



Dearly Beloved

An introduction to weddings
at St. Bartholomew's Church



A step-by-step guide to getting married at St. Bart's

1. Read the material in this folder. If this meaning of marriage and this way of doing a wedding works with your faith and in your life, then . . .
2. Fill out the form and send it to us. When we receive it, we arrange for you to . . .
3. Meet with a member of the clergy staff. If all agree to continue forward after that . . .
4. We'll set the date with you for your wedding at St. Bartholomew's.

We should begin with a word about our understanding of marriage. We believe that marriage is a lifelong, spiritual commitment. We can't say it any better than our Prayer Book does:

“Marriage 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 procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. “

We are eager to help make your wedding a joyful and meaningful experience. And we will do our best to keep it from being more stressful than it needs to be.

One of the most challenging and rewarding of human relationships, marriage is meant to be lived out in a community of faith where it can be supported and nurtured by others seeking to grow in love, forgiveness, justice, and compassion. By choosing to be married at St. Bartholomew's Church, we invite and encourage you to be supported by and committed to this church community now and in the future. If you live out of town, we will invite and encourage you to find a community that will support you in your life together.

From our work with couples of all ages, couples planning large or small weddings, we understand that the wedding planning itself can, at times, eclipse the marriage at this stage of your inquiry. In reading this booklet, you are taking your first step in letting us help prepare you for both your wedding and your marriage.

We believe it is helpful at this stage to be both welcoming and clear about what we believe and practice, and what we can offer you in terms of where and how your wedding will be celebrated. In this packet, in addition to this set of guidelines which describe our vision of how weddings work best at St. Bart's, we've included some information about our facilities, and a copy of the marriage service that is used in the Episcopal Church.

Getting Started

The best way to start is to read this booklet carefully. If, after reading this booklet, you find that you'd like to continue talking about marriage and a wedding at St. Bart's, fill out and return the enclosed form to the attention of our wedding coordinator. As soon as we receive the form we will give it to one of the members of our clergy staff, who will call you to set up an initial meeting.

At this initial meeting, you can determine together with the priest whether this is the right setting for your wedding. After this meeting has taken place, we will be glad to talk about dates for your wedding. A tentative date and time may be booked at the end of this meeting.

Within two weeks of the initial meeting, we ask that you read and return the Wedding Agreement, and pay the deposit. We urge you to hold off on announcing a time and place for the wedding until after the Agreement and deposit have been returned to St. Bartholomew's.

Celebrating a Marriage

Enclosed with this brochure you will find a copy of the marriage service from *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church. It's a beautiful liturgy, crafted with care over time. The opening address, "Dearly beloved . . ." sets forth our belief that the marriage of a woman and a man is fundamental in creation. Christians see marriage as a "sacrament" or sign of the mystery of Christ's living relationship to the Church. We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about the sacramental nature of this event. We also affirm the special purposes of

marriage set forth in the second paragraph of the service. Please read and reflect on these opening paragraphs. We believe your wedding and your marriage will be enriched by doing so.

The Church had a variety of marriage and wedding customs, representing differing cultures and times in history. In our time, a wedding is both a civil and an ecclesiastical rite. Because it has these two dimensions, both church and civil requirements must be met, and we believe it will be helpful to spell those out for you as you begin this process of preparation.

We'd like for you to know what the Episcopal Church requires: At least one of the parties to the marriage must be a baptized Christian, and the wedding ceremony must be attested by at least two witnesses. The bride and groom must also agree to and sign the Declaration of Intention.

If either of the parties is divorced, the member of the clergy must see that several conditions are met. Those conditions are outlined in the Guidelines portions of booklet.

The laws of the State of New York require a couple being married in New York to obtain a New York State Marriage License.

What you can expect of us

1. You will receive a real welcome here. This is one of the most significant moments in your lives. We share with you a belief in its importance. We want to help you bring depth, meaning and joy to this occasion.
2. Once you have read this booklet, agreed to its terms, and initiated your first appointment, we will be prompt and clear in our responses to you.
3. Our long experience with marriage liturgy and music will be of real guidance to you.
4. Our professional approach to event planning can enhance your reception, should you decide to use our facilities.
5. As preparations proceed, anxiety and tensions inevitably mount. By choosing to be married in this church, you are supported by the ongoing prayers and support of this community. Please know that we will help you keep sight of the “real stuff” of your marriage relationship and your future together, encouraging you to separate the inevitable “crises” of flowers, cakes, and photographers from the sacred nature of this commitment.

