

WEDDING CUSTOMARY

SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

7 July 2009

NOTES

THE WEDDING CUSTOMARY OF SAINT JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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What is Christian Marriage?

Christian marriage is the solemn and public covenant between two people in the presence of God and their faith community. This Church calls this the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony and understands it to be a physical and spiritual union of a couple entered into within the community of faith, by mutual consent of heart, mind, and will, with the intent that it be lifelong.

The Celebration of Holy Matrimony and Blessing of the Union is an act of worship of God in which those being joined together make their covenant vows before God and the community of faith. The couple, in turn, receives the grace and blessing of God to sustain and guide them in their new life together. The liturgy is not only a witness to a covenant, but also a benediction.

Legal and Canonical Requirements

The Canons of The Episcopal Church make stipulations over and above what may be required for the marriage to conform to the laws of the State. This Customary does not address the State's requirements.

The Canons of the Church require:

- That both parties have the right to contact a marriage according to the laws of the State¹ and that both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation.²
- That at least one of the parties has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

¹ *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2006*: Title I, Canon 18, Section 2, Paragraph (a), p. 56.

² *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2006*: Title I, Canon 18, Section 2, Paragraph (c), p. 56.

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- That if either party has been in a marriage that has been annulled or dissolved by a civil court, application to the Bishop of the Diocese for a judgment as to his or her marital status in the eyes of the Church must be made and judgment rendered before the Solemnization of Holy Matrimony can take place.³
- That the couple signs a Declaration of Intent⁴ at least thirty (30) days prior to the solemnization of marriage. The content of the declaration is as follows:

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 life-long union of husband and wife as it is set forth in the liturgical forms authorized by this church.

We believe it is for the purpose of mutual fellowship, encouragement and understanding, for the procreation (if it may be) of children, and their physical and spiritual nurture, and for the safe-guarding and benefit of society, 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.

³ *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2006*:Title I, Canon 19, Section 2, Paragraph (a), p. 57.

⁴ *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2006*:Title I, Canon 18, Section 3, Paragraph (d), p. 56.

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- That the couple receives instruction as to the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony by a Member of the Clergy.⁵ In this parish, this will take the form of at least three meetings with the Rector and independent pre-marital counseling by a third party.

It is the practice of this parish to publish the Banns of Marriage on three successive Sundays prior to the marriage. These take the form of:

I publish the Banns of Marriage between A.B. of W., X. and C.D. of Y., Z. If any of you know just why they may not be joined together in Holy Matrimony, you are bidden to declare it. This is the first (or second, or third) time of asking.

First Steps

The couple should talk with the Rector about the wedding before any plans become final. No arrangements which involve Saint John's Episcopal Church, the Member of Clergy that will perform the ceremony are to be disclosed or announced prior to approval by the Rector. A wedding at Saint John's involves many people, many functions, and the use of many of the parish facilities, therefore, sufficient notice is essential. The goal is to ensure that no conflicts in scheduling will occur.

Setting a date

It is preferable to avoid scheduling weddings in the season of Lent. In order to provide adequate time to prepare the church for Sunday morning worship, weddings will not be scheduled to begin later than 8:00PM on a Saturday. The Rector will coordinate dates with all involved parties to clear the chosen date and will give final approval.

⁵ *Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, 2006*:Title I, Canon 18, Section 2, Paragraph (e), p. 56.

Pre-Marital Counseling

As noted previously, the couple will meet with the Rector at least three times. The first meeting with the Rector will be to execute the Declaration of Intent, to begin instruction, and to plan the balance of the counseling time. The couple will meet with the Rector as needed for detailed planning of the liturgy.

Planning the Liturgy

The theology of a wedding in The Episcopal Church places it as a sacramental act of the community of faith. In all and through all, the liturgy should be seen as an act of worship. All details of the liturgy should be planned with this in mind.

The liturgy is defined by The Book of Common Prayer (1979) on pages 422 through 434. This liturgy assumes that the marriage takes place in the context of a Celebration of the Holy Eucharist. While it is not required, it is strongly encouraged that your marriage be celebrated as outlined.

Music Planning

If there is to be music at your wedding, the parish organist will be involved in its planning and the organist is reserved the right of first refusal to play for your wedding. Should you choose to use another organist, please recognize that there is no reduction in the service fees outlined later in this booklet.

The music you select should remain subordinate to the liturgy and function as an enhancement of the sacramental rite of the Church. Only the finest sacred music possible should be selected. There is a wealth of good, festive, sacred music available – hymns, psalms, anthems, and instrumental music – which is appropriate for the wedding service. The processional and recessional as well as the prenuptial music should be selected. A list of recommended and suitable music for weddings is found at the end of this booklet.

