

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT SAINT MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS CHURCH DALLAS, TEXAS

This detailed letter is written for those good persons considering a wedding in the Christian Church and specifically at Saint Michael and All Angels Church. Writing in some detail, we have attempted to answer, in advance, some of the many, many, questions that arise as one considers marriage in the church. We do hope its length and detail will not discourage anyone, but only encourage the two things we seek: a magnificent wedding service and a strong, lasting marriage.

The first question you, as a couple, ought to ask yourselves is whether or not you want either a Christian marriage or simply a place in which to be married.

There is a risk that the deep and wonderful meaning of Christian marriage can be lost when the church is reduced to no more than a beautiful setting for a ceremony. It is vital for couples planning to be married in the church to understand that Christian marriage implies a belief that God, through Jesus Christ, will play an important role in their new relationship and throughout their life together and the wedding service is the beginning of that remarkable journey.

If you are seriously considering the implications involved in a Christian marriage, are willing to reflect deeply on these matters prior to marriage, and you have determined that these can and will form your common life, Saint Michael and All Angels is a remarkably fine place to be married!

And, if the latter is the case and you are prepared to begin the planning and marriage instruction that the church offers, then the following questions and answers may help you understand the specific procedures involved in marriage at Saint Michael and All Angels:

“Who may be married at Saint Michael and All Angels Church?”

Any man and woman, (neither of whom is divorced¹), if:

- they are sincerely committed to establishing a Christian marriage;

- one of the two parties is baptized;

¹If there has been a divorce of one or both parties intending to be married, permission of the Bishop of the Diocese of Dallas must be obtained. This upholds the Church’s pastoral responsibility to ensure that divorced persons fully comprehend the reasons for the failure of the first marriage. (More than half of second marriages end in divorce, often because of unresolved issues present in the previous marriage.) This process requires interviews with officiating clergy. Thus, when there is a divorce an initial meeting with the clergy will need to precede the regular steps in reserving the Church for the ceremony.

- one of the two parties is presently a member or whose parents or grandparents are members of Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church²
- they are willing to conform to the good standards of this letter and attend the sessions of education outlined herein.

How are wedding arrangements made?”

After reading this document and agreeing that marriage in a Christian context is the desire of both parties, the couple contacts Gayle Kesinger, Wedding Coordinator, asking any questions not answered herein and checking possible dates for the rehearsal and wedding. At this time, the couple may also make an initial appointment to meet with one of the clergy. (If there are any questions about the required information, you may wait until the meeting and the clergy will assist you.) **The couple then duplicates (keeping one copy) and returns the completed marriage forms which are attached. These forms consist of the Information Form and the Declaration of Intention to Marry, both of which are found on the Church web site. The couple will also be asked to sign a covenant statement that they will abide by all guidelines described in this document before we officially schedule a wedding at Saint Michael and All Angels.**

Please Note: No wedding can be scheduled until the accompanying forms are on file in the Parish Office. This means, of course, that **no wedding announcements may be made until the date and time are established. If one or both of the parties has been married before, no booking of a wedding can be made until the couple has met with a member of the clergy staff.** (When divorce is involved, announcements ought not to be ordered until the couple has received final permission from the Bishop of Dallas to be remarried.)

“Where do weddings take place at Saint Michael and All Angels Church?”

The main church, the Saint Michael Chapel, and the Bishop Moore Chapel are available for weddings. The church holds approximately 650 persons, the Saint Michael Chapel approximately 175, and the Bishop Moore Chapel approximately 50.

“What takes place at the initial clergy meeting?”

- The couple receives counsel from the clergy about the nature of Christian marriage. One

² We consider holding a wedding for “newcomers” if the couple has committed to making Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church their home by: signing up for and attending the next Discovery Weekend, by attending worship and other parish activities on a regular basis, and by making a written monetary pledge to Saint Michael.

might anticipate such a meeting lasting one to one and a half hours. If subsequent meetings are necessary they may be scheduled at the time of the initial meeting or by calling later for another appointment.

“How does the Wedding Coordinator help?”

- The couple reviews the particular details involved in their wedding (i.e., information and dates on our Christian Marriage Classes, time for the wedding, rehearsal, flowers, music, choice of lessons). After the initial meeting with the clergy, the couple may wish to spend some time with Gayle Kesinger, the Wedding Coordinator to discuss any additional mechanics relating to marriage at Saint Michael and All Angels Church.

“What do the Christian Marriage Classes involve?”

