

WEDDING GUIDELINES AT  
CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH



CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

The following guidelines are made available directly to every couple inquiring about, or desiring, a wedding at Christ Church. It is the Church's hope that these guidelines will offer couples who present themselves to the clergy at Christ Church an initial understanding of what a marriage ceremony in a Church represents and our Church's procedures and requirements. All of the marriage liturgies will be taken from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

### A DEFINITION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Marriage has existed throughout civilized history and in most human societies in a variety of forms. In general, we might say that "marriage" is a natural relationship contracted by a man and a woman in accordance with the customs of the society in which they live. In general, there need be nothing specifically Christian about marriage if one or both of the marriage partners do not desire a Christian wedding or marriage.

Within the Christian Church, however, marriage is much more than just a custom of society. A couple desiring to be married in the Church and having the service officiated by a Christian minister, should be able to make some type of Christian affirmation and commitment. Each couple and each minister will have their own ideas about what makes a Christian marriage. Usually, however, such a definition might include the following:

A. Christian marriage is a sacramental relationship, lifelong in intention, between one man and one woman. It is an outward and visible occasion of an inward and spiritual love, through which God gives the man and the woman His love and help.

B. Christian marriage begins and matures within the context of a larger Christian community; and, indeed, one reason it exists is for the benefit of the Christian community. "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 in God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture with the knowledge and love of the Lord" (Book of Common Prayer, page 423).

### WEDDING PREPARATION TIMELINE

Make appointment with Christ Church Clergy to discuss potential wedding.

With clergy approval, set wedding date. Make appointment for follow up instructional meeting with clergy.

Complete Wedding Information Sheet.

Contact Marge Sidebottom and David Norfrey to get on their calendars and set up planning meetings with each.

Two months prior to wedding, send completed Bulletin Prep page to Marcy Hooker.

One month prior to wedding, review bulletin and make arrangements to print bulletin.

Day before wedding, bring marriage license, bulletins and all fees to rehearsal.

## FEES AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- For active members, there is no fee for the use of the church. Nor is there any fee for the officiant, although an honorarium is suggested.
- Non-members and non-active members will be charged \$750 for the use of the building, and \$300 for the clergy's time in pre-marital instruction, the rehearsal and the officiating, as well as a \$75 fee to the Altar Guild.
- A \$200 fee to the Director of Music, a \$100 fee to the Sexton, a \$20 fee to the acolyte and a \$200 fee to the Church's marriage facilitator will be paid by all couples.
- Specifics about the fees will be reviewed at the last meeting with the clergy. Specifics about payees will be provided the week before the wedding. If you wish to have our carillon played before or after the service we ask that \$75 be paid to the carillonneur. All fees are due at the rehearsal.
- The latest time of day for a wedding is 6 p.m.
- The regular organist of the Church plays for all weddings, unless other arrangements have been made with the Organist and the Rector.
- All musical participants need to be approved by the Director of Music, David Norfrey (293-2347 or 296-6135).
- The Church provides a Wedding Bulletin, the cost of which is the responsibility of the couple. Examples are available upon request. The Wedding Bulletin must be approved at least two weeks prior to the wedding.
- No outside facilitator/director is permitted.
- **Please bring the marriage license to the rehearsal.**

Revised July 2005

## WHO MAY BE MARRIED AT CHRIST CHURCH

In the Episcopal Church, it is required that one of the parties be a baptized Christian. If either or both persons have had a previous marriage, the priest needs to know this at the first interview. Divorce is not in itself a barrier to remarriage but the Church requires certain steps to be followed.

We are open to working with all couples, active members or local non-members, who have some connection to Christ Church or who live in or plan to move to the Charlottesville area. We also look for couples who are willing to take seriously their Christian life and marriage vows. A necessary first step, before any date for a wedding may be approved, is for the couple to meet privately with one of the parish's clergy. Due to the penitential nature of the season of Lent, no weddings are scheduled during this portion of the Church's year. The Rector is unavailable for weddings the week before and the week after Christmas due to his many responsibilities during that time of year. No wedding dates can be discussed over the phone.

