

## Your Guide to Getting Married at the Church of the Heavenly Rest

Welcome to the Church of the Heavenly Rest. Congratulations on your engagement, and we wish you every joy and blessing as you prepare for both your wedding ceremony and your life together in marriage. We are delighted you have chosen to consider our church and community as a place to begin. This information brochure contains answers to most, if not all, of the questions you might have as you begin to plan. Please read it carefully, and we will be happy to answer any further questions you may have before scheduling an initial meeting with one of our clergy.

### 1. Our Understanding of Marriage

Marriage is a lifelong spiritual commitment. Our Book of Common Prayer sums it up this way: “Marriage is intended by God for their mutual joy, for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord.”

The celebration and blessing of a marriage is a sacramental act, meaning it is the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of God’s presence in the union of the couple, witnessed and blessed by the community of the church and the couple’s family and friends. “Therefore,” as the Prayer Book reminds us, “marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God.”

### 2. Where to Begin

By reading this information packet, you are taking your first step towards planning your wedding ceremony at the Church of the Heavenly Rest.

The next step is to fill out the attached Couple’s Information form and return it by email to [info@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:info@heavenlyrest.org). Clergy contacts are Anne Marie Witchger ([amwitchger@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:amwitchger@heavenlyrest.org)), and The Rev. Cindy Stravers ([cstravers@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:cstravers@heavenlyrest.org)). As soon as we receive the form, one of the clergy will contact you to set up a preliminary meeting. At that meeting, once you have determined whether this is the right place for your wedding, a date and time can be reserved for you in the church or the chapel.

Within two weeks of deciding on a date, we ask that you sign a Wedding Agreement and return it with your initial deposit (see “Fees” below). We urge you not to announce the time and place of your wedding until the Agreement is returned and your deposit is paid to the Church of the Heavenly Rest.

### 3. Preliminary Requirements

What the Episcopal Church Requires:

At least one of the parties to the marriage must be a baptized Christian, and there must be at least two witnesses to the marriage. The both partners must also sign a Declaration of Consent.

The couple must engage in pre-marital counseling with the priest who will officiate the wedding (or with another clergy person authorized by him or her). The sessions will be scheduled by mutual agreement between you and the clergy.

Divorced persons may remarry in the Episcopal Church. If this applies to you, you will be required to show documentation of the previous marriage(s) and divorce(s) to the priest who will officiate your wedding. The priest must request permission to proceed with your wedding from the Episcopal Bishop of New York at least 60 days before the wedding date. In addition, the Bishop requires that the couple complete a short questionnaire that will be submitted with the application for permission.

What the Church of the Heavenly Rest Expects:

If you are not already members of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, you are strongly encouraged to attend church and to get to know this community during the months leading up to your wedding.

Marriage is one of the most challenging and rewarding of human relationships. We believe it is best lived out in a community of faith, where it can be supported and nurtured by others seeking to grow in love, forgiveness, justice and compassion. To that end, we invite you to consider becoming members of this community, who will witness and bless your wedding and promise to uphold you in your marriage. If you live out of town, you are strongly encouraged to seek out and join a community that will support you in your life together.

What the State Requires:

The laws of the State of New York require that you obtain a New York State Marriage License within 60 days of, and not less than 24 hours prior to, your wedding day. You must bring this license to the officiating priest on the day of the rehearsal.

**4. What To Expect From the Church of the Heavenly Rest**

We offer you and your family and friends a genuine and joyful welcome here. As one of the most significant events in your lives, your wedding will be approached with joy, respect, and a prompt attention to detail, along with our desire to help you bring depth, meaning and spiritual intention to the occasion.

We are familiar with the anxiety and tension that couples can experience during the planning of their wedding. We promise that you will be supported by the ongoing prayers and regard of this community.

**5. Logistical Details**

Scheduling:

Weddings are celebrated usually on Saturdays, but can also be celebrated on weekdays or on Sunday afternoons. Weddings are not performed in Lent, because of the penitential nature of that season. If you are not sure of the dates of Lent in

a given year, the clergy will be glad to tell you what they are. Throughout the year, scheduling priority goes to scheduled worship services. We are careful not to schedule any wedding within three hours of any other wedding or church service or event.

#### Rehearsal and Wedding proceedings:

A rehearsal is scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time between you and the priest, and usually takes place on the day before the wedding. The rehearsal must begin on time, and not later than 5pm. Wedding planners and coordinators are welcome to attend rehearsals, but the priest is fully in charge of all proceedings having to do with the ceremony at both the rehearsal and the wedding. We require that you take responsibility for seeing that both the rehearsal and wedding start times are adhered to. (When the wedding party causes a delay of longer than 15 minutes past the scheduled start time at the rehearsal and/or the wedding, it will result in the forfeiture of your deposit.)

