

## **St. Aidan's Wedding Policy Fall 2016**

*We welcome your inquiry about marriage at St. Aidan's and hope you will find this information helpful. Feel free to call the church office with any questions at 770-521-0207.*

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant entered into in the presence of God and lived out in the support of a community of faith.

A Christian marriage is not a wedding to which God is invited. It is a relationship formed and lived out in God's presence and in the discernment of God's will. The wedding ceremony is the liturgical expression of that relationship. It is first and foremost a worship service of joy and thanksgiving. It is the public exchange of vows and the proclamation of God's blessing. To quote *The Book of Common Prayer*: "Marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God."

It is clearly the intent of both the Prayer Book and the canons of the Church that marriages solemnized in the Church continue to be nurtured within the community of the Church and local congregation. Marriage is not something that happens at one particular moment. It is a lifelong process.

Those who come to the Church seeking God's blessing on their relationship should do so with a clear intention of maintaining an active participation in the life of the Church. While there may be extenuating circumstances, it should be considered normative that a marriage takes place where the couple intends to worship.

### **The Church's Laws Concerning Holy Matrimony**

In the Episcopal Church it is required that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian; that the ceremony is attested to by at least two witnesses; and that the marriage conforms to the laws of the State and the canons of this Church.

At St. Aidan's, it is customary that at least one of the parties is a member in good standing of this parish, or the son, daughter, grandson, or grand daughter, or parent of a member in good standing. If this is not the case, the couple should plan to attend church at St. Aidan's from the time they ask for the use of the church.

### **Marriage After Divorce**

Canon Law prohibits clergy from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced, except with the consent of the bishop. The guidelines of St. Aidan's and of the Diocese of Atlanta establish the norm of one year from the date of the final decree of divorce for remarriage in the Church. The bishop, in his guidelines for the clergy, speaks of: "the great and real need for time for a divorced person to work through the 'death' of the former marriage; the

grief, forgiveness and learning from past experience, both secular and religious, is generally a year."

In this diocese the bishop has requested thirty (30) days in which to respond to the priest's request to solemnize the marriage. The couple must, therefore, have had several counseling sessions and given the priest copies of their divorce decree(s) no later than forty-five (45) days before the wedding date in order to allow time for this to happen.

### **Premarital Counseling**

In the Episcopal Church, a process of preparation for marriage generally referred to as "premarital counseling" is required. Needs of individual couples can be very different and the time required for premarital counseling can vary greatly. It should be assumed that a minimum of six premarital sessions with the Rector or his/her designee, with both the bride and the groom present.

In situations where one or both of the couple are living out of town, it is usually possible to make arrangements for counseling to be done by an Episcopal priest elsewhere. Those arrangements need to be made as early as possible with the officiating priest.

*No announcement of the wedding should be made, nor invitations mailed, until final approval of the marriage has been given by the priest at the conclusion of the premarital counseling.*

### **The Marriage License**

It is required that the parties wishing to marry comply with all the laws of the state of Georgia. Such compliance is indicated to the officiating priest by the presentation of a marriage license. The license is issued by the County Marriage License Bureau located in the county courthouse or the county office building. If both applicants are from out of state, please contact Fulton County or your local county office for instruction.

It is recommended that the marriage license be brought to the Church office the Sunday prior to the wedding. The priest cannot officiate without the license. The priest will sign and mail the license after the wedding.

### **Date & Time of the Wedding**

Since a wedding at St. Aidan's involves the participation of a great many church staff and volunteers, adequate advance notice is essential. The couple will want to talk with a priest and make arrangements as far in advance as possible in order to reduce scheduling difficulties. Planning several months in advance is the norm. (Please complete the Wedding Information Form which is attached to this document)

Weddings are customarily held on Saturdays, with the time of the ceremony between 10:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. If there is more than one wedding in the church on a given date, they must

be at least four hours apart. Dates and times are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis. A Sunday afternoon wedding is also permitted.

*We do not schedule weddings during Lent and Holy Week.*

### **The Wedding Guild**

The Wedding Guild is charged with the responsibility of assisting the officiating priest with arrangements for the wedding. The Wedding Guild will coordinate the efforts of the Altar Guild and Flower Guilds to ensure that the church is ready for the service. The Wedding Guild will be present at the rehearsal and the wedding to give assistance and support to the wedding party and to insure the smooth flow of the service itself. The attached wedding information form should be completed well in advance of the wedding date.

### **The Vergers**

If a verger is available, they will assist with the logistics of the rehearsal and wedding to ensure all the groom's and bride's attendants are ready and to manage the procession and the flow of the worship.

### **The Rehearsal**

The purpose of the wedding rehearsal is to give the wedding party the opportunity to become familiar with the service ahead of time so they can be at ease during the worship service. The officiating priest, assisted by the Wedding Guild and Vergers, will be responsible for the actual conduct of the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals are normally held on the day before the wedding. Except in extremely unusual circumstances, rehearsals will not be scheduled to begin after 6:00 p.m. The rehearsal will take about an hour. The entire service, including ushering in of relatives and the entrance procession, will be rehearsed. Therefore, it is important for all members of the wedding party to attend and for everyone to be on time. It also makes things easier if those not in the wedding ceremony are not at the rehearsal.