### PRE-MARITAL INSTRUCTION

Pre-marital instruction is a requirement in the Episcopal Church. At Christ Church this takes the form of one on one instruction with the officiating priest (3 times). In order that adequate instruction may be given, the man and the woman to be married should, if possible, make arrangements for pre-marital instruction well in advance of the wedding date. This allows adequate time in which to give prayer and thought to what has been learned in the instruction. We highly recommend a meeting at the one year anniversary of the marriage also.

### WHO MAY OFFICIATE

The officiating priest is normally one of the parish priests. Should another clergy person be desired, the couple should not speak to that priest about it until the matter has been discussed with the Rector of Christ Church.

## CONCERNING MUSIC

As the music is an integral part of the service, it is under the direction of the Rector, as is the case in every aspect of the worship in the parish - although the Rector may delegate this authority to the organist, subject to the Rector's review. In keeping with the dignity of the sacrament of Holy Matrimony, only music allowed by the Prayer Book and the Canons of the Church will be permitted. The singing of secular love songs is entirely out of place in the Church. The Lord's Prayer will be spoken by the couple and congregation as part of the service, therefore it will not be sung as well. In the event that a solo of an acceptable nature is to be sung, it may be part of the pre-service music. You might consider having the carillon played after the service.

## CONCERNING THE LITURGY

The Episcopal Church treats the marriage liturgy as any liturgy of the church, as a praise to God from the Book of Common Prayer. Therefore, the service has the look and feel of any other service of the church. We do not use 'unity' candles at Christ Church nor do we permit any secular readings. If the couple desires a special prayer not in the Prayer Book, it must be approved by the Rector.

The liturgy used by the priest officiating at the wedding embodies the Christian nature of the ceremony and therefore is subject to the approval of the Rector of Christ Church or his representative. To give time for thoughtful consideration of the Liturgy, the Wedding Bulletin containing the details of the service must be approved at least two weeks prior to the wedding.

## OTHER DETAILS

Christ Church has a trained marriage facilitator to help with the details of the wedding. (Marge Sidebottom -296-4967) In the case she is unable to be present at the wedding, a trained member of our Altar Guild will facilitate the details of the wedding. The church will also provide an acolyte for your wedding.

## CONCERNING DECORATIONS

Remembering that the wedding is a service of the Church, the normal canons of good taste concerning the decorations of the Church should be observed. To insure that such decoration is in keeping with the traditions of the Church, they are always under the direct supervision of a member of the Altar Guild delegated by the Rector. Some of these traditions include restricting the use of floral arrangements to the Altar and to reserve pews for the immediate family. The wedding couple is responsible for ordering an arrangement of flowers. The Altar flowers normally remain on the altar for the following Sunday services as a reminder to the congregation of the Wedding that has taken place. Runners, floral arches and candles on pews are strictly prohibited.

## ABOUT THE REHEARSAL

A wedding is a service of the Church taking place in the Church building. The rehearsal for this service is therefore always under the direction of the officiating priest. Under no circumstances is it appropriate to turn the rehearsal of this Church service over to anyone else, including professional facilitators or family members.

Those participating in the rehearsal should be present 15 minutes ahead. Only the wedding party and immediate members of the family need to be present at the rehearsal. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that dresses of the bridesmaids should be of modest design and good taste. A normal rehearsal should last 45 minutes to an hour.

## CONCERNING PHOTOGRAPHS

In order to preserve the dignity of the service, photographs shall not be taken during the wedding itself. Pictures may be taken as the wedding party processes out of the church; if pictures of the couple at the altar are wanted, they may be posed after the ceremony. Out of consideration for the wedding guests attending a reception, posing ought to be brief. The use of a video camera during the wedding ceremony may be allowed, with filming from the balcony, if arrangements are made previously with the Rector.