#### Liturgy:

As an Episcopal Church, we use the marriage service from the Book of Common Prayer (1979). Other rites and services are not permitted. All elements of the service are subject to the approval of the priest. Often, couples desire to invite another clergy person to participate in the service. In nearly all cases, visiting clergy are most welcome, but first it must be discussed with the officiating priest, who will extend the invitation.

#### Flowers:

Florists are usually willing to arrange flowers at the Church. Flower arrangements are permitted on the altar, at the entrance to the church, at the base of the chancel stairs, at the front of the nave, and on a small number of pews and on torchieres, subject to the approval of the clergy. Flowers may be delivered to the 90<sup>th</sup> Street entrance on the day of the service. Use of church-owned vases may be arranged with the church staff. No flowers are required, but we encourage you to have an arrangement for the altar, and we ask that altar flowers be left there in thanksgiving for your wedding. All other flowers and greens must be removed within two hours after the wedding. Failure to do so will result in forfeiture of your security deposit.

#### Rice and Runners

Our insurance policy prohibits us from allowing rice, paper, confetti or anything else to be thrown in the Church or on Church property. For the same reason, the use of paper, plastic, or cloth runners are not permitted. Please let your guests know of these policies. Violations may result in the forfeiture of your deposit.

#### Music:

Arrangements for all music, vocal and instrumental, are to be made in direct consultation with our Organist and Director of Music, Mollie Nichols (212-289-3400 x.204; [mnichols@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:mnichols@heavenlyrest.org)), whom you should contact after your initial meeting with the officiating priest. The inviting of guest musicians is

subject to Mollie's approval, and all music must be approved by her and by the priest officiating at the service.

Photography:

No flash photography whatsoever, neither video nor still, professional nor amateur, is allowed in the nave, chancel, or any part of the sanctuary during the wedding ceremony. On the day of the wedding, the priest will instruct professional photographers and videographers as to where they can position themselves during the service. But the basic rule is that photographers and videographers may NOT obstruct the view of ANY guest or participant during the ceremony. They must stand in the side aisles only, or take pictures from the balconies. Flash photos may ONLY be taken as the wedding party walks down the aisle at the beginning and at the end of the service. Posed pictures can be taken in the church after the service. Photographers will be asked to sign a form agreeing to these rules. Violations will not be tolerated.

Bulletins:

The Church of the Heavenly Rest will print bulletins (orders of service) for your wedding free of charge. However, this is only possible if all the necessary information is made available to us at least three weeks prior to the wedding ceremony. This includes your selected readings, names of readers, names of wedding party and parents and family whom you would like listed, and any additional information you and the officiating priest agree should be included. We reserve the right to charge an additional fee if information for the bulletins is not received by the specified date.

## **6. Fees**

Ours is a large, historic, and complex building in an urban location. Our fees are set to accommodate maintenance and security requirements, and are in keeping with the not-for-profit mission and ministries of this church.

The wedding fee for a church ceremony is \$5,000; for the chapel it is \$3,000. Once the date has been set for the wedding, and confirmed by the priest with the church schedule, you will receive an invoice listing the fees for your wedding, and a 50% deposit will be required within two weeks of receipt of your invoice to hold the date. We also require a refundable deposit of \$500, which will be returned to you within three weeks after your ceremony, provided that all conditions are met, and your wedding and rehearsal did not begin more than 15 minutes late.

The fees are negotiable only in the most extreme cases, at the discretion of the clergy. In some cases, couples choose to reduce their costs to a minimum by having a truly small service, with no music, no need of sound or candles or even flowers. In these cases, the price can be appropriately modest.

## **Next Steps**

Now that you have read this material, you are ready for the next step, which is to fill out the Couple's Information form, and send it by email to email to [info@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:info@heavenlyrest.org). Clergy contacts are Anne Marie Witchger ([amwitchger@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:amwitchger@heavenlyrest.org)), and The Rev. Cindy Stravers ([cstravers@heavenlyrest.org](mailto:cstravers@heavenlyrest.org)). You may also choose to mail the form in, in which case you can address it to Anne Marie Witchger (c/o the Church of the Heavenly Rest, 1085 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10128).

Once we receive your information, one of the clergy will be in touch with you promptly to set up an initial meeting. Once again, we are delighted you are considering the Church of the Heavenly Rest as the setting for your wedding. We look forward to getting to know you as you plan and experience this wonderful occasion!

## **Couple's Information**

### Partner 1 Primary Information

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Whether previously married:

Parents' names:

### Partner 2 Primary Information

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Whether previously married:

Parents' names:

Desired date, alternative date(s):

Time:

Chapel or Church:

Wedding Agreement

(agree to fees, deposit, starting on time, guidelines for photographers, no runners, etc)