

ST. MARK'S IN-THE **VALLEY**
EPISCOPAL CHURCH & PRESCHOOL
A WELCOMING COMMUNITY OF FAITH

The Celebration and Blessing of Marriage at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley

GOD BLESS YOUR PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

May God bless your preparation for marriage and the planning of your wedding, one of the most important occasions in your life.

Here you will find an outline of our understanding of marriage and weddings within the life of the vibrant St. Mark's-in-the-Valley faith community, an active church, community center, and arts venue that serves the surrounding region daily.

A PUBLIC SERVICE OF WORSHIP THAT EXPRESSES YOUR COMMITMENT

One of the most challenging and rewarding of human relationships, marriage is often best lived in a community of faith where it can be recognized, valued, nurtured and supported by others. As you prepare for your wedding and after you are married, St. Mark's invites and encourages you to become involved in the life of this church or a church near your home.

We regard marriage as a sacrament—an outward sign of the inner working of God's love, reconciliation, justice, and compassion for you as a couple and for all people. Choosing to be married at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley is to ask for Christ's blessing on your union and for this sacramental character of marriage to be expressed in your wedding.

In the wider culture, the actual wedding in the larger "event" of a wedding celebration is increasingly viewed as a formality or technicality prior to a party. Nothing could be more foreign to the sensibility with which weddings at St. Mark's are viewed.

As a result, weddings at St. Mark's are profoundly beautiful and joyous.

First and foremost a public service of worship, wedding celebrations at church express the time-honored Christian beliefs and worship practices of the Episcopal Church. The wedding ceremony follows the pattern and sensibility of the marriage rite in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the principal worship book of the Episcopal Church.

Your wedding also expresses your own life as a couple and the life you live in the context of your family and friends. A wedding is self-expression in a larger spiritual, relational and public context.

ST. MARK'S-IN-THE-VALLEY IS AN EPISCOPAL CHURCH

- As Episcopalians, we experience God as eternal Creator, Risen Christ, and Sacred, Life-giving Spirit. We look to Jesus Christ as our Exemplar in faith and our Companion and Guide on our earthly pilgrimage.
- The Episcopal Church is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and traces its heritage to the Church of England and to the beginnings of Christianity.
- We believe in renewal of life, the complete and enduring forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting – all anchored in the undying love of God.

- The Bible is central to our identity and worship. We recognize that all texts, including sacred texts, are necessarily interpreted by their translators and readers, and thus commit to reading scripture critically and prayerfully in community.
- Our worship retains ancient structure and traditions now expressed in contemporary forms and celebrated in many languages.
- Our worship and our main patterns of thought about living as Christians in the world are drawn from our reflective and continual use of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Additional liturgical texts that are resonant with the shape of worship found in the *Book of Common Prayer* enrich our worship life.
- Lay people exercise essential and substantive roles in the ministry and governance of our church.
- Both women and men, including those who are married, are eligible for leadership as ordained ministers in the roles of deacon, priest and bishop.
- We see Baptism as a celebration and acceptance of the loving bond that God extends to every human being. Any person is welcome to be baptized at St. Mark's.
- Holy Communion may be received by all persons, not only members of the Episcopal Church.
- We affirm that marriage and similar committed relationships are unconditional, mutual, exclusive, faithful, and lifelong. Episcopalians also recognize that there is grace after divorce and do not deny the sacraments or any of the ministry of the church to those who have been divorced.
- We strive to love our neighbors as ourselves and to respect the dignity of every human being.
- We recognize that we are imperfect as individuals and that our endeavor to live as a faithful church community is imperfect.
- People are welcome to all of the sacraments, including marriage, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation.
- We welcome those of other Christian denominations, other faiths and those who do not see themselves as people of faith to full participation in our services and community life.
- We affirm that issues such as birth control are matters of personal, informed, prayerful conscience.
- We recognize that God is active in what we experience and understand as an abundant, multi-cultural and multi-religious world. Often we benefit and grow from spiritual practices and insights that have originated within other religious or spiritual paths.
- Within our faith community, we celebrate our unity in Christ while honoring our differences, always putting the work of love before uniformity of opinion.
- Generally speaking, we are positive, rational, mystical and relational – connected with God, within ourselves and with others.
- All are welcome to find a spiritual home in the Episcopal Church.

