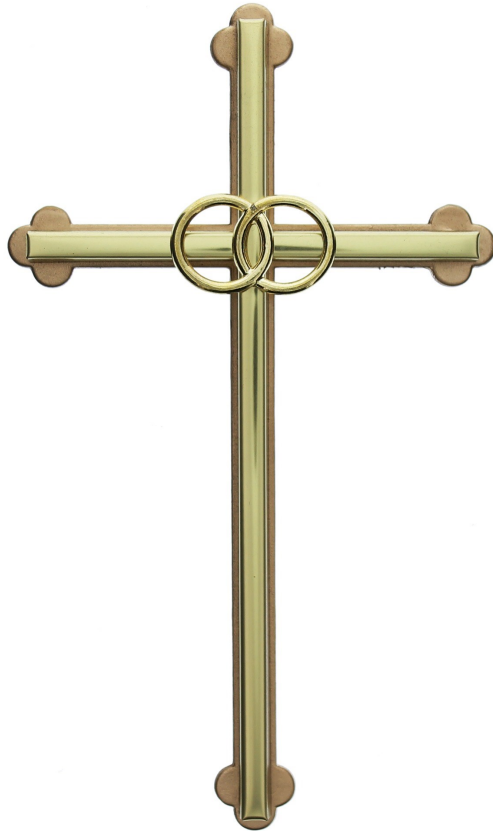


***St. Stephen Deacon & Martyr
Catholic Church
The Sacrament of Marriage***



Wedding Guidelines

Updated September 22, 2021

Dear Bride and Groom,

Congratulations on your wedding engagement. We know this is an exciting time in your relationship. Through the love you have for one another, together you have discerned that God is calling you to the vocation of marriage and family. On your wedding day, you will stand with each other and pledge your lifelong commitment to love one another as husband and wife. You will recall this special day as long as you live.

Planning a wedding can be an exciting time. As part of the planning process to receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, we encourage you to read through the policies and procedures at St. Stephen as outlined in this pamphlet.

The parish staff and the entire faith community of St. Stephen hope to do everything possible to make your wedding day a beautiful experience for you and all those you invite to attend. Those of us who will be involved with you in your preparation here at St. Stephen look forward to walking with you through this special time in your lives.

In Christ Jesus,

Fr. Michael Wyrzykowski, Pastor

Fr. Robert Stuglik, Associate Pastor

Deacon Bob Conlin

Deacon Bill Engler

Deacon Chuck McFarland

Deacon Pete Van Merkestyn

Wedding Policies

St. Stephen parish welcomes the celebration of the weddings of both registered parishioners and the children of registered parishioners.

St. Stephen parish also accepts weddings of Catholics who live within the canonical boundaries of St. Stephen parish.

People who live outside the parish boundaries should be married in the parish where they are registered or reside.

People who live outside the parish boundaries, yet still desiring to marry at St. Stephen, must first register.

Freedom to Marry

If one of you has been married before, even in a simple court ceremony, you must discuss this with a priest or deacon on staff to be sure you are both free to be married in the Catholic Church.

If your fiancé/fiancée is not a Catholic and was married before, his or her marriage may be valid in the eyes of the Church. In this case, a Church annulment must be investigated. We would guide you in this process. To be sure you can proceed, the marriage annulment must be completed before any wedding date can be set on the parish calendar.

Setting the Date of the Wedding and Wedding Rehearsal

Weddings at St. Stephen are scheduled with the respect to the couple's wishes as well as the availability of the church building and parish clergy.

In order to reserve a wedding date in the parish calendar, couples must:

- Complete the Marriage Inquiry Form found on St. Stephen's website.
- Meet with a deacon of St. Stephen parish to explore the couple's desire to marry in the Catholic Church and review if each person is free to marry without impediment.
- Make a deposit by check (preferred) or cash within two weeks of the initial meeting with a deacon to hold the date in the parish calendar. (Please see Schedule of Fees for exact costs.)