Our expectations of you

1. If you are interested in marriage at St. Bartholomew’s, please notify us at least three months before the date you are considering for your wedding.
2. We will ask that you meet at least three times with the officiating priest during this period of preparation. Marriage is described in the Prayer Book as a solemn and public covenant. While great joy surrounds the event, it’s not something to be taken unadvisedly or lightly, and so we take the time to prepare. We believe you’ll find that this is a gift, because at a busy time it allows you to focus on the heart and soul of the event.
3. In consultation with the officiating priest, it may be suggested that you meet with a trained marriage counselor. If so, we recommend that you use our resident counseling center, which offers a course of premarital counseling on a sliding fee basis. You should plan to complete this counseling as soon as possible after the initial meeting with the officiating priest.
4. We ask that you worship regularly with us on Sundays or weekdays at St. Bartholomew’s. We believe that marriage is not just a ceremony in our building, it is part of the community of seekers and believers here.

5. We ask that you consider joining one of our basic inquirers' courses during the time of your marriage preparation. We have two of these courses: Life at St. Bart's and Alpha. Both run continuously throughout the year, and both give wonderful introductions to the life of this community. Your individual spiritual journeys, and your marriage journey, will be enriched by your participation.

Guidelines

Planning the Date and Time of the Service

1. The date will be chosen after your initial meeting with one of St. Bartholomew's clergy. As we deal with today's busy schedules, it's clear that the longer the lead time we have, the more choice we will all have in setting the time and date.

2. Weddings are celebrated on weekdays, on Saturdays, or on Sundays (though there is a very limited time window on Sundays). Weddings are usually not performed in Lent, because of the penitential nature of that season. If you're not sure of the dates of Lent in a given year, the clergy will be glad to tell you what they are. Throughout the year, priority goes to scheduled worship services.

3. Please understand that St. Bartholomew's is a large, complicated building in a busy urban location. Fees (including a surcharge for evening weddings) are set to include maintenance and security requirements.

4. Rehearsals usually take place the day before your wedding. Rehearsals may begin no later than 4pm.

5. Both the wedding and the rehearsal dates and times are scheduled by the officiating priest. As you plan, please be aware that you may arrive up to one hour before the service (see section on Photography) and stay up to 30 minutes after the wedding. Part of what we've learned in our experience with weddings in this city leads us to ask that you take responsibility for seeing that both rehearsal and wedding start times are adhered to. Manhattan traffic can be counted on to delay everyone, so plan accordingly. Because of the vibrant and active life of the St. Bart's community, we often have other services and activities scheduled within a reasonable time after your wedding.

If one or both persons to be married have been divorced:

In the Episcopal Church, we observe the following procedure if you are seeking to be remarried. Clergy, in consultation with the couple, are asked to determine: that there is evidence that the prior marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a final judgment or decree of a civil court of competent jurisdiction; that continuing concern is being shown for the well-being of the former spouse and of any children; and that the Bishop of New York gives written consent to the proposed solemnization of marriage.

How to get a marriage license:

To obtain a license, both of you will need proof of identification (example: birth certificate, passport, driver's license).

The license must be paid for with a \$35 money order payable to *New York City Clerk*.

There is a 24-hour waiting period before the license becomes valid.

The license is valid for 60 days.

The License Office hours are 8:30am-3:45pm, M-F.

The Office of the City Clerk for New York City may be reached at 212-669-2400.

The address is: City Clerk Office of New York,
1 Centre Street, Room 262, New York, NY 10007.

Planning the Service

1. The clergy look forward to working with you to shape your service. We find that the time spent in planning is a wonderful way to keep a focus on the heart of the service.
2. Please read carefully the enclosed service for "The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" from *The Book of Common Prayer*. Although the service will follow this content and format, there is room to put a personal touch on the wedding. We will work with you to strike a balance that reflects both your relationship and our tradition.
3. Give some thought to the Biblical readings suggested for the service. We encourage the participation of friends and family members in the reading of lessons and offering of prayers (found on p. 429 of the Prayer Book).

4. A celebration of the Eucharist is a wonderful way to start your life together and to celebrate the blessing of a marriage. Our custom is to include all persons, whatever their denominational background, in the invitation to receive Holy Communion.
5. Clergy of other parishes or traditions are welcome to assist in the service, but the invitation should come from, and after consultation with, the officiating priest.
6. There are no fixed traditions on such matters as the style of the wedding procession (or even whether there must be one) or the composition of the wedding party. We want to hear your preferences, and our clergy will offer clear guidance on these matters, based on what we have found works best in this building.