PREPARING FOR YOUR WEDDING AND YOUR MARRIAGE

We want to help you to prepare for your wedding on **both a practical level and in terms of what is substantively happening in your lives individually and in**

your life together at your wedding. We care that attention also be focused on your marriage and your preparation for your future together.

In reviewing this booklet, you will see attention to many pragmatic details. The conversations we will have in preparing for your wedding will reach beyond those details. Don't be misled by these initial considerations; we know they are mostly not at the heart of the matter when it comes to your wedding and your marriage.

Contacting St. Mark's and scheduling your wedding date

If you continue to be interested in the celebration and blessing of your marriage at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley, **please complete the online "Wedding Inquiry."**

We will contact you in response and schedule an initial conversation with the priest who will officiate at your wedding. During that meeting, the date of your wedding will be set and held on our parish calendar for two weeks.

Following the initial meeting, it will be time for you to complete the full wedding information request and, if you are not a member of St. Mark's, to offer a deposit donation of \$500. (There is further information about donations on page 12. St. Mark's is able to do its work in the world because of the ongoing generosity of its members and others who support what we do.)

The State of California requires:

- **A valid marriage license.**

You have to get a valid California marriage license in order to be married at the church, or elsewhere. You do not need to be a California resident to marry in California. Your license may be from any county in California. Please consult your local county clerk's office for the requirements for obtaining the license, their hours of operation, etc. (the information is usually available online). Be prepared to apply in person, as a couple. Licenses are valid for 90 days from the date of issuance. You are encouraged to obtain the license well before the wedding day, as this will ease the burden of the tasks you are completing in the days immediately preceding your wedding date. **Please bring your license to the wedding rehearsal.**

If you have been married previously, the state will ask you to present proof of the end of your previous marriage (dissolution, divorce, annulment or death).

The Episcopal Church asks:

- That both parties have the right to marry according to the laws of the State and consent to do so freely.
- That at least one of the parties to the marriage be a baptized Christian.
- Two witnesses to attest to the wedding ceremony.
- Premarital conversation and preparation (see below).
- Signing of the Declaration of Intention (text available online or from the priest).
- Signing the parish register with the priest.
- If there has been a previous marriage, a record of dissolution, divorce, annulment or death, and evidence of provision for any minor children.
- If your ceremony is a Blessing of a Civil Union, you will be asked to show a certified copy of your marriage license.

Premarital Conversation and Preparation

Please plan several sessions, typically 3-4, of premarital conversation and preparation with the priest.

These sessions provide time for you and the priest to become acquainted; plan the wedding ceremony; discuss the meaning of marriage; discuss the strengths and challenges of your relationship; and connect more deeply to the life of the church.

These conversations are **not evaluative or determinative** in terms of your decision to be married. The aim is to open the richness of the experience of marriage and to give you a clear sense of your strengths as a couple as you move into the future together.

The priest will offer a relationship inventory that will help you consolidate your understanding of your relationship and will help you see clearly your strengths and what each of you contributes to what “works” for you as a couple. You complete the inventory confidentially online and then meet with the priest who assists you in interpreting and discussing the report generated by the program from your responses.

These sessions are scheduled at the mutual convenience of you and the officiant.

Couples who reside outside the Santa Ynez Valley region may be able to have some of their preparation conversations near their home with another priest or counselor. The priest may be able to help with making a connection.

THE PEOPLE AT ST. MARK'S WHO SUPPORT YOUR WEDDING

Several members of the church, lay and ordained, clergy, staff and volunteers will play roles in the planning and presentation of your wedding.

