

# *Parish Wedding*

## Policies & Guidelines

Preparing to Celebrate the  
Sacrament of Marriage  
at

**St. Andrew Catholic Church**



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## *For the Bride and Groom*

**C**ongratulations on your engagement and upcoming wedding. Soon you intend to tell the whole world of your mutual love and commitment. Before God and his Church with your family and friends as witnesses, you will promise to love one another until death do you part. This promise of love is expressed in your commitment to live together as husband and wife in mutual and lasting fidelity all the days of your life. The day you make these promises we call your wedding day, and in a real sense, this is your day...your wedding.

Your wedding should be one of the happiest times of your life. The Church rejoices in the experience and it is our privilege to be of help to you. The wedding need not be elaborate to be meaningful and beautiful. The true meaning and beauty of the celebration lies more in the attitude, faith and love of those who take part, than in any grandiose ceremony. Since the marriage ceremony centers around the two of you, it is only natural for both of you to actively participate in the planning of the ceremony and the details that surround it. We offer you this booklet to help you in the plans. Please read carefully through this *Parish Wedding Policies & Guidelines at St. Andrew Catholic Church*.

As with all Sacraments of the Catholic Church, the Sacrament of Marriage requires spiritual preparation. Couples need to begin this process at least six months prior to the date of their wedding and be registered and practicing members of our parish for at least six months prior to the beginning of your preparation. Visiting couples are also welcome.

The clergy and staff of St. Andrew are here to help you. Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions after reading this material. We will pray for blessings in the new life you are about to begin *together*.

In the love of Christ,

Father Juan Anzora  
Pastor

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## **I. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MARRIAGE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

### **A. Freedom to Marry**

Church law requires that both parties be free to marry, that is, neither party was married previously. If either of you were married before, and your former spouse is living, you will need to obtain a Declaration of Nullity of the marriage from The Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese. A Priest or Deacon of the parish can assist you in starting the process. Under no circumstances may a date for the ceremony, not even tentatively, be set until an annulment has been granted.

### **B. Interfaith Marriage**

An interfaith marriage is a marriage between couples professing different religions. The Catholic Church welcomes interfaith marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics. During marriage preparation, the Catholic party will be asked to promise to maintain his or her own faith and also do all in his or her power to ensure that children born of the union are raised in the Catholic faith. The non-Catholic party does not make any promises, but is aware of the promise by the Catholic party.

In an interfaith marriage, the minister of the non-Catholic party may be invited to participate in the ceremony. The type of participation will depend upon whether or not the marriage will be celebrated within a Mass. Usually it will involve participating in the readings and/or giving a blessing. A member of our clergy can offer more details about this.

## **II. ARRANGING THE CEREMONY**

### **A. Reserving the Date**

If you are considering a wedding at St. Andrew Catholic Church, you can check availability of the date you want by calling the parish office at 770.641.9720. The church seats around 600 guests. However, we reserve the right to limit the number of attendees to remain in compliance with CDC guidelines for social distancing during pandemic times.

To reserve the date and time for your wedding you must first meet with one of our Priests or Deacons (if the Priest or Deacon officiating the ceremony is not from St. Andrew, please also read section B). Only a Priest or Deacon can authorize reservation of the date and time on the parish schedule. All reservations are made on a first-come, first-served basis and can be scheduled between 6 months and 18 months before your desired date.

Weddings are celebrated on Saturdays at 10:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m. These times may not be changed. Weddings may also be scheduled on a week day at any convenient time that can be accommodated in the Church and in the clergy's calendar. Weddings may **NOT** be scheduled on Sundays, Holy Days, Holy Week and the vigils of Christmas and New Year's Day.

Rehearsals are usually held the evening before the wedding at 4:00 p.m. and take approximately 45 minutes. The bride and groom are responsible for the prompt attendance of their wedding party. The officiant, local or from outside, is required for the rehearsal. *More about the rehearsal on page 8.*

Having set the date of the wedding, it will be the responsibility of the officiating Priest or Deacon to see that all the necessary documentation is completed and that the couple receives the required pre-marriage preparation.

