

YOUR GUIDE TO SCHEDULING A WEDDING
ST. SOPHIA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



SYRACUSE, NY
METROPOLIS OF DETROIT

The Sacrament of Marriage

The following information is designed to give you to a greater understanding of what is required to schedule a wedding at Saint Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church.

Marriage is included in the seven major sacraments of the Orthodox Faith. The seven sacraments are, The Eucharist (Communion), Baptism, Chrismation (Confirmation) Confession, Marriage, Holy Unction (The sacrament of healing) and Holy Ordination.

When planning your wedding an appointment must be scheduled to meet with Fr. David (call him at 315-269-4940) prior to making **any** other arrangements. Please contact the priest for an appointment and to schedule pre-marital counseling sessions.

The bride and/or groom must be Orthodox Christian(s) in good ecclesiastical standing to be eligible for the sacrament of marriage. A marriage **may not** be scheduled if the future **bride or groom** are 1) member(s) of a non-Christian religion, 2) member(s) of a Christian denomination not recognized by the Greek Orthodox Church, 3) from a non-Trinitarian Church, 4) unchurched, or 5) member(s) of an Orthodox parish which defies the jurisdiction or the ecclesiastical authority of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The Orthodox Church is a loving and welcoming faith but adheres to canon law. For more information about the Orthodox faith and marriage - and the process by which one may become eligible for a wedding in the Orthodox Church through baptism or chrismation - **please consult with the parish priest.**

The couple should be willing to baptize their children in the Orthodox Church and raise and nurture them in accordance with the Orthodox faith.

The bride and/or groom must be steward(s) of St. Sophia's Church. The bride and/or groom must fill out a stewardship pledge form and have submitted the payment in full prior to the wedding. The bride and/or groom must also fill out a pledge form for the following year.

The sponsor(s) (koumbaros/koumbara) are traditionally chosen from outside your immediate family to expand your Orthodox family and grow in the faith together. **The sponsor(s) (koumbaros/koumbara) must also be in good ecclesiastical standing and stewards of St. Sophia's Church to participate in the ceremony. In the event that the sponsor(s) are not steward(s) of Saint Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church but are members of another canonical Orthodox Parish, a letter of good standing will be required from the home parish.**

All Orthodox Christian weddings must take place in the Church. No other venues or outdoor areas are possible. Non-orthodox Christians may serve as ushers and bridesmaids but may not participate in the exchange of rings or crowns.

The following items are the responsibility of the wedding party and required to be brought to the wedding ceremony: rings, wedding crowns (stefana) and two large white candles.

Other customary items include:

- ¼ cup of white rice
- White Jordan almonds, the quantity must be an odd number 7, 9, 11
- A silver or crystal goblet

- A silver or white platter for the above items to be placed upon

Our parish priest is available for this sacrament. In the event you wish to invite an additional Orthodox priest, permission must be granted from the priest of St. Sophia's. Priests from other religious denominations are not permitted to participate in the sacrament. If permission is granted, the family is responsible for all the financial requirements and accommodations of the additional priest.

All music performed in the church must be approved by the parish priest in advance of the wedding plans.

We have available the services of a chanter and/or organist. In the event that you required or request a chanter and/or organist, contact the church office and you will be given the contact information. The couple is responsible for payment one week prior to the wedding.

Please be considerate of the clergy. A generous gratuity is encouraged for the priest given to him directly or mailed to the Church. Please indicate clearly on your check or with a note to whom your gift is to be given or applied.

You may also choose to make a gift directly to St. Sophia's Church.

For more information on the customs of our faith and heritage, please consider purchasing the books The Orthodox Study Bible and A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America, both available in our Church bookstore.

The Requirements for being a Parishioner in Good Ecclesiastical Standing

Any person eighteen years of age or over who was baptized according to the rites of the Greek Orthodox Church, or was received into the Greek Orthodox Church through chrismation (confirmation), who lives according to the faith and canons of the Greek Orthodox Church, who has met his or her stewardship obligation and abides by the regulations and by-laws of the parish, is a parishioner in good standing of the parish.

A person qualifying as a parishioner in good standing who also wishes to be a member in another Orthodox parish must pay his/her financial obligations fully to each parish.

