

*Weddings  
at  
St. Martin's  
Episcopal Church*

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A Letter from the Rector .....	2
The Rector and Marriages at St. Martin's .....	3
Marriage in the Episcopal Church .....	6
The Wedding and Worship Service Coordinators .....	8
Scheduling Your Wedding and Rehearsal .....	9
Schedule of Fees .....	10
The Marriage License .....	10
Music for Your Wedding .....	11
Scripture Selections for Your Wedding Ceremony .....	12
Preparations in The Church and the Chapel .....	19
Flowers and Candles .....	20
• Florists .....	21
• Guidelines for The Church for Brides and Florists .....	22
• Guidelines for the Chapel for Brides and Florists .....	23
Photography .....	24
• Photographers .....	25
Videography .....	26
Children in the Wedding Party .....	27
The Day of the Rehearsal .....	28
The Wedding Day .....	29
Notes .....	31

## A Letter from the Rector

Dear friends:

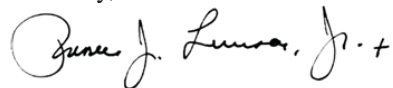
A marriage is a festive and joyous event in the life of a family and the Church. It was at a wedding in Cana in Galilee that Jesus chose to perform His first public miracle of changing water to wine! However, Christian marriage is to be entered into reverently and with the understanding that both discipline and dedication are required.

The Christian Church's teaching is that a Christian wedding is a life-long monogamous union of husband and wife, in heart, body and mind and is intended to provide an environment in which the couple support one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. It is therefore vital for persons planning to be married within the Church to understand that Christian marriage implies a belief in God, through Jesus Christ, and that this belief should be a cornerstone in this new relationship. Both persons should feel comfortable with these disciplines and dedicate themselves to the principals required by Christian marriage itself in order to pursue a wedding within the Church. As well, couples to be married at St. Martin's are expected to actively participate in the worship and life of the parish before *and after* the wedding itself.

It is a positive feature of the age in which we live that we speak honestly and openly about such matters. If, indeed, you have seriously considered the implications involved in a Christian marriage and determine that these can and will be applicable to your common life, you are ready to begin exploring marriage at St. Martin's.

The staff of St. Martin's wants to do everything possible to enhance this crucial step in your Christian journey. Please do not hesitate to call on us if you have questions!

Faithfully,



The Rev. Dr. Russell Levenson, Jr.  
Rector

## The Rector and Marriages at St. Martin's

A few years ago, in the middle of the Lenten season, my younger son was participating in a piano competition that was hosted by a non-Episcopal church. Laura and I happened to be waiting in a classroom while he registered. She was looking around the room and noticed it was decorated with many spring pictures, but also an Empty Tomb and the words "He is Risen!" on one of the bulletin boards. She turned to me and whispered, "Don't they know it is Lent?"

Of course, this particular denomination did not observe the Lenten season in the manner of some other rooms (including the Episcopal room) in God's house, but I had to smile. My wife grew up in the Methodist tradition, and while she still appreciates many of its customs, she was grafted into the Episcopal way shortly after we married.

I keep a kaleidoscope on my desk and use it as a tool from time to time. I sometimes find myself at odds when the way other people see things is much different from the way I see things. When the conversation is over and they leave the room, I will pick up this little tool and look through it. I remind myself that, with every turn, the picture viewed looks different but the picture presented is still illuminated by the same light! In sum, we don't always see things the same way as others and that is one reason (though there are several that are more theologically significant) that there are tens of thousands of Christian denominations in the United States alone.

With that rather long preface, we who are Episcopal do have a way of doing things. In Luke 4:16, we read that on the heels of His temptation, Jesus went back home and went to the synagogue, "*...as was His custom.*" In other words, it was Jesus' practice not just to worship, but also to worship in that particular way — a way that even Jesus was willing to subscribe to worship.

Every now and then, I have someone say to me, "Why don't we do this like they do?" (You can fill in the words of your choice!) And, while I am certainly open to doing new things, I am still drawn to the Episcopal way of worship because it says so much about who we are and what we value. One of the areas where I often see this questioning is in the preparation for marriage ceremonies. As many of you know, I recently experienced this with the marriage of my own daughter in June at the parish where I served for five years.