### **B. Visiting Clergy**

Any Roman Catholic Priest or Deacon, ordained and in good standing, may officiate with permission from our Pastor. If it is a Priest outside of the Archdiocese, he also needs permission from his Bishop.

If you wish a Priest or Deacon from outside the parish to officiate, you must first contact him and ask that he contact St. Andrew Catholic Church. He will be asked to confirm in writing that he is both willing to officiate, and that he is willing to complete the necessary premarital preparation and paperwork. He also needs to specify/reconfirm the date and time of the ceremony so that the church's availability can be verified.

The permission required by Church law for him to officiate will be granted only after the completed paperwork has been received at St. Andrew Catholic Church office, as well as submitting a letter to the pastor requesting delegation (as specified in Canon Law), no later than one month prior to the wedding date. Visiting clergy are expected to follow the policies of St. Andrew Catholic Church regarding the conduct of the ceremony, and to work with St Andrew Catholic Church Wedding Coordinators and parish staff. They are also required to attend the rehearsal.

### **C. Members of Another Parish Marrying at St. Andrew Catholic Church**

The Bride and Groom need to be prepared at their home parish by one of their Priests or Deacons. Your Priest or Deacon (or in the case of a visiting priest or deacon) will submit your date and time requests, commit to preparing you for the Sacrament of Marriage, and (if applicable) will request delegation to perform your marriage here. Couples from outside the State of Georgia may request an officiant from St. Andrew Catholic Church. All initial paperwork must be received by our parish office, along with the church fee to confirm your wedding date. All completed paperwork must be received at least one month in advance of your wedding date (See paragraph above).

### **D. Wedding Coordinators**

There is no need to engage the services of a "Bridal Consultant". Members of St. Andrew parish are trained Wedding Coordinators and are available to assist you with the rehearsal and on your wedding day. Once your reservation has been confirmed, please contact the Wedding Coordinator listed in our Sunday Bulletin.

### **E. St. Andrew Parishioner being Married Elsewhere**

If you are getting married at another parish, please make an appointment with one of our Priests or Deacons to begin the preparation process. The parish Priest or Deacon will send a letter to the location where you will be getting married stating that you have completed marriage preparation.

## **III. FEES AND STIPENDS**

### **A. Facilities**

There is no charge for the administration of the sacraments. The fees described below, are to cover the costs of our facilities and include the use of the church, the bride's room, and a room for the groom and his groomsmen, if desired.

For **Active Registered Parishioners**, there is a flat fee for basic services provided for the wedding day. This fee is currently \$ 675. For **Non-Parishioners or Non-Active Parishioners** there is an additional \$ 500 fee for the use of the church. A non-refundable \$200 deposit will be collected during the first meeting.

Service fees are payable when reserving the church but no later than two months prior to the ceremony. Reservations are not considered confirmed until all fees are fully paid. Checks should be made payable to *St. Andrew Catholic Church*.

The Family Center, also known as the Parish Hall, is not available for wedding receptions.



## B. Music Fees

Fees for church musicians are fixed amounts:

1. **Organist/Pianist:** The fee for the organist/pianist/music coordinator is included in the basic services fee.
2. **Other Musicians:** For other additional musicians who are employed for the wedding, including an additional cantor/soloist or other instrumentalist, the standard fee is \$150 each.

Checks for the organist/pianist/music coordinator and any other musicians' fees should be included in the same check as all other fees paid to the church.

## C. Stipends

1. **Priest or Deacon:** An honorarium of \$250 is included in the basic fee. An honorarium to the officiating Priest or Deacon is customary and provided by the groom. While the amount is a matter of personal discretion, in general, an honorarium for a priest/deacon celebrant is recommended. We suggest it be commensurate with the cost of the wedding, the time the officiating Priest or Deacon has spent with you in preparation and your overall financial means.
2. **Altar Servers:** Stipends to altar servers at a wedding Mass are also customary. There will be 1 or 2 Altar Servers at your wedding to assist the Priest or Deacon. This fee is included in the basic fee.
3. **Wedding Coordinators:** Wedding Coordinators are trained members of the parish who give their time and skills to assist you with the rehearsal and on your wedding day. There will be 1 or 2 Wedding Coordinators assisting you. This fee is included in the basic fee.