The Community Programs Assistant, **Silvia Lucatero**, is typically your first point of contact. She will receive information you provide and review the calendar to schedule your wedding rehearsal and the ceremony itself. She will be a point of contact for some logistical details.

The clergy officiant (priest), **The Rev. Randall Day**, will serve as your primary support as you move forward with your planning and preparation, engage in premarital conversations, and work out the details of your ceremony. The priest will conduct the rehearsal, and, on the wedding day, will guide the service. The priest will guide the work of the musicians, the florist, the photographer/videographer and others.

The Director of Music and Organist, **Beverly Staples**, will assist you with music planning and will guide you in the choice and coordination of any outside musicians. She will also provide the music for your wedding ceremony, should you choose to have organ and/or piano music.

Additionally, a dedicated team including our Altar Guild, administrative staff, and custodial staff all contribute to assuring your wedding fulfills the high standards we have for all church events.

About Wedding Planners and Consultants.

Many couples find it helpful to employ an outside wedding planner or consultant to help them plan the reception and many other arrangements that are often made in the months and weeks leading up to a wedding. If you choose to employ a professional wedding planner or consultant, that person can be of considerable assistance to you in coordinating many of the details surrounding your celebration.

The priest and others at St. Mark's are available to discuss ways to provide smooth transitions from and to events before and after the wedding ceremony at the church with your wedding planner.

The priest is responsible for all arrangements at St. Mark's concerning the ceremony: the music, the seating, photography/videography, movement and placement of participants, the start of the ceremony, lighting, sound and flowers. The wedding planner is welcome to attend the rehearsal, and the priest may consult with her or him to designate certain mutually-agreed functions, though she or he has no set role during the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony itself.

St. Mark's can offer you referrals to wedding planners with whom we have worked in the past.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

The church with the chapel **accommodates 220-250 guests**, the chapel alone can seat 30. Once your wedding ceremony is planned on the parish calendar, no other activities will be scheduled in the church at the same time. Photographs of the church interior and exterior are available on our website. The church is not air-conditioned. Though it is well-insulated, mid-afternoon on a summer day can be very warm in the church. On summer days, either 10 am or 4 pm or after are the best times to schedule your ceremony.

Construction and repairs

Historically and theologically, churches are like a living organism; they grow and are continually under construction and renovation. Because this upkeep is an ongoing process, it is possible that your ceremony will be scheduled at a time when repairs are being done – though **we intend to do them when weddings are not scheduled**. We will alert you of known, scheduled work. However, we cannot always predict the location of scaffolding or other equipment many months in advance or when repairs become necessary on an emergency basis. Please recognize that your wedding may fall at one of these times. In such a case, we can advise you on good places to take pictures and how to best maximize the space or minimize the impact.

The Church is “open” during weddings

Because our tradition considers a wedding “an act of public worship,” the church remains open during wedding ceremonies.

Art Installations

St. Mark's supports the arts in our region: visual, dramatic, musical, and performing. St. Mark's-in-the-Valley hosts art installations throughout the year. Art installations will remain “installed” during wedding ceremonies

THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR WEDDINGS

As you probably realize, this framework has been formed by the experience of hundreds and hundreds of weddings over many years, as well as our constant concern for the importance of your wedding, your safety and that of your guests.

Scheduling weddings

The canons (church bylaws) of the Episcopal Church require at least 30 days advance notice of a wedding and St. Mark's prefers a minimum of 90 days to complete the pre-marital preparations described here.

Wedding ceremonies are **most often scheduled on Saturdays**; starting times available for Saturday weddings are 10 am through 1 pm and 4 pm through 6 pm. In certain cases, weddings may be scheduled on weekdays (Monday through Friday) subject to availability on the church calendar.

St. Mark's does not schedule weddings on Sundays, on any day in the season of Lent or in Holy Week (40 days before Easter). We generally do not schedule weddings during the month of December (the season of Advent).