When I received the little booklet outlining policies and costs, I noticed that several things had changed since my leaving. But I knew my job, as father of the bride and not priest of a parish, was not to buck the system, but to embrace the customs — even if they did not completely align with the way I left them many years ago, or even my own beliefs and thoughts now.

Though every season is the wedding season at St. Martin's (with the exception of Lent), the summer tends to be so just a bit more. You may be having a child, grandchild, friend or co-worker who is planning a wedding here. If that is the case, they have already received the big book of guidelines! It is rather big, and much of it was written by my three predecessors based upon their experience. Every single guideline has a purpose and many were put into place based upon unfortunate experiences in the past that in some way detracted and/or distracted from the real meaning and purpose of a wedding.

Most of the issues of concern around weddings in our own day grow out of someone in the family wanting to create a much larger focus on the social aspects of the wedding rather than the spiritual aspects of the marriage. I must be completely honest here, as your rector, and as a priest, I have little — if any — interest in the role social aspects play in the marriage. The engagement parties, pre-parties, bridal and groom luncheons, rehearsal dinners and reception are all part and parcel of weddings — but they are absolutely not part of the marriage. They are nice memory-makers, but they are in no real way connected to the spiritual importance or vitality of the marriage bond.

This is one reason, and I cannot emphasize this enough, that we always tell couples and/or parents that your first phone call is not to the reception venue, but to the priest and the Church. I have sadly had to decline the opportunity to officiate at a wedding on a particular weekend because a couple makes the calls in the wrong order.

I have had young brides tell me of experiences they had in other weddings that they would like repeated in theirs; some things are part of our custom and some things are not. I remember Laura and I attending a wedding many years ago where the photographer snapped photos all during the service, actually telling the couple to “hold” certain poses for just the right shot. It was not an Episcopal Church

— we allow no photography in our services at St. Martin's for a reason.

It may seem like there are lots of guidelines around our wedding services, but they are all in place for good reasons — trust me. Where a member may bring the wedding experience of one to the marriage planning service, your clergy as a group bring the experience of literally thousands.

Many years ago I officiated at a service where every single piece of every detail of the wedding events and the marriage itself were planned as carefully as one of General Patton's battles in WWII! The mother of the groom was part of almost every discussion. It was sure to be one of the social — and spiritual — events of the year. I loved the couple dearly and knew them to honor our customs and that everyone hoped all the planning would make it a memorable event. It was. There was so much planning and preparation that, early in the service, the bride was simply overwhelmed with the pressure and passed out with exhaustion about five minutes into the service. Though we revived her she passed out twice more before the service was complete. The groom caught her the third time just after issuing his first kiss. They had to exit stage right rather than the traditional walk down the aisle! Much later we were all able to laugh about it a bit; in the midst of all our planning, we had not prepared for that!

So when it comes to planning it never hurts to ask, but don't be surprised if you hear the response, that is not our custom. And it is okay because customs are good things and even Jesus knew that. He chose to honor them so let's work hard to do the same.

## Marriage in the Episcopal Church

Marriage is a solemn, sacramental rite in the Anglican tradition. A sacrament consists of an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The principal part of the outward and visible sign of marriage is the lawful union of a man and woman brought about through the wedding ceremony. The inward grace of marriage is the presence and power of God given inwardly to the man and woman for them to use (when they do not have the power of themselves) to keep the vows and promises they have made. The “Catechism” in the *Book of Common Prayer* reads, “Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a lifelong union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.”

A wedding, therefore, involves not just a man and a woman, but also God and His Church – His people. Each Parish wedding is an act of worship of Almighty God and, as such, must reflect the character and traditions of the worshipping community known as St. Martin’s Episcopal Church and witness to the teaching of Christ and His Church concerning marriage.

### **The Policies, Rules and Advice in this Manual Have Three Purposes:**

First, to uphold the sacramental character of marriage and the reality that a wedding is a worship service of the Church.

