

Wedding Policy

Congratulations! We join with others in expressing our joy at your decision to marry and to celebrate this Sacrament in the Church. A relationship based on honesty, respect, and mutual admiration is a means of spiritual growth and happiness. We are honored to become part of the journey you have already begun and to join with those in your families and communities who look forward to celebrating your union. This booklet contains items for you to consider as you make your preparations. In order for the planning to be as joyous as possible and free of misunderstandings, we urge you to read this brochure before you call the church office. Be sure also to make the necessary appointments as soon as possible.

INTRODUCTION

"Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God." These words from The Book of Common Prayer set the stage for marriage in the Episcopal Church. Any marriage is therefore celebrated within the Christian community and according to the rules, regulations and Canons of the Church and those of Grace Church.

THE FIRST STEP

The couple must first talk with the clergy about the wedding before any other plans are finalized. A wedding at Grace involves the participation of many different people with different functions and adequate advance notice is essential. While the Canons of the Church require a minimum of thirty days notice for a wedding, the Church needs arrangements made as far in advance as possible in order to avoid scheduling difficulties. At Grace, we require advance notice of at least three months.

THE LAWS OF THE CHURCH CONCERNING HOLY MATRIMONY

In addition to complying with the civil laws regulating marriage, it is necessary for a couple desiring Holy Matrimony to comply with the Marriage Canons (Laws) of the Church. These Canons support the Christian truth that marriage is "as long as you both shall live."

The Canons specifically provide that it shall be within the discretion of any Minister of the Church to decline to solemnize any marriage. The Canons prohibit a priest from solemnizing the marriage of anyone who has been divorced except with the consent of the Bishop. (Please refer to the section - Concerning Divorced Persons.)

The Episcopal Church requires that at least one of the two persons be a baptized Christian.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

The Episcopal Church as a national body requires couples undergo premarital counseling. At Grace, this takes two forms.

The priest presiding at the wedding meets with the couple throughout the process. The first meeting is to collect certain information, describe the process leading up to the day of the wedding, and to get to know the couple. The second meeting is to plan the wedding itself. The last session will be to rehearse. All these sessions are mandatory. Failure to complete these meetings will result in the wedding being cancelled.

In addition to these meetings, the couple is required to meet for premarital counseling. The couple has been given the name by the officiating priest, the couple is responsible for contacting the priest, setting up the appointments. These sessions must be completed prior to the wedding.

If the parties live out of the area, members of the clergy are permitted to appoint a priest or counselor in the area in which they live to do the pre-marital instruction and counseling.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR A WEDDING AT GRACE

To be married at Grace, one member of the couple seeking to be married must be an active member of Grace Church or be directly related to an active member (e.g., child or grandchild). An active member is defined as a person who attends worship regularly and is a financial contributor of record. The Rector makes the final decision about exceptions to these qualifications.

THE DECLARATION OF INTENTION

The "Declaration of Intention" which follows, must be signed by both parties to the marriage at a time prior to the marriage:

"We, 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 Spouses as it is set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.

"We believe that the union of husband and wife, Spouses 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.

"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."

CONCERNING DIVORCED PERSONS

The Canons of the Episcopal Church allow the marriage of divorced persons whose previous marriage has been declared terminated by final decree of the State. No priest may officiate at any marriage ceremony of a divorced person without the written permission of the Bishop. To obtain this permission, the priest must submit an application with a recommendation to the Bishop.

This process can take more than a month and can only be accomplished after the priest meets with the couple to discuss their particular circumstances. Applications are not accepted by the clergy of Grace until 6 months after a Divorce Decree is final.

ADVENT, LENT AND HOLY DAYS

By long tradition, Episcopalians do not schedule weddings during the seasons of Advent (the season before Christmas) and Lent (the season before Easter) marked by the color purple. There are also other days and times when weddings shall not be celebrated, so early communication with the clergy is important to good planning.

FINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SERVICE

As in every service of the Church, the Rector is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details, although s/he may deputize other clergy to make these judgments. If there are matters in question, the final decision rests with the Rector.

For this reason, no wedding consultants are permitted regarding any arrangements in the church.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

The couple must secure a marriage license from the State of New York before a wedding can be solemnized in Grace Episcopal Church. Please deliver the license to the Church Office one week in advance of the wedding. After the wedding, the officiating priest completes the license and returns it to the State.

SEATING

The Church seats approximately 325.

FLOWERS AND AISLE CANDLES

It is strongly encouraged that floral decorations be kept as simple as possible. Only live or dried organic material may be used. A maximum of four (4) floral arrangements are permitted: two at the high altar, one in front of the lectern, and one in front of the freestanding altar.