Who may be married at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley?

The Episcopal Church asks that at least one member of the couple be a baptized Christian. It is not necessary to be a member of the parish congregation, or to be an Episcopalian, to be married at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley.

Divorced persons may be married in the Episcopal Church. You will be asked to show a certified copy of your divorce decree(s) (a pdf is fine) and evidence of provision for any minor children. If you do not have a certified copy of your divorce decree, please request one from the county clerk or recorder in the county in which the divorce decree was issued and recorded (this will likely be useful beyond this purpose for St. Mark's). The priest will ask for the blessing of the Bishop, a pastoral gift that affirms your freedom from previous vows as you enter new ones. There is **no process of judgment or scrutiny** to receive this blessing as in the Roman Catholic Church or other denominations. A minimum of 60 days is required for the necessary communication.

The Blessing of a Civil Marriage

If you have already been married in a civil ceremony, you may have your marriage blessed in the church. The service is very similar to the marriage service, with some minimal changes in wording. The ceremony may be very simple, or may involve all the elements of a wedding. Please show a certified copy of your marriage license.

Marriage without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation

St. Mark's-in-the-Valley welcomes all people to all of the sacraments, including marriage, without regard to gender identity or sexual orientation. All couples are treated equally by the Church, as they are equally loved by God.

Who may officiate?

The priest and Rector of St. Mark's, **The Rev. Randall Day**, typically officiates at weddings. In rare circumstances, the Rector may invite another priest of the Episcopal Church to officiate. Also, in rare circumstances, an ordained minister of another denomination or faith tradition will be invited to participate in a service at which the Rector is officiating, perhaps offering a reading, prayer, or remarks during the service. In all cases, the Rector presides at the declaration of consent, the exchange of vows (including the blessing and giving of rings), and the blessing of the couple. We ask any invited assisting or visiting clergy to consult well before the ceremony.

YOUR CEREMONY

In discussing your vision of your wedding, it is sometimes a challenge to both focus on the in-depth significance of a wedding and marriage generally while having life-long impressions of what a wedding is from media and literary sources. Also, family members and friends often are very free with suggestions of what a couple “has to do” on their wedding day for it to be “the best day of your life.” The priest and the church staff will work with you to hone and realize your essential vision with their extensive experience of having planned many weddings in a variety of settings as well as in this particular space and within the rich liturgical tradition of the Episcopal Church.

Most important: your vows

The one substantial thing that you as a couple do on your wedding day, the essential act that makes a wedding a wedding, is **saying your vows**: making clear and life-long promises to one another. Saying your vows, specific and all-encompassing, are the means through which you become married. All else that becomes part of your wedding (guests, music, readings, honor attendants, special clothes, a reception and so on) is arranged around the heart of what you do on your wedding day: making your explicit, enduring promises.

The priest will show you the pattern of time-honored vows and some different ways in which vows can be worded. The goal is to state your promises to one another in a way that frees you for future growth as individuals and as a couple. Another way to look at it is to say vows that will be equally true on your wedding day as on your 10th, 20th, 30th and all other anniversaries.

Many couples want to speak during their wedding in their own words. While this is sometimes referred to as “writing our own vows,” this part of the ceremony can be incorporated in sharing a “wedding letter” to your beloved, followed by an enduring and encompassing vow like the one in the marriage liturgy. If you do want to speak in your own words during your wedding, please discuss this interest with the priest who will assist you in incorporating it into your wedding.

Planning your own wedding (not someone else’s)

Weddings vary a great deal and many different weddings can be equally good. We suggest a goal of having your own wedding, not someone else’s. A wedding can become overly elaborate or acquire elements that one doesn’t really want or care about (can be very costly). Perhaps a friend, a family member or a vendor says, “you have to do this.” In truth, having a simple wedding with a solid liturgy at its center is often the most elegant and meaningful wedding. Sometimes a very elaborate wedding fits perfectly – as long as it is “yours.”

The best day of your life?