Second, to enable an attitude of reverence and devotion by all participants at each marriage celebrated at St. Martin’s.

Third, to make sure that your marriage ceremony is done with dignity, beauty and order. Therefore, we remind you of the following guidelines:

The administration of the Sacrament of Matrimony is governed by the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Canons of the Episcopal Church, the directives of our Diocesan Bishop and our Parish policies.

The marriage ceremony is that of “The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage” as set forth in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

### **Prior to *scheduling a wedding* at St. Martin’s Episcopal Church:**

**The bride, groom or parent of the bride or groom must be a confirmed member of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church for at least one year prior to the wedding date being scheduled on The Church master calendar.**

Each wedding is under the Rector’s direction or the direction of the parish cleric designated by the Rector.

The Canons require at least 30 days notice before any weddings may occur.

*The Canons of the Episcopal Church require that each couple meet with a member of the clergy staff three times prior to their wedding for premarital instruction. St. Martin’s also requires attendance at a half-day Marriage Preparation Class. These classes are held several times during the year. A schedule will be provided to you. (Attendance at one of these classes counts as one of the three required meetings with the clergy member.)*

A full time priest must be requested to perform the marriage ceremony.

The Church also strongly recommends an appointment with a professional marriage counselor before meeting with your parish cleric. More information on suggested counselors will be provided upon scheduling your wedding date. Counseling can be an important and useful tool in any and all relationships. By encouraging couples to visit a counselor prior to marriage, we hope to normalize counseling, and provide a foundation that helps couples find healthy ways to work through differences.

The Canons require the Bishop’s consent for the second or third marriage of any person previously married if previous spouses are still living.

St. Martin’s parish cleric may not officiate at a “fourth” wedding, when the previous marriage(s) ended in divorce. However, there are other pastoral services we can offer a couple in this situation. Please consult the parish cleric with any questions you may have on this matter. If either party is divorced, the couple should immediately consult the Wedding or Worship Service Coordinator about the process for securing the Bishop’s consent. Normally, at least one month is needed to secure this approval; we cannot make a commitment to perform a marriage ceremony until the Bishop’s consent has been given.



Other Episcopal clergy – and clergy of other traditions – *may be invited by the parish cleric of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church to assist at a wedding. This invitation must be extended by one of our parish clerics.*

No marriages are celebrated from Ash Wednesday through Easter Day, in observance of Lent.

The use of music for all Episcopal Church services is governed by the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal, 1982*. It may not be altered or ignored for any reason. All music is under the direction of the St. Martin’s Director of Music and Parish Organist.

### **The Wedding and Worship Service Coordinators**

The Wedding and Worship Service Coordinators have been appointed by the Rector of St. Martin’s Episcopal Church to coordinate all information and to manage the practical arrangements for all Parish weddings.

The Wedding Coordinator and Worship Service Coordinator work closely together and are thoroughly familiar with all Parish wedding policies. The parish clerics handle the liturgical details concerning the wedding ceremony; the music department handles the arrangements regarding the music.

For answers to your questions involving protocol, décor, logistical arrangements or Parish policies, please consult either the Wedding or Worship Service Coordinator.

If you have a personal Wedding Planner helping you, she should plan to remain with the bride and bridesmaids in the dressing area to help them with personal needs and to keep them on a timely schedule for photography and for the beginning of the wedding.

The St. Martin’s Wedding Coordinator or Worship Service Coordinator will escort the bridesmaids and the bride into the church for the wedding processional.

### **Scheduling Your Wedding and Rehearsal**

The Wedding Coordinator keeps a master calendar of weddings at St. Martin’s Episcopal Church. Call the Church office at 713-621-3040 during the office hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, to set a date and hour for your rehearsal and wedding on our master calendar. Tell the Wedding Coordinator at this time which parish cleric you would like to conduct your ceremony.

Wedding dates are scheduled on a first-come basis. ***The couple must be engaged before reserving a date.*** Please note that weddings are only held on Saturday and not celebrated during Lent or on holiday weekends.