### **The Altar Guild**

**The Altar & Aisle.** The liturgical color for a wedding is white, the color of joy and celebration. The Altar Guild will prepare the altar with a cream and tapestry festive frontal or leave the wooden altar uncovered. If you would like to provide a white altar covering for your wedding please consult the Rector during your pre-marital counseling for size and restrictions. (The color of the altar flowers is not restricted.) Pew markers may be supplied by a florist or the church will supply ribbons if desired. Aisle runners are not permitted because they are hazardous on wooden floors. Altar candles and torch candles will be lit for the service. If you desire candleabras these must be coordinated with the Rector and the floors protected from dripping wax. Candlabras will need to be rented from a local florist.

After the wedding, the Altar Guild will dismantle all wedding decorations and prepare the altar for the next worship service.

## **The Marriage Service**

As you plan your wedding, please remember that marriage is a sacrament of the Church and takes place in the context of worship. As in every service of the Church, the priest is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details.

**The Clergy.** The officiating priest, at the couple's request, will gladly invite an Episcopal priest from another parish, or diocese, to assist in the ceremony or invite a clergy person from another denomination to assist in the ceremony. The officiating priest should be notified of your desire to include other clergy as soon as possible.

**The Liturgy.** The Episcopal Church is a liturgical church, and, as such, worship services are defined by *The Book of Common Prayer*, and would normally include a liturgical procession, with a crucifer leading the wedding party and clergy.

**The Communion.** *Since the marriage service is a worship service involving the whole congregation, a celebration of the Holy Eucharist is usually included. In fact, The Book of Common Prayer service of Holy Matrimony is written within the context of the Holy Eucharist. (The decision to have the Eucharist will be made by the couple with the advice and counsel of the officiating priest.) When the Holy Eucharist is celebrated as a part of the marriage ceremony, all baptized Christians will be invited to share in this sacrament of unity.*

**Lay Eucharistic Ministers.** Lay Eucharistic Ministers from St. Aidan's or other parishes are welcome to assist. Please request particular individuals through the officiating priest.

**Lectors/Readers.** It is desirable that the lectors be friends and family of the couple being married, regardless of their church home. They should plan to practice the readings at the rehearsal.

**Acolytes.** Family and friends accustomed to acolyting are welcome to serve in this capacity. If St. Aidan's acolytes serve for the couple, it is customary to make a small donation to them.

## **The Wedding Music**

The bride and groom must contact St. Aidan's Director of Music for a music consultation at least six (6) to eight (8) weeks before the wedding. He/She will assist you in the selection of music for the organ, and congregational or choral singing\*, and can supply you a list of additional instrumentalists, if you desire.

It is expected that St. Aidan's Director of Music will play at all weddings which elect to use music. There is a fee for his/her services. You are welcome to have musicians other than the Organist and Choirmaster participate in the service. However, they and their music selections are subject to Rector and Director of Music approval. There is a fee for this consultation, and a bench fee for St. Aidan's Organist if you choose to use a musician in lieu of St. Aidan's Organist. (All fees are outlined at the end of this document.)

In keeping with the understanding of the wedding as a worship service of the Church, music selection is limited to sacred music. A song from contemporary resources may be played or sung during the lighting of the unity candle if it has significance for the couple and is in keeping with the liturgy. Music is generally provided only at those points in the service designated by the rubrics in the Prayer Book. The Lord's Prayer is a common prayer of the Church and is to be said or sung by the congregation.

*\*The choir does not usually sing at weddings, but in some circumstances the choir may be requested. If you wish to have the choir sing at your wedding, please notify the Rector so that she/he can determine if this is possible.*

### **Decoration of the Church**

The general principle to keep in mind is that a wedding is a worship service in which we seek to worship God with beauty and simplicity. Extravagant decorations are not necessary to create an atmosphere of joy and celebration.

**The Flowers.** The only flowers permitted at a wedding are vases of altar flowers (such as those arranged by the Flower Guild every weekend for Sunday Services). You may provide your own flowers if you wish, but this needs to be coordinated with the Flower Guild and within the guidelines of St. Aidan's. If a florist is used, there is no payment to the church. However, if the Flower Guild is used, a minimum fee of \$150.00 is charged. You are welcome to supplement that fee as your budget permits in order to get an arrangement you will be happy with. When two or more weddings are scheduled for the same day it is highly recommended that the flowers be coordinated so that unnecessary expense may be avoided.

It is expected that the wedding flowers will remain in the Church for worship services on the following Sunday. The Sunday bulletin will identify the flowers as given in thanksgiving for the marriage. After services, they will then be delivered to the sick and shut-in.

The couple should contact the Church Office for the name and number of the Flower Guild member who will be assisting as soon as a date is established with the clergy. The Flower Guild member will then go over all the size and placement options, as well as any additional instructions, if a florist is to be used.

