



Guidelines and Requirements for Marriage at Christ Episcopal Church

By both tradition and practice the Episcopal Church regards the solemnization of marriage as a sacred, life-long covenant between two persons in the presence of God and witnessed by the community of faith. The support of a faith community, as well as family and friends, is essential to the health of any marriage. Therefore, the following are required of persons seeking marriage at Christ Episcopal Church:

Baptism

Baptism makes a person a member of the Christian church. The canons (laws) of the church require that at least one member of the couple be a baptized Christian.

Signing of Declaration of Intention

The canons of the Episcopal Church require that couples sign a “Declaration of Intention” which states that they believe marriage to be a lifelong union.

Counseling with the Clergy

In order for a marriage ceremony to be truly personal, the clergy solemnizing the marriage must get to know the people involved. And, in order to give a married couple all the support they need to weather the “for better, for worse” of life together, counseling is required by the national canons (church laws) of the Episcopal Church. Couples are asked to meet four times with the clergy person, to share their journey toward marriage and their hopes for the future, and to explore the spiritual dimensions of marriage. Couples will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about their relationship to help them focus on areas of discussion such as finances and families of origin. At these meetings detailed plans for the ceremony itself will also be made.

Although these requirements may seem arduous, they are not nearly as arduous as other requirements we place upon marriage. Many couples put much effort and planning into the one day of the marriage ceremony, but it is equally important to put effort and planning into the many days of married life to follow. We believe it is well worth investing in establishing a firm foundation for a long and joyful life together.

Getting Married in Christ Episcopal Church

Welcome to Christ Church!

We're so glad you want to celebrate your wedding here. Couples often have many questions about their wedding; this brochure will help you plan your service.

Scheduling

Weddings are not celebrated during the holy seasons of Lent (usually mid-February through mid-April) or Advent (usually Thanksgiving through Christmas) unless in case of pastoral emergency. Weddings are also not celebrated during Holy Week or the week after Easter. Any other time is a wonderful time for your wedding. Please contact the church office to reserve the exact day and time. Usually you will want to do this at least six months to a year in advance – and under no circumstances will a wedding be scheduled less than three months in advance.

The Service

All weddings at Christ Church will be according to the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Please feel free to borrow a copy if you'd like to look over the wedding service. Although there is some flexibility in the prayers and readings chosen, you may not write your own vows. The Episcopal vows are the traditional “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer...” (However, they do not contain any clause about obeying!)

We strongly suggest your wedding include a celebration of the Holy Eucharist, since all our ability to share love with one another comes from Jesus first sharing his love with us, which we commemorate in the Eucharist. All people of faith, no matter what denomination they are from, are welcome to receive the Eucharist at Christ Church. Thus your guests from other faith traditions will be welcomed and included. Note: if most or many of your guests are from a non-Christian tradition (for example, if one of you is Jewish or Muslim), you may prefer not having the Eucharist as part of your wedding.

There are two or three readings as part of the wedding service. You may want to ask friends or family to do these readings. All must be from the Bible – we do not permit the use of readings from other sources. If your wedding includes the Eucharist, one must be from the Gospels. A list of readings to choose from is at the end of this brochure. You may also ask a friend or family member to lead the prayers during the service. Or, if you prefer, the clergy person can do this. Please see the “Wedding Planning Worksheet” for more decisions to make about the details of your service.

Program

The church office can create a program/bulletin for your wedding service. We strongly suggest a bulletin that includes all the words of the service so that non-Episcopal guests can follow along and know when to join in the prayers. If you would like the church office to produce the bulletin, please let us know at least six (6) weeks in advance and give all the information you would like included in the bulletin including:

- Your completed “Wedding Planning Worksheet”
- The names of the people in your wedding party.
- The names of the readers and others participating in the service.
- The music you have chosen for the service, including titles and composers
- Any other details you would like included in the bulletin.

The charge for this service is \$100. You may provide your own paper if you wish. Paper must also be provided six (6) weeks in advance.

Flowers

It is expected that if you wish to have fresh flowers at your wedding, you will need to provide them. Flowers are usually placed in two vases that sit on either side of the cross behind the altar. We call these the “altar flowers” although they do not actually sit on the altar. If you choose to have flowers in addition to the altar flowers, you may. However, flowers may not be placed on the altar table and may not obstruct the congregation’s view of the top of the altar, the cross behind the altar, or the wedding party. They must also not obstruct the clergy or wedding party when moving around the altar area.