No person shall be accepted as a parishioner while retaining membership in a non-Christian religion, or on a non-Orthodox Christian denomination, or in an Orthodox parish which defies the jurisdiction or the ecclesiastical authority of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, or who deliberately disregards and transgresses the moral law.

When transferring from one parish to another, the parishioner shall present to the priest of the new parish a letter of transfer signed by his or her former priest, which shall include all the pertinent information required.

The religious, moral and social duties of a parishioner are to apply the tenets of the Orthodox faith to his/her life, activities, his/her time, to attend the Divine Liturgy and other services of worship faithfully on Sundays and holy days, to keep the rules and fasts of the Orthodox tradition, to receive frequently the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, to train and teach the young according to the faith and spirit of Orthodoxy, to respect the clergy, the ecclesiastical authority, and all governing bodies of the Church, to be obedient in matters of faith and ecclesiastical order, and to cooperate in every way towards the welfare and prosperity of the parish and the success of its sacred mission.

The obligations of a parishioner are to support St. Sophia's with regular stewardship gifts and special assessments as the Parish Assembly may establish, and to meet such Archdiocesan financial charges as may be fixed by the Biennial Assembly. Financial hardship will be reviewed by the parish priest and/or the Stewardship Committee.

The rights of a parishioner are to attend all regular and special parish assemblies, to take part in its discussions and to vote therein, and be elected a member/officer of the Parish Council and in such position to take part in the administration of the Parish and in the direction of its life and activity.

We can all use our talents in response to God's love by serving God on the Choir, Sunday School Program, Philoptochos, GOYA and Parish Council - or by participating in the other ministries of our Church.

Annual Stewardship Pledge

To support the ministries of St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church and to meet its financial obligations the annual Stewardship Program was adopted in January 2004. Each parishioner (18 years old and above) herein (or husband and wife) are requested annually to sign and submit to the church office a stewardship pledge card during the month of January or soon thereafter making a financial commitment to support our parish. Please fill out the pledge form completely. Each steward is requested to commit an honest portion of his/her/their annual income for the work and support of the Church.

A new stewardship pledge must be submitted every year.

The Parish Register shall include the following information concerning each steward:

The baptismal and family name and dates of baptism, dates of marriage, complete family record of spouse and children, date of entry into the parish indicating if a transferee from another parish, record of payment of parish and Archdiocesan financial obligations, and the date of death.

Many have asked for guidance on how much the annual stewardship donation should be. The parish council has set a guideline of between 1% and 2% of your household annual income. The amount of your gift is between you and God, this is only a guide. No one will ask for verification.

Proportional giving is much more equitable for each person gives of their treasure according to his or her means. Those who receive more may give more and those who receive less may give less and still be active parishioners of the church. Your pledge amount should come from your conscience and love for God.

Your annual stewardship commitment may be paid weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. You may pay at the Church office during business hours, request personalized offering envelopes, mail in by check (no cash in the mail please) or pay electronically through direct deposit or a bank card.

A commitment is in the strictest of confidence and is not a legal obligation but a promise to God. A parishioner may contact the priest or a member the Stewardship Committee to increase or decrease his or her stewardship pledge according to financial circumstances.

A person whose name appears on the membership rolls of the Church and has executed an annual stewardship pledge card, submitted and is not in arrears in payment of his/her stewardship obligation for the preceding year is deemed a parishioner in good standing.

A new parishioner is considered in good standing if he/she has submitted an annual stewardship pledge card. If a new member is to have a baptism or wedding in the Church, the pledge must be paid in full prior to the sacrament and a pledge card filled out for the following year.

When a wedding, baptism or confirmation is requested by a current member of the parish, and the stewardship commitment for the prior year has not been met, the pledge must be fulfilled. The parishioner must also fill out a current annual pledge form which must be paid in full prior to the wedding baptism or confirmation. He/she must also fill out a pledge card for the following year. You are considered a new member if you have not been a member in good standing the previous year.

For the purpose of voting for Parish Council members and/or participating at a parish assembly a new member of the parish must have been enrolled for a minimum of 3 months.