

Saint Mary's Chapel

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RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA · EST. 1856

Married beneath *a century of light.*

A Gothic Revival chapel of hand-set stained glass and quiet wood, kept as the heart of Saint Mary's School for nearly two hundred years — and, for one afternoon, yours.

— National Historic Site

— Raleigh Historic Property

— Seats up to 250

Every chapel wedding begins the same way it has since 1856: red doors swung open, an organ warming in the transept, afternoon light breaking apart into color on the aisle. Saint Mary's Chapel was never built to impress — it was built to hold a congregation gently, and it still does.

Alumnae and those with close connections to the school are welcome to marry here, in a service of worship led by an ordained clergy member from a Christian denomination closely affiliated with the Episcopal tradition. What we offer is the room itself: its history, its light, and a coordinator who knows exactly how it should look on your day.

“Always considered the heart of the school.”

The chapel has stood at Saint Mary's longer than almost anything else on campus.



HISTORY

Built in 1856, by design.



The Reverend Aldert Smedes commissioned architect Richard Upjohn — already known for Christ Episcopal Church in Raleigh and Trinity Church in New York — to design a Gothic Revival chapel unlike anything else on the young campus. What he gave Saint Mary's was a steep gabled roof, an octagonal stained-glass window set high above the door, and a board-and-batten frame that still stands today.

The original 1856 building was smaller, and painted brown. In 1905, two transepts were added, giving the chapel the cruciform shape and additional seating it holds now. What hasn't changed is the feeling of walking in: dark pews, colored light, and nearly two centuries of Saint Mary's weddings behind you.

Today the chapel is both a National Historic Site and a Raleigh Historic Property — a distinction that shapes how carefully it is kept, and why so many couples choose to be married inside it.

What to know, in order.

Eligibility

Open to Saint Mary's alumnae and to those with close connections to the school. Because the chapel is a sacred space, every service must follow a religious order of worship. Both parties will need a valid North Carolina marriage license from any Register of Deeds office in the state. Because the chapel maintains its Episcopal affiliation, at least one party is strongly encouraged to be baptized, and premarital counseling is warmly encouraged for every couple.

Scheduling

School is in session mid-August through May, and campus events take priority — your date isn't confirmed until it's on the Saint Mary's Master Calendar, following a signed application and deposit. We ask for a minimum of 30 days' notice.

Clergy & service

Your officiant must be an ordained clergy member from a Christian denomination in close affiliation with the Episcopal tradition, and the service follows a religious order of worship. Saint Mary's does not provide or arrange clergy.

Music

The chapel's historic organ and a piano are both available, and we can connect you with organists who've played here before. Strings, brass, and other instruments are welcome — you'll arrange your own musicians.

Flowers

Only altar flowers are required, kept no taller than the cross — the chapel needs little embellishment. Simple pew markers are welcome for family seating. Vases aren't provided, and florists should plan to place arrangements with our staff rather than directly on the altar. No candles, of any kind, and petals may fall outside but never on the chapel carpet.

On the day

A Saint Mary's wedding coordinator sets the altar and is on hand at your rehearsal and ceremony for questions — we recommend hiring a wedding director to run the ceremony itself. The Bridal Suite is available to you at no additional cost — a dressing room with mirrors for the bride and her attendants, along with a separate waiting area for the groom's party, and needlepoint kneelers for the couple.

Rehearsal

Held whenever the chapel is free, scheduled through your coordinator, and never later than 6:00 pm. The chapel opens one hour before your rehearsal, and two hours before your ceremony.

Seating & parking

Up to 250 guests can be comfortably seated. Parking is arranged on campus for your guests, with accommodations for those who need them; your coordinator will share maps ahead of your date. Extra security can be arranged for \$300.

The honest details.

No tents, no exceptions

The chapel is the only campus space available for weddings, and no outdoor ceremonies or tented gatherings are permitted anywhere on campus. If rain is a risk, a weighted (never staked) canopy may cover the short walk to the door — the chapel itself has no covered vestibule.

Simple house rules

No alcohol is permitted in the chapel or dressing areas, no exceptions. A limited amount of alcohol is permitted in the area if you are having a reception on campus; if alcohol is found elsewhere on the grounds, a penalty will be charged. **No smoking is allowed anywhere on the grounds.** Beyond that: no food or drink inside the chapel beyond bottled water, no birdseed or rice anywhere on campus, and no wandering into Smedes Hall — it's home to students and faculty year-round.

Mind the steps

The front steps are lovely but a little uneven. We suggest stationing someone there to help elderly guests. A flatter side entrance is available for anyone using a wheelchair, with one small threshold ridge.

Leave it as you found it

Your coordinator oversees the reset, but please assign someone to gather personal items, flowers, and debris afterward, and return any hymnals or prayer books to their place.

REHEARSAL DINNERS

Rehearse here. Dine here.

Walk out of your chapel rehearsal and into dinner without anyone getting back in a car — and when the night is over, nothing is left behind overnight.

5:00 – 5:30	6:00 pm	8:30 – 9:00
Chapel rehearsal wraps up	Dinner begins	Evening ends, no overnight mess
MOST INTIMATE Smedes-Emory Parlor (Large Parlor) A historic, wood-paneled parlor, with the small parlor alongside for setting up food and drinks. Up to 80 seated \$6,000* base	FLEXIBLE & MODERN First Citizens Bank Theater The Black Box — an open, flexible room you can arrange exactly the way your dinner calls for. Up to 120 guests \$8,000* base	LIGHT & OPEN Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium A light-filled lobby in the Blanche Roberson Bacon Performing Arts Center, named for a Saint Mary's alumna. Up to 60 guests \$8,000* base

*Base rates. Additional items are quoted after inquiry.

Add-on staff rates

Security	\$100 / hour / person
Technology*	\$100 / hour / person
Housekeeping	\$100 / hour / person
Maintenance	\$100 / hour / person

*The technology rate covers staffing only. Equipment, such as microphones, is billed separately.

Food & drink. Saint Mary’s does not require a single exclusive caterer or bar service. Your coordinator can share a list of preferred vendors familiar with our spaces. A \$500 refundable damage/security deposit is required in addition to the room rate, and the certificate of general liability insurance (minimum \$1,000,000 per occurrence, naming Saint Mary’s School as additional insured) is due before your date is confirmed.

ANOTHER WAY TO MARRY

The Atrium as a ceremony space.

The chapel remains a sacred space for services of worship. For a non-traditional wedding, or one that comes together at the last minute, the Atrium offers an alternative: it can be arranged with an aisle, chairs and simple decor, seating about 75 or holding about 150 standing. Atrium rental begins at \$8,000, with additional items quoted after your inquiry.

A recent Saturday.



FEES

Chapel Rental Fees

Saint Mary's alumnae	\$3,000
Non-alumnae	\$5,000
Extra parking security (optional)	\$300

Cancellation policy. Cancel within 30 days of booking, or 9 months or more before your date, and half your fee is refunded. Inside nine months, the fee is non-refundable. Every bride is permitted one date change; a second requires a new payment in full.

Your fee covers the rehearsal, the ceremony, and the services of your wedding coordinator, and must be paid in full to reserve the chapel on our Master Calendar. Visa and Mastercard are accepted with a 2.75% processing fee.

Let's find your date.

Tour the chapel and dinner spaces, meet your coordinator, and start the paperwork whenever you're ready — we'll walk you through the rest.

Kristin Whittaker

Events & Calendar Manager

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SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL · CHAPEL WEDDINGS · RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA