



A Customary for Weddings at
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
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Canonical Requirements for Weddings at St. Paul's

To be married at St. Paul's Episcopal Church - Brady, Texas, one or both of the couple to be married (or at least one of their parents) must be an active member of St. Paul's for at least one year prior to their wedding date. Canon Law requires that at least one of the couple is a baptized Christian. Only an Episcopal priest in good standing with the Church may officiate a wedding at St. Paul's. A minister of another denomination may participate in the service but not officiate.

St. Paul's requires a minimum of 90 days' notice for weddings and allows scheduling up to one year in advance.

The Episcopal Church requires that the couple be instructed on the nature of Holy Matrimony. *The Book of Common Prayer 1979* states: "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" (BCP, 423). Adequate preparation is important in building a solid marriage. Pre-marital preparation will include service planning, roles and expectations, conflict, family history, budgeting, and raising children. These sessions may be led by the Rector or by a licensed counselor.

In the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, any priest must apply for and receive the Bishop's consent before officiating at a marriage in which either or both parties have been divorced. The Priest and divorced person(s) must submit a written request to the Bishop (at least 60 days before the wedding date), and it is frequently the case that more time is required for premarital counseling. The norm is one year from the date of the final decree of the divorce prior to remarriage in the Church. This request process will be handled by the Priest and couple as part of premarital counseling.

St. Paul's does not allow professional or volunteer wedding coordinators/planners/consultants to participate in the planning or executing of wedding rites.

St. Paul's does not allow marriages to be celebrated during the seasons of Lent (from Ash Wednesday through Easter Day), Sundays, holidays, or holiday weekends. Special circumstances can be discussed with the Rector.

Expectations of the Couple and their Families

All weddings at St. Paul's require a rehearsal, usually held the day or evening before the ceremony and beginning no later than 6:00 p.m. The rehearsal will last no longer than one hour. We ask that the entire wedding party, the parents of both spouses-to-be, and those formally seated attend the rehearsal. The wedding party must arrive promptly at the appointed time.

All members of the wedding party and extended families must be sober at the rehearsal and wedding. Anyone not complying with this requirement will forfeit the privilege to participate in the service, and that person's actions could result in the Rector canceling the ceremony. As such, no alcoholic beverages or illegal substances of any kind may be served or consumed anywhere on the St. Paul's campus prior to or during the wedding service.

Smoking/Vaping is prohibited in all of the buildings on the St. Paul's campus.

Couples who wish to have young children participate in the wedding should be mindful of the responsibilities required of both children and adults during the service.

Marriage License

Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal. A marriage license is *the* instrument that conveys to the Priest the authority of the State of Texas to officiate at the ceremony and to make the marriage legal in the eyes of the state. Without a marriage license, the Priest cannot perform the marriage. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the marriage license be brought to the rehearsal.

Arrangements for the marriage license should be made with the County Clerk before the ceremony date. In the State of Texas, a marriage license must be procured no less than 72 hours (three days) and no longer than 30 days before the wedding date.

The marriage license must be given to the priest at the rehearsal. The bride-and-groom-to-be and two witnesses will sign the marriage license at the rehearsal. The marriage license will remain in the possession of the priest until after the ceremony, at which time the priest will sign it and return it to the Office of the County Clerk. The County Clerk will return the original license to the married couple. At the time of the rehearsal, the spouses-to-be and two witnesses will be asked to sign the church register, as well.

Photography/Videography

St. Paul's rules concerning photographers and videographers are solely intended to maintain the dignity, beauty, order, and reverence of the wedding service. The detailed expectations of photographers and videographers set out below allow all participants to make the couple's wedding the worship service it is meant to be. We ask the spouses-to-be to present these guidelines to their photographer and videographer, emphasizing their expectation that the guidelines will be reviewed and followed.

Photographers and videographers are reminded that they are guests of St. Paul's and are working in the House of God.

Photographers and videographers should abide by the rules of St. Paul's.

Photographers and videographers will not go inside the altar rail and are to conduct themselves in a quiet and reverent manner.

Before the wedding

- If photographs are taken beforehand, everyone must arrive at the church and be dressed 1½ hours before the services.
- Photographs of the groom, his party, and family members can be taken 1½ - 2 hours before the ceremony in front of and inside the church.
- Photographs of the bride can be taken 1 - 1½ hours before the wedding in the Bride's Room, outside or inside the church.
- No inappropriate photographs of the bride or bridesmaids may be taken; they must be fully dressed.
- Photographers are welcome to take photos of the wedding party before the service; however, Ushers must be free to welcome and seat guests 30 minutes before the service begins.
- The rest of the wedding party should be finished with photography no later than 20 minutes before the beginning of the ceremony.
- Photographs may be taken in the Narthex before the ceremony.
- No photographs may be taken inside the church within 20 minutes of the ceremony beginning.

During the wedding

- Photographers are prohibited in the church Nave or Chancel during the wedding service.
- Guests are asked not to take photos during the wedding ceremony.

After the wedding

- Photos of the newly married couple leaving the Nave are permissible from the last pew or the Narthex.
- As a courtesy, pictures that include the Priest should be taken first.
- A limited number of flash photographs (not to exceed those that can be taken within 20 minutes) may be taken of the wedding party following the wedding celebration inside the church after the last guests have left.
- Please remember that the candles are part of the liturgy, will be extinguished after the ceremony, and will not remain lit during the photography period.

The Wedding Day

- All participants must be at St. Paul's at least one hour before the service.
- Guest books may be set up in the Narthex; however, they must be removed by a member of the house party 15 minutes before the wedding ceremony begins.
- The bride and wedding party are encouraged to bring their dresses themselves on the wedding day and not have them delivered the day before or the day of the wedding.
- The bridal party should arrive with hair and makeup done.
- The gentlemen should arrive in full dress for the wedding. This eliminates the possibility of the men arriving without all of their items of clothing.
- Make arrangements to provide light food for the separate spouse's-to-be rooms.
- Designate someone to clear personal articles from the dressing areas 30 minutes before the wedding.
- Personalized shopping bags are a good way to deal with the personal belongings of each attendant or wedding party member.
- Do not leave purses, jewelry, cameras, or valuables unattended in the dressing areas.
- St. Paul's does not assume responsibility for lost or stolen items.

The Authority of the Rector

The Rector of St. Paul's is responsible for all weddings at the church, which, without exception, will be done in accordance with *The Book of Common Prayer 1979*. As in all worship services of the church, the priest is charged with the final responsibility of determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details. All plans for the wedding ceremony must be made in consultation with the Rector.

Music and Worship Space

Music for each ceremony is planned in consultation with the Rector, who must approve all music and musicians.

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel—including seasonal hangings and ornaments—are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of St. Paul's; please do not disturb or remove them.

St. Paul's forbids any decorative activity that would damage the building and furnishings, such as driving tacks in the pews, using adhesive tape, and/or using materials that would leave stains on the pews and/or floors, etc.

Some of the rules regarding flowers/decorations in the church include but are not limited to:

- Aisle runners are not permitted.
- Flower girls may carry flowers but may not throw petals.
- No scattering of rice, birdseed, flower petals, confetti, bubbles, sparklers, or similar items – inside or outside the church or on the church steps/grounds.
- No flowers are allowed on the Pulpit, Lectern, or Altar.
- The florist or an appointed person will be responsible for distributing bouquets and pinning corsages and boutonnieres.

Any damage caused by decorators, florists, photographers, or others must be repaired to the satisfaction of the Vestry of St. Paul's Episcopal Church - Brady, Texas.

Please consult the Rector for suggested fees and honoraria.