

CELEBRATING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE  
GUIDELINES FOR THE PROSPECTIVE BRIDE AND GROOM

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
120 S. NEW HAMPSHIRE STREET  
COVINGTON, LOUISIANA 70433  
(985) 892-3177

## INTRODUCTION

Your wedding is an important event in your lives. When you ask for the blessing of the Church, your wedding becomes an important event in our lives as well.

There are various members of the congregation and staff who will be involved in the wedding celebration. We are here to assist you in your preparations and hope that you will feel free to call on us. In return, we expect our volunteers and staff to be treated with respect and courtesy, keeping in mind that we are not infinitely flexible and have rules for a reason. It is our intention that this booklet will help answer most of your questions. *Please read this document carefully and present any further questions to the priest at your first meeting.*

Some of the people you will be in contact with are:

Rector - The Rev. A. Thomas Blackmon -(985) 892-3177  
Wedding Committee Coordinator - Lucie Thornton (985) 373-1307  
Parish Administrator - Susan Griffis (985) 892-3177  
Publications Coordinator - Laura Robert (985) 892-3177  
Organist - Benjie Branson (985) 892-6194

The Wedding Coordinator and the Organist should be contacted as soon as possible after the initial meeting with the Priest. It is the couple's responsibility to contact them and set up meetings with each.

**Under no circumstances should a couple announce a date or print invitations or otherwise encumber themselves with any other wedding plans until approval is given by the Rector of Christ Church for a date and time for the wedding.**

The policies, rules and advice in this manual have three purposes:

First, to uphold the sacramental character of marriage and the reality that every wedding is a worship service of the Church

Second, to enable an attitude of reverence and care from all participants at each marriage celebrated at Christ Church.

Third, to insure that your marriage ceremony is done with dignity, beauty order, and joy.

## CELEBRATING A CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AT CHRIST CHURCH

### **What is Christian marriage?**

Christian marriage introduces God into the relationship of men and women. The relationship God established between Christ and the Church is the model for Christian marriage. The couple promises to live together until parted by death; to love, honor, and cherish each other; to establish a relationship of mutual fellowship, encouragement, and understanding, realizing that these things are only possible with God's help.

Christian marriage is blessed by the worshipping community of faith. When two people come to the Church asking if they may marry in the Church, they are acknowledging their need for a community, and their responsibility to the community. The Canons of the Episcopal Church and of the Diocese of Louisiana, The Book of Common Prayer, Christian tradition and parish custom inform us of several things which need to be considered in this booklet.

### **Who may marry in the Church?**

The immediate family of active, participating members of Christ Church are welcome to make arrangements for marriage at Christ Church.

For those who are not currently active, participating members of Christ Church, we simply ask that they come and be a part of our parish life by worshipping regularly with us on Sunday mornings for six months and make/maintain a financial pledge to the parish over that same period of time *prior to scheduling a wedding*.

At least one member of the couple must be a baptized member of Christ Church, either through letter of transfer from another Episcopal congregation or with some other proof of baptism from another church who baptize in the name of the Trinity.

Episcopalians in the Diocese of Louisiana who are not members of Christ Church should have their rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge write a letter to the Rector requesting that the marriage be solemnized here, explaining why it cannot take place in the home parish.

On occasion, it is possible to schedule weddings for persons outside of the Diocese of Louisiana who are active in their home parishes. To request this the potential candidates should ask their rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge to write a letter to the Rector requesting that the marriage be solemnized here and explain why the request is being made. Once this letter has been received a priest will contact the potential couple to schedule an initial appointment in order to discuss parish wedding policies.

### **The Declaration of Intention**

The Canon Law of the Episcopal Church requires all who wish to marry in the Episcopal Church to sign the Declaration of Intention. By signing this document the Church understands the couple to be saying that they believe Christian marriage to be a life-long union of husband and wife and that they intend to model their lives and that of their household on the teaching of Christ. The Declaration of Intention will be signed as part of the marriage preparation in the presence of the priest.

