



# Saint Thomas Aquinas Church

A UNIVERSITY PARISH SERVING THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

401 Alderman Road  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903

434.293.8081

<http://www.stauva.org>

## Sacrament of Matrimony Agreement

*Thank you for choosing St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish (hereby named: STAUVA) to assist you in your preparation of and the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. We rejoice with you in your engagement and are excited to assist you as you prepare for this most special occasion. The following policies are designed to help you plan your wedding, as well as make you aware of what will be expected of you as you chose to be married/prepared for marriage at STAUVA. By signing this agreement, you state that you understand:*

### Eligibility

STAUVA is a personal parish specifically designated by the Diocese of Richmond to serve the University of Virginia community and therefore those who are currently resident-registered parishioners of STAUVA for  $\geq 6$  months; children of resident-registered parishioners; current student, faculty, or staff of the University of Virginia; or UVA alumni who graduated  $\leq 1$  year prior to their wedding date, have priority when booking the church for a wedding. Couples outside of this group are still free to marry here but will be charged the “non-parishioner” church rates.

### Marriage Preparation

The preparation for a marriage in the Catholic Church is extensive and thorough and therefore requires a minimum of six months time before any anticipated celebration. Marriage preparation through STAUVA is for resident-registered parishioners only (see qualifying criteria above in “Eligibility” paragraph). Preparation and the setting of a wedding date may only begin after a Pre-Nuptial Investigation (PNI) interview has been conducted with a priest or deacon wherein it will be determined if the bride and groom are canonically free to marry and any dispensations that may be required. Following the PNI, preparation will begin and includes, but is not limited to: individual meetings with a priest or deacon, the Wedding Coordinator and Mentor Couple, FOCCUS premarital inventory and review, Pre-Cana instruction/retreat, Natural Family Planning instruction, and wedding day planning of the liturgy and music. All marriage and wedding preparation communication with the STAUVA priests and staff will be conducted with the bride or groom only, and not with parents, family, or wedding planners.

### Location

For a valid sacramental marriage, Catholics are required to be married within a Catholic church building and by a Catholic priest or deacon. STAUVA priests and deacons do not have ordinary authority to celebrate a wedding at a vineyard or any other building. Therefore, all ceremonies will take place at St. Thomas Aquinas Church or the UVA chapel. Formal dispensation for serious pastoral necessity must be granted from the chancellor of the Diocese of Richmond for any rare exception to these requirements for the sacramental validity of a Catholic marriage.

*For information and regulations regarding use of the parish church, please see Addendum 1.*

### UVA Chapel

A STAUVA priest or deacon may be requested as the officiant for a Catholic wedding at the UVA chapel by parishioners of STAUVA or current students, faculty or staff of UVA. For others, a STAUVA priest may be requested, but not guaranteed as it will depend on the priests’ availability. The bride and groom must contact UVA directly regarding the availability, fees and reservations of this facility (STAUVA is not responsible for reserving the chapel or any coordination at that location). All marriage preparation documents need to be filed at STAUVA for a Catholic wedding taking place at the chapel.

### Use of Outside Priest or Deacon

If the bride and groom choose to use an outside priest or deacon to officiate their wedding at the parish church or UVA chapel, the visiting priest/deacon must provide the appropriate documentation proving their good standing within the Catholic Church from their Bishop or Major Superior. They must also obtain a license to officiate a wedding in the state of

Virginia by contacting the County Clerk’s Office. Finally, the STAUVA Pastor must provide final permission for them to validly celebrate the wedding at the parish church or UVA chapel.

If the couple chooses to prepare for the Sacrament of Marriage outside of STAUVA, the priest or deacon preparing them for marriage must ensure that the Pre-Nuptial Investigation has been completed before a wedding date can be set at STAUVA and that Pre-Cana instruction will be given by himself or another priest or deacon. The non-STAUVA priest or deacon is responsible for the completion of all required church documents and submitting them through the Diocese of Richmond at least 6 weeks in advance of the wedding date and a wedding cannot take place unless they are received.