Pipe cleaners or ribbon are the only acceptable way to attach bows or flowers to the ends of the pews. Tape, tacks, and plastic clips will damage the pews. If your wedding is on a Saturday, you may choose to donate your altar flowers to the church for Sunday’s services. If you choose to do this, please let us know and let us know how you would like your offering to be noted in Sunday’s worship bulletin (for example: “Flowers offered in thanksgiving for the wedding of Jane Smith and John Jones”).

After the ceremony, please remove your flowers (except the altar flowers if you have donated them for Sunday) and all other decorations from the church.

Candles

The candles on the altar and behind the altar will be lit for your wedding ceremony. Additional candles in the altar area are not allowed. You may, however, put small votive candles in the side windows of the church. No other candles are permitted – including the so-called “unity candles” permitted in some traditions, but which are not a part of ours.

Music

Music at Christ Church is provided by and/or under the supervision of our music director and organist. Other organists are not permitted without the permission of the music director or unless the music director is not available. Please make an appointment with him if you plan to have music at your wedding. Music must be appropriate for a church context and reflect a Christian understanding of marriage. The music director can help you arrange for soloists and instrumentalists if you wish.

Guest Clergy

If there is a special clergyperson in your life that you would like to include, guest clergy are welcome to take part in the ceremony. Options for a guest minister might include: preaching the homily, leading the prayers, or pronouncing the final wedding blessing. Episcopal and Lutheran guest clergy are welcome to celebrate or co-celebrate the Eucharist. The Christ Church clergyperson must lead the couple in their wedding vows and pronounce them married in order to be able to sign the wedding license.

Aisle Runners Prohibited

For reasons of safety, no aisle runners may be used. Also, for reasons of safety, the throwing of rice, birdseed or any other objects is not permitted.

Kneelers and Cushions

Christ Church will provide a special wedding kneeler for use during the service. Other cushions (for example, for a ring bearer to carry the rings on) must be provided by you if you wish to have them.

Photography

Your photographers and videographer are welcome if they respect the sacred nature of the wedding ceremony. The photographer and/or videographer must meet briefly with the clergy before the wedding. Often this can be done just prior to the ceremony. Please make sure an appointment is set for a specific time for your photographer to touch base with the clergyperson.

Flash photography is an obvious presence of a photographer or videographer and can be distracting to wedding guests and the wedding party, leading many to lose focus on the wedding as an act of worship, rather than an event to be documented. Therefore, there is no flash photography or videography with lighting allowed during the service. Also, photographers and videographer must not be in the main body of the church itself, with the exception of the processions in and out of the church. They can stand in the sacristy opening near the altar (without entering the sanctuary itself), and/or in the vestibule of the church. If you would like “up close” photos taken with flash, parts of the wedding can be re-staged immediately after the wedding ceremony. In this way the photographer can get a close-up of the giving of the rings, etc.

License

You are responsible for obtaining your wedding license from the appropriate authorities. Please bring your license to the wedding rehearsal so that you don't forget it. After signing it, the clergy person will mail it in to the Town Hall from which it was obtained. In New Hampshire, you may apply for a marriage license at any Town Hall – it does not have to be from the City of Portsmouth.

Rehearsal

The wedding rehearsal is an important event in preparing for your wedding. It is a time for your clergy person to get to know the members of your family and wedding party, and for everyone to practice what they are going to do so that the ceremony itself goes smoothly. The rehearsal is usually scheduled for the evening before the wedding, but it can be scheduled at another time if more convenient. Please leave at least an hour for the rehearsal. Please also remind your wedding party to be on time. The rehearsal will run an hour from when the last person arrives, so late arrivals may delay any rehearsal dinner festivities you have planned.

Costs

There is no charge to church members for the sacraments of the church. However, there are certain church costs to keep in mind, and we do ask that you make donations that will allow these costs to be met:

The **rental charge for use of the church**, including rehearsal, is **\$350 for non-members**. A voluntary donation is requested from members. This check is made payable to **Christ Episcopal Church**.

The cost of the **organist** is **\$200 to both members and non-members**. To have the organist at your **rehearsal** is an additional **\$75**. This check is made payable directly to our organist, **Brendan Battey**. Soloists or instrumentalists arranged for by the organist are to be paid directly by you.