## IV. CANCELATION POLICY

St. Andrew Catholic Church reserves the right to cancel the wedding if the legal requirements under State or Church law are not met. If a wedding is canceled at least six months before the date of the ceremony, the fee is fully refundable to the party who paid the fee, but nonrefundable if the wedding is canceled within six months of the ceremony.

## V. MARRIAGE PREPARATION

To prepare for your marriage, the officiating Priest or Deacon will meet with you several times within a period of 6-12 months. In these meetings the Priest or Deacon will:

1. Start the necessary paperwork.
2. Help you select one of the mandatory marriage preparation courses offered by the Archdiocese of Atlanta: Engaged Encounter, Three to Get Married, Sponsor Couple Program and the Pre-Cana Program. These programs offer you an opportunity to reflect on the lifelong decision you are making. Upon completion of the program you should receive a certification of participation, which you should give to the officiating Priest or Deacon, at least 1 week before your wedding.
3. Assist you in completing a premarital inventory. Readiness for marriage cannot be scientifically measured, but an inventory helps engaged couples make sure that they have discussed the most important issues. These are not tests, but rather instruments that prompt discussion on sometimes sensitive issues. Our clergy uses the FOCCUS pre-marriage inventory and the Prepare/Enrich program.
4. Discuss the outcome of your marriage preparation course and premarital inventory.
5. Help you plan the details of your wedding ceremony. *More information about the ceremony on page 8.*
6. Discuss with you the Church's teaching concerning the Sacrament of Marriage.

## VI. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

The following documents are required well in advance of your wedding day:

### A. Baptismal Certificate

Catholic bride and groom will need each to obtain a NEW and original Baptismal Certificate from the Church of Baptism. This certificate should include all notations with information of the Sacraments you have received. The Baptismal Certificate should be issued no more than six months prior to the date of the wedding.

### B. Affidavits of Freedom to Marry

You will receive four (two each) affidavit forms of freedom to marry. These are to be completed (usually by parents or family members) and witnessed by *one* of the following: Priest, Deacon, Pastoral Minister or Notary Public. They are then to be returned to the officiating Priest or Deacon.

**C. Certificate of Completion** for your premarital preparation course. *For more information on preparation courses, see page 6, section V, item #2.*

### D. Bride and Groom Forms

After completing your marriage preparation program, the officiating Priest or Deacon will interview both the bride and the groom separately and complete both the bride and groom forms.

### E. Marriage License

It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to obtain a marriage license. **No wedding can be performed without the license.** If one or both persons to be married are residents of Georgia you may apply for a marriage license in any county in Georgia. If neither applicant is a resident of Georgia, you must then apply for the marriage license in the county where the ceremony is to be held. St. Andrew is in Fulton County. The fee may be reduced if the couple seeking the license has completed a qualifying premarital education program. For more information, please visit <http://www.fultoncountyga.gov/fcprobate-marriage-license> or call the Fulton County Probate Court at (404) 613-4583.

The license should be given to the Priest or Deacon or wedding coordinator at the rehearsal. The rehearsal will be cancelled if the parish office has not received the license before 4 p.m. on the day of the rehearsal. The parish office is open Monday thru Friday from 9a.m.-4p.m.

### F. Dispensation/Permission

When a Catholic and a person of another faith plan to get married, the officiating Priest or Deacon is responsible for obtaining the proper dispensation/permission. The dispensation/permission is sought on the condition that the Catholic party plans to continue living in the Catholic faith and intends to share that faith with the children.

### G. Previous Marriage

Should either party to the upcoming marriage have been previously married, it will be the responsibility of that party to provide certification of how the former marriage ceased to exist (namely through a decree of Ecclesiastical Nullity or Death certificate). This should be given to the officiating Priest or Deacon. It will be the responsibility of the officiating Priest or Deacon to complete the "Previous Marriage" form.