All arrangements for flowers must be made in consultation and approved by the officiating priest or Rector. The altar or floral guild will be responsible for the placement of the floral arrangements, and will remove all ribbons, bows, cards or other material.

The florist should contact the church office one week in advance of the wedding to schedule a delivery time during office hours.

OTHER DECORATIONS

Aisle runners are not permitted. Pew bows are permitted. Reserved seating will be designated using pew ropes supplied by Grace. Unity Candles are permitted and the lighting of which will be determined by the priest/rector in an appropriate place in the liturgy.

ROSE PETALS, RICE, BUBBLES, ETC.

As rice has been proven bad for the local wildlife (i.e birds, squirrels) rice is not permitted. Rose petals may be scattered in the aisle in lieu of an aisle runner. The use of bubbles are permitted and it is strongly urged that participants throw containers away in designated trash containers.

WEDDING MUSIC

The final decision regarding music resides with the Rector and Organist, who may deputize the responsibility to the officiating clergy. The Director of Music plays all weddings and has right of first refusal. Any organist or musician hired generally functions as the Rector's designated deputy.

Many appropriate and beautiful sacred compositions exist. The Music Director will play these at the time of the wedding consultation. Music of a secular nature is best used at the reception.

If vocal or instrumental solos or ensembles are desired, the music must be arranged well in advance of the wedding. Grace Church is not responsible for securing these musicians, although final approval rests with the officiating clergy, the Rector, or Organist.

THE SERVICE

The service itself will be conducted according to the "Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage" as found in The Book of Common Prayer. No substitutions or amendments are permitted beyond what the service allows.

THE EUCHARIST

A celebration of Holy Communion is normally part of the wedding ceremony itself, although it is not required. It is most fitting for the married couple's first act to be that of offering their marriage in thanksgiving at The Lord's Table and sharing in the Sacrament.

PROGRAMS

At the couple's request the Church will provide service programs (see fees below). The service program must be approved by the Rector/Priest 1-2 weeks before the serve. To avoid discrepancies it is best to coordinate with the parish office.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

The couple may choose a photographer. They must inform the officiating priest of their choice.

The dignity of a wedding service requires that no flash pictures may be taken during the service, with the exception of the opening and closing processions. Likewise, no movements of the photographer or camera snaps, clicks, etc., shall be permitted to interrupt or detract from the ceremony. The photographer is to check in with the officiating priest prior to the service to review these rules.

One video camera may be set up only in the Octagon or back of the church with equipment that requires no additional lighting, remote microphones or remote cameras.

Pictures may be taken of the wedding party before and after the ceremony. All pictures taken before the ceremony must begin not earlier than one hour before the service and be concluded a full half-hour before the beginning of the service. Likewise, all photographs taken after the wedding must be concluded a half-hour after the ceremony.

THE REHEARSAL

The Wedding rehearsal is normally held on the evening before the wedding. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and to be on time. The bride is required to participate fully in the rehearsal. Except in unusual circumstances, the rehearsal lasts no longer than one hour. The rehearsal will begin at the appointed time. If there is a rehearsal dinner, it should be after the rehearsal.

THE WEDDING

All members of the wedding party, including the bride, should arrive at the church at least one half hour before the scheduled time for the wedding. Failure to do so may result in the wedding being cancelled.

ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

The drinking of alcoholic beverages or the use of any drug by the Bride or Groom or members of the Wedding Party is prohibited before both the rehearsal and the wedding. Evidence of intoxication or other impairment will result in the ceremony being cancelled.

USE OF THE MEMORIAL HALL FOR RECEPTIONS

When available, the facilities of the Memorial Hall may be reserved for wedding receptions. These facilities must be reserved well in advance. In addition to soft drinks, coffee and tea, only beer, wine and champagne are permitted, and must be

displayed and dispensed according to Diocesan guidelines. To serve alcohol, you must provide proof of liability (\$1 million). For Fees for the use of the Memorial please consult with the Parish Office.

CLERGY

The participation of clergy from outside the parish must be approved by the Rector.

The clergy do not normally attend rehearsal dinners. If you wish the clergy to attend your reception, an invitation should be issued well in advance.

FEES

Required for all Weddings:

Church Fee: \$600.00

Clergy: \$375.00

Altar Guild: \$200

Sexton: \$250

Optional: Organist: \$400

Personalized Order of Service: \$150

Please note: Fees for soloists, choir or instrumentalists are to be arranged with the Organist/Choirmaster.

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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