



SAINT MARK'S
EPISCOPAL CATHEDRAL

GUIDELINES FOR THE SERVICE OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
at Saint Mark's Cathedral

Christian marriage is a service of worship, more aptly called **The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage**. The word celebration expresses the joy that characterizes the event and its public and communal nature. The word blessing is a reminder of the solemn, religious context of this holy covenant. It is sacramental work and is not to be entered into lightly or unadvisedly. We, therefore, have what may seem like high expectations for those wishing to be married at Saint Mark's Cathedral.



In the wedding service, the two people promise in God's name to be faithful to each other for life. The congregation commits to support the couple and prays that God will strengthen and guide them in their life together. The priest proclaims God's blessing upon them. The sacred nature of the service and the solemnity of the promises made by the couple influence the decisions to be made about the wedding.

Christian marriage is a covenant that is made out of the Christian commitment of the two people, at least one of whom must be baptized, within the context of the life of the congregation and the whole Church.

Thus, the service of Christian marriage assumes that **the couple are active participants in the life of Saint Mark's Cathedral**. Persons seeking God's blessing through the Church for their marriage are **expected to be regular in worship, especially during the months prior to their wedding**. Of course, it is hoped that couples requesting Christian marriage at Saint Mark's continue in regular worship following their wedding. The solemn vows of Christian marriage are expressed within the context of the living community of the Church.

Many people find that civil marriage is a more suitable expression of their vows. The Church fully

recognizes civil marriage, and in many countries it is the norm. A civil marriage may be blessed by the Church later whenever it seems appropriate. Only when a couple intends to take on the exceptional obligations and responsibilities expected by the Church should their marriage be a Christian one.

The marriage ceremony will be performed according to an authorized liturgy of the Episcopal Church. The liturgy reflects the communal aspect of the Church's life and the reality that marriage reflects the union between Christ and the Church.

First Steps

1. Read this entire booklet of wedding guidelines carefully. It will answer most of your questions.
2. Contact Erik Donner in the Church Office to begin a conversation with one of the Cathedral clergy. The priest will review the steps you will take in preparing for your wedding, and will assist you in arranging for premarital preparation sessions and making contact with the organist. The priest can also help you with potential dates that are available on the church calendar. It is unwise to set a firm wedding date until the couple has conferred with the priest and the space has been reserved. Please contact the Church Office at 206.323.0300 for more information.



The Requirements

Every priest of the Episcopal Church must conform to the laws of the State and the canons of the Episcopal Church regarding the solemnization of Holy Matrimony. The bare canonical requirements are: (1) that persons desirous of being married in this church must signify their intention to the minister at least 30 days prior to the date of the service; (2) that there be at least two witnesses to the ceremony; (3) that the date and place of the marriage, the names of the parties, the age of the parties, their residences and their Church status are recorded in the proper register; (4) that the witnesses and minister shall sign the record; and (5) that the couple signs a declaration of intention (to enter into marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant).

In the case of marriage following divorce, the officiating priest must meet with you **at least 90 days prior to the wedding**. The following additional requirements apply: (1) the minister is provided appropriate evidence that any previous marriage has been annulled or dissolved (copies of all divorce decrees constitute evidence of the termination of any previous marriages); (2) the divorce decree or annulment has been in effect for one full year prior to the date of the re-marriage; (3) the

minister consults with the parties as to continuing concern for the former spouse and children of the prior marriage; and (4) the minister has the consent of the Diocesan Bishop (this takes at least 60 days).

Because the request for the Bishop's permission occurs after the pre-marital counseling period, the typical preparation time for marriage of a divorced person begins several months prior to the wedding date.

PREMARITAL COUNSELING

While your wedding ceremony itself is very important, the development of a solid foundation for your ongoing marital relationship is of greater significance. Because we want to support your living into your wedding vows in an intentional and faithful way, Saint Mark's requires pre-marital preparation of all couples.

Pre-marital counseling should be coordinated with the officiating priest. In some cases, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) will require several sessions before providing a general statement of support to the priest. Please note: The priest may decline to officiate the service at the priest's discretion.

SETTING THE DATE OF THE SERVICE

Technically, the priest is not supposed to give consent to performing the service until after the canons have been fulfilled (see first paragraph under "The Requirements"). The date is subject to the schedule of the priest and the church. Because of the penitential nature of the season of Lent, it is not appropriate to perform weddings from Ash Wednesday until Easter.

THE MINISTER

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage is a service of worship, and therefore is under the complete direction of the Dean of the Cathedral, in consultation with the Cathedral's priest associates, liturgists and musicians. Wedding consultants are not necessary. The priest will conduct any rehearsal. Visiting clergy may request to participate by a letter to the Dean. Episcopal priests in good standing are welcome to serve as the primary officiant for the wedding; clergy of other denominations may have a role but do not serve as the primary officiant. Please do not invite clergy not on the Cathedral staff to participate in your wedding until you have spoken with the Cathedral priest and received permission from the Dean.

THE EUCHARIST

Because the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is the Sacrament of unity, it provides an exquisite context for the wedding service. You are encouraged to celebrate the Holy Eucharist in connection with your marriage. What better first act for a married couple than to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion together, with family and friends who celebrate the occasion with you!

THE OBLATIONS

It is customary for the couple, or for family members, to bring the bread and wine forward for the Communion.

THE CONGREGATION

Weddings are important occasions in the lives of the couple and their friends and families. It is expected that the invitation list will include many who are not members of the congregation. However, since the service of Holy Matrimony is a worship service, and since there are no "private services" in the Episcopal Church, it is understood that the local congregation is also invited and that an announcement to that effect may be published.

The Cathedral priest who officiates your wedding will facilitate several aspects of planning for the service, including:

- Receiving, evaluating requests for and scheduling weddings.
- Providing you with resources and answers to your questions, and serving as an ongoing source of information, guidance and support.
- Connecting you with other members of Saint Mark's wedding and marriage preparation team, including music staff.
- Facilitating the wedding rehearsal and working with clergy, parish administration, musicians, sextons, liturgical ministries, altar guild, flower guild and photographers to ensure a smooth-flowing ceremony.
- Maintaining parish records.
- Serving as an ongoing contact for you following your wedding day, as you grow into your marriage and in your desires to further strengthen your relationship with the Saint Mark's community.

THE MUSIC

Only sacred music is allowed at a marriage service. The Cathedral organist(s) has the first right of refusal on all weddings performed in Saint Mark's Cathedral. The priest will inform you which

Cathedral organist has been assigned to your wedding. You should contact the organist at least 30 days prior to the service. Any other arrangements need to be cleared with the priest and the resident organist. You are encouraged to use hymns for your wedding, especially if the congregation will be large enough to sing well. The Hymnal 1982 is widely regarded as a masterpiece of sacred music. Quality instrumentalists can add a festive tone to the celebration of a marriage. Such instrumentalists are under the direction of the priest and the resident organist.

Solo vocal music is unnecessary, but allowed as long as the music chosen is hymns or anthems which are appropriate to the liturgies authorized by the Episcopal Church. The Cathedral is a challenging acoustical space and it is best to use professional vocalists. If you have friends or family members who wish to sing, they need to be approved by the organist assigned to your wedding to ensure their capacity to sing successfully in the large Cathedral space. The words are to be from Holy Scripture, from The Book of Common Prayer, or from texts congruent with them. Popular music should be saved for the reception.

In our liturgical tradition the Lord's Prayer is a corporate act of prayer (see The Book of Common Prayer, page 428) and is said by the entire congregation. It is not appropriate for it to be sung as a solo.



Wagner's *Bridal Chorus* ("Here Comes the Bride") and Mendelssohn's *Wedding March* are secular pieces, and we do not use them in wedding services here at Saint Mark's. On all music decisions, the priest is the final authority.

* *Why would anybody object to the "traditional" wedding marches we've grown up hearing in every movie? Part of the problem is that their use is a Hollywood invention. When movie makers were looking for music for weddings, they intentionally chose music that had no history of use in religious ceremony so that the movie wedding scenes would not be identifiable with any particular church or religious group. They "discovered" these two pieces and used them because they had no religious connections. The marches come from two operas. In the Wagner opera, the new bride betrays her husband's trust and is abandoned by him. The Mendelssohn march was written for the marriage of a young woman to a satyr – half man and half horse!*

LITURGICAL POLICIES AT SAINT MARK'S CATHEDRAL

One of the reasons people love to worship at Saint Mark's and to be married here is our wonderful tradition of beautiful and inspiring liturgy. The use of symbol, sacrament, color and art is

particularly important in liturgical traditions like the Episcopal Church. Everything we do in worship has purpose and communicates meaning.

The Sacrament of Marriage is first of all a service of worship. Its focus is God – God’s divine blessing given to the solemn vows made by the couple. The service is also a celebration; its mood is joyful. Our goal is service of God-oriented worship in joyful celebration of solemn vows. The symbols and ritual acts of marriage are the ways we communicate the meaning of the worship service.

Here is the way we structure the worship service of the Sacrament of Marriage at Saint Mark’s:

BEFORE THE SERVICE

It is our tradition that the congregation keeps silence before worship in order to prepare through prayer. Appropriate sacred or classical music may be played. A hymn or other sacred music may be sung or played by the musicians. The ushers may help worshipers to their seats. If the family of the bride and groom are not to be in the procession, they may be ushered to their seats prior to the beginning of the service.

THE ENTRANCE PROCESSION

Since marriage is an act of worship, our entrance procession looks similar to our processions on Sunday. As the congregation sings a hymn or as instrumental music is played, the ministers of the service enter down the aisle from the back of the church. The use of a processional hymn of praise, or organ fanfare, is particularly encouraged to highlight the worship aspect of the service. Here is the order of procession [optional parts are placed in brackets]:

[Thurifer with incense]

Crucifer with Cross

Priest [and First Member of the Couple]

[Torches]

[Gospel Book]

[Choir]

[Other musicians]

[Parents of the Couple]

[Lay Reader(s) / Chalice Bearer(s)]

[Attendants]

Maid / Matron of Honor and Best Man

[Ring Bearer / Flower Girl]

[Priest]

The Couple

or if the Father escorts the Bride

Father and Bride

The procession enters in a smooth and dignified manner as one act of procession. Usually we give the couple (or the Father and Bride) as much as half the aisle for their entrance at the end of the procession using the same music as the procession. (See “Frequently Asked Questions” for more information about the procession.)

THE FLOWERS AND ALTAR HANGINGS

One of the joys of being in a liturgical church is that it is already beautifully appointed for worship. There is no need to import flower baskets, ferns and candelabra to make it look festive.



In the Nave (the large main worship space), one large flower arrangement may be placed on the cornerstone to the left of the liturgical platform. Additional flowers may be placed in the rear of the Nave behind the pews. Pillars are available for this purpose.

In Thomsen Chapel, two smaller flower arrangements may be placed on the shelf above the high altar. An additional small arrangement may be placed in the rear of the Chapel near the entry.

The bride and bridesmaids may have bouquets and the gentlemen may wear boutonnieres. Only fresh flowers and real greenery are used. Flowers may be used for pew markers if desired. No other flowers are necessary.

The flowers should follow the scale and proportion of arrangements used on Sundays and other Major Feasts, and coordination of those details will be facilitated by the priest. If a wedding takes place on a Saturday, it is customary that the flowers remain at the Cathedral to be used in church on the following Sunday. We will offer a thanksgiving for the couple as part of our corporate prayers on Sunday morning. We have a list of recommended florists who have successfully worked in our space in the past. If your florist has not arranged flowers in the Cathedral before, they are required to meet with the Head of the Cathedral Flower Ministry to discuss appropriate arrangements. Written guidelines for arranging flowers in the Cathedral will also be provided.

LITURGICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Cathedral is an active, worshipping community and our worship spaces are used in a variety of capacities throughout the year. During various times/seasons of the year there may be additional decoration present that is part of our celebration of that season (e.g., Easter streamers, Advent wreath, etc.) Those seasonal decorations may not be removed. The priest can give you an idea of what might be present at the time of your wedding if you would like to know. The altar hangings may be either the seasonal hangings, or white. At times there are art exhibits hanging on the walls of the Cathedral. Those also cannot be modified in any way.