Weddings can be scheduled at the following times:

- Fridays between 2 PM and 3PM
- Saturdays at 1 PM or at 3 PM
- *Alternate days and times are not permitted at this time.*

Nuptial Mass or Ceremony

It is a long-standing tradition that the exchange of vows occurs in the context of a Mass. Although this is appropriate, it is not obligatory. There are circumstances where a ceremony would be preferable. This should be discussed with the priest or deacon arranging your marriage.

Visiting Clergy

A priest or deacon who is a family member or friend is always welcome to celebrate the marriage. A letter of good standing is required.

Wedding Rehearsals are scheduled at the discretion of the presider.

Wedding rehearsals take approximately one hour. Dates and times should be agreed upon no later than two months prior to the wedding date. It is expected that everyone will be present and on time for the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals are generally scheduled:

- the Friday prior to a Saturday wedding
- the Thursday prior to a Friday wedding

Marriage Preparation

Marriage preparation offers couples the opportunity to develop a better understanding of Christian marriage; to evaluate and deepen their readiness to live married life; and to gain insights into themselves as individuals and as a couple. It is especially effective in helping couples to deal with the challenges of the early years of marriage.

Like all sacraments of faith, the Sacrament of Marriage requires formation and preparation. As part of the marriage preparation process at St. Stephen Deacon and Martyr, the couple should expect to:

Take a premarital inventory.

All couples preparing for marriage at St. Stephen parish are required to take a premarital inventory which will help surface issues in your lives that may need further attention or discussion. The inventories recommended by the Archdiocese of Chicago are Catholic Couple Check Up, available at pvm.archchicago.org, or FOCCUS. Both inventories can be taken online. Only one is required.

Attend a marriage preparation class.

Presently, couples must take the program through the Lifelong Formation Office with the Archdiocese of Chicago. For more information, please visit pvm.archchicago.org › [marriage-and-family-ministries](#) › [getting-married](#)

Upon completion of the PreCana program, couples must bring their Marriage Prep certificate to the parish office for their wedding file.

Attend a natural family planning class.

Natural family planning is the only method of family planning morally acceptable to Catholic teaching. Information about NFP can be found on pvm.archchicago.org

Documents Required

Certain records or documents are required by the Church before a marriage can occur, including:

Photo ID — At the initial intake meeting with clergy, the couple must present photo ID.

Archdiocesan Questionnaire — The couples' initial meeting with the priest or deacon will require a prenuptial questionnaire of both the bride and the groom. This statement will be completed by the priest or deacon.

Baptismal Certificate — A newly issued baptismal certificate from the church where you were baptized must be submitted for all Catholic parties.

- The baptismal certificate cannot be dated six months prior to the wedding. Copies are not accepted.
- If your baptismal parish has closed, please contact the Archdiocese or Diocese of parish origin.

If you are not a Roman Catholic, a copy of your original baptismal certificate or a letter attesting to baptism from your church of baptism will be accepted. These certificates are easily obtained by writing or phoning the church in which the baptism took place.

Confirmation Certificate — A Confirmation certificate is required if you are a confirmed Catholic.

Affidavits — Witness forms to establish freedom to marry are required. Parents are the preferred witnesses, but close relatives or friends of long standing can also be witnesses. A total of four witnesses is required—two for the bride and two for the groom. Your witnesses must sign the affidavits in front of their own priest, deacon, or clergy and have them stamped with the church's seal and sent directly to St. Stephen.

Marriage License — A Cook County marriage license is required. To learn more, visit www.cookcountyclerk.com

Please note:

- Both parties must be present when applying for the license.
- Marriage licenses are only valid for 60 days.
- Licenses must be returned to the parish 30 days prior to the wedding.

Date Reservation, Payment Schedule, and Cancellation Policy

Two weeks after the initial meeting with the deacon, a deposit of half of the wedding liturgy and building service fee (\$250 for parishioners/\$375 for non-parishioners) must be submitted to the parish office to reserve a wedding date on the parish calendar. *Dates and times are not reserved until the deposit fee is paid.*

Two weeks prior to the wedding, the remaining wedding liturgy/building services fee, along with the music coordinator or bench service fees must be paid in full at the parish office.

