the Rector.

### **Acolytes, Readers, and other Servers**

Acolytes are available through the parish and will be assigned if you desire them. If you have a parishioner you would like to serve, please discuss this with the Rector. It is appropriate for someone associated with the bride and groom to

St. Gregory's Episcopal Church  
1200 Seminole Rd., Muskegon, MI 49441 Phone: 231-780-2955  
Rector's Email: AJ.RN.EVANS@GMAIL.COM  
Website: www.stgregorysmuskegon.org

We have read the wedding guidelines for St. Gregory's and agree to follow the policy as set forth.

Our requested wedding date is: \_\_\_\_\_

Our requested wedding time is: \_\_\_\_\_

Our wedding service will include a Holy Communion: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No.

The service will be performed by \_\_\_\_\_ St. Gregory's Rector OR  
\_\_\_\_\_ other (specify).

### **Bride:**

- I have not been married before
- I have been divorced once
- I have been divorced more than once
- I am a widow
- I have children

### **Groom:**

- I have not been married before
- I have been divorced once
- I have been divorced more than once
- I am a widower
- I have children

Arrangements for payment of the organist, pianist, soloists, etc. must be made directly with the person(s) performing the service.

In instances where two non-members wish to be married at St. Gregory's, the Rector will make the decision to approve or deny the use of the facilities. For non-members, the fee to use the building is \$500.00 payable to St. Gregory's. In addition, non-members who would like the Rector to perform the ceremony, the fee is \$300.00 payable to the Rector.

For both members and non-members, use of the parish hall for the rehearsal dinner and/or the wedding reception, the fee is \$50.

### What's Next?

Now that you have read the above wedding guidelines, in order to reserve your wedding date at St. Gregory's, we ask that you complete the attached Information Form and either tear off the last page and bring it to the Rector, mail it in to the church, or copy and paste it into an email and send it to the Rector.

By providing the completed information document, you indicate that you understand and agree to be held accountable to the guidelines of St. Gregory's Episcopal Church.

### Contacts:

The Rev. Rachael N. Evans, Rector  
231-955-2464 (cell)  
[AJ.RN.EVANS@GMAIL.COM](mailto:AJ.RN.EVANS@GMAIL.COM)

Joshua Ledesma, choir director & musician  
616-566-3958  
[joshua.ledesma@gmail.com](mailto:joshua.ledesma@gmail.com)

Ms. Jocelyn Shaw, Altar Guild Directress  
231-740-8110 (cell)  
[redfernshaw@gmail.com](mailto:redfernshaw@gmail.com)

Le Fleur Shoppe (flowers)  
231-798-3232  
[www.lefleurshoppe.com](http://www.lefleurshoppe.com)

\*\*\* You can contact the rector for a list of organists from the American Guild of Organists in our area.

\*\*\* You can contact Mr. Ledesma for help finding additional musicians.

read scripture during the marriage ceremony. The reader(s) must plan on attending the rehearsal. Please consult with the Rector before asking an Acolyte or Crucifer from another church to serve at your wedding.

### The Wedding Party

Due to space, try to limit the size of your wedding party. Please be prepared to inform the Rector how many pews will need to be reserved for family/special guests.

### Flowers and Decorations

Marriage at St. Gregory's is a worship service and a sacrament, therefore, flowers and decorations are those that are in keeping with the liturgy and customs of the Church.

The couple must purchase all flowers on their own. St. Gregory's recommends using Le Fleur Shoppe on Old Grand Haven Rd. in Muskegon as they make regular deliveries to us and already have a key to our building.

The Altar Guild will contact your florist to arrange for transporting the liners used for the brass urns (flowers are only arranged in these liners) and for delivery of flowers to the Church.

The traditional candles which are a part of the worship service at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church are used during the wedding. These are the only candles which are used and are provided by the altar guild. Additional candles and flowers on the ALTAR are not allowed.