Music

1. One of our musicians will be assigned to work with you to discuss options and to begin planning. If you and the officiating priest agree to go forward with the ceremony, we will ask you to schedule this appointment by calling the music director at 212-378-0226. The music of the service is ultimately at the discretion of the officiating priest.

2. Music at St. Bartholomew's is some of the finest in the city. Our musicians will be creative and flexible in helping you choose the best music for your wedding. Bring your ideas and preferences to them.

3. Because of the sacred nature of the Marriage Rite, music outside of the sacred repertoire (popular songs, show tunes, etc.) is best used in your reception.

4. St. Bartholomew's music director must be consulted and give consent if other musicians are to be invited.

Please read the next two sections carefully to be sure to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings or conflicts. We require you to have your photographer and florist read, sign and return the enclosed agreements.

Photography and Video

1. We work to maintain a joyful and worshipful atmosphere in the wedding service. Good professional photographers understand this, and they will agree to minimize distractions and respect the sacred nature of the building and the liturgy.
2. The best way to photograph wedding participants is before or after the service. If you and your photographer desire this,

we will schedule a suitable time period, in consultation with the officiating priest. But once this schedule is set, it must be adhered to. Our spaces are very tightly booked; you will be asked to vacate the space(s) if your photography runs late and others are waiting.

3. When pictures are taken prior to the service, all shooting must be completed and equipment removed at least 45 minutes before the service.
4. Flash may be used for the procession, provided that the equipment and photographer remain behind the congregation at the west end of the church or chapel.
5. **NO FLASH** photographs may be taken once the service begins.

In the main church, available light (**no flash**) photography, with quiet shutter, is permitted during the service, provided that the photographer uses the north or south galleries or remains behind the congregation in the west end of the nave.

In the chapel, available light (no flash) photography, with quiet shutter, is permitted, provided that the photographer remains behind the congregation at the west end of the chapel. Videotaping is permitted during the service, with available light only, with the videographer adhering to the same restrictions as above.

Flowers and Other Decorations

St. Bartholomew's works with a reputable florist that is accustomed to decorating the church and chapel. We suggest that you consider using their services as they are familiar with St. Bartholomew's traditions, requirements, and worship spaces. They can provide for all of your floral needs, including bouquets. Photos of their work are available upon request.

If you choose to use another florist, they must make an appointment to meet with the wedding coordinator, who will take them through the space and explain the conditions and restrictions regarding floral decorations. The flowers on the altar, and in the columns in the church, will remain in thanksgiving for your wedding. All other flowers and greens must be removed within two hours after the wedding. Failure to do so will result in the forfeiture of your security deposit.

Aisle Runners and "Unity Candles" are not allowed at St. Bartholomew's.

Although a wedding may certainly take place without a single flower adorning the space, we encourage you to have an arrangement for the altar.

Final decisions about decorations and their placement are at the discretion of the officiating priest.

At the Rehearsal

Please remember that rehearsals usually take place on the day before the wedding, beginning no later than 4pm. We require that you take responsibility for seeing that both rehearsal and wedding start times are adhered to.

Please come prepared to walk through the service and to honor the solemn, yet joyful mood of the occasion.

On the Day of the Wedding

The wedding party should plan to arrive one hour before the wedding.

Have ushers in place one hour before the service. Our vergers will brief them on their duties. A good rule of thumb is to have at least one usher per every 50 people in attendance. Some of the ushers should be persons other than those in the wedding procession, to help seat latecomers and help with miscellaneous small details.

Because there are so many things coming together on the day of the wedding, we have found that it helps to have one person from the wedding party to help coordinate and communicate directions. Often the “Best Man” or “Maid/Matron of Honor” assumes this role.

The Offering and Fees

Christianity, at its best, confronts the great questions of life with candor and love. But you only need look around to realize what a hard time our culture has with such issues as sex, love, death, and money. In fact, it may be that money is the last taboo.

The truth is that when most of us plan our wedding, we make careful lists of the costs: reception site, food, and drinks; florists and photographers; clothing and limousines. Where is the church on that list? We ask, simply and directly: what value do you put on having your marriage blessed in and by the church?