We at Saint Michael and All Angels Church feel it to be enormously important to offer to those being married here a significant opportunity to lay the groundwork for their life together as husband and wife. The Christian Marriage course entitled “Grant Them Wisdom,” includes:

- I. One session is with the clergy, at which time a broad overview of Christian marriage is offered to the couple. Speaking generally, the clergy seek to instill a rich understanding of the uniqueness of Christian marriage and the role it plays in the lives of two persons drawn together by a deep and abiding love.
- II. The reading of our basic text, "The Marriage Journey" by Linda Grenz and Delbert Glover. Copies are available in the Book Shop of Saint Michael.
- III. Attendance at three Saturday morning classes (see attached schedule).

It is assumed that the couple will attend all the classes prior to marriage, but if distance is a problem, other arrangements can be made. Classes may be taken in any order.

- † One class is taught by the Rector and addresses the meaning of the term “Christian Marriage.”
- † Another class is led by a licensed clinical psychologist and deals basically with the stages of growth in marriage and how they interrelate to the Christian faith. This class concludes with the administration of FOCCUS, a creative and helpful inventory of marriage potential. There is a follow up private meeting with the psychologist to review the results of the FOCCUS assessment. **Beginning with the Fall Session, 2008, there will be a \$150 charge for this class.**

- † The final class is a three hour session taught again by the Rector, a financial planner and by couples of the parish and represents their firm and profound reflections on how one really succeeds in making marriage prosper within the framework of the Christian faith.

All those experiencing these three sessions need to understand that they do not represent a “dogmatic” or “absolute” approach. In summary, the fundamental educational goal is not to promulgate a particular point of view, but to inspire good people to form a clear and deeper understanding of what is implied in the terms “Christian Marriage.”

- IV. Subsequent meetings with the clergy may be required, if there remain any pastoral issues, questions about the seminars, or concerns about the actual wedding service.
- V. A final meeting with the officiating priest is necessary to go over the particulars of the wedding.

“What is the nature of the service?”

Marriage at Saint Michael and All Angels is performed within the tradition of the Episcopal Church. Only the “Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” as contained in the Book of Common Prayer may be used as a liturgical form for the service and the final decision relating to all elements of the service rests with the Saint Michael and All Angels’ clergy person who will serve as the officiant. To assure the uniqueness of each service and the participation of the couple in the design and execution of their wedding service, each couple is asked to specify:

- the readings and/or lessons they desire,
- whether or not they desire the Holy Eucharist,
- what music (hymns, processional and recessional music, soloists, etc.) they would like incorporated

and a number of other particulars relating to the conduct of the service. These determinations are not terribly time-consuming and they can be explored in consultation with the clergy and/or the Wedding Coordinator.

“Who may officiate?”

No service of Holy Matrimony may be conducted at Saint Michael and All Angels’ without one of the parish clergy as the primary officiant. Episcopal clergy, clergy of other Christian denominations and non-Christian denominations may participate in the service, when that involvement seems justified. When clergy outside the staff of Saint Michael and All Angels

Church are involved, it is proper for the officiant to extend a formal written invitation to that person. Names, titles and addresses should be submitted to the officiating clergy person as soon as possible. In very rare circumstances, members of other area Episcopal parishes may plan a large wedding that cannot be housed in their parish church. Their parish priest may contact a priest on the staff of Saint Michael who, **with permission of the Rector**, may authorize use of Saint Michael facilities and the Saint Michael priest would co-officiate.

“What hours of the day and time of year are best for weddings?”

Weddings are not permitted during Lent and there are no weddings in Holy Week or the first three weekends prior to Christmas. Weddings are normally held on Saturday, and only under the rarest circumstances are weddings scheduled for Sundays. Weddings are generally scheduled from ten in the morning until seven in the evening, with generally a three hour interval between any other scheduled weddings.

“What is involved in the rehearsal?”

This is the opportunity, the night before the wedding and most often scheduled at 5:00 P.M., to review the details of the service. An enormously important part of the wedding preparation, it provides the opportunity to carefully “rehearse” the actual service and to answer the many last-minute questions that arise. The rehearsal lasts about an hour and involves walking the entire wedding party through the wedding service two or three times. Every effort should be made to have all the participants arrive on time for the rehearsal and remain until dismissed by the celebrant.

“What about music?”

The couple should contact the music office (214-363-5471, ext. 247) to schedule a consultation with the Organist and Choirmaster, which will be held within three months of the wedding. Music must be selected from the large body of works written for the church. Therefore, no secular music (**music written for non-church use or not involving the adoration of God, i.e. “The Wedding March”**) may be used.

Outside organists are not permitted. Choirs, soloists, and instrumentalists may be contracted at the time of the wedding consultation with the Organist and Choirmaster. No musical arrangements should be made prior to the music consultation. Please contact the music office with questions regarding fees for wedding musicians.

“Is there a bride’s room?”

Yes.

