

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Policies and Guidelines in the Saint Mary's Chapel

Weddings and Other Special Services and Events

History of the Saint Mary's School Chapel

Saint Mary's Chapel was built in 1856, when the Reverend Aldert Smedes hired architect Richard Upjohn (1802 – 1878) to design the Gothic Revival structure. Upjohn was already a well-known church architect, having designed several fine American churches including Christ Episcopal Church in Raleigh and Trinity Church in New York City.

The original board and batten structure boasted many of the same features we cherish today. The steep gable roof, lovely octagonal stained glass window over the door, and the gabled entryway are all original. The 1856 chapel was much smaller, however, than the current building, and it was painted brown. It was enlarged in 1905 with the two current transepts.

Always considered “the heart of the school,” the Saint Mary's Chapel is a National Historic Site and a Raleigh Historic Property.

To those who wish to be married in the Saint Mary's School Chapel

At this important time in your lives, we at Saint Mary's School offer you our prayers and best wishes as you make plans for your new life together. Saint Mary's School wants to help make this day as holy and wondrous as it should be. The following will provide you with some helpful information and guidelines for preparing for your wedding day.

The celebration and blessing of a marriage is, above all else, a service of worship. It is a ceremony of the Episcopal Church appearing along with all other sacramental rites of the Church in the Book of Common Prayer; therefore, our policies concerning this service are subject to the same basic rules and expectations as other services in the Church. Episcopal weddings performed in Saint Mary's chapel are subject to the canons, laws and policies of the Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of North Carolina.

Weddings of other denominations are welcome at the Saint Mary's Chapel and the wedding service of your denomination may be used. Please read the following carefully, so that there will be no misunderstanding as to our mutual expectations or the services we can offer. The following guidelines and procedures should be read prior to your first meeting with your officiating clergy person. Weddings may follow an order of service for any Christian denomination. Since Saint Mary's Chapel maintains its affiliation with the Episcopal Church, one, at least, of the parties to be married is very strongly encouraged to be baptized, as is outlined in The Book of Common Prayer (page 422).

All couples are invited to seriously consider taking part in premarital counseling with a counselor or clergyperson of their choice.

Eligibility for marriage in the Saint Mary's Chapel

Both alumnae and non-alumnae are eligible to be married in the Saint Mary's School Chapel. Both parties must obtain a valid North Carolina marriage license from a Register of Deeds office within the State of North Carolina.

Scheduling your wedding date

The Saint Mary's Chapel and all campus facilities exist, first and foremost, to serve the current students, faculty and staff of the school; therefore, school events will have top priority in scheduling. Please note there may be other school events happening on campus during weddings.

School is in session from mid-August through May. Weddings and rehearsal times must be scheduled accordingly. A minimum of a 30-day notice is required prior to any wedding. The only campus facility available for weddings is the Saint Mary's Chapel. **No outdoor weddings, including weddings in tents, may take place on campus.**

Please know that no wedding date is firmly set until it is approved and scheduled on the Saint Mary's School Master Calendar. A calendar request will be made when the wedding coordinator receives your signed application request and your check for payment in full.

Clergy

Saint Mary's School does not provide clergy for weddings and rehearsals; therefore, the bride must arrange for her choice of the officiating clergy. Clergy of all denominations are welcome.

Music

Saint Mary's School's beautiful organ is available for your use by our recommended organist, as is a piano, that can be played by an pianist. Other instruments, such as strings and trumpets, may be brought to the Chapel. You should arrange for your own musicians well in advance of the wedding. Saint Mary's School cannot provide musicians; however we will provide the contact information for organists that have expressed interest in playing at weddings.

Provisions

A Saint Mary's School Wedding Coordinator will be present at your rehearsal and wedding to set up the altar and to answer questions. *Their duties do not include acting as a wedding director*, however, we do recommend that you have a Wedding Director for your wedding.

Neither acolytes nor acolyte robes are provided by Saint Mary's School. Special needlepoint kneelers for the bride and groom are available.

A dressing area for the bride and her attendants will be provided. The room is equipped with mirrors.

The groom's attendants will also be provided a waiting area to change clothes or store personal items.

