

*Wedding Policies and Procedures*

*For*

*The Church of the Ascension*

*2525 Seagler Road*

*Houston, Texas 77042*



*Osborne*

# THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION

2525 Seagler Road

Houston, TX 77042

713-781-1330

## WEDDING CHECKLIST

- \_\_\_ 1. Arrange date and time of wedding and rehearsal with the Wedding Coordinator.  
Contact Pat Cole at [ascensionwedding@aol.com](mailto:ascensionwedding@aol.com)
- \_\_\_ 2. Notify wedding party of dates and times of wedding and rehearsal.
- \_\_\_ 3. Look over contents of Wedding Packet.
- \_\_\_ 4. Contact the church organist about music.
- \_\_\_ 5. Contact the Ascension wedding coordinator about plans and arrangements for your wedding **before** contacting a florist.
- \_\_\_ 6. Contact florist and give him or her the “Policies For Wedding Florists”.
- \_\_\_ 7. Contact photographer and give him or her the “Photographer’s Instructions”.
- \_\_\_ 8. Review your wills, insurance policies, etc.
- \_\_\_ 9. Make an appointment for medical exams.
- \_\_\_ 10. Obtain license (valid for 30 days with a 72 hour waiting period).
- \_\_\_ 11. If desired, make a dedication of your wedding flowers to appear in the church bulletin on the Sunday following your wedding. This may be done through the wedding coordinator. Altar flowers must be left for the services on Sunday.
- \_\_\_ 12. Type a list of participants, their roles, and deliver to the wedding coordinator.

## **PLANNING YOUR WEDDING**

The wedding ceremony is primarily a worship service; therefore, all plans for music, decorations, photography, and the order of service must be in accordance with the doctrines and traditions of the Episcopal Church, and they must be approved by the wedding coordinator. An outside wedding coordinator may be employed, but all plans are subject to the rector's final approval.

### **MUSIC**

The organist and choirmaster, Charles Jordan, will be happy to help you select the music for your wedding. He can be reached at 832/746-5535 and e-mailed at [cjordanjr@comcast.net](mailto:cjordanjr@comcast.net). Mr. Jordan will also help you select appropriate soloists and other musicians. If outside musicians are to be used, music selections must be approved by the rector.

### **DECORATIONS**

**Before consulting with a florist or making any plans for decorating the church**, it is important that you read the pages entitled "Policies for Wedding Florists". It is recommended that you meet at the church with the florist and the Ascension wedding coordinator to discuss your plans, but if this is not practical, be sure to give the florist a copy of the decorating guidelines.

### **ORDER OF SERVICE**

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage from the Book of Common Prayer is the liturgy used for weddings in the Episcopal Church.

### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Be sure to give your photographer a copy of the "Photographer's Instructions"**. It is important that the photographer understands and agrees to the restrictions on flash photography during the service.

### **ROLE OF THE ALTAR GUILD**

The Altar Guild will help with many of the details of your wedding. It is important that you get in touch with the Altar Guild wedding coordinator, **Pat Cole** in order to schedule your first meeting with the rector. She can be contacted at [ascensionwedding@aol.com](mailto:ascensionwedding@aol.com)

Since there is no bride's room, you and your attendants may dress either in the choir room in the church, or in a room in the parish life building. The wedding coordinator will be happy to show you the rooms that are available. She will also meet at the church with you and your florist or wedding coordinator, if desired, to discuss your decorating plans. On the day of the wedding, an Altar Guild member will open the church and the parish hall for the florist, the photographer and the wedding party two hours before the wedding. Ordinarily, the wedding coordinator and assistant coordinator attend the rehearsal and wedding, where they are available to light the candles if there is no acolyte, pin on corsages and boutonnieres if needed, and help the wedding party line up to process down the aisle. Outside wedding coordinators are welcome but will need to work in conjunction with the rector and the wedding coordinator provided by Ascension Church. All procedure of the rehearsal and wedding is under the sole direction of the rector. No professional wedding consultants or friends of the participating families may supersede the church's requirements.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION AND HELPFUL HINTS FOR YOUR WEDDING DAY**