*St. Andrew Catholic Church reserves the right to cancel the wedding if the legal requirements under State or Church law are not met.*

## VII. THE REHEARSAL

Rehearsal times are set when your wedding is booked. The rehearsal is usually held the evening before the wedding at 4:00 p.m. (to be confirmed with presiding priest or deacon) and takes approximately 45 minutes.

The organist/pianist is not usually present at the rehearsal. The music should be selected with their help well in advance, so the Priest or Deacon and the Wedding Coordinators can receive an outline of the wedding ceremony, including the music, from you before the rehearsal.

Wedding rehearsals must start on time and proceed in a quiet, dignified manner. All members of the wedding party should remember that throughout the entire rehearsal, they are in a holy place, dedicated to the worship of God.

Members should dress appropriately in view of the setting (no shorts, etc.) and arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled rehearsal time. **The use of alcohol before or during the rehearsal is prohibited.** Persons violating this prohibition will be asked to leave the church. Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the church building. Food may not be brought into the church. Please turn off all cell phones during the rehearsal. No chewing of gum is allowed in the church.

Please have all members of the wedding party at the rehearsal, this includes the bride, groom, best man, ushers, maid of honor, bridesmaids, groomsmen, ring bearer, flower girl, mother and father of bride and groom, readers, and if you wish, special guests such as grandparents of the bride and groom. The Visiting Priest should also be present if applicable.

The entire rehearsal is under the direction of the officiating clergy, assisted by the St. Andrew Wedding Coordinators.

## VIII. PLANNING THE LITURGY

### A. The Ceremony

1. **Decide on the type of ceremony:** When planning your ceremony, your first step is to decide whether you would like a Nuptial Mass or Simple Ceremony. A **Nuptial Mass** is a wedding that includes both the Sacrament of Marriage and the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Communion is distributed to Catholic members of the congregation. A marriage between two Catholics is often celebrated during a Nuptial Mass. The sacramental graces received through the reception of the Eucharist, in addition to the Sacrament of Marriage, will continue to bless and strengthen their marriage throughout their lives. A **Simple Ceremony** includes only the Liturgy of the Word and the Exchange of Vows. This is often the choice for a mixed marriage (the marriage of a Catholic and a non-Catholic) when many in the congregation would not be receiving Communion. It is possible to have a Nuptial Mass at a mixed marriage if that is desired. A Deacon or Priest may celebrate at a Simple Ceremony, but a Priest is required for a Nuptial Mass.

**Note:** A 10:30 a.m. wedding needs to be out of the church by 12:00 p.m., a 1:30 p.m. wedding needs to be out of the church by 3:00 p.m.



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2. **Select the readings and prayers:** You will receive from the clergy a booklet called *Together for Life* to guide you in selecting appropriate readings and prayers for your wedding. He will explain how to prepare the list of your selections. You will give your selections to your clergy one week before the rehearsal.

## **B. Music**

Our Music Director/Organist will assist you in selecting the appropriate music for your wedding. Because our Music Director/Organist is under contract with the parish and relies on fees from special services to insure a just compensation for his services, he has the first right of first refusal for your wedding. He can also help you arrange for a vocal soloist or other instrumentalists. *For information on music fees, please see page 6, item B.*

Weddings in the Catholic church are liturgies and involve inviting the congregation present to sing; therefore, you must employ a cantor/soloist (either as a separate musician or employ an organist/pianist who also has the ability to sing.) All musicians are paid through the church. Fees collected will be processed after the wedding. All music selected for the wedding as well as musicians must be approved by our Music Director.

Please set up an appointment with the Director of Music two months before your wedding day. Scott Dixon can be reached at 770.641.9720 Ext. 246.

The guidelines for music at the ceremony include:

1. Only live music is allowed; recorded music or MP3 music are not permitted.
2. Electronic pianos/keyboards/synthesizers are not allowed.
3. All music, including a vocal solo, must be sacred in nature and suitable for a Sunday liturgy and must be approved by our Music Director.
4. All musicians must be located in the music area in the Church.
5. The organist/pianist/music coordinator will meet with the soloist/instrumentalists one hour before your wedding for a warm-up.