## PREMARITAL INSTRUCTION

### **A Canonical requirement**

Premarital instruction with a priest is required by the Canon Law of the Episcopal Church. The initial session provides an opportunity to discuss the material in this booklet and to set a schedule for the additional sessions. After the initial meeting, if geographic considerations preclude meetings with Christ Church's clergy, pre-marital counseling may be arranged with another Episcopal priest located closer to the couple. In some instances, the responsible priest may require the couple to do professional counseling at their expense.

## MARRIAGE OF DIVORCED PERSONS

### **Permission of the Bishop required**

In addition to all the standards for a first marriage, the permission of the Bishop of Louisiana must be obtained if one or both persons to marry have been previously married and divorced.

The Rector must be furnished with a copy of any certified divorce decrees. The divorce decree must be final for one year prior to a planned wedding date. The Canons of the Church require that the divorced person demonstrate continuing concern for the well being of the former spouse, and of any children of the prior marriage. Meeting these criteria is managed by the responsible priest together with the couple intending marriage.

### **Time required**

The Bishop's approval takes time to obtain. Therefore, application with Christ Church should be made six (6) months prior to the desired date of marriage if a former marriage has ended in divorce. If application is for a third marriage for either party, more than six (6) months is usually required and professional counseling is always necessary.

## PLANNING THE WEDDING

### **Selecting the date and time**

**Under no circumstances should a couple announce a date or print invitations or encumber themselves with any other wedding plans until approval is given by the Rector.**

The first step: Contact the Church office.

The second step: Meet with a Priest.

The third step: Contact and meet with the Wedding Coordinator and the Organist.

A wedding involves the participation of a great many people, and adequate notice is essential. However it is advisable to make arrangements as far in advance as possible in order to guarantee that no scheduling difficulties will arise. Advance notice of four months is the rule, rather than the exception, and in no case, less than three months.

At Christ Church weddings are not scheduled during the church seasons of Advent and Lent, including Holy Week. The solemn character of these seasons is compromised by the joyous nature of weddings and the traditional social celebrations which surround them. Nor are weddings solemnized on Sundays (except as a part of regular Sunday worship), on Thanksgiving Day and the following weekend; Christmas Eve through the weekend after Christmas, as well as major secular holiday weekends.

*Weddings on Saturdays will take place no later than 6:00 p.m.*

*Rehearsals on Fridays will be scheduled at 6:00 p.m. or earlier. The marriage license is signed at this time and left with the priest.*

### **The Liturgy**

The Book of Common Prayer is the liturgical form authorized by the Episcopal Church for all celebrations of marriage. At Christ Church no other rites are permitted. The clergy recommends that the celebration of Holy Eucharist be included as part of the marriage service. When the Eucharist is to be part of the wedding celebration, it is offered to all baptized Christians in attendance.

Appropriate readings for the wedding liturgy may be found on page 426 of The Book of Common Prayer.

**A “Unity Candle” is not used at Christ Church.**

### **Participating clergy from outside Christ Church**

The Rector is glad to discuss the participation of other clergy in the wedding. Visiting Episcopal clergy, or other clergy may, at the Rector’s discretion, participate in the service. When clergy outside the staff of Christ Church are involved, it is proper for the Rector to extend a formal written invitation to that person. The couple should *discuss* this request with the priest at their first pre-marital meeting. The couple will be asked to furnish contact information for possible guest clergy.

### **Marriage License**

All civil requirements of the State of Louisiana must be fulfilled before the wedding, and a valid, current marriage license must be presented to the Rector before the rehearsal. The marriage license may be procured from the Clerk of Court’s office in any parish in Louisiana, and is valid for a period of thirty (30) days.

*For those wishing to enter into a Covenant Marriage, the Clerk of Court’s office can advise what procedure is necessary. The counseling required by the Covenant Marriage license is to be done by a professional counselor. Those who enter a Louisiana Covenant marriage may apply to the church for a blessing after entering into their civil contract.*

Ordinarily, a couple may not be married within seventy-two (72) hours of the issuance of the license and not beyond the thirty (30) day period of its validation. Should an exception to this be required, the Clerk of Court will advise the proper legal procedures. In addition to the fee, the couple must have proper doctor’s certificates and birth certificates to present to the Clerk’s office.

## **Christ Church Parish register**

Please have two adult witnesses designated to sign the Canonical Parish Register at the rehearsal. This register remains secure at Christ Church.

### **Fees**

There is no charge to a contributing member of Christ Church for the use of the church or chapel for a wedding.. It is appropriate for the family to make a gift in the form of a thank-offering to the parish in proportion to the cost of the reception. It is also customary that a personal honorarium be given to the officiant or a check made payable directly to the priest's discretionary fund as a matter of personal expression of appreciation for his/her services.

#### **However, other charges apply:**

1. \$150 for the organist  
\$200 if other instruments or soloists are to be part of the service to cover extra rehearsal time.
2. \$100 for the sexton to attend to the building and grounds.
3. \$50 for candles (if used) as outlined above
4. \$10 per 100 programs

**All fees must be paid in the church office two weeks before the wedding.**

### **Seating capacity of Church and Chapel**

The seating capacity of the Church, including balcony has been determined to be 300 people.

The seating capacity of the Chapel has been determined to be 80 people.

People may not stand, nor may chairs be placed in the aisles. The aisles are narrow such that a hazard would be created should an emergency arise. The city of Covington Fire Marshall enforces this code requirement.

### **Rector and Wedding Coordinator**

As in every service of the Church, the Rector is charged by Canon Law with the final responsibility for determining the appropriateness of all arrangements and details and for conducting the rehearsal. At Christ Church the Rector is assisted by the Wedding Coordinator, who sees to the mechanical arrangements and advises the bride-to-be on all matters pertaining to wedding customs and rules at Christ Church. The Wedding Coordinator is well informed about weddings and knows the rules and the worship space of Christ Church. She is the person to contact about details and arrangements other than scheduling the date. The bride should contact the Wedding Coordinator well in advance of the wedding after the first meeting with the priest. Outside wedding consultants and planners will not be involved in the portion of the wedding at Christ Church.

### **Bridal Party**

The suggested *maximum* number of attendants is six bridesmaids and six groomsmen. This issue should be taken up with the clergy at the first meeting.

Flower girls and ring bearers are permitted, but they must be at least six years of age.

## Flowers

The Wedding Coordinator will be happy to advise the bride-to-be about appropriate floral and church decorations. The bride, of course, may choose any florist she wishes, but it is expected that floral arrangements will be simple and not overpower the beauty of the sanctuary or detract from the altar as its focal point.

The following information needs to be discussed with the florist:

1. The bride must make arrangements ahead of time for the florist to have access to the church on the day of the wedding. This can be done through the Parish Administrator on the day BEFORE the rehearsal between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
2. All deliveries and decorating arrangements must be completed three hours before the ceremony.
3. No bows or ribbons of any kind may be used in the Chancel (inside altar rail). This includes bows and ribbons on candelabra. Floral arrangements must be of real, fresh, or dried flowers and natural greenery.
4. Flowers in the Nave may be real, fresh, dried, or artificial. Ribbons and bows are allowed in these areas. Candles must be in votives or in hurricane globes.
5. The brass vases and liners belonging to the church are available for use.
6. The bride should appoint someone to remove the floral arrangements on the altar after the ceremony. If arrangements have been made with the church office one month prior to the wedding, they may be left in place as a thank you gift to the congregation. All other decorations must be removed after the ceremony.

## Aisle Runner & scattering

An aisle runner is NOT used for wedding ceremonies at Christ Church.

The throwing of rice, birdseed, flower petals, or confetti is very dangerous, and consequently, is NOT allowed within the Church, Chapel or on the steps and sidewalk leading to them.

## Candles and Hurricane Shades

Real, non-mechanical candles are the only candles used in the sanctuary. These candles are part of the altar setting and will be provided by the Altar Guild.

Wooden floor candelabra are available for use in the church. The candles for the candelabra are obtained by the church but paid for as part of the wedding decorations.