Valuable personal property should not be left unattended in these rooms. Please be sure to appoint a friend to remove all personal items from these rooms after the service.

Smedes Hall serves the students as a dormitory for high school girls. It is also contains year-round faculty/staff residences, administrative offices, and a vibrant student center which is in constant use.

Smedes-Emory Parlor is often used for recitals and other events, even on weekends. Therefore, members of the wedding party and guests are not permitted to roam throughout Smedes Hall.

The Chapel will be opened two (2) hours before the wedding ceremony. Heat or air conditioning will be set according to the season. Call Campus Security or check with the staff person on duty if the temperature is not suitable. (Security: 424-4044 from an outside line; 4044 if using an inside line). There is also a direct connection to Campus Security that may be accessed by simply picking up the phone outside the lower West Smedes entrance.

Before and after the ceremony

If you are an alumnae of Saint Mary's School, prior to your wedding, be sure to list that you attended Saint Mary's in your newspaper wedding write-up. Following the ceremony, the Chapel and all waiting and dressing areas should always be left in proper order. The wedding coordinator will oversee this effort, but please keep in mind that all personal items, flowers and any debris should be removed. All prayer books and hymnals should be returned to their original position.

Seating capacity

Weddings up to 250 guests are easily managed.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals may be held before the wedding at any time the Chapel is not in use by Saint Mary's School. Please schedule your rehearsal with the wedding coordinator. The rehearsal may not be scheduled after 6:30p.m. The Chapel will be open one hour prior to your rehearsal time.

Flowers

Only altar flowers are necessary for wedding services. No other flowers are needed. Pew markers may be used to mark family seating areas and may include simple flowers or greenery.

Altar flowers may be no higher than the cross. Saint Mary's School does not provide vases.

Flower petals may not be dropped by flower girls on the Chapel carpet, but they may be dropped outside. Birdseed and rice are not allowed at any location.

You and your florist are welcome to meet at the Chapel in order to plan your floral decorations. Please contact Alli: 919-424-4028, to make an appointment.

Please caution your florist not to place floral boxes or other objects on the altar at any time. Whenever possible, we prefer that the staff person on duty or member of the altar guild place the flowers on the altar.

Candles

Saint Mary's does not permit candles of any kind.

Rain and canopies

There is no covered way leading into the Chapel and no vestibule inside. Therefore, rainy days can be an issue. Canopies and tents are not recommended, but are permitted ONLY if they are weighted.

No objects that puncture the ground are permitted because of underground utilities.

Important notes

- Food and drink are not allowed inside the Chapel, with the exception of bottled water.
- Saint Mary's cannot promise access to the campus in case of snow, ice or natural disaster.

- ❖ Saint Mary's School sometimes undertakes renovation and construction projects, and though every effort will be made to keep the area around the Chapel pristine and beautiful, construction projects may be visible at times. No construction work will be done while a wedding is in progress.
- ❖ The steps at the front entrance to the Chapel can be tricky to navigate. We recommend that you station someone at the steps to caution guests about the steps and assist the elderly. For guests who use a wheelchair or elderly people who have trouble with steps, the side entrance to the Chapel is flat, with the exception of one small ridge at the door threshold.

Parking

Every effort will be made to provide convenient parking on campus for all wedding guests. Guests who are physically handicapped will be accommodated. However, as Saint Mary's School is a bustling school campus, the convenience of parking will depend upon the size of your guest list and other events which may be taking place on campus. Guests may not park in numbered student spaces during the school year nor in marked reserved spaces at any time. The wedding coordinator will discuss parking issues with you and provide maps to distribute to guests.

When needed, extra security can be provided at an additional charge of \$300.

Fees

Saint Mary's Chapel is a priceless historic landmark, and therefore requires special care and maintenance. Your wedding fee contributes to the upkeep and preservation of this treasure building.

As of April 1, 2024, a fee of **\$3000.00 for Saint Mary's School alumnae** and **\$5,000 for non-alumnae** is required for a wedding and must be paid in full before the wedding can be scheduled on the school's master calendar. This fee covers the rehearsal, wedding and services of the wedding coordinator. You are also financially responsible for any damage done by your wedding party or guests.

