

**THE
CHURCH'S MINISTRY
AT THE
CELEBRATION AND BLESSING
OF A
MARRIAGE**



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Introduction

Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God. In the wedding service the two people commit themselves to each other in a life-long union of faithfulness and love in God's name. The congregation prays that God will strengthen and guide them in their life together, and the priest asks God's blessing upon them. The sacred nature of the service, and the importance of it for the couple, determines the decisions to be made about the wedding.

Marriage is a covenant that is made out of the Christian commitment of the two people and in the context of life in the congregation. It is necessary that at least one of the parties be a baptized Christian.

The Officiating Priest

Before any date is set or other marriage plans made, a member of the clergy at St. Mark's must be consulted by the bride and groom. Episcopal clergy must conform to the laws of Arkansas and the canon laws of this Church regarding the solemnization of Holy Matrimony. The canons require that persons desiring to be married in this Church notify the priest at least thirty days prior to the service. We at St. Mark's believe however, that ninety days' notice is necessary for adequate preparation for a commitment as important as marriage. Instruction and counsel in the nature, meaning, and purpose of Holy Matrimony will be given to the couple before the marriage. This instruction is usually done in a number of sessions with the priest who will conduct the ceremony and with other qualified counselors, if necessary. The couple must sign the Declaration of Intention that states that they intend to make a Christian marriage.

Marriages of Persons Who Have Been Divorced

The Episcopal Church has certain other requirements for couples seeking to be married in the Church when one (or both) of them has been previously married and divorced. Persons who have been divorced or who have had a previous marriage annulled may be married again in the Episcopal Church. But in such cases the officiating priest is required, in accordance with national and diocesan canons, to investigate in depth the reasons for the dissolution of the previous

marriage (s) and the existing commitments to former spouse (s) and to children of the previous marriage (s). In accordance with the canons of the Church, the Bishop shares in this process and makes the final decision regarding permission for the priest to solemnize the proposed marriage.

The Marriage Service

- 1) The priest in charge of a congregation is given by the canons full authority in all matters liturgical and final responsibility for determining appropriate arrangements and details of the service.
- 2) A wedding date may be tentatively set in the parish calendar, but it is understood that no date is definitely fixed until the process of marriage preparation and counseling has been completed.
- 3) Concerning the Liturgy. Only rites and ceremonies in The Book of Common Prayer (1979) are used for marriages at St. Mark's. Couples desiring to be married should understand that they are not free to delete or add to the several marriage rites. Only those readings provided for in the Prayer Book will be permitted.
- 4) It is appropriate for the Holy Eucharist to be celebrated in connection with the marriage service. Communion in the Episcopal Church is open to all baptized persons who receives communion in their own church, and the priest will invite them to do so and give instructions. Advance notice should be given to the priest in the case of a large wedding, so that one or more acolytes and chalice bearers can be secured.
- 5) If the assistance of another Episcopal member of the clergy is desired, that cleric should be invited by the priest to participate in the service. Approval may be given for ordained clergy of other denominations to assist as allowed by the priest and the rubrics of The Book of Common Prayer.
- 6) In the Episcopal Church marriages are not usually solemnized during Lent, on holidays, or on Sundays. Unusual circumstances may be taken under advisement by the Rector, but exceptions are rare.

Summer Weddings

Given Little Rock's weather, during the months of June, July, and August often it is not possible to keep the church at a comfortable temperature in the afternoons and evenings, especially if there is a large congregation present. Couples need to be aware of that reality in planning a wedding date and time with the priest.

Music

It is understood that the parish organist shall play for all weddings at St. Mark's. Canon law states that it shall be the Rector's special duty to "suppress all light and unseemly music and all irreverence in the ceremony"; only appropriate sacred music is allowed at a marriage service. It is not customary to use the wedding marches of Wagner and Mendelsohn, because of their secular nature. Much good music is available, and the parish organist will endeavor to provide a choice of selections. The organist should be contacted at least thirty days prior to the wedding to discuss musical details, fees and arrangement for any soloists. In the event the organist is unable to play, it is the organist's responsibility to provide a deputy organist.

Ten to thirty minutes of organ music serves as a prelude to assist the congregation into the spirit of the service. Vocal or instrumental solos and/or ensembles may be performed during the period of the prelude. If vocal music is desired, it is required those selections are limited to words from the Bible, The Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal, or other authorized liturgical forms.

For active members of St. Mark's only, it is sometimes possible to honor a request for the parish choir to sing. However, since the choir members are volunteers and under no obligation to add to their schedules, it may not be possible to honor all such requests. When the request can be accommodated, a donation to the music program of St. Mark's in an amount at least equal to the organist's fee is to be made. If soloists from the parish choir are desired, the choirmaster should be consulted concerning suggestions and fees.

Church Decoration: Flowers and Candles

The altar guild of St. Mark's assists the clergy in arrangements for a wedding. An appointment should be made with the wedding director several weeks in advance to discuss all matters pertaining to the decoration of the church and other details. The director is able to advise about the number and kind of flowers and candles which are appropriate. This person can be contacted through the church office. St. Mark's is so designed that a wedding of great beauty can be held with a minimum of decoration.

The cost of flowers is the responsibility of the people being married. Arrangements for flowers must be made with a **local** florist. The parish office will be glad to recommend a florist. Florists should arrange a time to decorate the church under the direction of the wedding director and should remove non-floral decorations immediately after the ceremony. Flowers become the property of St. Mark's and may not be removed. They will be used at a subsequent worship service or taken to the sick. No artificial flowers or bows are permitted. Rented flowers or greenery are not permitted in the chancel area (the area in and around the altar rail).