The bride and her attendants usually dress at the church, but the groom, groomsmen and ushers usually arrive already dressed for the ceremony. They may sit in the parish hall, along with any other family members and friends who arrive early. Non-alcoholic refreshments may be served in the parish hall, but not in the church or any other room in the parish life building. The bridal gown may be delivered to the church the day before the wedding between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., as long as Ascension's wedding coordinator is aware of this. The dress may also be brought to the rehearsal. **If the dress must be delivered the day of the wedding, or if the florist or anyone else must arrive early that day, arrangements will have to be made with the Ascension wedding coordinator ahead of time, as the office is not open on Saturday, and the church will be locked until 2 hours before the ceremony.**

### **THE WEDDING CEREMONY**

Before the ceremony, guests tend to gather in the narthex of the church to visit with family and friends. No later than 15 minutes before the ceremony, grandparents, family, and honored guests should be seated by the ushers in the designated pews. Ushers should then proceed to seat all guests. Enclosed is a chart to plan where family members and honored guests are to sit, and which ushers are to seat the grandparents and the mothers. About 5 minutes before the ceremony, the mothers are seated (groom's mother first), and the wedding party lines up to process down the aisle, with the bride on her father's left

arm. As soon as the priest, the groom, the best man and the groomsmen have taken their places, the bridesmaids will process, cued by the wedding coordinator. Please decide **before** the rehearsal how they will line up – usually according to height. The maid or matron of honor walks behind the last bridesmaid, and the ring bearer and flower girl walk directly in front of the bride. The Episcopal Church does **not** use the “half step” or “hesitation step” procession.

### **AFTER THE CEREMONY**

Immediately after the ceremony, guests tend to gather in the narthex again to visit. Since additional pictures still need to be taken at the front of the church, it is important that the wedding party **not** start talking with guests in the narthex. This holds up the photographer and other staff (who have to remain and prepare the church for Sunday services), and delays the reception indefinitely. To prevent this from happening, the bride and groom and attendants should not pause in the narthex after coming down the aisle, but should **immediately** return to the front of the church, going back through the side door to their left and walking behind the choir stalls. Picture-taking can then begin right away, and there will be plenty of time to visit with family and friends at the reception. **While the pictures are being taken, it is important to designate someone to see that all areas used by the wedding party are cleaned up, and all belongings removed.**

## **POLICIES FOR WEDDING FLORISTS**

*Give a copy of these instructions to your florist.*

The ceremony of Christian marriage is a sacred occasion in which a man and a woman enter into a solemn covenant before God. Their declaration is witnessed and supported by families, friends, and members of the community of faith. As with any religious service, nothing must detract from the central purpose of worship, which is to offer praise and prayer to God; therefore, all plans for flowers and decorations must be in accordance with the traditions of the Episcopal Church and are subject to the approval of the rector. Based on experience, we have established the following policies. They are intended to help make each Ascension wedding a safe, joyous and God-centered occasion, in keeping with the spirit of Christian marriage and Christian worship.

### **DÉCOR AND DECORUM**

The sanctuary of Ascension Church is itself an offering of praise to God. The cross above the altar, the vaulted ceiling, beautiful stained-glass windows and pipe organ are all designed to draw worshippers' thoughts upward to things divine.

The richness of this classic style requires little enhancement. Thus, in order that nothing may detract from the sanctuary's inherent stately beauty, wedding decorations should be kept as simple as possible.

### **FLOWERS AND GREENERY**

The customary floral decoration for all worship services is a single large flower arrangement, which is placed on a shelf behind the altar. This shelf measures 30" wide by 10" deep. For a wedding, the colors may coordinate with the bouquets of the bride and her attendants, or all white flowers may be used. No dyed, silk or artificial flowers or bows are allowed in the altar arrangement. Any suitable container may be used for this arrangement; or the florist may put the arrangement in the church's brass urn, which holds an EPI 003 liner (preferred) or J6 papier-mâché liner. It is recommended that flowers or greenery not trail very far below the level of the shelf, as the view from the pews is blocked by the altar. Florists will be asked to reduce oversize arrangements or to change the arrangement if it is inappropriate for a worship service. This flower arrangement must be left in the church for Sunday services. If there is to be a Eucharist (Holy Communion) at the wedding service, the altar is set up in the usual manner. If there is no Eucharist nothing may be placed on the altar itself, but the church's two standing 7-branch candelabra may be placed on either side of the altar, and these may be decorated with flowers or greenery.

