



Christ Episcopal Church Marriage Customary

A Christian marriage is a request for God's blessing upon a covenant freely undertaken by a couple for their lifetime. The wedding ceremony will be the first of many sacred steps toward lifelong communion and commitment with one another and with God. All weddings at Christ Episcopal Church follow the Liturgy for the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage found in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage falls within the pastoral and liturgical ministries of the church community. We hope that those who marry at Christ Church will nurture their union in the context of this parish community.

This document is designed to guide you when planning your wedding here at Christ Church.

Scheduling

The couple must be officially engaged before requesting a wedding date. The scheduling of all weddings occurs through the Rector. All weddings at Christ Church are typically scheduled on Saturdays, but exceptions can be made. Weddings are not conducted during Advent (which begins four Sundays before Christmas), Lent (which begins about six weeks before Easter), or other major Church holiday weekends (Easter, Pentecost, etc.). Church canons require at least 30 days' notice before a wedding can take place. If the bride or groom is divorced, please see the requirements below.

Requirements for Marriage

State law requires that each couple obtain a marriage license for the State of West Virginia. The license in the State of West Virginia is valid for 60 days. The church suggests that you obtain within thirty days, but no less than seventy-two hours, before the wedding day. In Marion County, you must schedule through the county clerk's office. Canon and civil law require the officiating clergy person to have the marriage license in his or her possession before the ceremony can be performed. We request that you bring the license to the Wedding rehearsal.

The canons of the Episcopal Church require that each couple receive premarital instruction in preparation for their life together. At Christ Church, this requires meeting with an Episcopal Clergy person or other church-approved counseling for three sessions before the wedding day. The Episcopal Church also requires that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian.

If either the bride or groom has been previously divorced, specific requirements of the Church must be met. At least one year must have elapsed since the final divorce decree and the upcoming marriage. The divorced party must show that any court-required settlements have been met and that any children born of that marriage are adequately cared for. The priest must have the Bishop's approval to solemnize the marriage vows. At least 90 days is required for the submission of a remarriage petition to the Bishop.

Guidelines for a Wedding Ceremony

Wedding Planning: The priest is ultimately in charge and oversees all elements of the church ceremony. Any addition or amendment of the episcopal ceremony as provided in *the Book of Common Prayer* must be cleared with the priest.

Guest Clergy: An Episcopal Clergy person officiates at all weddings performed at Christ Church. Other clergy –of other denominations or traditions – who have a special relationship with the bride or groom, may be invited to assist in the ceremony with the prior permission and the direction of the Rector.

Music: The parish organist, Zachary Allen, will play the organ or piano during the ceremony. He will work with you to obtain a suitable substitute if he is unavailable. As Director of Music, he has final approval of all musical selections and additional musicians should they be needed. Please note that additional musicians will usually mean extra fees. Zachary should be contacted before making any decisions about the music for your ceremony. All music must be performed live and cannot be pre-recorded.

Liturgy: Ultimately, all ceremonial decisions are left to the priest's discretion. The priest or their proxy will conduct all aspects of the ceremony. The ceremony must follow *the Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage* as found in *the Book of Common Prayer*. The clergy, in consultation with the couple, will determine the scripture readings, appropriate prayers, and other liturgical aspects of the ceremony. We do not allow the writing of one's vows or the inclusion of additional symbols of unity beyond the exchange of rings.

- Readings – At least one reading must be offered from Holy Scripture. Other appropriate readings can be included at the discretion of the priest. It is suitable to ask one or more family members or friends to read these passages.
- Intercessors—During the ceremony, a family member or friend may offer applicable prayers from *the Book of Common Prayer* for the couple.
- Eucharist or Holy Communion—It is appropriate, although not necessary, for a wedding ceremony to include the celebration of Holy Communion. If desired, the couple will work with the priest to determine the logistics of this addition.
- Homily—Weddings at Christ Church will include a homily offered by the priest or Guest Clergy, abiding by the requirements stated above and generally reflecting the Episcopal Church's understanding of Marriage.
- Rehearsal—The ceremony rehearsal will occur at 5 p.m. (or earlier) the Friday before the wedding and will include a brief walk-through of the service. All participants

(attendants, bridal party, groomsmen, readers, intercessors, ushers, and families) are expected to be present.

Other Special Instructions:

- Couples married at Christ Church are asked to provide flower arrangements for the two altars in the church as a gift to the people of Christ Church. The couple's gift will remain on the altars for Sunday services as a reminder of the community's commitment to the couple.
- No artificial or silk flowers may be used in any arrangements in the church.
- No nails, tacks, staples, or tape may be used to affix arrangements anywhere in the church building.
- All arrangements, other than those on the altars, must be removed after the ceremony by someone assigned that task by the couple. If any arrangements are left, additional fees for removal may apply.
- Dropping flower petals or other materials is not permitted.
- Floor runners or Unity Candles are not allowed at Christ Church.
- Children serving in the wedding party must be at least five years old. Children younger than ten must be accompanied by a parent or guardian at the rehearsal and on the wedding day.
- The wedding couple will provide the wedding programs.
- Smoking and alcoholic beverages are not allowed anywhere on the church grounds before, during, or after the wedding rehearsal or the wedding.
- Photography during the ceremony, including videography, must be conducted from a fixed location determined by the priest without additional lighting or flash. We also request that participants and guests refrain from using cellphones to record or stream the ceremony.

Behavior

Should either the bride or groom or any member of the wedding party (who are legal witnesses) appear inebriated, their mental capacity impaired by drugs, or become disruptive during the ceremony, the priest may be required to stop the ceremony and reschedule. Both church canon and state law expect those who enter into legal agreements such as marriages to do so of their own volition and be of sound mind to make those decisions.

Fees and Honorariums

The fees cover the facility expenses, setting up and cleaning up, and the organist. All fees are due thirty days before the wedding and are non-refundable. If the guest list is larger than 200 people and requires additional seating, our fees may need to increase to reflect the additional set-up and clean up. The use of the Parish Hall and Kitchen for a reception will need to be negotiated separately.

Should the cost of any fees or other wedding expenses inhibit you from moving forward with your marriage, please communicate this to the priest at least 30 days before the ceremony. There are ways the priest can help you.

Cleaning and setup - \$100

Organist - \$250

It is also customary to provide an honorarium for all clergy involved in the ceremony, typically between \$100-\$200. In the case of the Rector of Christ Church, we ask that you give this to *Christ Episcopal Church* and earmark for the *Rector's Discretionary Fund*. This fund is used to help those in need in and around the Fairmont Community.