## **C. Flowers, Candles and Decorations**

We think of our church as a simple place of beauty created to enhance any service of worship. An abundance of flowers and candles is not necessary. During the Advent, Christmas and Easter Seasons, as well as at other times during the year, the church and sanctuary are already decorated in an appropriate manner with flowers and/or other installations. Under no circumstances may these be removed for weddings.

Please observe the following additional guidelines with regard to flowers, candles and decorations:

1. Flower arrangements may be placed in front of the altar, ambo or baptismal font.
2. Sanctuary and vestibule furniture, flags, posters, banners, literature racks and other church furnishings must not be moved.
3. Live flower arrangements brought by you for the wedding are free to stay or to take with you after the ceremony.
4. If seasonal flowers (Christmas, Easter) are in place they may NOT be removed for a wedding.
5. Please note that flowers placed in front of the altar should not be taller than the altar (36").

6. Nothing may be removed from or placed on the altar table or tabernacle.
7. Pew decorations must be affixed with ribbon ONLY. No decorations may block access in and out of the pews, in order to comply with fire and safety codes.
8. The decorating must be completed 30 minutes before the wedding is scheduled to begin.
9. All decorations are to be removed immediately after the wedding.
10. Candles on the pews or outside of the church are not permitted.
11. Because of liability issues, rice, confetti, birdseed or flower petals, whether real or artificial, are not permitted in the church or on the church grounds. If you choose to have a flower girl in your wedding party, her role is to be strictly symbolic.
12. No tacks or nails, tape or other means may be used to secure flowers, palms or other decorations to church walls, pews, furniture or fixtures.
13. To comply with fire codes and safety codes, no aisle runners are permitted.
14. Flowers for the wedding party should be delivered to the Bride's Room.
15. It is your responsibility to inform the florist of these requirements.

#### **D. Photography and Video**

The bride and groom make arrangements for photography and video. We understand that photographs and videos are important mementos of your wedding. Yet, we also believe that the dignity and solemnity of the wedding as a worship service must be maintained so we ask you to please advise the photographer and videographer of the following:

##### **Photography:**

1. Your photographer should be appropriately dressed for a formal church service.
2. During the procession, a photographer will be allowed to be in the center aisle, only at the beginning of the procession.
3. During the ceremony, the photographer must stay in the back of the church and not come forward of the last pew (near the vestibule) in the center aisle.
4. Flash photography is NOT allowed during the ceremony, by professionals or guests.
5. The photographer is allowed 30 minutes before the ceremony and 30 minutes after for posed photographs.
6. Any posed photographs involving clergy and/or Altar servers should be taken first.

##### **Videography:**

The church has the ability to livestream the wedding event. If this is desired, please plan for this service at the same time as the music. For those couples having the wedding video-graphed, the following regulations are in effect:

1. All persons providing videography services are to be dressed for a formal church service.
2. All video equipment must be set up no later than 30 minutes before the wedding.
3. Cameras may be set up in the rear of the church or in one of the side aisles, not in the sanctuary.
4. Equipment is to remain in place during the wedding. No one is permitted to move around with a camera during the ceremony.
5. Floodlights and auxiliary lighting are not permitted during the ceremony. Wires may not be laid down across any aisle.

*We reserve the right to ask any photographer or video person in violation of these regulations to immediately correct the violation or to leave the premises.*

## IX. THE WEDDING DAY

The Wedding Party should arrive at the church at least 30 minutes before the wedding time. The preferred plan for a Catholic wedding is that the bride, her attendants and family members arrive at the church ready to walk down the aisle. However, we do have facilities in which the bride and her female attendants may freshen up. Arrangements should be made in advance for this. Pins, coat hangers, flower boxes, clothing and personal items are to be removed from the Bride's Room as soon as the bride walks out to the Church. The room should be left in good order. Please designate this assignment to a family member to ensure that it is completed. St. Andrew Catholic Church is not responsible for any lost items.

The Bride's Room is available for the use of the bride and her immediate attendants 60 minutes prior to the wedding ceremony. Upon request, we can also provide a room for the groom and groomsmen if necessary. Please let the Wedding Coordinators know if you would need one or both rooms.

