



ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE
episcopal church & school

Wedding Information

We rejoice with you as you prepare to embark on the wonderful and blessed adventure of marriage. The **Celebration and Blessing of Marriage** service is a momentous event in the life of any couple and we at St Thomas the Apostle want to do everything we can to make it a joyful, memorable, and holy event. We offer this booklet, which outlines our guidelines and requirements, as an aid to planning your wedding service here at St Thomas.

We look forward to working with you in the planning of this holy sacramental ceremony. We pray that God will richly bless you during this time of preparation and over the entire course of your life together.

Yours in Christ,

The Priest and Laity of St Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church

Marriage in the Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church has a very definite and clear set of Canon Laws and Diocesan policies governing the Blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church. Anyone contemplating marriage at St Thomas should be aware of the following requirements:

1. The Church requires that notice of the intention to marry must be made at least 3 months before the proposed date of the marriage. This date and time must be arranged with the church priest and then entered on the parish calendar before any public announcement of the date can be made.
2. A course of premarital instruction must be completed by the couple. Premarital counseling may be conducted in varying ways depending on the circumstance and location of the persons to be married. The priest will assist the couple in making this selection.

Premarital instruction involves several sessions that will need to be concluded by 30 days prior to the wedding date so the final counseling session with the priest can take place.
This is a Church "GO / NO GO" requirement.

3. Only an Episcopal priest may officiate (but, with the priest's approval, clergy of other denominations may assist), and only the Book of Common Prayer may be used for the vows.
4. All readings, music, decorations, and physical arrangements must be approved by the priest. Further details about these requirements can be found later in this booklet and on the Wedding Checklist (meeting with Wedding Coordinator).
5. The requirements of the State of Texas must be met. The marriage license must be obtained from the State and brought to the rehearsal. The church will send the signed license back to the State (County Clerk) after the ceremony. Further details can be found later in this booklet.
This is a State "GO / NO GO" requirement.

Remarriage in the Episcopal Church

Persons who have been divorced and whose former spouses are living may be remarried in the Church, provided the Bishop approves. The divorced person needs to write a letter to the Bishop explaining why this marriage is sacramental and the previous one ended. Talk to the priest about details of the requirement. Allow 4 to 6 months for this process.

State Marriage License

Marriage licenses are issued by the County Clerk of any Texas county. Licenses issued in one county permit the service to be held in any other county.

There is a 72-hour waiting period. You will receive the license the same day you apply for it; however, it cannot be used for 3 days. The license is valid for 30 days only.

You will need to:

- Present a valid government photo ID (e.g. driver's license, ID card, or passport) proving that you are each at least 18 years old.
- Fill out the application and repeat the oath listed on the application.
- Sign the application in front of the clerk.
- Pay the application fee (*cash only*).

General Information

The wedding date will be officially listed on the church calendar when the completed Wedding Reservation form and deposit check are delivered to the church office. We ask that full proper names (no initials, please) be used when filling out the Wedding Reservation form since these names will be listed in the official church records.

Once the Canonical requirements on the previous pages have been met (or possible exceptions arranged in writing with the priest) planning may proceed, keeping in mind the following:

- St Thomas the Apostle Church is a sacred building dedicated to the Glory of God. It is not an event venue. Weddings and rehearsals are religious services; please ask the wedding party to conduct themselves accordingly. Appropriate attire and behavior is expected.
- No more than one wedding per day will be scheduled.
- St Thomas the Apostle has a seating capacity of 400.
- NO SMOKING is allowed in any of the church buildings, and no food or beverages may be consumed in the church sanctuary.
- Church banners, posters, pictures, decorations, etc in any of the church buildings are to remain in place.

Wedding Coordinator

St Thomas provides a volunteer Wedding Coordinator to help couples through the many steps of wedding planning involving the rehearsal and the actual wedding. The role of the Wedding Coordinator is to work with the wedding couple from the date the wedding is posted until completed, to serve as the personal contact for the wedding party, and when appropriate, as an interface between the priest and the couple.

It is important to set a date as soon as possible for a meeting with the Wedding Coordinator, preferably in church, to go over the many details mentioned later in this booklet.

The priest makes all final decisions.

The Marriage Ceremony

The couple needs to discuss with the priest whether they want a full service with the Eucharist (lasts about 40 to 45 minutes) or just the marriage ceremony (lasts about 15 minutes without additional readings or songs).

If you go to www.bcponline.org/PastoralOffices/marriage.html you will find the Marriage Ceremony section from the Book of Common Prayer.

Prayers, Scripture and Other Readings

Scripture readings and wedding prayers are important pieces of the wedding ceremony. You may select family members or friends to read Scripture selections or St Thomas will provide a reader. Readings should be selected early to allow ample time for the reader to practice and perform the reading in a meaningful manner.

The Marriage Ceremony section of the Book of Common Prayer suggests traditional readings which may help you choose. Readings must be approved by the priest.

Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist is always an appropriate part of the wedding ceremony and is a meaningful and joyous way of beginning a couple's marriage. When the celebration of the Holy Eucharist is planned, it is assumed that all those attending the ceremony who wish to do so will be given the opportunity to receive the Eucharist. In the Episcopal Church all are invited to share in Holy Communion.

If the Eucharist is served there must be a Gospel reading, and it must be read by the priest.

Two kneeling cushions are provided at the altar for the bridal couple.

Music

The bridal couple can select the music or let St Thomas choose. Musical selections need to be approved by the priest, and should be determined at least 30 days prior to the wedding to give the musicians an opportunity to practice.

St Thomas has an organ plus a piano that can be used with a vocalist. The organist and vocalist need to be notified as soon as possible so the date can be reserved on their calendars.

The couple is free to select outside musicians, such as a harpist or string quartet, and their own vocalist.

Flowers and Decorations

We are fortunate at St Thomas to have a beautiful worship space which needs little in the way of ornamentation. The only flowers allowed behind the communion rail are bouquets on the two wall sconces behind the altar. These bouquets are included in the wedding fee and are left on the altar for the Sunday service. The Sunday bulletin will contain a notation that the flowers are in honor of the wedding.

Because of the danger of tripping, the use of an aisle runner is **not** permitted. The use of rice, confetti, or live flower petals is **not** permitted. Flower girls are allowed to scatter SILK rose petals.

Pews may be decorated with ribbons, greenery, or flowers (real or silk). The only restriction is they CANNOT be attached with tape; they must be hung with a loop of green florist wire.

An alternative is pew torches. St Thomas has a set of 8 that fit in brackets spaced along the main aisle. These are permanent candles that are filled with special oil, so there is an additional fee of \$150 for using them.

Pictures and other decorations are not permitted in the sanctuary. We suggest that these decorations be used at the reception.

Photography

As a sacramental rite of the Church, the marriage service is not to be interrupted or disturbed by the distraction of videotaping or photographs being taken. It is the couple's responsibility to review these instructions with the photographer well before the ceremony so that there will be no misunderstanding at the time of the wedding. The ceremony begins with the seating of the mothers.

Flash photography is NOT allowed during the ceremony. The two exceptions are when the bride walks down the aisle first with her father and later with her husband.

Photo and video recordings of the service are permitted as long as the equipment is silent and does not require any supplemental lighting. Video equipment is to be located in the balcony.

The photographer is a guest at the wedding ceremony and is expected to observe the rules adopted by the church. We strongly suggest that the photographer attend the rehearsal or visit the church prior to the wedding date.

Dressing Areas

The church is opened one and a half hours prior to the wedding or as agreed upon beforehand. St Thomas has limited space and tiny bathrooms; the wedding party should arrive dressed and only do minor “touch ups” at church. Men will be in the Multipurpose Room, women in Krist Hall. It is useful to bring a shopping bag to contain personal items which makes it easy to carry them to the reception.

The church only provides ice water in dressing areas. You may bring snacks but are encouraged to eat a protein snack before arriving at church. Nerves fray when people are hungry; this is especially true for children.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually scheduled the day before the wedding and is expected to start on time; it generally lasts one hour. The rehearsal is conducted under the direction of the priest. Bridal consultants and / or florists have no place at either the rehearsal or the wedding, although they are welcome to attend to the bride and her needs before the wedding.

It is expected that all members of the bridal party will be active participants in the rehearsal. The rehearsal is to ensure that the wedding runs smoothly, and also to give participants a “feel” for the wedding liturgy and the space in which it is conducted. The use of stand-ins at the time of the rehearsal is not permitted.

All participants in the rehearsal are expected to act and dress appropriately.

NO ALCOHOL is allowed before and during the rehearsal and wedding, except for the communion wine.

This is a Church “GO / NO GO” requirement.

Bring the remaining fees to the rehearsal and give them to the Wedding Coordinator.

Bring the marriage license to the rehearsal and give it to the priest.

This is a State “GO / NO GO” requirement.

Fees

The wedding fee for members is \$600 and for nonmembers is \$900.

This fee includes: Church
Priest
Altar flowers

An additional \$150 fee is charged for use of the pew torches.

A \$200 deposit is payable at the time the wedding date is set and put on the church calendar, and is applied towards the wedding fee.

Checks should be made out to St Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church (STTAEC is acceptable).

Should the wedding be canceled, the deposit is refundable up to 30 days prior to the wedding date with appropriate notification to the church.

If the church organist is used, a check is made out to him (Hank Carillo).

Church organist \$225
Practice with vocalist \$50

If the church vocalist is used, a check is made out to her (Mackenna Morrow).

Church vocalist \$150 for one song
 \$250 for three songs
Songs to be selected from her list.
Fee includes practice session with organist.

All fees are due to the Wedding Coordinator at the rehearsal, in individual envelopes.





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Wedding Reservation

_____ and

(please print full names of bride and groom)

wish to be married in the St Thomas sanctuary on the following day and time:

We have attached a \$200 check for the wedding deposit and agree to abide by the church regulations.

(bride's signature)

(groom's signature)