Occasionally people feel under pressure to have “the best day of your life.” Ideally, a wedding opens the door to many better days that wouldn’t have been possible without the committed presence of your beloved in this singular relationship. Yes, your wedding day is very special to you, your family, your friends and in the life of the church. It doesn’t have to be burdened to be “the best day ever.”

Initial questions for planning your wedding

Some initial questions will help you in your first stages of planning and location choice:

How many guests do you anticipate having?

How many people do you want to have in your wedding party?

Would you like your ceremony to include the Holy Eucharist (communion)? St. Mark's-in-the-Valley has an open table policy, which means that all persons are invited to receive the bread and wine (or simply a blessing, if they choose) at Communion. Occasionally, only the couple or the wedding party receive communion.

With the Eucharist (communion) the service is typically 45 minutes long, without, it is around 30 minutes. The service can be lengthened with additional readings, prayers and music, if you choose.

Would you like organ and/or piano music (included in your donation)? Outside musicians (additional cost)?

Which biblical readings do you find meaningful and how many would you like to include in your ceremony? A document with suggested readings is available on our website. Additional readings not from scripture are sometimes appropriate and included, in addition to a biblical reading or readings. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible is the text used for scriptural readings. If you are having Communion, one reading from the Gospels is included.

The text of the marriage ceremony

The text of the marriage ceremony is based on the liturgy: *The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage* found beginning on page 422 of the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church.

The priest will share with you some variations of the wording of that ceremony and some alternative prayers that can be incorporated in the shape of that liturgy.

Of course, weddings for same-gender couples use a version of the ceremony that is appropriately worded.

During the pre-marital meetings, the priest will give you a copy of the service and the various alternatives.

Music for your ceremony

Wedding music plays an important role in helping friends, family, and the couple celebrate the blessing of marriage, combining both the joy and sacredness of the event. In choosing music, please keep in mind that the choices should reflect not only your relationship as a couple and with God, but also be suitable for the entire community you have invited to gather. There is a broad variety of music to choose from.

To help you discover just the right combination of music (and additional musicians if you so choose) for your wedding, please plan to spend time with our Director of Music, **Beverly Staples**, who will be happy to **meet with you** personally, **exchange ideas** about your service, **play through some selections**, and **help you put it all together**.

Choosing who will play your music

Typically, the church provides music and musicians for weddings. St. Mark's is blessed by being able to offer our two significant instruments: a 22-rank Schoenstein pipe organ, built for this church, and a Steinway grand piano. Other instruments in addition

to the organ may be used. Flute, harp, trumpet and string ensembles are among the most popular and fitting with the church's acoustics.

The church maintains a relationship with fine vocal soloists, including **Nichole Dechaine**, our Director of Vocal Music, choirs and other musicians in the area. The church can assist in arranging such musicians when they are requested.

Recorded music is not in line either with our ethos or the church's resonant acoustics.

Please discuss any outside musicians with the Director of Music no later than two months in advance of the ceremony. Use of outside musicians will generally require an additional rehearsal with our organist/pianist. The rehearsal typically takes place the day of the rehearsal or ceremony and an additional donation for that time is appropriate. Should you wish to have Choral Music, please discuss the possibility with the Director of Music two months in advance.

Musicians, including the church organist, will not necessarily be present at the wedding rehearsal.

The Bell

Following or during the procession out, the church bell may be rung for 3-5 minutes. Please indicate to the priest if you would like this additional element. It can be run either automatically or swung (by a family member or friend) using the rope.

Altar flowers

Altar flower arrangements are not required for your ceremony but are welcome in the church for all festive occasions. The general thought is that they are never more elaborate than for major festivals like Christmas or Easter.

Should you desire floral décor, only fresh flowers and greens cut from live plants are appropriate. Altar flowers are typically left at the altar after the wedding ceremony in thanksgiving for your marriage, and as a contribution to Sunday worship in the church.