THE CANDLES

The Church's altar candles may be used during the marriage only if the service is Eucharist. During Advent and Christmas, the Advent wreath candles are lit, and during the Easter season, the Paschal Candle is used at all services. If you wish to use a "unity candle," please save that for the reception. We do not use pew candles.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A wedding is a service of worship. Photographs may be taken from designated positions in the Church during the service according to the strict guidelines appended to this document in an agreement which must be signed by the photographer. This is a firm requirement and is expected to be communicated to the photographer and to friends and family. The photographer may also take pictures in the Narthex (entrance area) prior to the procession.

Posed photographs may be taken either before or after the service. We may pose any parts of the wedding service. If pictures are taken in the church before the service, they must conclude at least 30 minutes before the start time of the wedding. Remember, posing pictures after the service delays the wedding party's arrival at the reception.

There may be one stationary video camera on a tripod placed in the church behind the last pew or in the organ loft (in the Nave only; there is no organ loft access in Thomsen Chapel). It may be supervised, but the photographer should be dressed in keeping with the wedding party (i.e., coat and tie, nice dress or pants outfit).

Artificial light for photography is inappropriate for a wedding.

THE ACOLYTES

Ordinarily, the acolytes (altar assistants) will be those of the congregation. If you wish to request particular parish acolytes, please clear those choices with the priest in advance. You are asked to extend the invitations to the acolytes who would take part in the service, and it is customary to present them with a small honorarium for their service, payable directly to them.

THE REHEARSAL

Wedding rehearsals are usually held in the early evening of the day before the wedding, concluding no later than 6:00 p.m. All members of the wedding party are expected to attend, to be on time and to remember that the rehearsal is conducted with reverence. For some small weddings, it is preferable to have a brief rehearsal on the day of the wedding sometime prior to the arrival of the congregation, or at some other suitable time, at the discretion of the priest.

THE RECEPTION

If the reception is to be held in the Parish Hall, arrangements should be made in advance to reserve the building and to ensure that the event occurs smoothly. You are responsible for cleaning up and returning everything to its pre-reception condition. All rented equipment and personal belongings must be removed from the kitchen and Parish Hall immediately after the reception. The use of alcoholic beverages must follow the parish policy. The cleaning service will normally come in afterwards to prepare the church for the following Sunday. The reception needs to end in time for the hall to be empty by 8:30 p.m. so we can set up for Sunday.



FACILITIES

The pews in the Cathedral Nave seat 360 guests. Additional seating may be added with a maximum capacity of 800. Thomsen Chapel comfortably accommodates 60-70 guests with a maximum capacity of 80. Confetti, rice, birdseed, balloons or other such items are not permitted inside the Cathedral or on the grounds. Bubbles are a delightful alternative and may be used outside the Cathedral as you exit the worship space following your service. Please remove hangers, cleaning bags and other things from the dressing areas. Please do not bring or drink alcohol during the

rehearsal or during the time prior to the wedding. We have a very strict policy that alcohol may only be used at receptions.

LIMOUSINES AND SPECIAL TRANSPORTATION

If you plan to be picked up after your wedding by a limousine or other special transportation, please note that the area in front of the Cathedral is a fire lane. Your driver should remain with the vehicle while waiting for the conclusion of your service.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why don't the men enter from one direction and the women process down the aisle as I've seen in other weddings?

Many of the ritual actions of weddings are an inheritance from days when marriages were contractual events arranged by families, often with important property issues as the primary driving force. In those days it made sense for the two parties to enter from different directions in order to begin the contractual process safely — at arm's length. For protection, sometimes the Best Man and a representative from the Bride's family were armed just in case things got out of hand.

Form follows function. We no longer enter marriage as potentially adversarial parties agreeing to enter a contract. In our culture, a mature, committed couple is coming joyfully to the church to celebrate their relationship of love. The bridal party enters together as friends intending to show their support for these two persons in their marriage. It makes sense for them to enter the church together as a sign of their mutual support and loving relationship.