The Wedding Coordinator will email you a Wedding Information Sheet and request you return it (preferably by email) as soon as possible. When the Wedding Coordinator receives your completed Wedding Information Sheet, she will place your *tentative* date on the master calendar. The engaged couple should then request a full time priest to perform their ceremony and notify the Wedding Coordinator once this has been done. When your wedding fee and signed confirmation letter are received, your date will be *firm* on the Church’s master calendar. In accordance with our policies, if the Church does not receive the wedding fee within 14 days, you will be notified that your date will be dropped from the calendar within 10 days.

In your confirmation letter, the Wedding Coordinator will give you a checklist of persons on the Church staff that should be called and things to do to begin planning your wedding.

## Schedule of Fees:

The wedding fee schedule for each of the venues is as follows:

The Church – \$1500.00

The Chapel – \$600.00

Off Campus Wedding Ceremony - \$1,000

*The wedding fee (which includes the organist fee for a Church or Chapel ceremony) must be received by the Wedding Coordinator within 14 days of the bride receiving the confirmation letter. When your wedding fees are received, your date will be firm on the Church's master calendar. In accordance with our policies, if the Church does not receive the wedding fees within 14 days, you will be notified that your tentative date will be dropped from the calendar within 10 days.*

The Organist's base fee is included in the initial wedding fee. Instrumentalists, Soloists, Chamber Orchestra or Choir are not included and would involve additional costs. Arrangements may be made and fees can be discussed at your meeting with the Director of Music and Parish Organist and will reflect your specific selections.

An honorarium for the priest performing your ceremony is strongly recommended. Please consider the amount of time the priest has spent preparing for and performing your ceremony.

## The Marriage License

The State of Texas requires a marriage license to be secured from the County Clerk's office. You must provide a valid marriage license to the parish cleric at the rehearsal in order for your marriage ceremony to be performed. After the ceremony, the parish cleric will sign your license; it will then be mailed to the County Clerk's office where it will be recorded and the original will be returned to you in 4-6 weeks.

We urge you to call the County Clerk's office immediately and ask for the requirements you will need to fulfill to secure your marriage license such as: time limits, proof of identity and fee. In the State of Texas a marriage license must be procured no less than 72 hours (3 days) before the date of the wedding and the marriage must take place within 30 days from the date of the issuance of the license.

## Music for Your Wedding

The St. Martin's Director of Music and Parish Organist has been designated by the Rector to be in charge of all music, instrumental and vocal, at every service. Therefore, please do not negotiate in advance with anyone to be involved with the music of your wedding, as any music-related personnel must be first approved by the Director of Music and Parish Organist.

Call the Director of Music and Parish Organist during the office hours of 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, to arrange a meeting to discuss the music for your wedding. This meeting will be especially helpful to you in deciding what music is appropriate for your wedding.

When you meet with the Director of Music and Parish Organist or his assistant, he or she will offer many options for the use of the organ and other instruments and the appropriate use of vocal music and hymns during weddings. There is a schedule of fees for extra music services, which the Director of Music and Parish Organist will discuss with you at the time of your appointment.

A template for the liturgy of music is provided by the Director of Music and Parish Organist.

The liturgy and music listed in your wedding program must be approved in advance of printing by the parish cleric and the Director of Music and Parish Organist **at least two weeks prior to the wedding date. St. Martin's does not print programs.**

## Scripture Selections for Your Wedding Ceremony

You may make three scripture selections to be read during your ceremony: one Old Testament reading, one New Testament reading and one reading from the Holy Gospel.

Listed are the text selections; make one choice from each group:

Old Testament	Genesis 1:26-28 Genesis 2:4-9, 15-25 Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7
New Testament	First Corinthians 13:1-13 Ephesians 3:14-19 Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 Colossians 3:12-17 First John 4:7-16
Holy Gospel	Matthew 5:1-10 Matthew 5:13-16 Matthew 7:21, 24-29 Mark 10:6-9, 13-16 John 15:9-12

## Old Testament (choose one from this group)

### **A Reading from the Book of Genesis [1:26-28]**

God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." The Word of the Lord.