If you have the church office create your wedding **bulletin**, the cost is **\$100 for both members and non-members**. This check is payable to **Christ Episcopal Church**.

It is customary to give the **clergy person** an honorarium for his or her time in preparing for your wedding. The honorarium is at your discretion, but in the case of **non-members**, we suggest **\$250**. For members, this check should be made payable to the **Vicar's Discretionary Fund**. Non-members make checks payable directly to the officiating clergy person.

Please note that if you have an organist and have the church do the program, this means there will be four separate checks. Please do not write one big check to Christ Church. Please bring these checks to the rehearsal or remit them in advance so you don't have to remember them on your wedding day.

If your wedding is on a budget (for example, if you are not planning a reception) please let us know and some of the above costs can be waived or reduced.

Wedding Planning Worksheet

Spouse 1 _____

Spouse 2 _____

Wedding Date _____

Complete, and return this worksheet to clergyperson at least 6 weeks before your wedding date.

1. What names would you like to be called during the service (e.g. first and middle, just first, nickname, etc.)?

2. Will there be a presentation or giving in marriage? Yes No

If so, which wording:

Who gives (presents) this man/woman to be married to this man/woman?

or the following

Who presents this couple to be married to each other?

To either question, the appropriate answer is, "I do." If more than one person responds, they do so together.

3. What will the readings be?

First reading: _____

Second reading: _____

Gospel reading (required if Communion): _____

4. Who will the readers be?

First reader: _____

Second reader: _____

Third reader: _____

6. Will there be one or two rings? One Two

7. Will there be Communion? Yes No

8. Would you like a friend or family member to read the prayers or prefer the clergy do it?

_____ Friend/Family Member _____ Clergy

If you choose a friend please print the name here: _____

9. Would you like the church office to prepare the bulletin or would you prefer to do it yourself?

_____ Church _____ Yourself

If you would like the church to do it, there is a \$100 charge to cover the cost of preparation, printing ink and paper. You may provide your own paper if you wish. The church office needs to receive all the answers on this worksheet, the names of all in the wedding party, names of the readers, titles and composers of any music, and any additional information to be included in the bulletin at least 6 weeks before your wedding.

10. What music will be played at the service (please note hymn or title and composer)?
If you would like a list of hymns appropriate for weddings, please ask your clergyperson.

Prelude: _____

Processional: _____

Between the readings: _____

At the offertory: _____

During Communion: _____

Recessional: _____

Wedding Readings

Some suggested passages from Holy Scripture are read. If there is to be a Communion, a passage from the Gospel always concludes the Readings.

First Reading:

- Genesis 1:26-28 (Male and female he created them)
- Genesis 2:4-9, 15-24 (A man cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh)
- Song of Solomon 2:10-13; 8:6-7 (Many waters cannot quench love)
- Tobit 8:5b-8 (*New English Bible*) (That she and I may grow old together)

Second Reading:

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (Love is patient and kind)
- Ephesians 3:14-19 (The Father from whom every family is named)
- Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 (Walk in love, as Christ loved us)
- Colossians 3:12-17 (Love which binds everything together in harmony)
- 1 John 4:7-16 (Let us love one another for love is of God)

*Between the Readings, a Psalm, hymn, or anthem may be sung or said.
Appropriate Psalms are 67, 127, and 128.*

Gospel Readings:

- Matthew 5:1-10 (The Beatitudes)
- Matthew 5:13-16 (You are the light...Let your light so shine)
- Matthew 7:21, 24-29 (Like a wise man who built his house upon the rock)
- Mark 10:6-9, 13-16 (They are no longer two but one)
- John 15:9-12 (Love one another as I have loved you)

Bishop's Guidelines for Marriage and Remarriage

Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire

The Canons of the Church

Every priest canonically resident or licensed in the Diocese of New Hampshire, and any priest from outside the diocese who has been given permission to officiate in this diocese, shall be attentive to and follow *Canons 18 and 19 of Title I* of the Canons of the General Convention. Copies of these canons are appended to these policies for your convenience (See Attachment B).

Marriage is a Sacramental Rite of the Church. As such, normally it is blessed and witnessed within the life of a parish. The officiating priest has a dual role and stands before the couple with authority conferred by civil law to marry the couple and with pastoral authority conferred by the Church to bless the marriage as the chief witness for the congregation.

Priests have the right and the canonical authority to refuse to witness and bless any marriage on appropriate pastoral grounds (See Attachment B: "*Canon I.18.4 of the Canons of General Convention.*").

