

Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

Policies Regarding Marriage

May 2010

The applicable Canons of the national church are cited below for your convenience.

Section I: General Marriage Requirements

1. **Marriage is legal under Virginia law:** Both parties have the right to contract marriage under the laws of Virginia, that you are authorized by the Commonwealth of Virginia to perform marriages and that all other requirements of state law regarding the solemnization are met. (I.18.2(a))
2. **Understanding of Holy Matrimony:** 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. (I.18.2(b))
3. **Free Consent:** That both parties freely and knowingly consent to such marriage, without fraud, coercion, mistake as to identity of a partner, or mental reservation. (I.18.2(c))
4. **Baptism:** That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism in the Christian tradition. (I.18.2(d))
5. **Premarital Instruction:** That both parties have received premarital instruction and preparation in accordance with Canon I.18.2(e) and to your satisfaction, including exploration of factors contributing to the failure of any previous marriage(s).
6. **Thirty-day Notice:** Unless you choose to waive this requirement for a member of your congregation for weighty cause, the parties signified their intention to you to be married at least thirty days prior to the wedding. If you waive this thirty-day notice, you must report your action to me immediately. (I.18.3(a))
7. **Two Witnesses Present:** At least two witnesses will be present at the ceremony. (I.18.3(b))
8. **Recorded in Church Register:** The ceremony will be recorded in your church register as provided by Canon (I.18.3(c))
9. **Declaration of Intention:** The Parties have signed the Declaration of Intention specified in Canon (I.18.3(d), (e), (f) and (g)).

Section 2: Remarriage After Divorce

Bishop Hollerith permits clergy to solemnize remarriages after one divorce in limited circumstances. If the circumstances do not meet the requirements outlined in this policy (Sections 1 and 2), you must complete a formal application and obtain my written consent prior to solemnizing the marriage.

If you certify that each of the following things is true to the best of your knowledge, information and belief, you are permitted to solemnize the applicable remarriage after divorce:

1. **One Prior Marriage Per Party:** That neither of the parties have been married more than once previously.
2. **Divorce Decree(s) More Than A Year Old:** That you have seen photocopies of all applicable divorce decrees filed at least one year prior to the solemnization certifying that the prior marriages of all parties were dissolved or annulled by a court of competent jurisdiction. (I.19.3(a))
3. **Concern for Former Spouse & Children:** That both of the parties have assured you of adequate continuing concern for the well-being of former spouses and children of prior marriages, including, but not limited to, compliance with all court-ordered obligations. (I.19.3(b)).
4. **Wedding Within Diocese of Southern Virginia:** That the solemnization will take place within the Diocese of Southern Virginia. If the solemnization is to take place outside of this diocese, you must comply with the requirements of the Ecclesiastical Authority in the diocese in which the ceremony takes place. (I.19.3(c) and (d)).
5. **Certification of Remarriage:** That you complete and mail the Certification of Remarriage After Divorce to my office within five days of the solemnization.

Section 3: The Blessing of a Civil Marriage

1. In order for the Blessing of a Civil Marriage to take place, at least one year must elapse between the civil service and the church service. The same procedures must be followed for the Blessing of a Civil Marriage as for marriage in the church.
2. **General Marriage Requirements:** Paragraphs 4, 5, 6 and 9 of Section 1 above also apply for couples who have been married in a civil ceremony and who ask the church to bless their marriage.
3. **Remarriage After Divorce:** In addition, where there has been a former marriage dissolved or annulled by court decree, paragraphs 1-4 of Section 2 above also apply.