Pew flowers and supplementary flower arrangements

Pew end arrangements of fresh flowers and greens cut from live plants are welcome.

Pew end arrangements may be attached to the wooden pews in the nave and to the wooden chairs in the Chapel. Please use only non-marring attachments (no permanent adhesives; all attachments and adhesives have to be removed). Pew-end arrangements which include candles are not practical and pose a safety challenge. Please plan with your florist to remove pew end arrangements and other supplementary arrangements soon after the ceremony (same day); they may be taken away by the couple.

Attendants may carry bouquets or baskets containing fixed flower arrangements, but no loose petals. Please don't plan for loose flower petals or other materials to be strewn on the floor, both for safety reasons and because flower petals stain.

Sharing Flowers

If more than one couple is being married at St. Mark's on the same day, we will let you know so you have the opportunity to discuss sharing flowers. Sharing flowers can result in a significant saving for both couples and allows the florist and the Altar Guild more time to set up the arrangements.

Other decor

There are candles at the altar and they are lit for a wedding ceremony as they are for all worship services. “Unity candles” and related actions (tree planting, sand pouring) are not part of Episcopal Church tradition and tend to detract from the truly significant act of exchanging wedding vows and the giving and receiving of rings.

Cloth or paper runners or other floor coverings present an unsafe hazard for both guests and the bridal party.

Please do not include the release of doves or butterflies, sparklers, flower petals, rice, birdseed, bubbles, or confetti or other objects to be strewn or blown anywhere inside or outside the church as they present environmental concerns, safety hazards, and cleaning problems.

Church furnishings

Church furnishings and fixtures are in place to support the worship of life of the parish, including your wedding. Please do not plan to move or remove any of the church furnishings or fixtures. Vestments and other altar appointments appropriate to the occasion will be provided by the Altar Guild.

Photography and Videography

While couple frequently end up with hundreds or thousands of images of their wedding, in the long-run, very few, sometimes only one or two have enduring value. Still, photography and videography are always a part of even the simplest of weddings.

Because the wedding ceremony is first and foremost a worship service, St. Mark’s has guidelines regarding professional photography and videography. Also, wedding guests are invited to simply experience and enjoy the ceremony without the distraction of cameras or digital devices.

Once the service is over, anyone is welcome to take pictures of all sorts. By prior arrangement, parts of the ceremony may be re-enacted for the purpose of photography.

Both photography and videography by professionals are permitted within our guidelines. All photographers and videographers are asked to sign an agreement signifying that they understand the guidelines and agree to abide by them.

Guidelines for photographers and videographers

The general principle behind church wedding photography and video is summed up in one word: **unobtrusive**.

Still photographers and videographers are welcome to work with available light; please do not use flash or other lighting.

No flash photographs are permitted during the ceremony. The entering procession, only, may be photographed with flash until it passes the font in the center aisle.

Photographers/videographers are asked to avoid entering the center aisle or in any way coming between the members of the procession and the congregation or clergy.

Photographs of the ceremony itself may be taken from the rear of the center aisle or from the chapel (if the chapel is not being used for seating).

Photographs and video may be taken under the direction of the priest for a prescheduled time before and for 15 minutes following the ceremony.

Please position any video camera that is visible to the congregation on a tripod and leave it on the tripod during the entire ceremony.

An attendant may stand near a video camera tripod to adjust focus as necessary, but may not otherwise move during the ceremony. In the nave, the tripod is located to the side of the altar sanctuary, within the chapel rood screen. In other locations, the priest will point out appropriate places, usually in a doorway to the side of the action. The videographer is asked to make an appointment with the priest to visit and plan this use of the space no less than one week prior to the ceremony.

Please turn on cameras on tripods at least 10 minutes prior to the beginning of the ceremony and don't move them after that time.

While there is no specific dress code for photographers or videographers, please keep in mind that this is a dressy occasion in a dignified setting. A dark business suit, dress, or similar clothing is appropriate. Shirt sleeves, tennis shoes and other informal attire are not appropriate.