There is a central aisle and 13 rows of pews. Bows, flowers or greenery or aisle candelabra may be used to decorate the pews, but no tacks, tape, glue or uncovered wire is allowed. (Plastic pew clips are preferred.) To allow the wedding party to pass down the center aisle, such arrangements must not extend more than 6 inches into the aisle and no other objects may be placed in the aisle. If any additional decorations are desired in the nave or the narthex, these must be approved by the church's wedding coordinator, and they must be removed by the florist immediately following the wedding ceremony.

### **CANDLES/RUNNERS/ FLOWER PETALS**

Please note that only the candles and candelabra belonging to the church may be used in the sanctuary of the church (the area beyond the altar rail). No other accessories are allowed in the sanctuary. The Paschal candle, symbolic of the light of Christ, is always lit for weddings and may not be decorated. When there is no Eucharist, the church's two standing candelabra may also be lit. For a Eucharist, the two Eucharistic candles on the altar will be lit, as well as the two candelabra on the shelves on either side of the flower arrangement. No runners or flower petals may be used during the service. Candles are furnished by the church. Nothing may be placed on the altar except by the rector or members of Ascension's Altar Guild.

### **OTHER ITEMS**

- No tape, pins, nails, tacks, or glue may be used to fasten decorations to any part of the church building or furnishings.
- No arches, gazebos, screens, columns or other such free standing decorations are permitted.
- Church furniture, linens/cloths, and other furnishings are part of the worship setting and may not be removed or altered.
- Nothing may be placed on the Communion railings.
- Use of an aisle cloth is not permitted.
- No rice, bird seed or anything of this nature may be thrown anywhere on church property, including the parking lot.
- The above policies apply whether the family chooses to use the services of a professional florist or those of a nonprofessional friend or relative. It is the

responsibility of the family to see that anyone ordering or handling floral or other decorations is supplied with a copy of the “Policies For Wedding Florists.”

- It is the responsibility of the florist to keep a current copy of this policy on file and to comply with all policies in it. Any florist failing to do so will not be permitted to return to work at Ascension Church. The florist will also be responsible for any damages incurred from the use of their decorations.
- Decorating of the facilities may begin no more than two (2) hours before the time of the ceremony.
- Arrangements must be made for removal of all decorations immediately after the ceremony. Items not removed by the florist or family may be discarded by church staff or volunteers to allow preparations for other worship services. Ascension does not store any wedding decorations.

## **PHOTOGRAPHER'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR WEDDINGS**

*Give a copy of these instructions to your photographer.*

**Photographers are not permitted to take flash pictures in the church during the service. Photographs may be taken as follows:**

**In the narthex (vestibule of the church) immediately preceding the service.**

1. Coming down the center aisle before and after the service
2. After the wedding, at the front of the church
3. The photographer is not allowed behind the altar rail at any time
4. Video taping and non flash photography may be done from the balcony.

## USHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

*Give a copy of these instructions to each usher.*

You are extremely important to the wedding. You are responsible for greeting people, guiding them to their seat, taking care of any emergencies that arise, and generally serving as hosts for those who come to the wedding. Thank you for accepting this responsibility.

Remember that the bride and groom are depending on you.

Arrive early, at least an hour before the time of the wedding.

Take your place at the entrance of the church.

Make your first word a word of welcome. Be prepared to give directions to the rest rooms as needed.

Hand each person a wedding program. If you happen to see a guest with a camera, please remind the owner that photographs are not allowed during the ceremony.

Seat people from the outside aisle. The center aisle should not be used by anyone prior to the entrance of the wedding party.

Seat the mothers just before the entrance of the wedding party. The groom's mother is seated first and should be on your right arm and the bride's mother on your left arm when she is seated.

Stand at the back of the church during the wedding. Watch for anyone who may be having difficulty that requires your assistance. Take care of emergencies with grace.

After the priest blesses the couple, you should prepare to move to the front of the church. As the wedding party processes into the narthex, come down the side aisle and wait by the front pew until the wedding party reaches the narthex, then escort the mothers out - the bride's mother first and then the groom's mother.

