



The Wedding Customary

St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church
Blowing Rock, North Carolina

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage

The union of two people in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God's will, for the gift of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.

—*Book of Common Prayer*, page 422 (amended 2018)

A Wedding at St. Mary's

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage at St. Mary of the Hills is offered for members of the parish and their children. Others may be considered at the discretion of the Rector. A member is understood to be someone who frequently and regularly attends worship and contributes to the mission and ministry of the parish. Membership must be established six months prior to the wedding date.

Marriage is a sacrament of the Church, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, which celebrates through public witness the commitment that two persons make to one another. St. Mary's uses the *Book of Common Prayer*, 1979, and the alternative rites approved for use by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, for all services, including weddings. This marriage liturgy provides a framework that will enable the couple to express and celebrate publicly their life together.

Preliminary Arrangements

Those desiring to be married at St. Mary of the Hills should contact the Rector as soon as possible, before making any plans or setting a date for their wedding. A minimum of 60 days' notice is required for all weddings; a minimum of 90 days' notice is required if remarriage is involved.

The Marriage Information Sheet, included with this packet and available from the parish office, must be returned before the church can be reserved for a wedding. The Marriage Service Notes document will be completed in consultation with the officiating priest and needs to be finalized no later than one month prior to the service.

Weddings at St. Mary's are normally scheduled on Saturdays, between 11:00am and 5:00pm. No wedding will be scheduled to begin later than 5:00pm. One hour is typically scheduled for a wedding, with no more than 30 minutes allotted for pictures in the Church following the service.

The wedding rehearsal will be held on the day before the service, usually beginning at 4:00pm. The rehearsal will begin promptly and will last one hour. All persons involved in the service should be at the rehearsal.

Maximum capacity in the Church for a wedding is 150 people, including all members of the wedding party.

Premarital Conferences

Premarital conferences with a priest are required of anyone desiring to be married in the Episcopal Church. Generally, this involves four conferences with a priest on the St. Mary's staff. In marriages involving a divorced party, the premarital process is modified to respond to this pastoral reality and the Church's canonical requirements.

Officiants and Other Ministers

Marriages performed at St. Mary's have clergy on staff as the primary officiant. If it is desired that another priest or minister take part in the service, the Rector must first be consulted. The Rector will then invite the priest or minister as he deems appropriate and coordinate parts of the service accordingly.

The Order of the Service

All weddings at St. Mary of the Hills will conform to the rites found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) or one of the other alternative rites approved by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. In preparation with the priest, the couple will have conversation about the liturgy and make decisions about the options presented, such as biblical readings, prayers, and music.

The Holy Eucharist is normatively celebrated at weddings. All baptized Christians present who receive communion in their own church will be invited to receive Holy Communion. Chalice bearers may be provided by St. Mary's and will be assigned to volunteers, if the couple has no preferences.

An acolyte is needed in the service, lighting and extinguishing candles, leading the procession, and assisting the priest. If the couple does not have persons they would like to perform this function in the service, a St. Mary's acolyte may be assigned.

The Prayer Book rite for The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage lasts approximately 40 minutes to an hour, depending upon whether or not Eucharist is celebrated and the number of people receiving communion. A homily is offered at all weddings at St. Mary's.

Wedding Guild

A liaison from the church's wedding guild will be arranged to work with you in the planning and preparation for a wedding at St. Mary's. This liaison will be at the rehearsal and the wedding to assist the wedding party and officiating priest, and will be present at the wedding to assist ushers, organize the procession, etc.

Outside wedding coordinators are not necessary but are most welcome to assist in the dressing areas, etc. The liturgy is under the sole direction of the officiating priest; therefore, the wedding coordinator will not be permitted to assist in the rehearsal or service in any way.

Readings from Holy Scripture

One or more of the following passages from Holy Scripture is read at the ceremony. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the readings. These readings may be viewed online at <http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearABC/SpecServ/Marriage.html>.

Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)

Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)

Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)

Tobit 8:5b-8 (New English Bible) (That she and I may grow old together)

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)

Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named)

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)

Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)

1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said. Appropriate Psalms are Psalm 67, Psalm 127, and Psalm 128.

Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)

Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light...Let your light so shine)

Matthew 7:21,24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)

Mark 10:6-9,13-16 (They are no longer two but one)

John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)

Music

After your third meeting with a priest, you will be connected with the Organist/Choirmaster to arrange for an appointment for consultation with him no later than 30 days before the service. Marc Longlois has been appointed by the Organist/Choirmaster as organist for weddings in the parish. He will be available to consult with and assist the couple in creative and appropriate musical selections. If Mr. Longlois is not available to play for the service, the Organist/Choirmaster will connect you with an organist familiar with St. Mary's.

There are several points in the wedding liturgy at which instrumental music and congregational singing is appropriate, and the organist is available to help you explore these possibilities. All music for the service should be suitable for a sacred occasion and be liturgically appropriate. Secular, "pop", and/or recorded music is not permitted for sacred liturgical events in the parish.

Use of a musical instrument other than the organ must first be approved by the Organist/Choirmaster and is subject to the church's restrictions, requirements, and additional fees.

Service Bulletins

St. Mary's will provide a simple bulletin for the service. An example will be provided by the officiating priest during the premarital conferences. A proof will be provided to the couple prior to the service; all edits and changes must be submitted to the officiating priest no later than one week prior to the service, so that printing can be completed.

If the couple chooses to print the bulletin outside the church, a final proof must be submitted to the officiating priest no later than two weeks prior to the service and approved before printing begins.

Flowers

A local florist may be used, provided they are familiar with our flower guidelines. Containers are available for their use in the flower arrangements. The florist should consult the parish office for delivery of arrangements on the day of the service.

Additional flowers may be displayed in other areas, such as the Foyer or Parish Hall. Altar flowers from a Saturday wedding will remain in the church for Sunday services. An acknowledgement will be printed in the bulletin.

Silk or other artificial flowers may not be used. Altar flower arrangements should not be higher than 24 inches. The retable on which the flowers sit is 21 ½” deep and 90” long; flowers may not exceed these dimensions.

An additional arrangement for the Foyer table is permitted, as well as flowers to mark the reserved family pews, so long as they do not block the aisles. Ferns, potted plants, candelabra, and other decorations are not permitted in the church.

Photography

Photography is permitted before, during, and after the service, subject to the policies attached to this customary. The couple is responsible for providing the photographer with a copy of these policies.

The general guidelines for photography are that cameras must be silenced, flash may not be used (with the exception of the couple exiting the church), and no one may move into the aisles for pictures during the service. A maximum of 30 minutes is allotted for pictures in the church following the service.

Videography may be permitted during the service from a stationary camera placed behind the last pew in the church. Portable microphones will not be used.

License

The marriage license is to be obtained from the Office of the Watauga County Register of Deeds (842 West King Street, Boone), or from the Register of Deeds in any county within the State of North Carolina, within sixty days of the service. Please bring the license to the parish office as soon as it is obtained, so that it is not lost.

The officiating priest will complete the license with you and your witnesses at the rehearsal and mail it in following the service. Included with the packet from the Register of Deeds office will be instructions on obtaining a certified copy of the license following the wedding.

The Day of the Service - Arrival at St. Mary's and Dressing Arrangements

If it is desired that one or both parties dress at the church, space may be made available two hours prior to the wedding. These spaces must be cleaned and returned to their previous condition immediately after the service. We suggest that a snack and drinks be provided to the wedding party during afternoon and evening weddings.

Wedding parties that elect not to dress at the church should plan to arrive no less than one hour prior to the start of the service.

Alcohol and Smoking

Alcohol may not be consumed by the wedding party prior to the service. Marriage is both a legal contract and sacramental rite; all parties must be sober and of good judgment. If one or more of the parties is under the influence, the wedding will not take place as scheduled.

St. Mary's is a tobacco-free facility. Smoking, as well as the use of e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco, are not permitted in our buildings or on the grounds.

Personal Belongings

The couple should arrange for a person not in the wedding party (friends or relatives) to gather and remove all personal belongings including purses from dressing and waiting areas. This takes place as soon as the members of the party are dressed, always before they leave the dressing area to enter the service. Laundry baskets are excellent for this task. St. Mary's assumes no responsibility for the safety of your personal items.