At the wedding rehearsal, the wedding coordinator and altar servers cash gratuities should be given to the wedding coordinator.

At the wedding rehearsal or day of the wedding — Any additional church donation or a stipend to the priest or deacon celebrating the wedding can be at your discretion and can be given at this time.

Cancellation policy — Deposit fees for the wedding date are non-refundable at the two month window mark to the wedding date. (e.g. April 1st for a June 1st wedding).

Schedule of Fees as of January 1, 2022

Wedding Liturgy and Building Services Fee (Check payable to St. Stephen or Cash)

- Registered, contributing parishioner \$500
- Child of a registered, contributing parishioner
- Non-parishioner rate \$750

Clergy officiating the ceremony (Cash) TBD

- Gratuity can be given at the discretion of the bride & groom

Music Coordinator Fee (Check payable to Music Coordinator)

- Includes consultation and music at liturgy \$175

Bench Services Fee (Check payable to Music Coordinator)

Fee when outside musicians are brought in \$150

Altar Servers (Cash)

- Generally, two per Mass. Cash price is paid per server. \$20

Parish Wedding Coordinator (Cash)

- Cash gratuity for consultation services prior to the wedding date and services provided at rehearsal and at wedding. \$50

Ceremony Guidelines

The Celebration

In Catholic theology, the bride and groom minister the sacrament of marriage to one another. A priest or deacon and at least two witnesses (maid/matron of honor and best man) are also required to be present.

Timing

St. Stephen is a large and vibrant faith community. Often there are multiple weddings scheduled on the same date. With that in mind, it is imperative that weddings and wedding rehearsals start on time. Couples have one and a half hours for their mass or ceremony and pictures. If a wedding does not start on time, the couple's amount of time for pictures is reduced. Please note: St. Stephen will open the church building doors one hour to the start of the Mass or ceremony. As we have no bridal room available, brides should schedule their arrival 10-15 minutes prior to the wedding.

No Private Dressing or Bridal Rooms Are Available

- St. Stephen does not have a bridal room nor a private dressing area on premise. A bride and her attendants should come fully dressed.
- Please be advised: There are no secured areas for storing items during the wedding. The bridal party is fully responsible for the safety of purses, bags, phones, etc.

Parish Wedding Coordinator

- St. Stephen has parish wedding coordinators who assist at the wedding rehearsal and the actual wedding. Gratuity is required. Please see the Schedule of Fees.
- Couples who use an outside wedding planner need to instruct their wedding planner that ONLY the St. Stephen parish wedding coordinator can direct activity within the church building. All St. Stephen guidelines must be followed and only our parish wedding coordinators are fully aware of what is and is not permitted at the wedding ceremony and within the church.

Florists

- The church is always decorated according to the liturgical season of the year. These decorations, as well as all furniture in the sanctuary, remain intact both during and after a wedding.
- Nothing may be placed on the altar or arranged in a manner that inhibits the movement of the priest, deacon, or bridal party.
- Florists may set up no sooner than 45 minutes prior to the ceremony time.
- Taping or wiring of pew bows or flowers is not permitted. Pew bows can only be attached to pews by the florist with plastic clips or rubber bands.
- Fresh flower petals for flower girl baskets are not allowed. Silk is permissible.

Ceremony Guidelines

Altar Servers — The parish schedules two altar servers for weddings to assist the priest or deacon; however, (with notice) friends or relatives of the bride and groom may be the altar servers. Gratuity is required. Please see Schedule of Fees.

Aisle Runner — The use of an aisle runner is optional. Aisle runners should be at least 100 feet in length. Aisle runners are required if you choose to have a flower girl drop silk or artificial petals.