There are two rooms used for the bride and her wedding party. The Main Bride's Room located adjacent to the Main Church is used for Church weddings. Room 105 in the Episcopal School of Dallas is used for Saint Michael Chapel weddings. The Bride's Room is available for two hours prior to the service. If the bride's and/or bridesmaids dresses are being delivered, they must arrive by noon of the day of the wedding. It is the bride's responsibility to check the church to see if the dresses have arrived by this time. If not, the bride will need to contact the store and send someone to the church to wait for the dresses. This is not the church's or the Wedding Guild's responsibility.

If the bride and bridesmaids are bringing their own dresses, they can, of course, bring them at the time they arrive.

The Bride's Room will be locked after the dresses have arrived. The room will be opened **two** hours before the service. During the service the room will be locked. The bride will be responsible for having all personal belongings removed from the room immediately after the wedding. If another wedding follows and the Bride's Room is to be used, all personal belongings must be removed immediately after the service.

“What financial costs are to be contemplated?”

Facility use	(Church, Saint Michael Chapel)**	
	Pledging and Contributing Members of Record	\$ 650
	Others ***	\$1000
Music	(Music Department sets fee)	
Pew Torches		\$ 100
Marriage Class Fee (explained previously)		\$ 150

It is customary that a personal honorarium be made payable directly to the officiating priest, and/or the priest who has provided the marriage instruction. The suggested amount should be no less than \$250 made payable by name to the priest and presented at the rehearsal.

**The Facility fee is due within ten days of receipt of the wedding confirmation.

***Non-Pledging/Non-Contributing Members of Record during the last 12 months

“How are flower arrangements handled?”

Two arrangements only of fresh flowers are allowed in the church and the chapels. These must be in the liners of the church's containers. If desired, small arrangements of flowers may be placed on the ends of the pews by the center aisle. No other flowers or arrangements may be used. **No flowers or bows may be attached to the pew torches.**

Before a florist is chosen, the couple may contact the Wedding Coordinator for assistance in choosing a florist. Flowers are arranged by the florist selected by the couple, in consultation with the Wedding Coordinator, and then brought to the church or chapel. The Wedding Guild's Flower Chairperson will contact the florist approximately a week before the wedding to set a convenient time for the florist to pick up the liners.

Florists who are unfamiliar with the interior of the church or chapel are expected to acquaint themselves with both the setting and our containers.

In the case of two (or more) weddings scheduled for one day, the couples may contact each other to share the cost of the flowers if they agree on the arrangements they want.

The altar flowers are a gift from the bride and groom to the church. Following the wedding, flowers remain in the sanctuary. They may not be taken to the reception or any other location.

“Tell me about candles?”

Candles, provided by the church, on or near the altar, are used. No other candles (i.e. Unity Candles) may be used. (Pew torches may be used, but there is a fee involved. This should be discussed with the Wedding Coordinator.)

“And, about an aisle cover?”

No carpet cover or runner is used for the center aisle.

“What about photography?”

Marriage is a sacred and solemn event and the staff of Saint Michael and All Angels' labors very diligently to be assured that the two persons being married are prepared for that event and are not in any way distracted from its importance. To help accomplish this goal, flash photography may not take place during the course of the actual service. The following rules must be strictly observed:

1. Flash or still-light pictures may not be taken during the service or less than 40 minutes prior to the service. In the main sanctuary, this includes the balcony.

2. Flash pictures may be taken in the Bride's Room and vestibule prior to the service.
3. During the service, the photographer may take pictures from the balcony or vestibule using available light. Even with available light photography, there should be no noise or motion that calls attention to the photographer and thus detracts from the service.
4. Flash pictures may be made as the bride and groom come near to the door of the vestibule after the service.
5. Photographers and video cameramen are not allowed inside the church during the service, except in the balcony and immediately inside the double doors. In the chapels, they operate from the back row in a quiet, unobtrusive manner and without lights or flashes. **Only one photographer and/or one videographer is allowed inside during the service.**
6. **No video cameras are allowed anywhere in the Church or chapels except in the back immediately inside the double doors or in the balcony in the main Church. No video cameras are allowed in the front of the Church or chapels even if they are remote controlled.**
7. Photos may be taken in the church or chapels after the ceremony and after the congregation has departed. After the service, photography is limited to 20 minutes from the time the congregation has departed the sanctuary. (This is necessary because both the Wedding Guild and staff are limited by time in preparing for either the next wedding and/or the Sunday services which follow on the next day.) It should be remembered that the Wedding Guild consists of volunteers and every effort should be made to avoid keeping them waiting an inordinate amount of time.
8. Pictures in the church or chapel before the wedding must be coordinated with the Wedding Coordinator. Often guests arrive 30 minutes before the service. All picture-taking should be completed and bridal party out of the church or chapel, **40 minutes before service time.**
8. Guests who are a part of the congregation are not allowed to take pictures (flash or no flash) during the procession or the service. The families should share this information with their friends.