The service leaflet

Worship services at the church employ a simple service leaflet or "program," so that the congregation can participate in the liturgy. **If you want this simple service leaflet the priest will prepare it and it is included in your donation.** It will contain all the information required for participation, and it will list the names of the participants in your ceremony. You will be given the opportunity to review a draft before it is printed, early in the week before the wedding. The church uses a consistent template for these leaflets.

If you want something more elaborate, you may choose to print and produce your own service leaflet, at your expense. Any additional inserts may be produced by an outside vendor. While there are no limitations on the design elements of a program that you produce, please use an established template for the marriage rite portion of the program that the priest will give you for your printer, with all necessary service information.

If you use an outside designer and printer, please consider having the priest review a draft. Please include: "Please refrain from photography, video or still, during the ceremony."

Your wedding rehearsal

In most cases, your wedding rehearsal will take place the day before your wedding ceremony and is scheduled at the time we place your wedding on the parish calendar. St. Mark's will try to accommodate the preferred date and time for your rehearsal. The church calendar and the priest's schedule permitting, rehearsal times may be planned with the priest to begin anytime from 10 am through 5 pm. **It is important for all to be present on time;** advise your wedding party in a way that will assure they are prompt (some couples give a time 30 minutes prior to the start).

The wedding rehearsal is **conducted by the priest and takes one hour.** You, and all the participants in the ceremony, will have the opportunity to walk through the entire ceremony, ask questions, and work out any logistical details. Being familiar with the space and with what is asked of participants during the ceremony helps make all members of the wedding party more comfortable and helps to ensure a gracious and memorable ceremony.

All participants in the ceremony attend the rehearsal: maid/matron of honor, best man, bridesmaids, groomsmen, ring bearers, flower girls, readers, ushers, anyone who will walk in procession, and visiting clergy. Everyone should be ready to begin

at least five minutes before the scheduled time for the rehearsal, gathering together inside the church. Often, a rehearsal dinner or other gathering follows the rehearsal and starting on time means arriving on time for that next event.

The wedding planner is welcome to attend the rehearsal, and the priest may consult with her or him to designate certain mutually-agreed functions, though she or he has no set role during the rehearsal or the wedding ceremony itself. The organist (or other musicians) will not necessarily attend the rehearsal.

Bring your marriage license with you to the rehearsal. Having your marriage license in hand the day before the ceremony helps to ensure that both your and our legal obligations are satisfied. Also, the priest and church staff can complete the necessary paperwork before you arrive for the wedding ceremony.

A note about children

Children are welcome at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley without qualification. Children are always welcome in worship, and weddings are no exception. We are mindful that children have their own needs and sensibilities, and that those needs and sensibilities can change on a dime! Some will feel excited and honored to participate in the ceremony; others may feel uncomfortable and anxious.

We invite you to discern the needs and sensibilities of children and honor them in your wedding plans. As you plan your ceremony, the priest can advise you about ways to involve children that meet their needs while fully including them. At the rehearsal, they will have the chance to walk through the ceremony and experience the spaces. We remain **flexible as to their ability to participate** and to accommodate their needs in ways that maintain the best and most relaxed environment for all involved.

YOUR WEDDING DAY

The wedding party **arrives 45 minutes to an hour before the scheduled time** of your wedding. All the careful planning and preparation with your partner and family, the church clergy, staff, and others has been done. Now you can relax and enter fully into the experience of your wedding.

Dressing and preparation areas

The parlor and parish office are available for the wedding couple and their attendants to gather prior to the ceremony. Both are air-conditioned, a full-length mirror is available, and restroom facilities are adjacent. Drinking water is available. Please do not bring food or other beverages.

No alcohol or unprescribed medications before your wedding

Please do not bring alcoholic beverages to the church and do not drink alcohol or take other mood-altering medications prior to the ceremony, except under treatment and supervision of a physician or other professional. Unwisely in our culture, we often dull our senses at key moments, fearing the feelings that naturally come at important points in our lives. Regrettably, the result can be an unnecessary disaster or not being able to be fully present for or to clearly recall this pivotal event.