Unity Candle — The bride and groom may choose to light a candle symbolizing their unity. Often times, the couple may choose to have their mothers light the side tapers next to the unity pillar candle. The unity candle and tapers will be placed on a small table next to the altar. It is the couple's responsibility to not only provide the candles, but the holders for the candles as well. The unity candle must be brought to the wedding rehearsal.

Candles — Fire codes prohibit the use of candles down the aisle of the church or in/near the pews.

Photographer — In respect for the sacred nature of the sacraments and of the church, we require that all photographers observe the following procedures. It is the bride and groom's responsibility to share these guidelines with their respective photographer(s).

- All photographers must check with the St. Stephen parish wedding coordinator prior to the event for procedures to be followed in the sacred space of the church.
- At no time are any photographers allowed on the altar platform.
- Photos can be taken in the church or narthex 30 minutes before the scheduled ceremony. Couples have one and a half hours from their ceremony start time for both their ceremony and photos. If a ceremony does not start on time, less time is available for photos.
- Photos may be taken from the center of the church in front for the opening procession. After the procession, all pictures should be taken from outside the center section of pews or from the center aisle no closer than where the indentation starts on the main aisle.
- Photographers are not allowed to stand on any pew or any other part of the furnishings of the church.
- Flash is allowed, but no continuously shining lights are allowed during a church ceremony.

Ceremony Guidelines (Continued)

Flower Girl and Ring Bearer

- Children acting as flower girls and ring bearers should be of the appropriate age to participate in the wedding liturgy.
- The flower girl's basket should contain only silk or artificial flowers or petals, as real flower petals may stain the carpet.
- We recommend that the ring bearer's pillow not have the actual wedding bands tied on.

Music Liturgy

- Music is an integral part of your wedding celebration. Our Music Ministry looks forward to meeting with you and working with you in preparing your special day.
- After you have met with one of the priests or deacons and paid your deposit, please contact our Music Coordinator, Patrick Sheehan, who will guide you through the steps of selecting the appropriate music for your wedding. Patrick can be reached by email at patrick@ststephentinley.com or by calling the parish office at 708-342-2400.
- Please note: Couples may elect to use outside guest musicians for their wedding. While outside musicians can be used, a bench fee payment of \$150 is still required in addition to any fees the couple pays directly to their guest musicians. This fee covers the cost of our music coordinator's time to be present at the wedding to manage the sound boards unique to St. Stephen.

Booklets/Programs

- Couples may opt to create and print a booklet or program. These must be brought to the wedding rehearsal.

Safety Concerns and Courtesy

Please note the following:

- For the safety of the elderly and the physically challenged, and out of courtesy for other liturgies scheduled after your wedding, **rice, confetti, birdseed, candy and/or flower petals are not allowed** to be thrown inside or outside of the church building.
- **Balloons are not permitted inside the church building.**
- **Alcohol is prohibited** anywhere on church premises—inside or outside at the rehearsal or at the wedding ceremony.
- **Bubbles are only allowed outside the church building.** Guests should not be handed bubbles until they are outside.
- St. Stephen’s public restroom is located off the west side of the Narthex and must remain fully accessible to everyone at all times.

Checklist/Reminders

Two weeks prior to the wedding, a St. Stephen wedding coordinator will reach out to the bride and groom via the contact information on file to review the wedding liturgy checklist.

At the wedding rehearsal, please remember to bring:

- Altar server gratuity (two envelopes—\$20 each)
- Wedding coordinator fee (one envelope \$50)
- Unity candle with holder, if one is being used
- Wedding booklets/programs, printed by the couple
- Aisle runner, if one is being used.

For the wedding rehearsal and wedding ceremony— please be on time!

Out of consideration for everyone involved, please be on time.

Your wedding rehearsal and your wedding start at the times agreed upon.

Closing Thoughts

The Clergy and Staff at St. Stephen look forward to working with you as you plan your marriage and your wedding day.

We realize the information outlined in this pamphlet may seem overwhelming at first. Please do not hesitate to contact the parish office with questions. We will be happy to try and answer any questions that you may have.

Parish Office
708-342-2400