The single Biblical standard for giving is that of proportionality. The only practice actually named in the Bible is called tithing, which means setting aside 10% of what one has to give to the “temple,” the worshipping and serving community

of the faithful. We ask, therefore, that you tithe (i.e., give an amount equal to 10% of) the overall cost of your wedding as a contribution to the church. We feel on solid ground in asking for this tithe. St. Bartholomew's gives far more than it gets—to its members, to those who come here to use and enjoy this sacred space, to the poor who are clothed and housed through our ministries, to the city which benefits from this holy presence in its midst.

Once your date has been set you will receive an invoice listing the fees which are applicable to your ceremony. A 50% deposit will be required at that time. We also require a refundable deposit, which will be returned to you within three weeks after your ceremony, provided that all conditions are met, and your wedding and rehearsal did not begin more than 15 minutes late.

In an effort to be sensitive to our members and friends planning weddings, we offer the possibility of reducing the cost of the event by accepting a discount on the wedding fee we charge for the use of the church and chapel.

The wedding fee for a church ceremony is \$3,000; for the chapel it is \$2,000.* If you choose to limit the overall

amount you spend on the entire wedding event, and tithe (i.e. give 1/10 of that sum), we will gladly accept it.

So, for example, if you choose to limit the entire cost of your event—clothes, flowers, photographer, dinner, reception, invitations, plus the fees St. Bart's charges for organist, sound engineer, candles and maybe Café catering—to \$6,000. Then your church or chapel charge would be a tithe or 1/10, or \$600. As you can see, in our definition only the church or chapel use fee is subject to the reduced payment by tithing. All other costs form the basis of the total cost, which is then tithed (and obviously, the church or chapel use fee is not included in the total cost figure).

Confusion sometimes arises because there are direct costs that are usually paid to St. Bart's. Please understand that those are fixed costs, and in case of stipends, contractual amounts owed to individuals performing work. These fixed costs can't be reduced to a tithe.

The real key to lowering the church fee is scaling down over all event. In some cases, couples have chosen to reduce their costs to a minimum by having a truly small service, with no music, no need of sound or candles or even flowers. The sacrament is still valid, the welcome mat is still out, and the price is appropriately modest.

**As a point of reference, these fees are among the lowest in leading churches in Manhattan.*

Now That You've Read This Material...

If after reading this material and thinking about it you decide that this is not the right community to serve as hosts for your wedding, we will understand. Perhaps you'll find that you need to worship with us for a while, and sample the active spiritual and social life of St. Bartholomew's as you search. After reading this booklet you may sense that your own beliefs and needs are at odds with ours. If that is the case, please accept our best wishes as you continue the search for the proper setting for your wedding. We are open at any time to beginning or resuming a conversation with you.

Using our Facilities for Bridal Showers, Rehearsal Dinners and Receptions

Contact our wedding coordinator at [212-378-0254](tel:212-378-0254) or weddings@stbarts.org to make an appointment to see the various spaces and to reserve the site most appropriate for your reception. We also offer full party planning including wedding cakes, effects lighting, specialty linens, and music.

Our recommended florist will help you create the perfect atmosphere for your wedding and reception. Things to consider when speaking with them are budget, color scheme, and favorite types of flowers.

