

## **Introduction: Marriage in the Church**

Marriage is not a uniquely Christian Institution. Wedding ceremonies may take place in completely secular settings, following the laws of the state and under supervision of an officer of the state. In this setting, it is a legal contract between two parties, in force until it is dissolved by the state.

The church understands marriage between Christians as more than a contract, and expects more of the parties involved. The church views marriage as a sacrament and as a holy covenant between a man and a woman. As the bride and groom exchange vows and symbols of the vows, we are reminded of God's covenant of limitless, self-less love for us in return for our faithfulness. The sacrament of Holy Matrimony as described in our *Book of Common Prayer* is a solemn and public covenant in which a man and a woman declare their intention to enter a life-long union before God and his church and receive the blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows. The celebration of a marriage is not a private act, but a public service for the church in the context of the community of faith. Holy Matrimony is also a liturgy of the church. The rites and ceremonies of the church seek to preserve that liturgy and focus on the bride and groom as the true ministers of this sacrament and on the sanctity of the vows they make. Music, decorations, and even physical movement of the wedding party in the church are in an effort to express the church's understanding of marriage as a sacrament and covenant of two people within the community of faith.

### **I. About the Couple**

It is expected that at least one member of the couple seeking marriage in the church be baptized and a practicing Episcopalian. A clergyperson may consider other arrangements and conditions at his or her discretion and with the approval of the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church. This should be discussed directly with a clergyperson. If either party has been previously married and divorced, the permission of the Bishop must be sought. Six months should have passed since the divorce decree, and the couple should have been separated for at least 18 months. The Bishop's approval takes about 30 days to obtain. This should be taken into consideration in planning by the couple. The petitioning of the Bishop is handled by the officiating clergyperson.

### **II. Marriage Preparation**

The couple should expect three to six one-hour premarital counseling sessions with the officiating clergyperson, as required by church canon law. Other requirements for preparation are at the discretion of the officiating clergyperson. A priest may decline to officiate at any marriage in the church. All arrangements for weddings are subject to final approval of the Rector of the parish.

### **III. Setting the Date**

It is certainly understood that the wedding date and the place for the wedding are very important to the intended bride and groom. However, no wedding date or place for the wedding (through Christ Church and/or its clergy) may be set until first approved by the officiating clergyperson and then by the Parish Administrator (if the ceremony is to take place in the Christ Church Building). The bride or groom shall first indicate their desire to seek marriage through Christ Church and/or its clergy through the Parish Administrator. Next, the couple may request preferred dates through the Parish Administrator, who will then consult with clergy. The reserved date must be placed on the Church

and clergy calendars as soon as possible. While a wedding date and the Church building (or other place) may reserved, it is understood that no wedding is given final approval to proceed until done so by the officiating clergy person at his or her discretion and that of the Rector at Christ Episcopal Church, and in consideration of all parish requirements having been met. Other reservations, such as a time and place for the wedding rehearsal and other functions must follow the same reservation procedure.

The Parish Administrator will inform the couple of available time slots for the weddings at Christ Episcopal Church when planning a date and time for the wedding. Ordinarily, weddings are scheduled no later than 7:00 in the evening, and only one wedding is scheduled on a given day.

The Parish Administrator will arrange a meeting with the organist and inform the Altar Guild of and details as needed.

#### IV. The Wedding Ceremony

The *Book of Common Prayer* is used in all weddings at Christ Episcopal Church. In the Episcopal Church it is desirable that the Eucharist be celebrated when members of the church marry. The Bishops of the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Diocese in Louisiana have agreed that it is not appropriate to celebrate the Eucharist at a mixed Roman Catholic/Episcopalian wedding if the Roman Catholic spouse intends to continue in the Roman Catholic faith.

Arranging for more than five attendants for the bride is discouraged because of space limitations.

It is also understood that it is the responsibility of the couple, not the Parish Administrator, to provide programs for the wedding ceremony.

#### V. Church Décor

The wedding party and decorators will have access to the church building two hours before the ceremony and one hour afterward. Decorating the church should be limited to two hours before the ceremony or to two hours earlier in the day of the wedding. It will be the responsibility of the decorators to clean up after themselves before the service. Christ Church and its Rector will determine the appropriateness of any and all proposed decorations for the church wedding.

- A. Decoration of the church is the responsibility of the florist under direction of the Parish Administrator and the Altar Guild. The Altar Guild of the church is available for the arrangement of the flowers, as a service to the participants. The beauty of Christ Church is best enhanced simply. Excessive decoration implies that the church, as it is, is lacking in what is needed to celebrate this sacrament, and that is not the case
  - 1.) The Parish Administrator will pass along any decorating plans and the name of the florist to the Altar Guild Chairperson. Only fresh flowers should be used.
  - 2.) As the wedding date approaches, the florist must contact the Parish Administrator and arrange to meet her at the church at the time set for the decorating.