Reserved Seating

Pews will be reserved at the front of the church for family members. Please inform the officiating priest ahead of time how many family members will be seated in the reserved area, so that adequate seating may be provided.

Attendants

Attendants (bridesmaids, groomsmen, ushers, etc.) should be persons who can participate and be supportive of the purpose the ceremony. Because of the constraints of the space at St. Mary's, no more than 4 attendants will be permitted to stand in the front for the duration of the service. Larger wedding parties will be seated in the first pew on either side of the congregation. Dress for attendants should be appropriate for the worship in the church.

Children, who are able to walk by themselves, may be permitted to attend the bridal party; however, they should be seated with a parent, or other adult, after the procession and may not stand with the wedding party during the liturgy. Flowers may not be scattered in the church aisle during the procession.

No Rice

Rice may not be used anywhere inside the buildings or on the grounds of St. Mary's. Birdseed is an excellent substitute outside and must be distributed by large bowl, rather than in individually wrapped packets.

Banns of Marriage

Banns (announcements) of marriage may be published at public services for three Sundays before the wedding. The tradition of the banns began in France in the ninth century and spread throughout the western Church and today is a way to honor and pray for two people as they enter this important aspect of their lives.

Church Receptions

For a reception at the church, you must furnish all of your own supplies, except tables and chairs on hand at St. Mary's. The church is not responsible for the storage of any food or refreshment prior to the day of the reception. Church receptions are not to exceed three hours from the conclusion of the service. The church's reception area in the Parish Hall has a maximum capacity of 75.

The Facility Use Policy and Application for Use of Facility are available from the parish office. Space will be reserved only after these forms have been returned.

Alcoholic beverages may be served at a reception in accordance with the church's alcohol policy. Liquor is not permitted, and equally attractive, non-alcoholic beverages must be readily available.

Wedding Fees

Deposit* (returned following wedding if facility is left clean and undamaged)	\$250
Use of Church Facilities (includes cost of staff, bulletins, cleanup, etc.)	\$600
Organist** (check payable to organist – Marc Longlois)	\$350
Reception in Parish Hall	\$500

** Deposit is due at time of reservation. All other fees should be paid no less than 30 days prior to the service.*

***Checks are payable to 'St. Mary of the Hills', with the exception of the organist.*

Please note that fees are not considered tax-deductible contributions to St. Mary's.

Photography and Videography Policy

Families and couples cherish wedding pictures. To aid in having quality pictorial records, St. Mary's requires that certain rules and guidelines be followed.

It is the policy of St. Mary's that:

- a) One professional still photographer, with assistant if desired, may take pictures:
 - 1) of preliminaries and preparations before the service begins. All photos in the church and yard must be completed one hour before the service. Photos may still be taken in the dressing areas.
 - 2) of the entry to the church – flash is approved for this shot. Standing at the back of the church, photos may also be taken of the parents and attendants entering the church with no flash.
 - 3) of the couple leaving the service. This shot is to be taken from the back of the church and may be done with flash. Standing at the back of the church, photos may be taken of the wedding party as they leave the service with no flash.
- b) Photographs may be taken by the professional during the service from the back of the church, behind the last pew of seated guests, with a “silent” camera. No flash is allowed at this time.
- c) After the postlude, and when half the guests have left, please begin setting up for the after-ceremony photos. The Wedding Guild will bring the wedding party back to the church for pictures. No more than 30 minutes are allotted for post-service photography.
- d) Videoing of the service is possible, provided it does not interfere with or distract from the ceremony. St. Mary's is very limited in the number of good camera locations. One, on a tripod at the back of the church, may be used. All cameras must be able to run on battery.
- e) No photographs or videos may be taken during the service by family, friends, guests or photographers other than outlined above.
- f) Photographers should not allow anyone to pose standing on the needlepoint kneelers at the church altar.

Please provide this policy to your photographer and videographer.

The officiating priest will make contact with the photographer and videographer before the wedding. If the photographer/videographer has any questions or concerns, they may contact the officiating priest.

