

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Policies and Guidelines in the Saint Mary's Chapel

Weddings and Rehearsal Dinner Space Rentals

History of the Saint Mary's School Chapel

The Reverend Aldert Smedes commissioned architect Richard Upjohn (1802 – 1878) — 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.

Always considered “the heart of the school,” the chapel is today 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.

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, 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.

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. Please read the following carefully so that there will be no misunderstanding as to our mutual expectations or the services we can offer. These guidelines and procedures should be read prior to your first meeting with your officiating clergy person.

Eligibility for marriage in the Saint Mary's Chapel

The chapel is 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, as is outlined in The Book of Common Prayer (page 422), and premarital counseling is warmly encouraged for every couple.

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. School is in session mid-August through May, and campus events take priority; please note that there may be other school events happening on campus during weddings. We ask for a minimum of 30 days' notice prior to any wedding.

Your date isn't confirmed until it's on the Saint Mary's Master Calendar, following a signed application and deposit. A calendar request will be made when the wedding coordinator receives your signed application request and payment.

Ceremonies may be held in the chapel or, as an alternative, in the Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium (see below). No outdoor ceremonies or tented gatherings are permitted anywhere on campus — no tents, no exceptions. Rehearsal dinners may be held indoors on campus (see "Rehearsal Dinners" below).

Clergy and 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 for weddings or rehearsals.

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 well in advance of the wedding.

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. Neither acolytes nor acolyte robes are provided.

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

The chapel opens two hours before your 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.

Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held whenever the chapel is free, scheduled through your coordinator, and finished by 5:00–5:30 p.m. The chapel opens one hour before your rehearsal.

Seating and 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. As Saint Mary's is a bustling school campus, the convenience of parking will depend upon the size of your guest list and other events taking place on campus. Guests may not park in numbered student spaces during the school year nor in marked reserved spaces at any time. Extra security can be arranged for \$300.

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; floral boxes and other objects should never be placed on the altar. Petals may fall outside but never on the chapel carpet.

You and your florist are welcome to meet at the chapel to plan your floral decorations. Please contact Kristin Whittaker at 919-424-4005 or weddings@sms.edu to make an appointment.

Candles

No candles, of any kind.

Rain and canopies

The chapel itself has no covered vestibule. If rain is a risk, a weighted (never staked) canopy may cover the short walk to the door. No objects that puncture the ground are permitted because of underground utilities.

Simple house rules

- No alcohol is permitted in the chapel or dressing areas, no exceptions. If alcohol is found elsewhere on the grounds, a penalty will be charged.
- No smoking is allowed anywhere on the grounds.
- No food or drink inside the chapel beyond bottled water.
- No birdseed or rice anywhere on campus.

- No wandering into Smedes Hall — it's home to students and faculty year-round, and also contains administrative offices and a student center in constant use.

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.

Before and after the ceremony

If you are an alumna of Saint Mary's School, be sure to list that you attended Saint Mary's in your newspaper wedding write-up.

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. You are financially responsible for any damage done by your wedding party or guests.

Important notes

- 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.

Rehearsal Dinners

Rehearsal dinners may be held on campus. A typical evening runs like this: the chapel rehearsal wraps up by 5:00–5:30 p.m., dinner is served from 6:00 until 8:30 or 9:00 p.m., and the space is cleared the same night, with nothing left overnight.

Three indoor spaces are available, each a short walk from the chapel doors:

- **Smedes-Emory Parlor (large parlor):** seats up to 80, and includes use of the Small Parlor for food and drink setup.
- **Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium:** seats up to 80; a light-filled event space.
- **First Citizens Bank Theater (Black Box):** seats up to 120; a flexible event space.

The Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium as a ceremony space

The chapel remains a sacred space reserved for services of worship. For couples who would like a different setting, the Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium is available as an alternative ceremony space. It can accommodate an aisle, rows of chairs and simple decor, and holds approximately 80 seated or 150 standing guests. It is a good fit for smaller or non-traditional ceremonies, and for weddings planned on a shorter timeline.

Space rental pricing

Space	Rental
Smedes-Emory Parlor (large parlor) (includes Small Parlor for food and drink setup; seats 80)	\$6,000 base
First Citizens Bank Theater (Black Box)	\$8,000 base
Harriet Matthews Jackson '73HS Atrium	\$8,000 base

All space rental prices are base rates; any extras are quoted after your inquiry. Space rental fees are separate from the chapel rental fees.

Add-on staff rates

Staff (per person, per hour)	Rate
Security	\$100/hour
Technology*	\$100/hour
Housekeeping	\$100/hour
Maintenance	\$100/hour

**The technology rate covers staff time only. Equipment, such as microphones, is billed separately; an itemized equipment list is available from the coordinator.*

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 treasured building.

Chapel rental fees	Amount
Saint Mary's alumnae	\$3,000
Non-alumnae	\$5,000
Extra parking security (optional; due before the rehearsal)	\$300

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. Make all checks payable to "Saint Mary's School." Visa and Mastercard are accepted with a 2.75% processing fee. Checks may be mailed to the Events and Calendar Manager: Kristin Whittaker, Saint Mary's School, 900 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27603.

Cancellation policy

Cancel within 30 days of booking, or 9 months or more before your date, and half your fee is refunded (\$1,500 for alumnae and \$2,500 for non-alumnae). Inside nine months, the fee is non-refundable. Every bride is permitted one date change; a second requires a new payment in full.

Contact information

Tour the chapel and event spaces, meet your coordinator, and start the paperwork whenever you're ready — we'll walk you through the rest. The wedding coordinator will be the primary person assisting you with the facilities and questions as you make your plans. We strongly encourage you to hire a wedding director to direct the ceremony; the Saint Mary's coordinator is not a wedding planner.

Kristin Whittaker – Events and Calendar Manager – weddings and special services:
919-424-4005, weddings@sms.edu, 900 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27603