

Congratulations! Now that you have decided to get married, please take the time to read this brochure completely. It has been designed not only to help you in planning your wedding, but also to make your special day pass by as smoothly as possible.

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Your wedding is not a show!

Your wedding is a solemn sacramental act which takes place in a church in a reverent and holy manner. Two people are joined together in the sight of God to become one.

If you have not already booked a date for your wedding, make sure you do so at least eight to twelve months prior to your wedding. Make sure that you coordinate hotel/hall rentals, florist, photographer, videographer and band so that they are all taken care of at the same time as the booking of the church for the wedding. Do not pick a date, commit to a hall or a band and then call the church. We have a very busy wedding season, and your date or time may not be available. So please reserve early!

Meetings with Der Hayr

At least three months prior to the wedding date you have reserved, be sure to contact the church secretary and make an appointment with Der Hayr to fill out the pre-nuptial forms. At the time of the meeting, be certain to bring with you all pertinent information regarding the following items:

1. **Baptism and Confirmation:** Please bring certificates of Baptism and Confirmation. If you received these sacraments at St. Stephen's, there will be a record of it in the church archives and you will not need to bring any other information.
2. **Previous marriage(s):** If you have been married before, a copy of an official decree of divorce or an annulment needs to be brought with you to the office.
3. **General Information:** Information regarding the couple's personal history as well as that of parents, best man and maid of honor is required for the paper work. Dates of birth, current addresses, phone numbers and religious affiliation are all part of the pre-nuptial questionnaire.

Licenses, etc

Within two months of your wedding, you should apply for your marriage license at any city/town hall in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Three days later, it will be ready. By Massachusetts law, the person who is solemnizing the wedding must have that license in his hand BEFORE he can perform the marriage. By the same token, after performing the wedding, the priest has until the tenth day of the month following the wedding to fill out his part of the license and mail it back directly to the city/town clerk's office where it was issued.



After the initial meeting with Der Hayr, couples may wish to schedule a further meeting to go over and better understand the wedding service. A second meeting can be scheduled with Der Hayr at the time of the initial meeting. The couple must also arrange to receive Communion on the Sunday before the wedding.

The Rehearsal

Finally, couples need to schedule a rehearsal to be held a day or two before the wedding. Most people schedule the rehearsal for the night before the wedding, but many couples prefer to do it two nights before, so that they have no obligations on the eve of the wedding. In any event, Der Hayr's time is flexible and he will try to accommodate your rehearsal schedule.

At the rehearsal and again on the day of the wedding, clothing of the wedding party should be **modest and appropriate for the occasion**. Chewing gum is strictly forbidden in church at any time.

The Wedding Day

When the big day finally arrives, things will seem pretty hectic. After (hopefully) a good night's sleep, both bride and groom (as well as their attendants) should make sure to eat a moderate breakfast if the wedding is

in the morning and a light lunch if it is in the late afternoon. Low blood sugar combined with nervousness and dehydration is a perfect recipe for fainting.

The Groom and ushers should be at the church **45 minutes to one hour before** the scheduled start of the wedding. The Bride must be at the church and in the bridal room **fifteen minutes before** the scheduled starting time. Everyone who is participating in the performance of the wedding service usually has plans or other commitments after the wedding. The couple is asked to kindly respect those who are involved with the wedding – as well as their guests – by being at church early so that the wedding service can start on time.

Music

Aside from the music played or sung during the wedding service, any music especially requested by the couple must be either classical or religious in nature and can only be played or sung before or after the service. Music for the wedding will be discussed at the meetings with Der Hayr. Anyone wishing special or additional music must contact the church organist.

The service itself lasts about thirty to forty minutes from start to finish. After the ceremony, couples may choose whether or not to have a receiving line. At the end of the service, it is strictly forbidden in the Armenian Church for the Bride and Groom to kiss in front of the Altar. It is also forbidden to applaud at the end of the service or to throw anything outside on the church steps such as confetti, rice or candy. If the bride and groom have a written program for their guests, these last two items (no clapping, no throwing) must be mentioned in the program.

Days when marriage is prohibited

Great Lent, Holy Week, Easter (*Poon Paregentan* until Easter Tuesday): Portions of February, March and April, depending on the date of Easter.

Jrakalouyts (Eve) Christmas Day and the following day (*Merclots*): Jan. 5-7.

Donations and Fees

As with all things in life, there are also certain financial obligations in getting married. Aside from the fees for florists, photographers, hotels and the like, there are certain expenditures related to the wedding ceremony as well. Below is what you may typically expect to spend for your wedding ceremony. Please note that while there is no set fee for clergy, an amount should be considered which takes into account the time and effort expended in insuring the best wedding experience possible. **All Payments must be made to the Church Secretary at least one month prior to the wedding day.**

	Members*	Non-members
Deposit	\$500.00**	\$500.00**
Church	\$350.00	\$650.00
Organist	\$225.00	\$225.00
Deacon	\$150.00	\$150.00
Soloist	\$150.00	\$150.00
(optional) Clergy	Donation	Donation
Hall Rental (If desired)	\$750.00	\$1,000.00

* The member fee applies only to the newly married couple that pays Annual Dues to St. Stephen's church. If not already members, this is an appropriate time to sign up.

** The \$500 refundable deposit (for members and non-members) is now required for weddings to reserve the wedding date and cover late fees and any other unforeseen ancillary charges with the following terms.

0 – 15 minutes	Grace Period
16 – 30 minutes	\$150
31 minutes +	\$500

Finding no other way to enforce the time a couple shows up for their wedding, any late fees will be deducted from the abovementioned deposit.

Do not be late!

The importance of being at the church on time cannot be stressed enough. That is the reason for this repetition. It is all too common for weddings in our church to begin fifteen minutes to one hour late. This often has to do with carelessness or faulty planning. Sometimes unforeseen things happen. These are beyond control. However, to insure your wedding beginning on time, make the necessary arrangements for the Groom and ushers to arrive at least 45 minutes prior to the start of the Wedding, and the Bride and her maids to arrive no later than 15 minutes before the service is to begin.

Being late to your wedding may seem fashionable, but in fact shows a fundamental lack of respect for the Church, the priest and the other wedding participants as well as the guests.



We have read the above information and understood and accept the rules and conditions expressed herein.

Signature of Groom

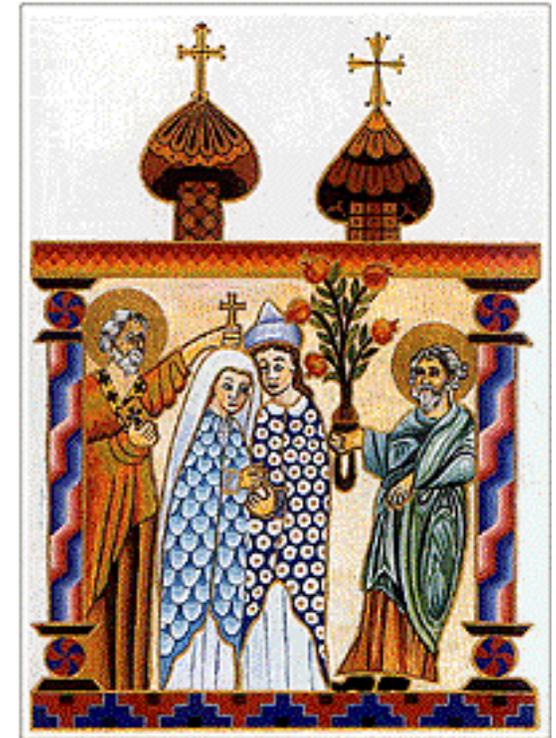
Signature of Bride

Signature of Pastor/Administrator

Date: ____/____/____

For Further Information, call:
Phone: 617-924-7562 Fax: 617-924-6809
Or E-mail us at: office@soorpstepanos.org
Website: www.soorpstepanos.org

...And the Two Shall Become One Flesh."



St. Stephen's Armenian Apostolic Church
WEDDING HANDBOOK

**A Practical Guide to Matrimony
Within the Church**

Rev. Fr. Antranig Baljian, Pastor
38 Elton Avenue, Watertown, Massachusetts