

# THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF BETHESDA-BY-THE-SEA

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

---

---

## General Wedding Information

---

---

**A Bethesda Wedding** Weddings are first and foremost gatherings to worship God, and in that worship to celebrate the love of God manifest in the love and commitment of the couple. While each wedding has some distinct personal touches, the intent of the service is not so much to be personal as it is to ground this particular celebration in the universal love of God in Christ.

Much of the service and the ceremony for a wedding at Bethesda are set following the *Book of Common Prayer* and this church's customs. The proper place to begin a wedding feast is at the Lord's Table with Holy Eucharist, or Communion. Therefore, this is an integral part of a Bethesda wedding, and Bethesda's clergy are careful to make this part of the celebration welcoming and inclusive. Though it is not a choice for the couple, in rare instances, the officiating priest may make the pastoral decision not to have communion.

Bethesda wedding services take place at an altar within the church itself. One of the clergy of Bethesda-by-the-Sea will always officiate at the wedding. The couple may request the participation of other clergy, and those invitations will be made by the Rector at his discretion.

Weddings are normally on Saturdays and begin between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The wedding rehearsal is scheduled Friday in the church, starting promptly at 4:00 p.m. Clergy will consider weddings on other days of the week except Sunday.

Bethesda's weddings are coordinated through our staff liaison who will first schedule the couple's meeting with a priest. The majority of questions, choices, and decisions thereafter can be resolved by this staff person in direct contact with the couple. Bethesda strongly desires a relationship with the couple to be married; therefore, *all* communications will be with the couple, not parents or wedding planners (see *Wedding Coordinators* below).

**Requirements** Normally, the bride or groom, or at least one of their parents, is a communicant member of this parish. Other couples who live locally will be asked to begin participating in the life and worship of this parish as part of their preparation, with the expectation that this will become their church home. Those couples who reside elsewhere, and therefore are not able to participate in our parish life, yet want to be married at Bethesda, will be considered when dates are available. The final decision about every wedding request rests with the Rector.

**Decorations** Bethesda is blessed with such a beautiful worship space that we take a "less is more" approach to wedding decorations. The Altar Guild provides the guidelines for the decoration of the church. Our staff coordinator will notify the Altar Guild once a wedding is scheduled. The wedding fee includes two floral arrangements for the altar. For an additional fee, the couple may have additional flowers, up to 14 aisle candles, and an aisle runner, all of which is subject to the church's guidelines. No additional candles or runners are permitted, nor are rice, bubbles, flower petals, butterflies, etc.

**Music** Please see separate sheet.

**Food & Drink** No food or drink may be brought onto the premises for the wedding or the rehearsal. Anyone found to have been consuming any intoxicant—legal or illegal—on the wedding day before the service will not participate in the wedding.

**Parking & Police** The *Town of Palm Beach Police* is very cooperative when it comes to parking for large functions. Parking is never permitted in front of the church on South County Road; however, on the day of

the wedding, Bethesda's staff will request that Barton Avenue be converted to a one-way access road (as we do for Sunday services), allowing for parking on both sides of the street—facing west.

It is important to notify the church of plans to hire a valet or transportation service for guests' convenience so that the proper parking precautions are taken.

If attendance is expected to exceed 200 guests, we are required to hire two policemen to direct traffic. The cost will be added onto the wedding fee. At present this fee is \$360 for two officers for two hours.

### **Wedding Leaflets**

The church prepares and prints a leaflet for your service to enable everyone to participate in this time of worship. The contents of this leaflet are decided upon between the officiating priest and the couple. Prior to being printed, the couple will proof the leaflet for the accuracy of wedding party names.

### **Wedding Coordinators**

Independent wedding coordinators or planners are not permitted to have any part in planning the service and are not permitted to attend the rehearsal. They may attend the wedding as a guest at the family's invitation.

### **Photography and Videography**

As soon as the Prelude music has begun—and during the Processional and entire service—there is to be no *flash photography* and no *lights for videography*.

VIDEOGRAPHERS may be in either of these locations: [1] at the back of the church or [2] in the Barton Avenue hallway (behind the organ console). Videographers may not move between the two sites.

Because of camera noise, PHOTOGRAPHERS may be only at the back of the church.

After the service—when the bridal party has returned to the church for photographs—the *photographic session is strictly limited to one-half hour*. If clergy are expected to participate in the photographic session, they should be requested to do so prior to the service and photographed at the beginning of the session.

The clergy, organist, Altar Guild assistants (blue robe), and sextons (black robe) are all aware of these rules and have the authority to offer further instructions and to dismiss from the premises any photographer/videographer not following these guidelines.