**Documentation Required**

The documents required for marriage include (but are not limited to):

- Pre-Nuptial Investigation (performed by a priest/deacon with the couple) – Required in advance of wedding date reservation
- New copy of Baptism Certificate (must be dated within 6 months of the wedding) – Bride/groom to request from their church of baptism
- Copy of Confirmation Certificate – If a notation of Confirmation will be included on the Baptism certificates, that will suffice
- Freedom-to-Marry Affidavits (witness forms will be provided)
- Pre-Cana Completion Certificate
- Natural Family Planning Instruction Completion Certificate
- Letter of Permission - For non-resident parishioners
- Civil Marriage License - Due at the Rehearsal
- Where applicable, any necessary dispensations – Obtained by the marriage prep priest/facilitator

**Music**

All music to be used at the wedding mass or ceremony must be sacred. The STAUVA Music Coordinator will provide an organist and cantor for all weddings held at the parish church. A separate fee will apply for the use of each musician. Outside musicians are not permitted to replace the STAUVA provided musicians, however, special requests may be considered by the pastor. A meeting will be held between the STAUVA Music Coordinator and the couple approximately 1-3 months prior to the wedding date. Specific music selections and guidelines for guest vocal or instrumental soloists will be discussed at this meeting. Request for music coordination at the UVA chapel is available for parishioners (non-parishioners may make the request, but it will depend on availability). *If outside musicians are contracted by the couple for the UVA chapel, they are responsible for every aspect of music coordination at that location.*

**Wedding Fees**

Church Fees	Includes use of Parish Church, Bride and Groom rooms, utilities, supplies, maintenance, etc. For parishioners, fee also includes 4-5 (minimal) marriage preparation meetings.	Registered Parishioner: \$500.00 Non-Parishioner: \$1,500.00
<i>UVA Chapel Fee</i>	<i>Please contact UVA for availability, fees and reservations of the chapel.</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Parish Officiant Stipend	Includes officiating wedding at STA Church or UVA Chapel	\$200.00 (suggested offering)
Parish Wedding Coordinator	Includes planning and wedding coordination at STA Church, or UVA chapel (for parishioners only)	\$350.00
Marriage Preparation ONLY	Includes 4-5 meetings (minimal), processing, and mailing of necessary documents. (For parishioners only)	\$250.00
Ceremony Music	For wedding at STA Church, or UVA chapel (for parishioners only)	Organist: \$350.00 Cantor: \$200.00

A deposit for the Church and Marriage Preparation fees (as applicable) is required to confirm rehearsal and wedding dates/times and is due at the time of agreement signing. The final balance along with the fees for Wedding Coordinator, Organist and Cantor are due one month (~30 days) prior to the wedding date. Each bride and groom will receive an itemized invoice outlining specific fees and payment details.

Note that there is no fee required for the celebration of the sacrament. Any STAUVA parishioners in financial difficulty may request a reduction or waiver of fees to be reviewed and approved by the pastor for the preparation, celebration, and church use (except those due to a contracted coordinator, musician or cantor).

**Cancellation/Refund Policy**

A paid wedding reservation fee holds the St. Thomas Aquinas Church available for a couple who may be validly married in the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Richmond. Any restrictions on the manner of use of the church property may be unilaterally set or adapted by parish policy or the pastor.

Due to a shared contractual use of the church parking lot with the University of Virginia for home football games, the Church cannot guarantee the availability of parking during home football games. A full refund will be given if the church-owned parking is unavailable for the wedding due to a University of Virginia football game.

STAUVA reserves the right to cancel any reservation due to safety reasons, building emergencies or pastoral concerns regarding the potential religious or legal validity of a wedding. If STAUVA determines that the church space is unusable due to safety or emergency reasons, a full refund will be given. A restriction on church occupancy limits, or parking due to government regulations or actions, does not necessarily constitute as an emergency reason for cancellation of a reservation.

A refund request for a church wedding reservation must be received in writing from the bride or groom directly and not from a third party. A minimum of \$500.00 for a paid wedding reservation will be non-refundable. After that, \$100.00 will be refunded for each month prior to the wedding date once the written notice of cancellation is received. A cancellation requested by STAUVA will be given a full refund.

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By signing this document we acknowledge that we have fully read and understand the wedding agreement of St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish—including all addendums—regarding marriage preparation, weddings and cancellations, and will comply with all of its requirements and instructions:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Groom

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Bride

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

Signature of Receipt by STAUVA staff member \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Use of Parish Church Rules & Regulations

The following rules and regulations apply for all weddings being conducted at STAUVA parish church. They are meant to ensure the safety of all present, the respect of church activities happening before or after the wedding, and to protect the sacred space of the church building, especially the Sanctuary. The Bride and Groom, as well as their wedding party and guests must be in full accordance with these regulations and respect the timeline provided.