Deacons shall not preside at the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony in the Diocese of New Hampshire under any circumstance.

Priests of the Diocese may participate in ecumenical or interfaith services of Holy Matrimony at their own pastoral discretion.

Honoraria

Often, couples married in the Church offer honoraria to the officiating priest to express their gratitude for good pastoral care and helpful services rendered. Such honoraria are to be placed in a properly audited discretionary account. If the couple to be married specifies that the honorarium is for the personal benefit of the officiating clergy, then it may be received as such (but must be reported as earned income).

Priests canonically resident or licensed in the Diocese of New Hampshire who have been asked to bless and witness a marriage in another diocese are required to:

- Receive the permission of the bishop of that diocese.
- Comply with the guidelines for marriage or remarriage as directed by the bishop (in the case of remarriage, my permission must also be obtained as your diocesan bishop).
- Be properly licensed by the State in which the marriage will take place.
- Ensure that the wedding is recorded in accordance with the guidelines of the bishop of that diocese.
- Obtain approval from the diocesan bishop if the wedding is to occur in a location other than a parish church setting.

Priests canonically resident or licensed in another diocese entering the Diocese of New Hampshire to officiate, witness and bless a marriage must:

- Have written permission of the Bishop of New Hampshire.
- Be appropriately licensed by the State.
- Follow prevailing policies established by the Bishop of New Hampshire in this document.

On Divorce and Remarriage

Any divorce is traumatic and those who have experienced such trauma are to be cared for with diligence and sensitivity. It is important that priests spend appropriate time and the necessary pastoral care in counseling a couple where one or both parties are legally divorced and seeking remarriage. When appropriate, priests should recommend to the couple additional counseling resources to assist them in better understanding the reasons for the dissolution of their previous marriage(s) and in helping them integrate this learning into their new marriage.

In cases where there are children born from a previous marriage, it is important that the priest be clear with the couple that appropriate pastoral support and care be extended to those children and that, in cases where the court has defined custody and child support, such requirements be honored. Care of a previous spouse, as may be defined by the court, and an amicable relationship with the previous spouse are encouraged.

In cases of a marriage where one or both of the parties have been divorced, priests are required to forward to the Bishop the following documents:

- A written report of the counseling received by the persons seeking remarriage.
- A completed marriage questionnaire (See Attachment A).
- A signed copy of the Declaration of Intention.
- A copy of the “Divorce Absolute” (*not “Divorce Nisi”*).

All requests for permission to remarry must be sent to the Bishop’s office no less than thirty days prior to the proposed wedding date and that no second marriage shall occur until six months following the Courts granting of a “Divorce Absolute.” A couple seeking permission to remarry **MAY NOT issue invitations before permission to remarry is received back from the Bishop’s Office.**

On Proposed Third or Subsequent Marriages

No priest in the Diocese of New Hampshire shall officiate and bless the marriage of any persons entering into a third or subsequent marriage unless the following additional guidelines have been followed:

- The couple has had counseling with a professional other than the parish priest, preferably one with psychotherapeutic training, for no fewer than three sessions. (If the priest does not have access to appropriately trained counselors, then the Diocese can provide a list.)
- The priest has reviewed a written report of the counselor's recommendations regarding the remarriage, allowing the priest to make an informed pastoral judgment as to whether the proposed marriage should be solemnized in the life of the Church.
- At least one year has passed following the court's granting a "Divorce Absolute."

This counseling report shall be forwarded by the priest, along with the other requested documentation to the Office of the Bishop for the bishops' pastoral judgment.

Marriage Questionnaire

Application submitted by

(Priest's Name)

(Date)

(Parish Address Line 1)

(Telephone)

(Address Line 2)

(Email)

To the Bishop of New Hampshire:

I apply for consent to solemnize the marriage of:

(Bride's full name)

(Groom's full name)

single

single

divorced

divorced

___ number of previous marriages

___ number of previous marriages

Proposed date of marriage (mm/dd/yy) _____ Proposed location _____

From the Bishop of New Hampshire:

This signature indicates my permission for you to solemnize the marriage of the above-named couple, given that all diocesan procedures and guidelines have been met.

The Rt. Rev. A. Robert Hirschfeld
Bishop of New Hampshire

(Date)

Please mail this completed form to:

Office of the Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire
63 Green Street
Concord, NH 03301

This form will be processed and completed within ten to fifteen business days.