The groom and his party should arrive first and proceed into the church. The ushers should come to the church already dressed. They should meet in the vestibule to receive their boutonnieres.

## X. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

1. There is no smoking in any area of the church building.
2. **The use of alcohol in the church or on the premises is strictly prohibited.** Alcoholic beverages in church or on the premises may result in cancellation of your wedding.
3. Frequently, we have more than one rehearsal and/or wedding on a weekend. Should you fail to be on time, your rehearsal will have to be rescheduled at a later time.
4. According to the Archdiocesan outlines, a person is considered **Active Parishioner** if he/she meets the following criteria:
  - A person must be registered in our parish and participate in the Sunday Liturgy (Mass) at St. Andrew at least 65% of the time.
  - This participation at the Sunday Liturgy (Mass) must be verifiable. Each registered person is provided with parish envelopes. Even if a person contributes on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis we ask you to please use the empty envelope to verify your attendance. All envelopes are recorded and verify your regular presence at Mass. It also provides the pastor with the founded hope that you are a practicing Catholic. So please use your envelopes to verify your attendance.
  - You must have a current stewardship card on file that indicates your commitment of time and talent to the parish. This commitment should reflect a prayerful and thoughtful response of gratitude to God. It must reflect a sincere effort to comply with God's invitation to tithe. God does not call us all to be equal in the sacrifice we make. Thus, He asks us all to tithe. In our tithing the Archdiocese guidelines asks us to set aside 5% for the parish offertory, 1% for the Archdiocesan Annual Appeal, and the remaining 4% for favorite charities of each person's choosing.
  - Your financial support to St. Andrew and the Archdiocesan Appeal must be verifiable. Therefore, when contributing you should use the envelopes provided or checks. (When using checks only, we ask you to please write your membership number on the check, as this is a great help to our bookkeeper.)
  - A person must be willing to help in the ministry of St. Andrew.



# Wedding Checklist

Please use this list as a guiding point to help you begin your wedding plan.

## **Appointment with the Priest or Deacon**

*Please call the parish office 6-18 months before the wedding day to schedule the first appointment. During your first visit with the Priest or Deacon, you will be able to reserve the date and begin marriage preparation. Any facility usage fees are due shortly after the reservation.*

## **DOCUMENTATION**

### **Bride's Baptismal Certificate**

*Please read section A on page 7.*

### **Groom's Baptismal Certificate**

*Please read section A on page 7.*

### **Dispensation/Permission Form** (if applicable)

### **Bride's Freedom to Marry Forms (2)**

*To be returned to Priest or Deacon before your wedding day. Read section B on Page 7.*

### **Groom's Freedom to Marry Forms (2)**

*To be returned to Priest or Deacon before your wedding day. Read section B on Page 7.*

### **Visiting Priest**

*If applicable, the completed paperwork should be received at the parish office from the Visiting Priest, at least 1 month before the wedding day.*

### **Wedding Registration Form**

*This form summarizes all the details of your wedding and will be completed by the Priest or Deacon with the Wedding Coordinator.*

### **Music Director**

*Please schedule a meeting 2 months before the wedding day.*

### **Wedding Coordinator**

*Contact the Wedding Coordinator (listed in the bulletin) after your reservation has been confirmed by the parish office and at least 2 months prior to the wedding.*

### **Music Fees**

*Should be paid at the parish office 2 weeks before the wedding day.*

### **Honorarium to priest/deacon celebrant**

*Please give to the parish office 2 weeks before the rehearsal*

### **Marriage Licenses**

*Please give to the Wedding Coordinator at the day of the rehearsal.*

### **Reading Selection**

*Please give to clergy at least 1 week before the wedding day.*

### **Marriage Preparation Course Certificate**

*Please give to clergy at least 1 week before the wedding day or as soon as the course has been completed, which ever comes first.*

### **Rehearsal**

*Please make sure the rehearsal is scheduled at the time of the first visit with the Priest or Deacon and that every one involved with your wedding party attends.*