### Church Capacity:

Maximum seating capacity: **1170**

### Wedding/Rehearsal Times: *Applies to both Nuptial Masses and Marriages celebrated outside of the mass.*

No weddings are scheduled on Sundays or during Holy Week (from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday). Weddings may be celebrated on Saturdays at either 11AM or 2PM. Some exceptions may apply. *Please be sure your wedding date and time has been confirmed by the STAUVA Wedding Coordinator before making any arrangements for your reception.*

Reservation of the church is for a 2.5-hour time period. This includes: One hour prior to the start of the ceremony for bride/groom arrival and set-up, one hour for the ceremony and 30 minutes after for pictures, clean-up and exit. *EXAMPLE: An 11AM wedding has the church reserved from 10AM-12:30PM.* Please adhere to this schedule to show the couple before or after you the same respect you received.

Rehearsals are held the day before the wedding, at either 2:00PM, 2:30PM, 3:00PM or after the evening Mass at 6:15PM. Some exceptions may apply. There is no music at the rehearsal. If you will be using an outside priest or deacon, he must be present at the rehearsal.

### Wedding Planners

Due to the sacramental nature of this occasion, the STAUVA Wedding Coordinator will attend to all details of the wedding mass/ceremony for the couple. ***Any outside wedding planner that has been contracted by the couple is not needed for this portion of their wedding day celebration and should not perform any duties within the church.*** Our Catholic Wedding Coordinator will work with the couple prior to their wedding to ensure all dates, times, paperwork, liturgy and ceremony details are attended to. They will be present at your rehearsal and wedding day mass/ceremony to assist in all matters as related to the Sacrament.

### Pictures/Video

Pictures may be taken during the Mass or ceremony, but we ask that everyone involved remember that this is a religious ceremony and that picture taking and video should be done as discretely as possible. The photographer and videographer must follow the Wedding Coordinator’s instructions on where to stand during the ceremony, and when to refrain from movement. Pictures/videos in the main aisle will only be permitted during the processional, the vows (discretely) and the recessional. The space in the main aisle must remain clear at all other times for the respect of the ceremony and the safety of guests. Photographers and videographers are never allowed in the raised altar area. The bride and groom are responsible for providing these instructions to their vendors.

*STAUVA Videographer recommendation: Christopher Tobey (804) 387-2394 | chris@tobeymedia.com*

### Flowers & Adornments

The parish does not provide flowers, nor do we set out the arrangements, this is handled by your contracted florist. They will have access to the Sanctuary to deliver arrangements 1 hour prior to your wedding time. Suggested areas for flower placement is on either side of the Tabernacle on the marble columns provided (columns are 10” diameter and the arrangements should stand  $\leq 40$ ” from the base of the vase to the tip of the flower). Please plan to take your flowers with you to the reception location after the ceremony. STAUVA can accommodate requests to leave the flowers at the church with an advanced request, dependent on the Liturgical season.

Flowers and/or bows used as pew markers must be hung with soft ribbon loops over the top end of the pew. Do not use u-shaped hangers, tape, nails, thumbtacks, anything hard or any adhesive on parish furniture.

Pew torches are available by STAUVA for the adornment of the center aisle for rental for a fee of \$150.

No rice, birdseed, flowers, flower petals, bubbles or anything else may be strewn inside the church (including the main aisle) or outside the church at the entrances or walkways. Please inform your wedding party and guests.

*STAUVA Recommended Florist: Blue Ridge Floral Design - BlueRidgeFloral.com | 434-361-9218 | Amy@BlueRidgeFloral.com*

### Bridal Party & Guest Conduct

All wedding guests and members of the wedding party should conduct themselves in a manner fitting of being in the house of God. No alcohol or food is permitted in the bridal suite, groom room or church. Thank you in advance for respecting this sacred space.

*Thank you for choosing St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish for your wedding ceremony.*

*We look forward to celebrating with you!*

Groom’s Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride’s Initials: \_\_\_\_\_