### **A Reading from the Book of Genesis [2:4-9, 15-25]**

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—then [the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.] And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." [Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him.] \*So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of



his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the [LORD God] had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.\* [Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.] And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. The Word of the Lord.

**A Reading from the Song of Solomon [2:10-13; 8:6-7]**

My beloved speaks and says to me: “Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth its figs, and the vines are in blossom; they give forth fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned. The Word of the Lord.

**New Testament** (choose one from this group)

**A Reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians [13:1-13]**

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love. The Word of the Lord.

**A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians [3:14-19]**

I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. The Word of the Lord.

**A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians [5:1-2, 21-33]**

Be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such

thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. The Word of the Lord.

**A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Colossians [3:12-17]**

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. The Word of the Lord.

**A Reading from the First Letter of John [4:7-16]**

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. The Word of the Lord.

**Holy Gospel** (choose one from this group)

**The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [5:1-10]**

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The Gospel of the Lord.

**The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [5:13-16]**

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” The Gospel of the Lord.

**The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [7:21, 24-29]**

Jesus said, “Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.” And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. The Gospel of the Lord.

**The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Mark [10:6-9, 13-16]**

Jesus said to the Pharisees, “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” And they were bringing children to him, that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them. The Gospel of the Lord.

**The Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to John 15:9-12**

Jesus said to his disciples, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” The Gospel of the Lord.

**Preparations in The Church and the Chapel**

The Church and the Chapel are “consecrated” spaces, set aside solely for the worship of God. These holy places are reminders of God’s presence and Kingdom on this earth. During all preparations, photography sessions, rehearsals and other times in the spaces, all present are expected to conduct themselves with reverence and to treat The Church and the Chapel and all its furnishings, fixtures and fabric with respect and care. The reverent conduct of the couple to be married and their families will set the example for the appropriate behavior of any unchurched members in the wedding party and guests. The regulations concerning decorations in The Church and the Chapel are designed to honor and observe the fact that the Church is a holy space and to protect the fixtures and fabric of the building.

About The Church and the Chapel:

The Church will seat 1,300 people.

The Chapel seats 60 comfortably; 70 if every pew is filled.

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel – including seasonal hangings and ornaments such as the Advent Wreath, Christmas greens and decorations and the Paschal Candle – are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of The Church and may not be disturbed or removed.

In decorating, nothing should be used that may cause permanent damage to any of the pews, carpets, etc. Tacks, tape or other material that might de-face the furnishings may not be used.

*Some definitions that describe the interior spaces of the church; these terms should be helpful to you and those participating in your wedding:*

*Chancel: the raised part of the Church where the parish clerics and choir sit.*

*Sanctuary: the part of the chancel containing the altar.*

*Nave: the main body of the Church below the steps where the pews are located.*

*Narthex: the “foyer” of the Church.*

## Flowers and Candles

A list of florists who have done the flowers for St. Martin's weddings in the past is provided on the next page. It is important that your florist understand the appearance, dimensions and lighting so that the flower arrangements will be adequate and appropriate for the space. The Wedding Coordinator is required to meet with your florist well before the wedding if the florist has not prepared flowers for a wedding at St. Martin's in the recent past. We strongly recommend that you employ a florist from our list; one who has successfully worked at the Church before.

Some of the regulations regarding flowers in the church:

***The bride and groom or their family must provide the altar flowers for the wedding. In addition, if the wedding is held in The Church, flowers must be provided as a centerpiece for the silver bowl on the round wooden table in the Narthex (foyer).*** Only The Church supplied vessels for flowers are to be used. Liner sizes will be given to the florist. The florist can bring the arrangements to The Church in the "liner" which will fit down into the vessel.

Only living flowers and plants may be used. No synthetic, silk, dried or any kind of floral substitutes are to be used anywhere in either The Church or the Chapel.