Considering the level of personal and financial investment in and the special nature of your wedding celebration as a whole, you may want to carefully consider the role that alcohol will play in all of the various related gatherings. At the least, consider

planning for truly attractive non-alcoholic alternative beverages for guests who may choose to either space their alcohol intake or who need to drive or simply don't drink alcohol.

Parking

Parking is quite easy at St. Mark's-in-the-Valley in our 70-car parking lot and on adjacent streets.

Your wedding begins

About 20 minutes before your service is scheduled to begin, the organist will play a selection of prelude music as guests are seated. Promptly at the scheduled time of your ceremony, the procession begins and you and your partner take this life-long step into a marriage intended for your mutual joy.

The priest mails your signed license to the county clerk

After the wedding, the priest will mail the signed license to the appropriate county clerk. Your marriage license will then be filed in the county where you obtained your license, and you should be able to obtain a certified copy from the clerk 4-6 weeks after the wedding date. When you get your marriage license, you will receive instructions on how to get a certified copy of your marriage certificate.

ST. MARK'S STACY HALL AND COURTYARD AS A RECEPTION VENUE

While your reception may be anywhere in the area, if you choose to have your reception at St. Mark's, we have the facilities. Our parish hall, Stacy Hall, offers a beautiful and flexible space that will accommodate 150 guests for a sit down dinner reception and a lovely courtyard space for a welcome reception. To provide for more people, the courtyard can be used for seating and the hall for the welcome reception. The donation for using Stacy Hall and the courtyard is \$1,500 for non-members and includes tables, chairs and many other furnishings and fixtures that you will not need to rent separately. Also, transportation and parking for guests is greatly simplified.

If you decide to use Stacy Hall for your reception, we have a list of several preferred caterers who have experienced using our kitchen and our venue. St. Mark's can provide building use guidelines, should you choose to use Stacy Hall.

DONATIONS

The donation for your wedding covers a variety of fixed costs, personnel costs, stipends, and contractual obligations of the church. Your donation includes premarital planning and preparation conversations with the priest and parish staff, a clergy honorarium recognizing time spent planning, rehearsing and officiating, the organist's planning, rehearsal and performance time, the work and supplies of the Altar Guild, a simple printed program, and use and maintenance of the church, including rehearsal time and space, dressing areas and time for pre and post-wedding photography. Your donation recognizes that the church is here because many members are regularly donating money, time and skill year by year and season by season. With your donation, you join in and do your part, participating with the members in supporting the ongoing availability of the church for both non-members and the wider community.

For non-members, the donation is \$3,000. Members (contributors of record for at least the two prior years) make a donation of their choice, while providing a stipend for musicians.

Because your wedding ceremony is considered to confer an intangible religious benefit, **your wedding donation is tax deductible** to the extent allowed by law. You will receive a statement for your offering stating that “St. Mark’s-in-the-Valley is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. No goods or services were provided other than intangible religious benefits.”

A non-refundable, tax-deductible deposit donation of \$500 for non-members secures and confirms your date on the church calendar. The deposit is transferable if you need to reschedule your wedding ceremony to another available date; it is not refundable if you cancel.

Offering your donation

You may give your deposit donation and subsequent donations by cash, check or credit card (in person or online). Our Business Manager, **Leslie Zuller** is the contact person for donations. Non-members, please plan to make your entire donation by four weeks prior to the wedding date.

CONTACT FORMS AND OTHER RESOURCES ONLINE: **smitv.org**

You will be able to find contact forms and other resources on our website: **smitv.org**. St. Mark’s welcomes hearing from you and discussing your marriage preparation, wedding planning, and the material in this handbook. **We are grateful** for your interest in the celebration and blessing of your marriage at St. Mark’s.