The Church has hurricane shades and candle holders which may be used on the 18 window ledges of the church or the six windows of the chapel. The 6 inch candles used in the hurricane globes are to be purchased by the bride's family. It is also their responsibility to wash the globes if necessary before and after use and return the globes to the appropriate closet of the church or chapel. The globes should be put in place by someone designated by the bride but will be removed from the window ledges after the wedding service by the sexton. Any decorations left on them will be discarded.

## **Programs**

Programs may be used for wedding liturgies and nuptial Eucharists if content has been approved by the Rector. These programs may be printed by the church office. The content of such programs must be approved by the officiating priest two weeks prior to the wedding. Contact the Publications Coordinator for arrangements. There is a cost of \$10 per hundred for printing programs.

## **Music at the Wedding**

Music in the Church is the responsibility of the Rector and of those he may designate to share the responsibility. All wedding music used at Christ Church must have the Rector's approval. The Rector realizes that the wedding ceremony is a church service of festival proportions and, that music plays an important role.

The Church and Chapel are always available for weddings without music, but when music is desired the Christ Church Organist must be employed. This fee is \$150 payable directly to the organist **prior** to the rehearsal.

Should a vocalist or instrumentalist be desired, arrangements must be made through the Organist, in which case a fee of \$200.00 for the Organist will cover both the wedding and the necessary rehearsal with the vocalist or instrumentalist. Fees for musicians other than the Organist are additional and must be paid directly to that person.

### **A Note from the Organist**

Please contact me as soon as you have set a date and met with the Priest. Your wedding is not on my calendar until you contact me.

I will meet with you early on and play some processionals and recessionals and help you with selecting these. Keep in mind that a wedding is a worship service and that the music should be appropriate and in good taste. It should be elegant and dignified.

If you want a vocalist or instrumentalist, I can help you with that as well.

I will attend your rehearsal if at all possible.

I will play appropriate prelude music 20 minutes before the service.

Following is a list of possible processionals and recessionals. They are coded as to where in the wedding they work best. I look forward to working with you.

*Benjie Branson*  
(985) 892-6194

## Wedding Processionals and Recessionals

M	Bm	B	R		
X	X	X		Air II - Water Music	Handel
X	X	X		Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring	Bach
X	X	X		Canon in D	Pachelbel
		X		Processional Hymn with Fanfare	Purcell
X	X	X		St. Anthony Chorale	Brahms
X	X	X		Air I	Handel
			X	Allegro Maestoso	Handel
X	X	X		Allegro Moderato	Handel
X	X	X	X	Trumpet Tune	Purcell
X	X	X	X	Trumpet Voluntary	Clarke
			X	Now Thank We All Our God	Bach
X	X	X	X	Rondeau	Mouret
X	X	X	X	Trumpet Voluntary	Stanley
				The Rejoicing	Handel
		X	X	Arioso	Handel
			X	Psalm 19	Marcello
X	X	X		My Heart Ever Faithful	Bach
X	X	X	X	Rejoice Ye Pure in Heart	Lows
X	X			Air	Wesley
X	X	X	X	Royal Fireworks Music - various movement	Handel
			X	Recessional on Hymn to Joy	Beethoven
		X	X	Rigadon	Campra
			X	Sinfonia - Cantata 29	Bach

### Key

M - Mothers' and Grandmothers' entrance

Bm - Bridesmaids

B - Bride

R - Recessional

## THE WEDDING REHEARSAL

### **Responsibility of the Couple**

If guests are expected at the wedding, a rehearsal must precede the wedding. The rehearsal will take place the day before the ceremony, usually at 6:00 p.m. Other times are arranged with the officiating priest. It is the responsibility of the couple to have all of their attendants at the Church on time and sober. Alcohol is not allowed on premises before, during or after rehearsals and weddings (including in vehicles). If there is a rehearsal dinner, it should in no way conflict with the rehearsal, which lasts about one hour.

The wedding coordinator will be present at the rehearsal. It is helpful for her to meet the head usher at this time. It is not expected that the Rector, the Organist, or the Wedding Coordinator attend the rehearsal dinner.

