

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church, Rochester, New York
Guidelines for Weddings
Parish Members
585-442-3544

Congratulations on your upcoming day of great celebration. As you begin to plan your wedding day, we offer you this set of guidelines for your consideration. They are intended to aid you in planning your wedding service in such a way as to focus upon your committing yourself to one another before God.

The Canons of the Church (church laws) require that thirty (30) days notice must be given prior to the wedding date. If either the bride or the groom have been previously married and are presently divorced, an additional thirty days (30) must be added to the thirty-day notice. The purpose for the thirty-day notice and the subsequent thirty-day notice in divorce situations is to provide for a time of reflection. In the case of a divorced person, a copy of the divorce decree and any pertinent material must be submitted in accordance with the Episcopal Church's Canon on Divorced Persons. Concurrence for remarriage from the Diocesan Bishop must be obtained prior to the wedding service. During this time, premarital conversations with one of the clergy will be provided and is required for marriages taking place at St. Thomas'.

Arrangements

As you begin to make your plans, the first thing to do is to make sure that the church has an open date. Please contact the church office (442-3544) to begin the process of selecting a date for your wedding. Persons who are not members, as defined by the canons of the church, of St. Thomas' will receive a tentative date. Nonmembers are asked to worship for six months on a consistent basis and contribute to the support of the parish before a permanent date can be assigned. During the six-month period you can decide in what way you wish to be a part of the faith community of St. Thomas'.

All arrangements must be made with one of the clergy of St. Thomas' who are in complete charge of the rehearsal and wedding service. If you have any questions about your wedding service, please contact the clergy person who is officiating at your service. Musical arrangements can be made with the Music Director following your first session with one of the clergy.

Premarital Conversations

As you get closer to your wedding date, it is extremely important for you as a couple to meet with the clergy person officiating at your service for premarital conversations and planning the wedding service. These arrangements should be made during your first conference session with the individual clergy person who is officiating at the service. The number of sessions needed may vary from couple to couple and the clergy person officiating. The sessions are always conducted in an open, friendly and informal setting and are completely confidential between the couple and the clergy person.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is usually conducted on the day prior to your wedding between the hours of 5:00 P.M. and 7:00 P.M., unless other arrangements are made. Please consult with your clergy person as to who should attend the rehearsal.

The Episcopal Church requires that one of the clergy of St. Thomas' conduct the wedding and rehearsal unless arrangements are being made through another Episcopal Church and are agreed upon by the Rector of St. Thomas. However, assisting clergy of other denominations are always welcome, and the clergy of St. Thomas will be glad to extend an invitation.

The wedding party is asked to be prompt for both the rehearsal and the wedding service. The rehearsal should take between 40 - 50 minutes.

The Service

The Wedding Service is conducted in an atmosphere of worship since two people come before God and the worshipping community to exchange holy vows. In the Episcopal Church, the wedding service is a sacrament in which two people make their vows before God and the community of the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows. The service will take between 25 - 55 minutes depending upon music and whether Holy Communion is a part of the wedding service.

Service:

- Episcopal clergy are permitted to use only those services authorized by the Episcopal.
- Services will be held in the church or the chapel. The Holy Eucharist is always appropriate, and the whole congregation will be invited to receive. At St. Thomas, Holy Communion is offered to all persons attending the wedding service and it is not appropriate to have only the wedding party receive.
- The availability of dates and times are dependent upon the Church calendar. On Saturdays, the Church Nave and Chapel are available until 2:00 P.M. and after 6:30 P.M. Weddings are not allowed during Lent, Holy Week or Easter week.

Music:

- It is at the sole discretion of the church organist to determine if any other persons may be given permission to use the musical facilities of St. Thomas', in part or whole.
- The music should be chosen to reflect the service of worship. Popular music (such as show tunes, Top 40, Classic Rock, etc.) is not appropriate for the wedding service, but is best saved for the reception. The church organist will be happy to meet with you to discuss your wedding music.
- The church organist and the Rector have the final approval for music during the wedding service.
- The church organist plays for all weddings at St. Thomas'. Accompanying musicians or a soloist may be hired to assist in providing music for your wedding, but must be approved by the church organist.
- All special music to be used during your wedding must be purchased by you, unless it is within the repertory of St. Thomas'.

Flowers:

- If you wish to leave your flowers for Sunday morning's worship service in thanksgiving of the wedding, please contact Kathleen, in the Parish Office.
- Prior to discussing your possible arrangements with the florist, please discuss your thoughts with our Altar Guild chairs, Vicky Rupley or Ann Tamburrini, to discern what is allowable, the proper form of attachments, vases, etc.

The Building

- Aisle runners are not permitted.
- Unity candles are not used at St. Thomas’ and are suggested for use at the reception.
- The use of confetti, birdseed, and rice on the property of St. Thomas’ is not allowed.

Photographers:

- No flash photographs may be taken during the service. Available light photographs are permitted from the rear rood screen of the nave. The clergy will be happy to pose or recreate any portion of the ceremony after the service. Videography is permissible within specific constraints. You must check with the clergy person who is officiating concerning videography or it will not be allowed.

Reception Lines:

- A reception line may be formed at the church. However, a reception line is more appropriate at the reception.

Church Fees

All fees must be received by the Parish Office one week prior to the date of the rehearsal and should be included in one check made payable to St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church.

Church Organist (includes pre-wedding consultation and wedding ceremony)	\$200.00
- With soloist (additional rehearsal)	\$ 25.00
- With any additional rehearsals	as arranged
Building Usage	\$ 60.00
Altar Guild	\$ 40.00

Clergy:

- If at least one party in the marriage is a pledging member or their family pledges at St. Thomas’, there is no set fee for the wedding. However, a thank you offering to the officiating clergy’s Discretionary Fund via St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church is customary.
- For nonmembers, the fee is \$300 plus the charges above (covering the premarital conversations, the rehearsal and marriage ceremony). The fee may be discussed with the officiating clergy. Payment is made to St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church.

Dressing at the Church

- St. Thomas’ provides the North Porch for the preparation of the bride and her attendants prior to the service.
- The groom and his attendants are welcome to use another location in the church building.
- If anyone is dressing at the church, someone should be appointed to clean the dressing areas and to take care of any personal belongings.

Loss of Property:

- St. Thomas’ Church is not responsible for any loss or damage to property left in the building following the ceremony.