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The couple should make an appointment with the organist as far in advance as possible so that together they can begin selecting the wedding music.

The Coordinator

The parish will provide a Coordinator for the wedding. The couple should meet with the Coordinator as soon as possible following the setting the wedding date and as needed to assist with the following:

- Decorations should be kept as simple as possible. Only fresh greenery and flowers are allowed on the altar.
- The couple may choose any florist they wish. The Coordinator will advise the couple about the number and kind of floral arrangements that are appropriate.
- Please inform the Coordinator if the family wishes to leave the altar flowers for the Sunday service or other disposition of the flowers. The Coordinator will be happy to arrange delivery of the flowers to the sick or shut-ins.
- If lighted tapers are used in the nave, they must have hurricane shades to protect guests from brushing against candle flames.
- A white aisle runner may be used for the bride, if desired. If live flower petals are to be dropped, an aisle runner is required. It should be long enough to extend from the back of the church to the chancel steps. Cloth aisle runners or one made of paper fabric which adheres to the carpet are recommended. Plastic cloth will cause slipping.

Final responsibility for the liturgy

The Canons charge the Rector with the responsibility for all arrangements. In all cases, the Rector is the final authority. At your option, you may employ the services of a wedding planner to assist you with the planning, but please note that the Rector is the director of all rehearsals and the liturgy itself.

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Seating Capacity

There are 32 pews in the nave of the church. With eight people per pew, the nave has a capacity of 256. Ten people per pew, a bit tighter seating, yields seating for 320. Additional chairs in the chapel and baptistry can provide seating capacity for an additional 30 people.

It is best to have the pews for the family marked and the ushers thoroughly instructed in advance so that members of both families may be seated in their proper places. The groom's family sits in the front pews on the right, facing the altar, and the bride's family on the left side.

The Rehearsal

The rehearsal is normally held on the day before the wedding. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and to be on time.

The Rector is the director of all rehearsals. The purpose of the rehearsal is to familiarize all members of the wedding party with what is expected of them so that the actual service will run smoothly and that no one will feel awkward or ill-at-ease.

It is not permissible for someone to "stand-in" for the bride at the rehearsal.

The groom is to bring the license to the rehearsal. At the conclusion of the rehearsal, the bride, groom, and witnesses will sign the marriage register following the rehearsal. At the conclusion of the liturgy, the Member of Clergy will sign the register.

N.B.: The wedding will not be performed unless the marriage license is in the possession of the Rector.

Parking

The large parking lot is located directly behind the church with additional parking alongside the church on Breamwood Street. If the wedding is held between the hours of noon and 4 p.m., guests may use the parking lot of The Pillars restaurant. After 4 p.m., the Pillars restaurant parking lot is not available.

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The Wedding

- The Sexton opens the church no more than two hours before the wedding and closes it no more than two hours after the wedding.
- One or two acolytes may be used in your service, but are not required. When used, acolytes are responsible for lighting and extinguishing all candles. The acolytes may also serve as crucifers.
- Ushers should be in place at least 45 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin. They should have already received instructions concerning the seating of guests
- The choir room in the parish hall is available for the groom and his party to use as a dressing room. Restrooms are down the hall.
- The bride and her attendants may dress in the parlor. There is a restroom in the sacristy.
- When the bride's mother has been seated in her pew and a runner is to be used, two of the ushers draw back the white runner and see that it is properly stretched to the back of the church. The service then begins.
- Attendants are limited to a maximum of eight men and eight women, plus one flower girl and one ring bearer (a total of eighteen).

Photography

Because of the dignity of a wedding as a service of worship, photographs may not be taken in the church during the service. The photographer must have permission of the Rector before taking photographs in the church.

The following rules must be observed:

- No pictures may be taken during the service or ceremony inside the church.
- Fixed video cameras are permitted, however, special

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arrangements must be made with the Rector prior to the service. The videographer must contact the Rector three (3) days prior to the wedding.

- After the ceremony, flash pictures of the bride and groom may be made as they draw near the door to the vestibule.
- Pictures may be taken of the wedding party and altar after the ceremony, and after the congregation has left the church. Audio tapes are permitted.

Reception

The Great Hall is available for receptions. It will accommodate 200 guests comfortably. The kitchen is also available. We ask only that it be left in the same condition as it was found. If you wish to use the Great Hall, you must ask the Rector to confirm your reservation.