Why isn't there a break in the procession when the Bride enters? In other weddings I've seen the doors close and the music change for the entrance of the Bride?

Some of that practice has its origins in the days of arranged marriages. In some traditions, the Groom was not to see the Bride prior to the safe culmination of the contract. The families often feared that if the Groom did not find the Bride attractive enough, he might refuse the wedding and spoil the property arrangements. There was also great concern to protect the virginity of the Bride, which was an important property value promised to the Groom. If he had reason to suspect the virginity of the Bride, it was legal grounds to annul the contract. The safest way to get the Bride to the point where the couple was legally married was to keep her heavily veiled and distanced from the Groom until he had made his public and binding vows. Then he could safely lift the veil to see the Bride who had been chosen for him.

The liturgical procession at Saint Mark's Cathedral is intended to communicate a different understanding. We enter together joyfully in an act of worship and thanksgiving. The main focus is on God, not on the property contract or even on the Bride. Overly theatrical entrances can take away from the worship aspect of the wedding celebration. Much as the Bishop enters solemnly at the end of the procession, so does the couple (or Bride and Father) as the final part of the beautiful and dignified entrance rite. It is one procession flowing together rather than two divided. The Sacrament of Marriage is a Sacrament of Unity, and everything we do in worship intends to convey this essential meaning.

Why does the congregation stand through most of the wedding? In other churches the congregation sits.

In our tradition, the congregation participates as active witnesses to the vows and covenants of the couple. Instead of being a passive audience, the congregation stands to indicate its active

participation in the marriage. In our tradition we sit to listen to the scriptures, and we stand or kneel as active worshipers in the vows and prayers of the service.

FEES

The cost for a wedding in the main Cathedral is \$2200; in Thomsen Chapel \$1500. Payment for the organist is made separately. For pledging members of the Cathedral there is a reduced fee structure. The priest will give you detailed information about whom payments are made to and by when they need to be made. We ask for a \$500 deposit at the time you reserve the Church for your wedding. That deposit is nonrefundable but can be transferred to another date. Additional musicians and the organist's rehearsal time with them will accrue additional fees.

If you have a reception at Saint Mark's Cathedral, there are additional fees depending on the space and length of time desired.

If you would like acolytes, we can make suggestions for servers. Customarily there is an honorarium (\$25.00 suggested) given directly to each acolyte. Please pay all fees before the rehearsal.

Declaration of Intention

(to be signed by the couple to be married)

We, _____ and _____,
desiring to receive the blessing of Holy Matrimony in the Church, do solemnly
declare that we hold marriage to be a lifelong union of two persons. We believe that
our union, in heart, body and mind, is intended by God for our mutual joy; for the
help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is
God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and
love of the Lord. 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.

Name

Name

Date

Date

Acknowledgement of Wedding Couple

We, the undersigned, hereby acknowledge that we have read the contents of the “Guidelines for the Service of Christian Marriage at Saint Mark’s Cathedral,” and we understand that the wedding is a worship service which is conducted according the practice and tradition of the Episcopal Church. We further acknowledge understanding, acceptance and commitment to comply with the guidelines regarding the service, photography, flowers, candles and the respective roles of priest, liturgist and wedding coordinator.

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

Acknowledgement of Photographer

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have read the contents of the “Guidelines for the Service of Christian Marriage at Saint Mark’s Cathedral,” and I understand that the wedding is a worship service which is conducted according the practice and tradition of the Episcopal Church. I further acknowledge understanding, acceptance and my commitment to comply with the guidelines regarding the use of photographic equipment during the wedding service. Failure to comply may result in the service being halted by the priest, and may also result in the photographer being banned from future weddings at Saint Mark’s Cathedral.

Signature

Date

Acknowledgement of Wedding Coordinator (if applicable)

By signing below, I hereby acknowledge that I have read the contents of the “Guidelines for the Service of Christian Marriage at Saint Mark’s Cathedral,” and I understand that the wedding is a worship service which is conducted according the practice and tradition of the Episcopal Church. I further acknowledge understanding, acceptance and my commitment that the priest of Saint Mark’s Cathedral will conduct the wedding rehearsal and the wedding service.

Signature

Date