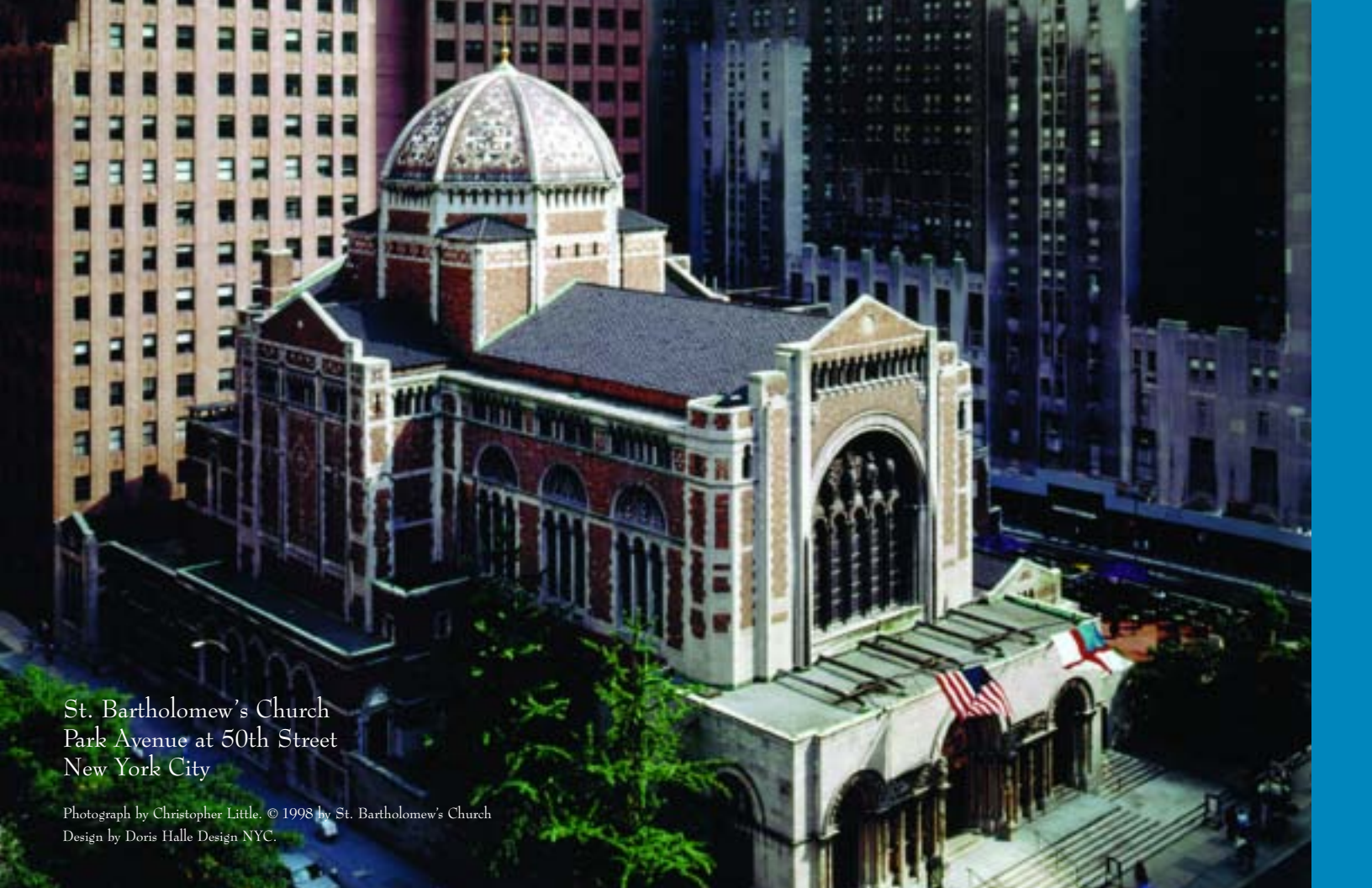
St. Bart's in-house caterers have years of restaurant and catering experience and will tailor any event to your individual preferences.

We also offer professional babysitting. Please inquire with our wedding coordinator regarding rates.

Wedding Bulletins Service at St. Bartholomew's

The bulletins for your wedding will be printed by St. Bartholomew's free of charge. However, this is only possible if all of the appropriate information is made available to us least three weeks prior to the wedding ceremony. If information is not received by the officiating priest by the date specified, there will be a minimum charge of \$250, or actual production cost, whichever is greater.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S IS ONE OF NEW YORK'S MOST BEAUTIFUL LANDMARK CHURCHES, WITH NUMEROUS ENTERTAINING SPACES—LARGE AND SMALL—TO ACCOMMODATE ALL TYPES AND SIZES OF EVENTS. THE COMMUNITY HOUSE OFFERS CONVERTIBLE WOOD PANELED ROOMS; A 5,000-SQUARE-FOOT PARK AVENUE TERRACE (THAT CAN BE TENTED IN INCLEMENT WEATHER), WHICH IS CONNECTED WITH A LARGE INDOOR SPACE; A 1,000-SQUARE-FOOT THIRD-FLOOR BALCONY OVERLOOKING PARK AVENUE; AND A WALLED CLOISTER GARDEN THAT IS PERFECT FOR ROMANTIC PHOTOGRAPHS. WHEN THE GREAT TERRACE IS TENTED, IT IS POSSIBLE TO ACCOMMODATE 300 FOR DINNER AND DANCING. THERE IS NO MINIMUM NUMBER REQUIRED FOR YOUR RECEPTION.



St. Bartholomew's Church
Park Avenue at 50th Street
New York City

Photograph by Christopher Little. © 1998 by St. Bartholomew's Church
Design by Doris Halle Design NYC.