### **Final Meeting with the officiating Priest or Deacon**

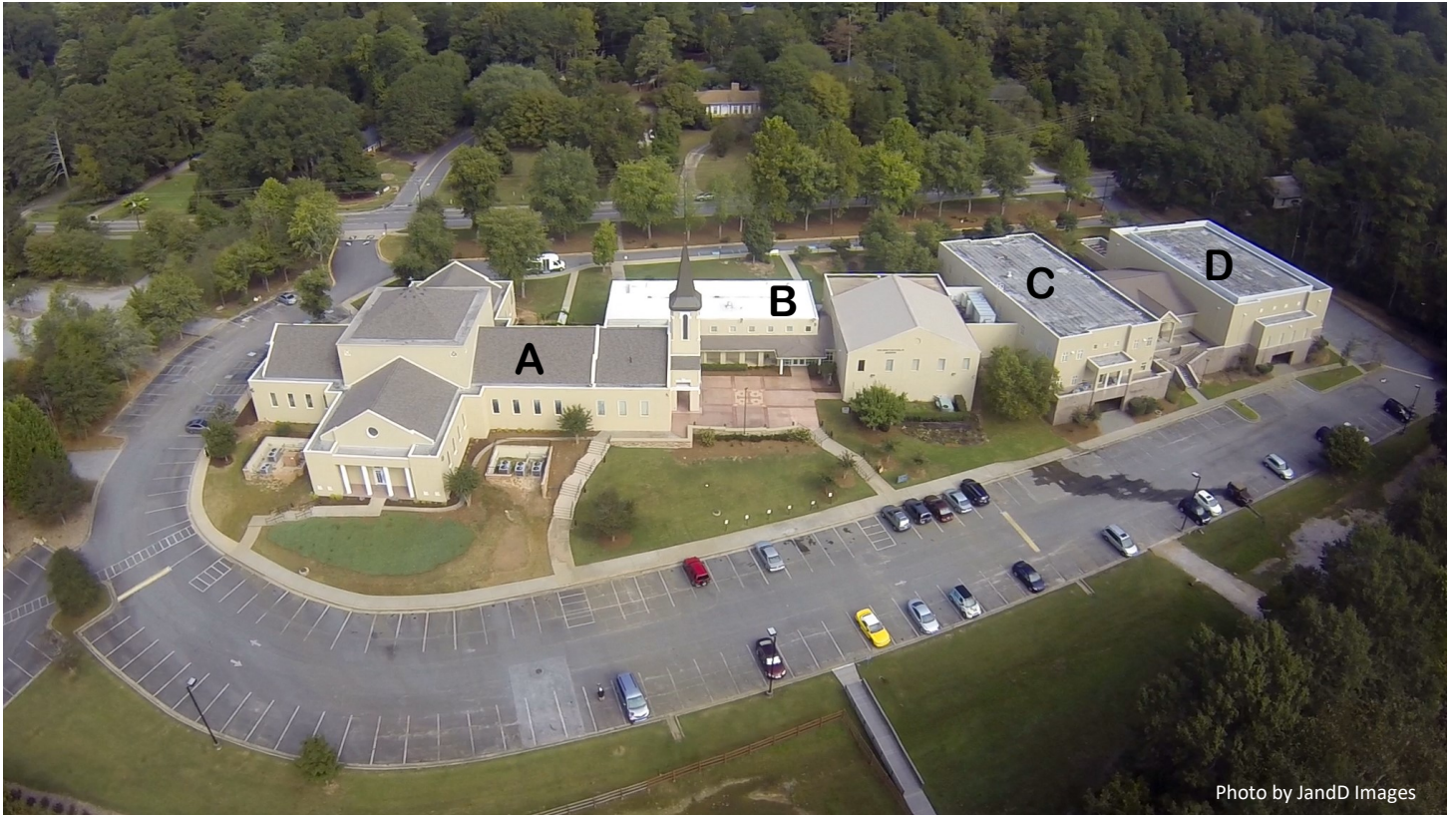


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**A:** Church

**B:** Parish Office

**C:** Faith Formation Building

**D:** Family Center