- 3.) The altar area is the sole responsibility of the Altar Guild. Only Christ Church properties may be used on the altar re-table (shelf). Altar candles are provided by the church. Neither the vases nor their liners may be removed from the church. Flowers must be placed on the altar retable by an Altar Guild member. No other plants, flowers or plants may be used inside the altar rail.
  - 4.) Other than flowers at the altar, flowers or plants may be used in the choir area, on pedestals by the lectern and the pulpit. No other floral arrangements are appropriate. No artificial flowers may be used. The flowers from the wedding must remain on the altar for the Sunday services since time will not allow the Altar Guild to replace them. Please arrange to pick them up on a Monday morning if you want them back.
  - 5.) No candles may be used in the church other than those placed on the altar table.
  - 6.) No church property may be moved.
  - 7.) No decorations may be nailed, taped or otherwise attached to walls, rails, or church furnishings. Candles or flowers may not be placed in the window or attached to the pews, except that family pews may be designated with simple floral arrangements.
  - 8.) A 'unity candle' is not part of our Prayer Book Marriage service and, therefore, is not used.
  - 9.) A simple floral arrangement may be used on the welcome tables at the church entrances (the Narthex and the side entrance).
  - 10.) No rice, birdseed, confetti, or rose petals may be thrown in or around the church. This is a safety precaution because of the floors and walks.
- B. Decorations in Comfort Hall or Activities Building for receptions are the responsibility of the bride and her family.
- 1.) Candles: No lighted candles are permitted except on tables in suitable candle holders.
  - 2.) No decorations may be nailed, taped or glued to the walls, woodwork or ceilings.
  - 3.) Nothing is to be placed on the piano.
  - 4.) No alcoholic beverages may be served except wine, champagne or champagne punch.
  - 5.) The rice must be returned to its original state after the reception.
- C.) Use of the Bride's Room

The church provides the bride's room in the rear of the Church primarily as a waiting area before the wedding and a place to complete the "finishing touches" of dressing. There is not space for the complete dressing storage of other clothing; that should be done before arriving at the church.

## VI. Music

A. The following provisions regulate the use of music in the Episcopal Church:

1.) Title II, Canon 6, Section 1: "It shall be the duty of every minister to see that the music is used as an offering for the glory of God and as a help to people in the worship in accordance with the *Book of Common Prayer* and as authorized by the rubrics or by the General Convention of the Church. To this end the Minister shall have final authority in the administering of matters pertaining to the music. In fulfilling this responsibility the Minister shall seek assistance from the persons skilled in music. Together they shall see that the music is appropriate to the context in which it is used."

B.) Accordingly, the Rector and Organist have final authority over music for the wedding. They shall be guided by two considerations. First, marriage is a sacrament of the Church; it is not an expression of the love of two individuals, but it is the outward sign of the Church's hope that two may become one as a sign of God's Kingdom in this world. Music selected for the wedding should reflect the practice of Christ Episcopal Church; musical selections must be within the usual scope of Christ Church's repertoire.

C.) The parish organist plays for all weddings at Christ Church. If an exception is desired, there is a fee of \$100.00 for use of the instrument and permission must be obtained from the Rector and Organist. The bride must meet with the Organist at least four weeks in advance to plan and select music for the wedding.

D.) Pre-Service Music:

The organist may play appropriate music for 20 to 30 minutes before the service. Requests which comply with the provisions outlined herein are welcomed.

E. Wedding Marches:

During the meeting to plan music for the wedding, the organist will play for you a number of appropriate marches; these will include the music of Clarke (Trumpet Voluntary), Purcell, Handel (Watermusic), Marcello and others, Love songs or operatic extracts (Wagner's Bridal Chorus from *Lohengrin*, or Mendelssohn's Wedding March from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) are not appropriate.

F. Hymns:

The 1982 Hymnal contains many appropriate hymns for use during your wedding, any of which may be played or sung as solos or by the congregation.

## G. Soloists:

Vocalists or instrumentalists can contribute effectively to the pre-service music. Many weddings do not have soloists, but this remains up to the individuals to be married. Normally, a soloist plays or sings one or two pieces before the ceremony. Our Cantor is available for this service at a fee. Pop hits are not allowed, nor are pieces whose accompaniments are inappropriate for a pipe organ or piano (guitar reductions, for example). No song may take the place within the ceremony of a portion of the ceremony itself (the Lord's Prayer, for example.)

## H.) Music Fees:

The Organist's fee is \$250.00 and up. The Cantor's fee is \$200.00 and up. The fee for additional rehearsals with the soloists is to be negotiated. (Normally, one rehearsal is sufficient.)

## VII. Wedding Pictures

A photographer must check with the officiating clergy person on what and where pictures may be taken in the church. No flash may be used during the service, except processional shots taken from the front of the aisle (see the Parish Administrator for placement). Ordinarily, photographs or taping must be done from the balcony or side aisles.

Posed pictures are usually taken immediately after the wedding when the congregation leaves the church building. Video cameras are not allowed behind the altar rail.

## VII. Clean - up

The fee for use of the Church or parish halls includes a charge for clean - up. The church's cleaning personnel will be used and are under the supervision of the Church staff.

## IX. Fees

A.	a. Use of Church Building	\$150.00
	b. Use of Comfort Hall or Wheeler House	\$150.00
	c. Use of the building for dressing	\$50.00
	d. Organist fee	\$250.00
	e. Cantor/Soloist fee	\$200.00

These fees include utilities and cleaning fees. All persons using the facilities pay the same fees.

- B. The officiating clergy charge no fees for their services. Any gift which the couple may make to him or her is a personal expression of their appreciation and remains at their discretion.
- C. All fees are payable to the Parish Administrator two weeks prior to the wedding

## Christ Episcopal Church Wedding Checklist

- \_\_\_ Contact Parish Administrator
- \_\_\_ Set tentative wedding date and location with Church and Clergy person
- \_\_\_ Reserve necessary facilities (Church, Comfort Hall, Wheeler House, Dressing Area)
- \_\_\_ Arrange for pre-marital counseling with officiating clergy person
- \_\_\_ Discuss and obtain approval for wedding arrangements with Parish Administrator
- \_\_\_ Discuss Music arrangements with Organist and/or Cantor
- \_\_\_ Make appropriate payments to the Parish Administrator

### Contact information:

Church Office and Clergy: 985.643.4531

Office Hours: Tuesday – Friday 9am-3pm

Website: [www.christchurchslidell.com](http://www.christchurchslidell.com)

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