Photographers must be unobtrusive and cooperate with these regulations.

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make clear these rules to the photographer and all persons involved in the wedding. If a photographer or videographer breaks any of the above rules, he/she/they will not be invited back to Saint Michael and All Angels.

“What other wedding protocol should we know?”

General Assistance

The Wedding Coordinator will contact the bride one to three months prior to the wedding. Her role is to make sure the Church has all the information that it needs and to answer any logistical questions that the families may have. She also has a list of florists and photographers that are frequently used by couples at Saint Michael, and she can refer you to appropriate ones. The name and telephone number of the Wedding Chairwoman will always be available from the parish office. Under no circumstances will “wedding directors” (either close friends of the family or paid consultants) be allowed to assist with rehearsals or actual weddings. Assistance in these matters is provided by the members of the parish Wedding Guild who are well versed in weddings at Saint Michael.

Arrival Time

All members of the wedding party should arrive at the church not less than one hour or more than **two** hours before the scheduled time of the service. The groom and groomsmen should arrive already dressed.

Conduct

Under no circumstances will alcoholic beverages be allowed on the premises (includes parking lots) of Saint Michael and All Angels’. The couple and their families are responsible for explaining that any drinking prior to coming to church may result in our not being able to go forward with the service. The simple truth is that even the least bit of alcohol to “calm the nerves” is a mistake and inevitably takes away from the grace and meaning of the service.

Seating

Near the actual hour of the wedding, grandparents of the bride and groom will be seated. A few minutes before the service, the mother of the groom and then the mother of the bride will be seated. The seating of the bride’s mother is a sign that the wedding is about to begin.

Acolytes

Generally, acolytes will carry the processional cross and torches (just as at every other service in our church) into the Church ahead of the wedding party. Acolytes will be scheduled in accordance with our regular procedures for church services.

Procession

The entire wedding party (clergy, groom, groomsmen, bridesmaids, bride, and bride's escort) enters the church successively from the narthex and proceeds down the center aisle to their appointed places. The bride enters on the left arm of her father or other designated person.

There will be no unnecessary pause or shifting of music between the full procession, the entrance of the bride and the conclusion of the procession.

Standing

The bride's mother and the rest of the congregation stand when the processional music begins (rather than when the bride enters).

The congregation will sit, stand, or kneel at appropriate times throughout the service, under the direction of the officiant.

Ushers

There should be one usher for every 50 guests. Groomsmen may be used for this function.

Ushers should arrive at the church not less than one hour before the service.

Ushers are expected to expedite the seating of guests to minimize both congestion and noise in the narthex.

For weddings in the main church, guests are seated by the side aisles and directed to sit toward the center. The center doors are kept closed, to reduce noise in the church, until the families are seated for the wedding and the procession is ready to begin.

As one faces the altar, the seating on the left of the center aisle is often referred to as the bride's side of the church; the groom's side is on the right. Unless a guest requests seating on a specific side, however, ushers are asked to seat persons on either side, filling the pews toward the front first.

An usher normally offers his right arm to the woman in a party. Her escort follows them. No woman should be seated unescorted by an usher. Specific ushers need to be assigned to seat family members, and specifically the mothers of the bride and groom. After the seating of the bride's mother, no one is to be escorted to a seat. Latecomers are directed to use the side aisles to enter quietly and find a place near the back of the church.

Ushers may also assist in the Holy Eucharist by indicating when persons may approach the altar for Communion. Brief training for this function will be provided at the rehearsal.

Licenses

Important! The State License, issued by the Civil Authority, must be obtained by the couple at least three days prior to the wedding and not more than 30 days prior to the wedding. **The Priest must have the License at the rehearsal.**

The State License will be signed by the Priest immediately after the service and mailed to the appropriate authority. Details from the License will be recorded by the civil Authority and the License mailed back to the couple at the address recorded on the License.

Flower Girls and Ring Bearers

Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted, but they must be at least six years of age.

Service Leaflets (Programs)

The printing of service leaflets is the couple's responsibility, but the clergy and Wedding Coordinator are happy to assist you with examples, layout and content. **A draft of the service leaflet must be submitted to the Wedding Coordinator before printing.**

Nursery for Guests

Saint Michael does not provide a staffed nursery for weddings, nor (because of insurance liability) can we provide space for a nursery.

General Notices

Rice, rose petals, birdseed, and confetti create a serious problem. These may not be used or thrown on church property, inside or out. Saint Michael does not own or provide an entrance canopy. If desired, this must be provided by the wedding party and approved by the Business Office. If special traffic control officers are needed, arrangements must be handled between the wedding party and the City of Dallas Police.