Ferns and other floral arrangements may be used at the entrance to the Nave and in the back of the Nave and in other areas of the church as approved by the Rector.

### **Photography**

While we are sensitive to the desire of the bride and groom to preserve this important moment in their lives, we are also concerned that the dignity and reverence of the service be maintained, and that family and friends' experience of worship not be compromised. The cooperation of the bride, the groom and the entire wedding party is sought and appreciated. Photographs may not be taken during the marriage service, with the following exceptions: One flash picture may be taken as the couple leaves the Church during the retiring procession. Non-flash photographs may be taken during the service as long as the photographer remains stationary and to one side of the nave or at the back of the nave.

A stationary video camera may be set up on the choir platform, and audio-taping is permitted, provided that no additional lighting or microphones are required and that set up is completed thirty (30) minutes prior to the service.

Photographs may, of course, be taken either before or after the wedding. The Vergers and Altar Guild will be happy to provide assistance. If there is another wedding scheduled, the time allotted for photographs will have to be limited. Please be aware of the following points:

**Photography Sessions prior to the Wedding.** It is an unreasonable hardship for the church volunteers to arrive at the Church more than two hours before the wedding.

**Photography Sessions following the Wedding.** Extended photography sessions after the service can be difficult for the wedding guests waiting for a reception and for the Altar Guild and the sexton who need to prepare the Church for Sunday. A workable solution is to complete all but one or two photos prior to the service.

*The wedding party and photographers must vacate the church thirty (30) minutes before the wedding is to begin in order for visitors to be seated and the clergy to prepare the space.*

### **Receptions**

Burtenshaw Hall is a lovely place for a reception, if the couple so desires. Usage guidelines and fees are in an accompanying document.

### **Dressing at the Church**

St. Aidan's does not have a dressing room, but women in the wedding party may use the nursery rooms for final preparations. Men may use the library. St. Aidan's asks that there be no smoking or drinking of alcoholic beverages in these areas. Please ask someone in your wedding party to remove all of your personal belongings from these rooms immediately after your wedding and ensure that these areas are picked up and left as you found them. The parish cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items.

### **Miscellaneous Concerns**

**The Guest Book.** A guest book may be displayed and signed in the narthex before the wedding.

**Rice, Confetti, Bird Seed & Bubbles.** Rice and confetti are not to be thrown at or on the wedding couple on church property. Birdseed and bubbles may be used only out of doors.

### **Smoke free campus and buildings**

St. Aidan's has a smoke free campus and does not permit smoking in vehicles, buildings or on the grounds. Please tell your guests and altar party of this important fact.

### **Alcohol Policy**

Consumption of alcohol is not permitted on church property except if a reception is held in the parish hall, and in accordance with diocesan policy. Hard liquor is never permitted. Non-alcoholic beverages in equal quantity and prominence must be offered if alcohol is served.

**Church Donations & Fees**

It is expected that all fees will be paid when the marriage license is brought to the Church on the Sunday prior to the wedding. In any case, they must be paid prior to the rehearsal.

**Use of Church**

By active members who are givers of record & have made a pledge *no charge*  
By nonmembers..... \$500.00

**Music**

Organist consultation, rehearsal & music.....\$ 350.00  
Organist consultation only.....50.00

**Flowers provided by St. Aidan’s Flower Guild** \$150.00

**Clergy**

Active members of St. Aidan’s \$ *no charge* \*

Non-members are expected to pay St. Aidan’s \$1000 to cover the time of the clergy for pre-marital counseling sessions, the rehearsal and the wedding. This is payable to St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church to cover the hours of parish time used to coordinate and prepare the couple for the wedding as well as the time for the rehearsal and service.

All fees for weddings of nonmembers are to be paid in full at least two weeks prior to the wedding. For nonmembers, a deposit of \$500 is due to hold the date of the wedding.

*\*As a sacrament of the church, marriage is offered by the priest without charge. In thanksgiving for their marriage, many couples make a contribution to the discretionary fund of the clergy person presiding at the services. This is entirely optional. If you elect to give an Honoria (gift) to the clergy, those funds should be given directly to the clergy person and not made out to the church.*

**Application for the Celebration of a Marriage  
at St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, Milton, Georgia**

Date of Application: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Holy Communion: Yes No

If yes, do you wish to select someone to be Chalice Bearer(s) \_\_\_\_\_

or let the Priest determine who will be the Chalice Bearer(s). \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Number of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

Reception at St. Aidan's: No Yes (please contact church office)

Reception Times: \_\_\_\_\_ until \_ pm

Rehearsal Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehearsal Dinner at St. Aidan's: No Yes (please contact church office)

Priest: The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Coordinators: Joyce Tripp Miller/Anne McManes

Organist: \_\_\_\_\_

Soloist: \_\_\_\_\_

Readers: \_\_\_\_\_

Acolytes needed: Yes No

Florist: \_\_\_\_\_

Photographer: .