- You may serve champagne, champagne punch, and/or wine. All other alcoholic beverages are strictly forbidden.
- Outside, your guests may throw birdseed as you leave the reception. Do not use rice! Birdseed may not be brought in, opened, or thrown within the church or parish hall or any other interior space. The proper setting for that tradition is out-of-doors only.

Fees

The standard fees for the use of the church and The Great Hall vary depending on the relationship of the couple to the parish, the Diocese, and The Episcopal Church. The fee schedule below includes the fees for the Organist, Sexton, Altar Guild, and the Clergy, as well as operating expenses of the physical plant.

The categories of the relationship are as follows:

- A Parishioner is a member of Saint John's. The Canons of the Church define a parishioner as a communicant member in good standing. At a minimum, this requires having taken communion at least three times in the past year and being known to the treasurer.

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- A Diocesan Parishioner is a communicant in good standing in a parish in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast.
- An Episcopalian is a communicant member in good standing of a parish in another diocese of The Episcopal Church.
- A non-affiliated Christian is a person who has received the Sacrament of Baptism, that is to say, baptism in the name of the Trinity.

If none of these categories seem to fit you, please discuss your situation with the Rector.

The following table lists the fees currently in force:

Category	Church	Great Hall
Parishioner	\$325.00	None
Diocesan Parishioner	\$450.00	\$100.00
Episcopalian	\$500.00	\$150.00
Non-affiliated Christian	\$750.00	\$250.00

Fees are payable to Saint John's Episcopal Church thirty (30) days before the wedding. If you choose to use acolytes, an honorarium of \$20.00 per acolyte is suggested.

Final Notes

This is a customary and it describes the usual practices of the parish. If you have questions or concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Rector.

Appendix: Musical Suggestions

The following listings are provided to stimulate your thinking regarding = the musical selections for your wedding. Please feel free to discuss them with the Organist.

Suitable Instrumental Music for Processional or Recessional:

Parish Organist – Wedding Music Volume IX. Concordia
Wedding Music, I & II. Concordia
Wedding Music, I & II (D. Johnson) Augsburg.
A Book of Wedding Pieces. Oxford Univ. Press. (OUP)
Ceremonial Music B Purcell. (E. P. Briggs) Mercury
Ceremonial Music I & II (OUP)
Water Music Suite (G. F. Handel)
Music for Royal Fireworks (G. F. Handel)

Suitable Vocal Music Selections:

Wedding Blessings Concordia
Sacred Songs (Bach, Concordia)
Wedding Songs (Jan Bender, Concordia)
Three Wedding Songs (Robert Powell, Concordia)
Three Wedding Solos (G. Winston Cassler, Ausburg)
Beloved Let us Love (R. Proulx, Ausburg)

Suitable Hymns for the Procession: (from *Hymnal 1982*)

364 O God, we praise Thee and confess
*373 Praise the Lord! Ye heavens adore him
*375 Give praise and glory unto God
*376 Joyful, Joyful, We adore Thee
377 All People that on earth do dwell
379 God is Love, Let Heaven adore Him
388 O Worship the King
*390 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
397 How thank we all our God
399 To God with gladness sing
*400 All Creatures of our God and King

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- *401 The God of Abraham praise
 - *408 Sig praise to God who reigns above
 - *410 Praise, my Soul, the King of heaven
 - 413 New songs of celebration render
 - *414 God, my King, thy Might Confessing
 - 421 All Glory be to God on High
 - 423 Immortal, Invisible, God only Wise
 - 428 O all ye works of God now come
 - 432 O Praise ye the Lord!
 - 438 Tell Out my Soul!
 - 461 Alleluia, Sing to Jesus
 - 481 Rejoice, the Lord is King
 - 486 Hosanna to the Living Lord
 - 492 Sing, ye faithful, sing with gladness
 - 518 Christ is Made the Sure Foundation
 - 522 Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken
 - 625 Ye Holy Angels Bright
 - 657 Love Divine, All Loves Excelling
- * Also appropriate for Recessional

Suitable Hymns For Use During The Service:

- 351 May the grace of Christ our Savior
- 382 King of Glory, King of Peace
- 482 Lord of all Hopefulness, Lord of all Joy
- 488 Be Thou My Vision
- 490 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light
- 508 Breathe on me, breath of God
- 516 Come Down, O Love Divine
- 581 Where charity and love prevail
- 587 Our Father, by whose Name
- 646 The King of Love my Shepherd is
- 709 O God of Bethel, by whose hand

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NOTES

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