***Altar flowers and flowers in the narthex may not be removed from The Church after the ceremony under any circumstances, since they are considered to be a "gift to God" in honor of the marriage. Floral gifts are acknowledged in the upcoming Sunday's worship booklet. These flower arrangements need to last through the 6:00 PM Sunday service.***

The ornaments and appointments of the Sanctuary and Chancel, including seasonal ornaments like the Advent Wreath, Christmas greens and decorations and Paschal Candle, are part of the permanent liturgical furnishings of the Church and may not be disturbed or removed.

There is no provision for the use of a "unity candle" in the liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Flower girls may carry flowers, but may not throw petals.

Rice, petals, confetti, bubbles and similar items are not to be used in The Church, the Chapel, or anywhere on campus.

Guest books may be set up in the narthex but must be removed by a member of the wedding party 10 minutes prior to the start of the wedding ceremony.

Florists must deliver altar flowers by 10:00 AM on Saturday. The Wedding Coordinator will arrange the time with the bride and her florist.

This is a listing of florists who have worked at St. Martin's and are familiar with our guidelines and facilities. Your preferred florist must be approved by the Wedding Coordinator if not listed below. Please contact these florists directly.

### Florists

*Guidelines will be sent to the florist you select.*

Mark Anthony Florist, Mark Ruisinger, <i>florist of record</i>	713-524-7679
In Bloom	713-523-3553
David Brown	713-664-0466
Blossom's Floral Design	713-780-7838
Bergner & Johnson Design	713-662-3769
Aubrey Sellers	713-807-1919
Blooming Gallery	713-398-3633
Charles Ratcliffe	713-522-9100
Susie Miller, Houston Country Club	713-304-5552
Darryl Murchison Design	713-863-0400
John Hines Floral Design	713-523-0606
Jonathan Sage	713-227-7300

## **Guidelines for The Church for Brides and Florists**

*You must provide the two altar arrangements* which are on the rood screen behind the altar. The urns are 13¾" tall. The inside diameter at the top of the urn is 11" and the outside diameter at the top is 13½"; the diameter at the base is 10¾". Altar arrangements should be created in a standard mache liner size J-7 or J-8. Please do not build the altar arrangements on a flat tray. The width of the opening on the rood screen is 6'; the arrangement should be at least 4' wide. The height of the space to the tip of the center fleur-de-lis is 4¾' (57"). The arrangements should be at least 3½' high and should not touch the screen above. White and bright colors show up in the large church more effectively than soft subdued colors.

*You must also provide flowers in the large silver bowl* which sits in the middle of the large round table in the Narthex (foyer). The diameter of the liner that should be used is 17". The arrangement for the silver bowl should be at least 2' wide and 2' high. A large clear glass flower vase may also be used, and that arrangement should stand at least 2½' from the base of the vase to the top of the arrangement, and be at least 2' wide.

You may also have arrangements in the two side stands; these are wrought iron stands with silver urns. The stands are 41" tall and the urns are 15" tall. The inside diameter of the urns at the top is 9½", with the outside diameter at the top 13½" wide. These urns are footed and are 7" diameter at the base. The liner size is J-7.

You may also have flowers on the back wall of The Church under the stone arches. The pedestals that The Church uses for Festival Sundays are 42" tall and the urns on top of the pedestals are 28" tall. Anything shorter will not be visible. The florist will have to provide these for you.

The sconces on the columns will be lit for an evening wedding (after 5:00 PM).

There are no other provisions for ornamentation with flowers or candles in The Church.

There are no provisions for pew decorations in the nave area or aisle runners.

## **Guidelines for the Chapel for Brides and Florists**

You may use the arrangement that is in the Chapel. It is replaced each Tuesday and Saturday. You may also contribute additional monies to the Altar Guild Flower Fund to make the Chapel arrangement larger for your wedding. Please check with the Wedding Coordinator for further details.

You may provide the flowers for your wedding through an outside florist of your choice. (See page 21 for recommended florists and their phone number.)

The flower container for the Chapel is a footed brass oval shape. It is 4" tall, 4" wide, and 10" long. The liner size is J4 or J41/2.

The tallest tendrils should not reach higher than 24". They may not cover the bottom of the cross above the altar. The suggested width for the arrangement is 36" to 56". You may use one or both of the flower stands for the arrangement to sit on; those stands are 33" tall, 16" x 16" surface for the arrangement.

