

Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia

Policies Regarding Marriage

May 2021

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

Section 1: 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.18.1)
2. **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.18.3(a))
3. **Baptism:** That at least one of the parties has received Holy Baptism in the Christian tradition. (I.18.3(b))
4. **Premarital Instruction:** That both parties have received premarital instruction and preparation to your satisfaction, including exploration of factors contributing to the failure of any previous marriage(s). (I.18.3(c))
5. **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 the Bishop immediately. (I.18.2)
6. **Two Witnesses Present:** At least two witnesses will be present at the ceremony. (I.18.5)
7. **Recorded in Church Register:** The ceremony will be recorded in your church register as provided by Canon (I.18.5)
8. **Declaration of Intention:** The Parties have signed the Declaration of Intention specified in Canon (I.18.4)

Section 2: Remarriage After Divorce

Bishop Haynes requires clergy to complete a formal application and obtain her written consent prior to solemnizing a remarriage after divorce.

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.