Cancellation Policy

Weddings and receptions canceled within 30 days of booking or 9 months or more in advance will be refunded 50% of the wedding fee (\$1,500 for alumnae and \$2,500 for non-alumnae). Weddings canceled with less than nine-months' notice are non-refundable.

Brides are allowed one change in date after their original booking, any further change in dates will require a second payment in full.

- \$3,000.00 (alumnae) or \$5,000.00 (non-alumnae) due in full to reserve Chapel
- \$300 to hire an extra parking guard (due before the rehearsal – See "Parking" above)
- Make all checks payable to "Saint Mary's School". We are able to accept Visa and Mastercard as forms of credit card payment. A 2.75% credit card fee will be applied.
- Checks may be mailed to the Director of Auxiliary Services: **Alli Leggett, Saint Mary's**

School, 900 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27603

In conclusion

We hope that this information will be of assistance to you in planning your wedding. All policies are designed to ensure that every event in the Chapel may glorify God and maintain the dignity, beauty, traditions and sanctity of our beloved church.

Contact information

The wedding coordinator will be the primary person assisting you with the facilities and questions as you are making your plans in the Saint Mary's Chapel. We strongly encourage you to hire a Wedding Director to direct the ceremony. The Saint Mary's coordinator is not a wedding planner.

Alli Leggett – Director of Auxiliary Services and Programs - weddings, receptions, and special services: 919-424-4028 aleggett@sms.edu

Special Services in the Chapel

In addition to weddings, a very limited number of memorial services for Saint Mary's School alumnae are considered on a case by case basis, in the Chapel. The Chapel does not have special furnishings for memorial services. The cost of a memorial service is \$500.

Services to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Baptism are strongly discouraged in the Chapel due to Episcopal policies and tenets outlined in the Book of Common Prayer.

Please contact Alli Leggett for information on scheduling any special service. All special events in the Chapel are subject to the same guidelines and policies outlined in this document for weddings.

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

REQUEST FOR A MARRIAGE CEREMONY IN THE SAINT MARY'S CHAPEL and/or RECEPTION ON THE SAINT MARY'S CAMPUS

Please complete this form and return it with your check to the wedding coordinator (\$3,000.00 for Saint Mary's School alumnae/\$5000.00 for non-alumnae, payable to Saint Mary's School).

Bride's/Groom's First Name Middle Last (Maiden)

Saint Mary's Class(es), if applicable _____ (HS) _____ (C)

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail _____ Cell Phone _____

Bride's/Groom's First Name Middle Last (Maiden)

Saint Mary's Class(es), if applicable _____ (HS) _____ (C)

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Wedding Date Requested: _____ **Time:** _____

Rehearsal Date Requested: _____ **Time:** _____

Reception on Saint Mary's Campus: YES NO (circle one) **Time:** _____

Smedes Hall Parlor(s): _____ (please mark requested location)

Chan-Poyner Dining Room: _____ (please mark requested location)

Bride's/Groom's Parents' Phone _____

Brides's/Groom's Parents' Phone _____

Officiating Clergy _____ Denomination _____

Name, address of your current church _____

Approximately how many guests do you expect to have at your wedding? _____

Approximately how many attendants (total) do you expect? _____

Florist: _____

Musician(s): _____

Photographer _____ Phone _____

Wedding Director (strongly recommended if more than two attendants):

_____ Phone _____

(Please note that it is the bride's responsibility to inform every vendor of Chapel policies.)

Couple's address after wedding _____

Phone _____

*I have reviewed the policies and guidelines in this contract and in the booklet, Saint Mary's School Policies and Guidelines for Weddings and Other Special Services and Events. I understand that my date is not final until confirmed by Saint Mary's School and payment has been made in full. I agree to the rules and conditions in these documents.

Bride's/Groom's Signature _____

Date _____

Bride's/Groom's Signature _____

Date _____

Printed name of financially responsible party: _____

Signature of financially responsible party: _____

Date _____

When you have completed this form, please attach check and mail to:

Alli Leggett
Saint Mary's School
Director of Auxiliary Engagement and Programs
900 Hillsborough Street
Raleigh, NC 27603