Unless special arrangements are made with the Altar Guild, the altar flower arrangements are left for use in the Sunday service following the wedding. A dedication will be made in the Sunday Church Bulletin regarding the donation of these wedding flowers. Flowers or plants, if any, that are used outside the nave may be taken by the wedding party immediately following the ceremony.

### Music

Arrangements for the wedding music must be made with the Rector and the Choir Director. If St. Gregory's organ is to be used, then the Rector will recommend a qualified organist. All music should be sacred and appropriate for a worship service.

If used, the appropriate time for soloists to sing is after the mothers are seated

and before the procession begins. The “Wedding March” (known as *Here Comes the Bride*) from Wagner’s opera Lohengrin is not used in the Episcopal Church.

### **Photography and Videography**

Still photography of the wedding must be unobtrusive. The photographer will be allowed two hours before the ceremony for still photography whether inside or outside the Church. Once the procession has begun, the photographer may not take pictures with a flash except to take a picture (from inside the doorway to the Nave) of the bride as she starts down the aisle. No photography, flash or otherwise, is allowed during the sacrament of Holy Communion. If you will be working with a professional photographer, please let the Rector know who you are using. This will allow the Rector to discuss with them the photography policy in advance.

Videography is allowed during the service, but the location of the camera and person operating the camera must be approved ahead of time. As with the photographer, the Rector will need to know who you will use ahead of time.

### **The Service Bulletin**

Service Bulletins for your wedding will be provided by the church office. There is no extra charge for these Bulletins. The church does not provide special wedding bulletin covers. If you would like to use special covers, you will need to purchase them yourself and provide the church office with them two (2) weeks in advance.

### **The Rehearsal**

A rehearsal gives all involved the opportunity to practice, which will allow the wedding service to be carried out without undue stage fright and confusion. The rehearsal usually takes place the day before the wedding ceremony at 6:00 p.m. The rehearsal will last approximately one hour. Please plan at least two (2) hours between the starting time of the rehearsal and the starting time of your rehearsal dinner. All members of the wedding party, including children, are expected to participate in the rehearsal. Also expected to be there are readers, altar servers, acolytes and ushers, It is also helpful to ask your photographer to be present for the rehearsal. Please ask everyone to be on time, appropriately dressed and ready to begin. Rehearsals are for reviewing and practicing how the wedding was planned, not for planning the wedding itself. Decisions will have been made prior to this time. The Rector is in charge of the rehearsal as she is

responsible for conducting the service itself. An outside wedding planner/consultant will not be ‘calling the shots’ during the rehearsal or the wedding itself. Be sure to bring your marriage license to the rehearsal. It would be awful to hold up the wedding the next day while the wedding party searches for the wedding license! So, look for it on the day of the rehearsal and bring it with you.

You may request to use the parish hall for a rehearsal dinner. This must be arranged with the Rector. If you decide to serve alcohol at the rehearsal dinner, you must request a copy of and make yourself familiar with the diocesan alcohol policy. This is available from the Rector.

### **The Wedding Day**

Arrive early. Arrive early. Arrive early! This is best for everyone.

You may use the kitchen/refrigerator for snacks while dressing and waiting for the wedding to begin. The bride is encouraged to eat. We don’t want *anyone* to faint, let alone the bride.

Members of the wedding party must not arrive at the church for the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs. The Rector reserves the right to cancel the ceremony if she determines intoxication.

There will be separate bathrooms for the groomsmen and the bridal party.

The Rector will visit both the men and the women before the wedding begins to ensure everything is ready to go. It is customary for the Rector to pray with the men and women separately before the ceremony.

### **Fees and Donations**

Per the employment contract, the Rector does not accept money for the wedding services of members (one or both of the couple) of St. Gregory’s. In like manner, there is no fee for the use of the sanctuary for members.

If members choose to make a donation, the money will be deposited to the Rector’s Discretionary Fund which is used for outreach and pastoral needs of the parish and community.