With the exception of wall lanterns available from the church, candles are not permitted outside the altar area. Lanterns in the choir stalls are available for use only when the choir is singing. The cost for using these lanterns can be found in the fee schedule.

Participant Children

Children under four years of age should not be asked to be formal participants in the wedding ceremony.

The Rehearsal

Wedding rehearsals are normally held in the early evening of the day before the wedding and should precede the rehearsal dinner. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend and be on time. Stand-ins and proxies are not used in the rehearsal. If there is evidence that any member of the wedding party is intoxicated, either at the rehearsal or the wedding, there will be no marriage service. The wedding director will be useful in helping to plan the overall event, but at the rehearsal and marriage ceremony the cleric alone is charged with the responsibility of directing the service.

The Marriage License

Arrangements for the marriage license should be made with the office of the County Clerk well in advance of the date for the ceremony. The marriage license must be presented to the priest at the rehearsal. It is the responsibility of the priest to complete the license and return it to the office of the County Clerk. The County Clerk then will return the original license to the married couple.

Dressing Areas

If desired, rooms are available for the wedding party to dress. The Choir Vesting Room is available for the bridal party. The EYC Center may be used for the groom's party. Please remember that no one should leave valuables unattended in any room on church property. No hard liquor is permitted. If there is any evidence of such in any church building, there will be no marriage ceremony.

Orders of Service

The church will provide a simple, white; one page printed orders of service, if desired.

The Wedding

Ushers should be at the church and ready to begin seating guests 45 minutes before the time of the service (30 minutes for a small wedding.) The groom and best man should arrive not less than 45 minutes before the ceremony and meet the priest in the sacristy/chapel area.

While a guest registry book may be appropriate for a reception, it is not appropriate at the time of the wedding itself. Because the presence of a guest book delays the seating of guests arriving for the ceremony, the use of a guest book is strongly discouraged.

If the mother of the bride is to be the last person seated, she will be seated precisely at the time announced for the service to begin. The wedding director will give appropriate signals to the organist and clergy and will help the bridal party begin to process down the aisle. No one else will give these signals and directions.

Photographs

Because of the nature of the wedding as a service of worship, photographs may not be taken during the service. All photography is under the supervision of the Wedding Director. A photo may be taken of the bride and her escort in the narthex just prior to their entrance into the church, as well as one of the bride and groom as they leave the main aisle. If these are flash photographs, they must be taken within the narthex area. Group photographs of the wedding party and their families may be made before or after the service, when the congregation is not present. The couple getting married is responsible for sending to their photographer a copy of St. Mark's photography requirements.

If videotaping is done, the camera must use existing light only and be placed in the transept where the congregation at large will not see it.

Ushers are to remind guests arriving with cameras that they are not to take photographs inside the church.

Police Security

For the protection of the bridal party and guests, an off-duty police officer will be hired to be present while the bridal party is preparing for the wedding and will remain until after the wedding. The bride & groom are responsible for the cost.

Reception

If the parish hall is desired for a reception, it must be reserved well in advance. With the Rector's permission, beer and/or wine (including champagne) may be served in the parish hall. No hard liquor or other alcoholic beverages are permitted. There is a 2 ½ hour limit on the serving of alcohol. The length of the reception is not to exceed 3 hours. If the reception is to be catered, the caterer should consult with the wedding director well in advance. No confetti, glitter or candles are allowed in the parish hall. All deliveries, meetings, etc., or any decorating should be done during church office hours. If this is not possible, the wedding director may be available after hours and will be compensated by the couple. No smoking allowed in the parish hall or any other buildings on campus. This is considered a private social function; a list of guidelines, fees, and rules for the parish hall must be obtained at the parish office.

Wedding Director

St. Mark's provides a wedding director who must be used at all weddings in the sanctuary and all receptions. The wedding director serves as the primary church staff liaison and is the one whom all questions regarding facilities and wedding policies should be directed. The use of the church's wedding director eliminates the need for a professional bridal consultant for the rehearsal or ceremony. The wedding director may be reached at any time by calling the church office and leaving a message with the receptionist. The wedding director is not on staff; therefore, phone calls to her home should be kept to a minimum.

About the Information Form

Enclosed with these guidelines is an information form. This form is to be completed and returned to the church office as soon as possible and no later than twenty days before the wedding. Please direct any questions you have to the clergy or Parish Administrator at 225-4203.

Fees

There is no charge for the sacraments of the Church. When the facilities are used expenses are incurred. Fees for such expenses are listed below and are due seven days before the wedding. No one should feel inhibited by fees from requesting the sacrament of Holy Matrimony at St. Mark's. If cost is a barrier, please let a member of the clergy know. Resources are available to make a wedding possible for any couple.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| Facility fee: | Chapel | No charge |
| | Church | \$500 |
| Wedding Director (check made payable to Director) | | \$250 |
| Organist (check made payable to the organist): | | \$250 |
| Police Security | current hourly charge | |
| Parish Hall | | \$100/hr. |
| Kitchen | | \$ 50/hr. |
| (please read rules and guidelines for the parish hall and kitchen) | | |
| Wall Lanterns (optional): | | \$160 |
| Pew Candles (optional): | | \$160 |
| Choir Lanterns (optional when choir sings): | | \$240 |
| Candle Fee - | | \$50 |
| Deposit | | \$500 |

There are no fees for the clergy, but if desired an honorarium may be given.

Revised 2.14.17

Orders/wedding/weddingbooklet.doc

MARRIAGE AGREEMENT

I have received a copy of the marriage booklet and agree to follow and adhere to these policies.

Date: _____

Signed by Groom: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Bride: _____

THIS SIGNED FORM MUST BE RETURNED TO THE PARISH OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT NO LESS THAN ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE WEDDING CEREMONY.