Circle Yes or No to each question on page two of this form. Each No answer must be substantiated with an attached explanation.

Priest's endorsement of proposed remarriage: _____

1. I have met in person with both parties and they are engaged in a program of pre-marital counseling satisfactory to me, or they done so with another Episcopal priest satisfactory to me.

Yes No

2. I have personally examined the final decree(s) of divorce or annulment and I certify that on the basis of my examination, the prior marriage(s) is(are) lawfully dissolved.

Yes No

3. I have thoroughly discussed each party's personal readiness for marriage with them (or such discussion has occurred in a counseling program satisfactory to me).

Yes No

4. I believe each has realistically faced and evaluated the cause(s) of the deaths of the previous marriage(s).

Yes No

5. I am satisfied that each party has an adequate continuing concern for the previous spouse(s) and any children.

Yes No N/A

6. I am willing to solemnize the marriage, if consent is granted.

Yes No

7. I have received from a professional counselor a statement concerning this couple and the statement is attached along with a supplemental letter from me (this question is applicable only if either or both parties has been divorced more than once).

Yes No N/A

8. This ceremony will take place in the Diocese of New Hampshire, or I have received written permission from the bishop of the diocese in which I have been asked to officiate.

Yes No

9. I have filled out and submitted (or plan to submit if forms are due following the service) all state and diocesan licenses and documents.

Yes No

10. Canonical requirements of the National Church have been met, and I have discussed these requirements with both parties.

Yes No

CANON 18: Of the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony

Sec. 1. Every Member of the Clergy of this Church shall conform to the laws of the State governing the creation of the civil status of marriage, and also to the laws of this Church governing the solemnization of Holy Matrimony.

Sec. 2. Before solemnizing a marriage the Member of the Clergy shall have ascertained:

- (a) That both parties have the right to contract a marriage according to the laws of the State.
- (b) That both parties understand that Holy Matrimony is a physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman, entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, and with intent that it be lifelong.
- (c) That both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.
- (d) That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism.
- (e) That both parties have been instructed as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by the Member of the Clergy, or that they have both received such instruction from persons known by the Member of the Clergy to be competent and responsible.

Sec. 3. No Member of the Clergy of this Church shall solemnize any marriage unless the following procedures are complied with:

- (a) The intention of the parties to contract marriage shall have been signified to the Member of the Clergy at least thirty days before the service of solemnization; *Provided*, that for weighty cause, this requirement may be dispensed with if one of the parties is a member of the Congregation of the Member of the Clergy, or can furnish satisfactory evidence of responsibility. In case the thirty days' notice is waived, the Member of the Clergy shall report such action in writing to the Bishop immediately.
- (b) There shall be present at least two witnesses to the solemnization of marriage.
- (c) The Member of the Clergy shall record in the proper register the date and place of the marriage, the names of the parties and their parents, the age of the parties, their residences, and their Church status; the witnesses and the Member of the Clergy shall sign the record.
- (d) The Member of the Clergy shall have required that the parties sign the following declaration:
- (e) "We, A.B. and C.D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.
- (f) "We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mind, 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.
- (g) "And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."

Sec. 4. It shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to solemnize any marriage.

CANON 19: Of Regulations Respecting Holy Matrimony: Concerning Preservation of Marriage, Dissolution of Marriage, and Remarriage

Sec. 1. When marital unity is imperiled by dissension, it shall be the duty, if possible, of either or both parties, before taking legal action, to lay the matter before a Member of the Clergy; it shall be the duty of such Member of the Clergy to act first to protect and promote the physical and emotional safety of those involved and only then, if it be possible, to labor that the parties may be reconciled.

Sec. 2. (a) Any member of this Church whose marriage has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court may apply to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which such person is legally or canonically

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(b) There shall be present at least two witnesses to the solemnization of marriage.

(c) The Member of the Clergy shall record in the proper register the date and place of the marriage, the names of the parties and their parents, the age of the parties, their residences, and their Church status; the witnesses and the Member of the Clergy shall sign the record.

(d) The Member of the Clergy shall have required that the parties sign the following declaration:

(e) "We, A.B. and C.D., desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.

(f) "We believe that the union of husband and wife, in heart, body, and mind, 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.

(g) "And we do engage ourselves, so far as in us lies, to make our utmost effort to establish this relationship and to seek God's help thereto."

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