## Photography

Our rules and regulations concerning photographers are solely intended to maintain the dignity, beauty, order and reverence of the marriage ceremony. Our experience is that not all photographers understand the Episcopal Church liturgy and the high standards of dignity and discretion required of all present. The detailed expectations of photographers set out below allow all participants to observe the high standards, making your wedding the worship service it is meant to be. We require the bride and groom to present these guidelines to their photographer emphasizing their expectation that the guidelines will be reviewed and followed. The policies are as follows:

Photographers are reminded that they are guests of the Parish and are working in the House of God. Photographers should abide by the rules of The Church. Photographers should not go inside the altar rail and are to conduct themselves in a quiet and reverent manner.

### ***Before the Wedding:***

Photographs of the groom, his party and family members can be taken 1½ – 2 hours prior to the ceremony in the parlor, outside in the courtyard, in front of The Church and inside The Church.

Photographs of the bride can be taken 1 - 1½ hours prior to the wedding in the Bride's Room, outside in the courtyard 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 ceremony. Ushers need to be free to welcome and seat guests 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony; the rest of the wedding party should be finished with photography 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony.

Photographs may be taken in the narthex prior to the ceremony.

Photographs of the participants exiting the narthex are fine, but must be taken from within the narthex.

No photographs may be taken inside The Church after the candles are lit or within 45 minutes of the ceremony beginning.

### ***During the Wedding:***

Photographers are not permitted in The Church nave or chancel during the wedding ceremony. Time exposure (non-flash) photos from the center aisle of the balcony are permitted during the ceremony.

***Guests are asked not to take photos during the wedding ceremony.***

### ***After the Wedding:***

Photos of the bride and groom as they leave the nave of The Church are admissible only from just in front of the baptismal font. Under no circumstances may the photographer stand forward of the last pew.

**Photographers may spend no more than 15 minutes inside The Church posing and taking pictures of the wedding party.** The Church must be prepared for Sunday services and this time limit allows for that process to move forward. This also facilitates the wedding party's arrival at the reception.

If the photographer or videographer has any questions they should check with the parish cleric and follow his/her instructions.

This is a listing of photographers who have worked at St. Martin's and are familiar with our guidelines and facilities. Your preferred photographer must be approved by the Wedding Coordinator, if not listed below. Please contact the photographers directly.

### **Photographers**

Guidelines will be sent to the photographer you select.

Trish Strangmeyer	713-661-2131
Temple Webber	713-621-9320
Michael Martinez	713-355-5345
David Jones	713-521-1550
Karen Sacher	713-523-1150
Michael Carr	713-461-2862
Cantu Studios	713-723-0785
Steve Lee Weddings	713-443-7058
Christopher Bailey Photography	713-518-1452



## Videography

St. Martin's contracts with Heights Film Company for all videography during wedding ceremonies. Below are the general guidelines regarding videography. For more information regarding available services and packages, please contact Heights Film Company.

**Jason Fricke**  
**Heights Film Company**  
352 Garden Oaks  
Houston, Texas 77018  
Telephone: 713-234-1267  
Facsimile: 832-460-6493

In The Church, during the wedding, the video camera must be operated silently, without movement by the operator, and **without any auxiliary lighting**. The video set up must be in place 45 minutes prior to the ceremony and the operator in place at least 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony.

The video operator must be located either on the far left or the far right front row of the balcony during the ceremony and must remain in place until the wedding has ended. No additional microphones can be placed within the sanctuary or chancel of The Church. Appropriate dark clothing is to be worn by the video operator. **No auxiliary lights may be used.**

The video operator should have sufficient extension cords for power supply. Outlets are located near the mentioned positions.

By prior special request only: In The Church, there is a video stand which can be located next to a column in the nave of The Church. The operator must be wearing appropriate dark clothing and remain in place until the ceremony has ended. **No auxiliary lights may be used. This request must be made to the Wedding Coordinator prior to the day of the wedding so arrangements can be made for set up.**

## Children in the Wedding Party

The policy at St. Martin's is that children under five are not permitted to participate in the wedding ceremony.