The couple will assist the ushers if they will inform specific family or friends ahead of time if they are to be seated in family pew sections of the Church. As they enter the Church, these honored guests should inform the ushers. Usher guidelines will be given to the couple for distribution to the ushers prior to the rehearsal.

## THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

### **Facilities at the Church**

We do not have a “Bride’s Room” or any extensive space where people can change clothes at Christ Church. There is a small powder room in the Parish House where the bride can do last-minute finishing touches, but the bride and groom should not expect elaborate changing facilities at the Church. The wedding committee will be on hand to assist in any way. If arrangements are made with the Wedding Coordinator, the Parlor of the Parish House may be used before the wedding for pictures.

### **Photographs**

Because of the dignity of a wedding as a sacramental service of worship, photographers may not distract from the service in any way. The couple may choose any photographer they wish, but the photographer, in turn, must have the permission and approval of the Rector or Wedding Coordinator one month prior to the wedding.. Please see the Photographer’s Instructions on the last page of this booklet for specific rules. Give the appropriate form to the photographer for signature and return the signed form to the office with the wedding checklist. Please inform your guests that photo taking from the congregation during the service is not allowed.

### **The Ceremony**

All ushers should be at the church and ready to begin seating guests not less than one hour before the wedding begins. The groom and best man should arrive at the church not less than one hour before the ceremony. The bride and her entourage, including mothers or family representatives, should be present not less than 30 minutes before the ceremony.

A few moments before the ceremony, grandmothers of the bride and groom will be seated. The mother of the groom and then the mother of the bride will be seated a minute or so before the service begins. The wedding coordinator will give the appropriate signals to the organist, and will help the bridal party to be spaced properly as they begin to go up the aisle.

The bride's mother and the rest of the congregation should stand as the bride enters the church. At the conclusion of the service, the bride's parents will immediately be escorted out of the church, followed by the groom's parents. The congregation is then free to depart.

**All vans, limousines or other large vehicles should drop off attendants and leave the area. They should park elsewhere.** These vehicles can return to a pick-up area at the church after the wedding and post-wedding photographs are completed. Parking is limited right around the church and should be available for your guests attending the marriage service.

## THE RECEPTION

### Use of the Parish House

When available, the facilities of the Parish House may be rented for wedding receptions. These facilities must be reserved well in advance and priority will be given to parish organizations that use them on a regular, continuing schedule. Rental fees for the Parish House, (Holzhalb Hall), the Commons, the Kitchen, and the Parlor, may be obtained from the Parish Administrator. A deposit is required to reserve the rooms.

There are strict rules pertaining to the use of alcohol and dancing in the Parish House (Holzhalb Hall) which have been set by the Vestry of Christ Church. We ask that you respect these rules and that you practice extreme constraint in the serving of alcoholic beverages.

## **PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDELINES**

**1 white copy for the bride**

**1 white copy to be signed by the photographer and returned to the office**

**1 blue copy to be given to the photographer for his information**

Because a wedding is a sacramental service of worship, the Rector requires that photographers be neither intrusive nor distracting. You must observe the following rules:

1. The photographer must be approved by the wedding coordinator or the Rector at least 30 days ahead of the wedding date.
2. If desired, pictures may be taken one hour before the ceremony in the parlor of the Parish House. The wedding coordinator must be alerted beforehand.
3. Video tapes of the ceremony may be taken discreetly from the balcony. No artificial lighting may be used.
4. Natural light pictures may be taken from the balcony during the ceremony.
5. Flash pictures may be taken from the fourth pew from the back of the Church only (and two pews from the back of the Chapel) as participants enter from the narthex. At no other time in the service shall flash bulbs be permitted.
6. Fifteen minutes are allowed for flash pictures to be taken if desired of the wedding party and altar after the ceremony when the congregation has left the church. There may be no moving around in the Sanctuary or Nave during the ceremony.
7. The marriage license is signed at the rehearsal.
8. Have the photographer sign this sheet and return it to the church office one month prior to the wedding verifying that these guidelines have been read and understood. The photographer should keep the blue copy for reference.

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Photographer's signature

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120 S. New Hampshire Street  
Covington, LA 70433  
(985) 892-3177

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