We have this policy because we have learned from experience that children under five years of age cannot and should not be relied upon to conduct themselves in an adult manner during the ceremony. Remaining in place, standing still, not talking, not crying and not engaging in distracting behavior while in public view, is adult behavior and is usually more than a young child can manage. Please do not risk the possibility of an embarrassing situation for you and an innocent child.

We advise you, if you are using elementary school aged boys and girls in your wedding, to prepare them in advance for the clothing they will be expected to wear. Sometimes children, especially boys, will react negatively when presented with unfamiliar, unusual and elaborate clothing and refuse to wear it. We advise you to prepare the children in advance, if boys are expected to escort girls upon entering and leaving the ceremony.

It is our policy that the wedding rings are placed in the custody of the best man and maid/matron of honor. If there is a ring bearer, a representative ring is placed on the ring bearer's pillow. Experience has taught us that deviating from this policy carries with it the risk of a disrupted wedding.

**Flower girls and ring bearers must be 5-9 years of age, and must be accompanied by a parent at all times at the rehearsal and on the day of the wedding.**

## The Day of the Rehearsal

### *Prior to the Rehearsal*

If the bride is dressing at the Church, please arrange to have the bridal dress delivered to the Bride's Room before 3:00 PM on Friday.

### *The Rehearsal*

All weddings in The Church and all but very informal weddings in the Chapel, require a full rehearsal, usually on the evening before the wedding. For a very informal wedding in the Chapel, a casual walk-through beforehand may suffice.

The rehearsal will last no more than 45 minutes from the time it begins. Rehearsals are scheduled for 5:30 PM the day before the wedding. Your help is requested to inform members of the wedding party to arrive on time. The entire wedding party, including parents and all those to be formally seated, need to attend the rehearsal and arrive on time. Rehearsals must start on time because of other events that may be happening at the Church.

Bring these items to the Church on the night of the rehearsal:

1. Marriage License.
2. Shopping/Tote bags for each bridesmaid labeled with each name. Assign a house party member to collect these filled bags on the wedding day prior to the beginning of the ceremony and take them to their cars.
3. Clothing items: bride's shoes, bridal dress accessories, bridesmaid's dresses and shoes, etc. (if dressing at the Church).
4. Guest Book. Assign a house party member to collect the book 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony.
5. Wedding programs.
6. Honorarium for any extra musicians.
7. Honorarium for the officiating priest.

## The Wedding Day

All participants must be at The Church at least 1 hour prior to the ceremony. If photographs are taken beforehand, everyone needs to arrive at The Church two hours before the ceremony.

Gentlemen in the wedding party are to arrive in full dress, two hours before the wedding. Pictures will begin promptly after their arrival.

The bridal party will be allowed access to dressing areas exactly two hours before the wedding. If you have more than three bridesmaids, we strongly suggest that they arrive dressed, due to space and time concerns.

The bridal party should arrive with hair and makeup done. Remember, the photographs will begin 30 minutes after arrival of the wedding party.

Bridal consultants, dressers and other related professionals are welcome to assist in dressing. Bridal consultants function at St. Martin's as Parish guests under the direction of the Parish Wedding Coordinator.

Members of the wedding party may have snacks in the Parlor or Conference Room, however we do ask you to be mindful of spills and provide easy to eat foods or snacks. (Sandwich trays, if desired, may be delivered to the Parlor or Conference Room two hours prior to the ceremony for members of the wedding party.) If there is to be food in the Bride's Room, it will need to be located and eaten in the slate hallway next to the Bride's Room. Pitchers of ice water are provided by the Church and will be in the Bride's Room and the Parlor.

**No alcoholic beverages** are permitted on the Church grounds. Please remind all members of your wedding party of this policy.

Smoking is prohibited in all buildings on the St. Martin's Episcopal Church campus.

Do not leave purses, jewelry, cameras or valuables unattended in the dressing areas or in parked cars in the Church parking lot. The Church does not assume responsibility for lost or stolen items.







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